

**HORIZONS**

**ELEMENTS  
OF  
POSITIVE PRACTICES  
&  
Teaching Techniques**

HORIZONS  
[www.horizonsct.org](http://www.horizonsct.org)  
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# **1. RELATIONSHIPS**

**Building relationships based on a person's preferences and strengths is the cornerstone of Positive Practices.**

**The teaching techniques and behavior support strategies outlined in this manual work in conjunction with positive, respectful relationships.**

## **Preferences**

## **Strengths**

## **Interests**

- ❖ Each person has unique likes and dislikes. It is very important to learn each person's preferences right at the start of the relationship.
- ❖ Engage the person to share his or her preferences and interests with you.
- ❖ Being aware of a person's preferences gives us information about the activities that will promote participation, enjoyment and success.
- ❖ When we match a person's strengths and preferences with planned activities, individuals display a high rate of success and accomplishment which in turn builds self-esteem.
- ❖ Interests vary due to age, gender, culture, socioeconomic background and prior life experiences.
- ❖ It is important to value others' preferences, even if you do not share them.
- ❖ Valuing each person's unique interests promotes building respectful relationships.

## **2. TOTAL COMMUNICATION**

**Total communication is a critical aspect of Positive Practices.**

**Our goal is to use Total Communication all the time.**

**Clear communication is also the key to effective team work.**

- ❖ **Verbal Communication** is using your voice to express yourself.
- ❖ **Visual Communication** is the use of gestures, facial expressions, mime, illustrations and sign language.
- ❖ **Total Communication** is the combination of visual and verbal communication.

Total Communication brings everyone into the conversation. There are times in the routine where a picture schedule paired with verbal communication and pointing will make clear what is going to happen next. There are other times, such as a PE class, where the visual example of someone running around a cone will cement the understanding of the expectation and what is going to happen next.

### **INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION**

Understanding how an individual communicates and processes information is key to the effective use of Total Communication.

- ❖ **Expressive** is how the person communicates to others.
- ❖ **Receptive** is how a person receives what has been communicated.

People receive and express language at different levels. A person's receptive language may be excellent - they understand most of what you say - but their expressive language may be quite limited.

## ❖ **Processing & Function of Communication**

**Processing** refers to how a person understands information communicated to him/her.

- All people have unique and individual processing abilities.
  
- Some people rely on visual cues to process information.
  
- Some experience delays from the time the communication occurs to the time it is understood. These individuals need “think time” or “wait time.”
  
- Some people process information best when short or one-word phrases are used.
  
- It is advantageous to quickly become familiar with how the person processes communication.

**Function** The function of communication is often to express a need, want, desire or feeling.

- A smile is a form of communication that may express happiness or joy.
  
- Rocking or moving rapidly in a chair may express discomfort or displeasure for some, or may for others be a way to regulate the need for sensory input.
  
- Some people don't have the ability to express themselves clearly with spoken language or sign language, and will exhibit a negative behavior in order to communicate their need, desire or feeling at the time.
  
- Observing carefully and responding positively are very important as you work to discover the function of specific communications.

# **3. ENGINEERING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS**

## **5 ASPECTS OF A REINFORCING ENVIRONMENT**

### **❖ Frequent Opportunities for Success**

- Successes can be big or small, from earning a paycheck to putting your head underwater at the pool. Success looks different for different people. Opportunities for success will be capitalized on by getting to know campers' preferences, their likes and dislikes, what they are good at and what is more difficult for them to do. Matching each person's strengths and preferences into activities/tasks enables him or her to display a high rate of success or accomplishment. This in turn will build self-esteem and confidence and increase the likelihood that campers will try new things and continue to stay motivated and engaged.

### **❖ Opportunities to Make Choices**

- Choices are built into reinforcing environments. We enjoy the feeling of being in control and making decisions. Choice-making needs to be built into all aspects of a person's routine: "What color dye will I use for my tie-dye t-shirt?" "Which friend will I sit next to?" "Is now a good time to send an email home?" These are examples of the hundreds of choices that are available in the context of a day.

### **❖ Opportunities to Experience Independence**

- At Horizons we don't do "for"; we do "just enough" to enable each person to be successful and as independent as possible. Positive Practices emphasize the importance of clear directions for each activity or task with big tasks broken down into sequential, organized components. Using this method enables individuals to understand and do some of the smaller parts of a task independently. For example, instead of the broad statement "It's time to get ready for horseback riding", the direction for an individual might be "Please get your horseback riding boots." This is a task the person can do independently.

### **❖ Variety in Routine**

- Each day the routine is rich and engaging. During Horseback Riding, Swimming, Boating, Fitness, P.E., Yoga and Dance, campers will learn to move their bodies in new and different ways. Arts and Crafts, Drama, Pioneering, Music, Camp Crafts and Language Arts offer campers new ways to communicate and get in touch with their own creative energy.

### **❖ A Natural Flow of Meaningful Activities**

- As campers awake each morning the natural flow of the day begins. Getting dressed and ready for breakfast is a prime time to learn how to be more independent. After breakfast, cabin clean-up will provide another chance to be engaged in a relevant, meaningful activity. Each evening after dinner the entire camp will come together for yet another element in the natural flow of activities: "Evening Activity." Campers will have many opportunities to share their special talents to at Dances, Talent Nights and Campfires.

## **EXPECTATIONS & GOALS**

- ❖ Most situations - work, camp, school, sports, games, homes, families - have expectations or rules.
- ❖ Expectations teach us how to behave, socialize or participate.
- ❖ Expectations must be made clear in advance.
- ❖ Expectations are only effective when they are understood by the person.
- ❖ Expectations are often the boundaries that help people be safe and comfortable.
- ❖ Expectations help a person be successful.
- ❖ It is important to engage individuals in personal goal setting and groups in the setting of group expectations.
- ❖ Goals lead us in a particular direction, towards a specific outcome.
- ❖ In order to understand another person's goal we need to ask and/or carefully observe the person.
- ❖ When the goal for an activity/lesson is clearly stated, then the effectiveness of the activity/lesson can be evaluated.
- ❖ Goals are stated in the positive and say what the person will do, not what he or she won't do:
  - "Sarah will swim a lap underwater."
  - "Adam will cooperatively work with peers in Social Studies class."

## **POSITIVE OUTCOMES & NATURAL CONSEQUENCES**

- ❖ Campers come to camp to have a great time, and it is our job to help them enjoy themselves here. Others join our employment, educational or living support opportunities to meet personal goals. If they are not enjoying an activity, meeting an expectation or realizing their goal, then we need to change some aspect of what we are doing.
- ❖ Positive reinforcement promotes positive outcomes. Verbal praise, high fives or shout-outs are all natural outcomes and as such are the consequences of meeting an expectation.
- ❖ It is very important to deliver positive reinforcement quickly. Timing is everything.
- ❖ Reminders or rehearsals of expectations and outcomes are key to their effectiveness.

You can verbally state expectations many ways:

- "We're going swimming. It will be great to cool off. First we'll all wait by the gate and then sit on our towels until the lifeguards tell us we can get in the pool."
- "When we are finished in PE, we will head to Language Arts and you will see your friend Tommy."
- "After you earn three stars we will visit with Michelle."

You can remind others and rehearse expectations many ways:

- Reviewing the daily schedule with pictures.
- Creating a list of what will happen, with opportunities built in for the person to check off each item as it is finished.
- Using a calendar with words and pictures to mark daily events in advance and review it at key times in the day.

- ❖ When an expectation is not met, the response needs to be natural, non-punitive and timely.
- ❖ Positive outcomes/consequences are intrinsically reinforcing and provide an incentive to do more.
- ❖ Friendly interactions, completed projects, and awards are examples of positive outcomes.

## **PROACTIVE VS REACTIVE**

**We put everything in place to be as proactive as possible.**

**Planning is essential to being proactive rather than reactive.**

- ❖ **Proactive strategies** are the things we pre-plan to do in order to teach positive behavior and to prevent or manage a challenging situation.
- ❖ When we plan **proactively** we have the tools and confidence we need to support a person to be successful.
- ❖ **Proactive strategies** minimize over-reaction to inappropriate behavior.
- ❖ A **Positive Daily Routine** is the most effective general **proactive strategy**.
- ❖ However, some individuals require additional **proactive strategies** to be incorporated into their routine when the existing strategies are not enough to meet their needs, such as a personal incentive chart or schedule.
- ❖ Identifying the triggers or antecedents to challenging behavior helps us know what **proactive** tools we need to develop and when to intervene.
- ❖ **Reactive responses** occur during or after a specific behavior is exhibited.
- ❖ When we engage in a **reactive response** to a challenging behavior, we risk escalating the behavior or confusing the person.
- ❖ **Reactive responses** can potentially put yourself or the other person at risk.

# 4. TEACHING TECHNIQUES

**At Horizons, we are ALL teachers.**

## ➤ **Teachable Moments**

- ❖ Every day is full of teachable moments. Stop and take the time to make the most out of those moments.
- ❖ Explaining something as it naturally occurs is a teachable moment.
- ❖ Look for the “teachable moments” in each person’s routine. Getting ready for a swimming lesson is the perfect time to teach someone how to apply sunscreen.

## ➤ **Teaching a Lesson or a Task**

- ❖ Have materials organized and prepared before teaching; plan the time frames for each component of the lesson or task.
- ❖ Give clear directions. State goals and outcomes of activity. Use total communication and be clear, specific, positive and direct.
- ❖ Identify where and how to begin working.
- ❖ If you are asking the group to create something, have a model product to look at.
- ❖ Break instruction and activities into smaller sequential components.
- ❖ Plan variety in the type of engagement: working as a group, hands-on instruction, individual assistance.
- ❖ Plan for each person to exercise his/her highest level of competence.
- ❖ Don't do for; do enough to enable a person to be successful.



# Teaching Strategies

## Engage in Modeling

- When people see others doing the task that is being asked of them, they are much more likely to understand what is expected.
- **Modeling** gets others excited to do what you are doing.
- **Modeling** provides concrete information and a reference point.
- **Modeling** occurs on an ongoing basis.
- **Modeling** cues positive social behavior.

## Use Many Visual Cues

- **Visual cues** include gestures, posters, photos and graphics.
- **Visual cues** enhance understanding and provide additional information.
- A **visual cue** may be a poster, holding up an example, or pointing to something specific.

## Provide Physical Assistance

- **Physical Assistance** is effective when the person will understand the task better by doing it together, such as painting in an up-and-down motion while holding the brush together, or hand-over-hand swinging a tennis racquet.
- Some individuals will need **Physical Assistance** to complete just parts of a task.
- Some individuals will need **Physical Assistance** to get started with a task or activity.
- Hand-over-hand is one type of **Physical Assistance** and may be the most effective way to ensure a person stays engaged in the activity and experiences success.

# Behavior Support Strategies

“The Behavior you attend to is the Behavior you teach.”

Attention is a very powerful reinforcer.

## **#1 POSITIVE SCAN**

- ❖ Positive Scan is looking for and acknowledging “what is working” and desired behaviors.
- ❖ Things that work are desired behaviors, such as having a conversation, taking care of personal belongings, helping a friend, paying attention to a lesson, following a direction, giving a compliment, and making an effort.
- ❖ When in a group of people look for “what works.”
- ❖ Make a positive, reinforcing statement about “what's working.”
- ❖ When using Positive Scan:
  - include the person’s name and the positive behavior you want to reinforce;
  - use personal "I" statements;
  - notice unexpected or unplanned, positive behavior;
  - reinforce the closest proximity to success.

## **#2 SELECTIVE ATTENTION**

- ❖ Selective attention is the process of focusing on individuals’ positive behaviors and not attending to inappropriate or challenging behaviors.
- ❖ Many challenging behaviors will be minimized or will stop completely if they are not maintained by attention.
- ❖ Selective attention works because attention of any kind - both “good attention” and “bad attention” - is a powerful reinforcer.
- ❖ Use selective attention safely as you will need to attend when a person is putting themselves or others in danger.

## **#3 REDIRECTION**

- ❖ Redirection is directing the person who is engaging in a challenging behavior to another positive behavior that is incompatible with the challenging behavior.
- ❖ Examples of redirection:
  - a person is shouting in an upset manner and you redirect him to sing a song along with you;
  - a person is tossing frisbees about and getting others upset; you redirect her by putting a bag in her hand and directing her to collect the frisbees and put them in the bag with you.
- ❖ A person can be redirected to a new topic of conversation, a different activity, or a different place.