



5 Things Every Early Educator Must Know About Behavior (Before Monday Morning)



Dr. Julie Causton



<https://inclusiveschooling.com/eltai>

Inclusive Education

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MEANS

we no longer accept that separate classrooms, separate schools, and separate lives are in the best interest of any student. Separating people by ability disadvantages everyone. Belonging is a human need. Our educational system, practices, and spaces, need to be reimagined.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MEANS

every student is valued because of their strengths, gifts, and even challenges. As disability is simply... diversity. Everyone benefits from meaningful participation and opportunities to learn grade level content with diverse peers. We must trust that all students come to us as incredible whole people who do not need to be fixed.

Inclusive Education

CREATED BY DR. JULIE CAUSTON AND DR. KRISTIE PRETTI-FRONTZAK

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MEANS we no longer accept that separate classrooms, separate schools, and separate lives are in the best interest of any student. Separating people by ability disadvantages everyone. Belonging is a human need. Our educational system, practices, and spaces, need to be reimagined.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MEANS every student is valued because of their strengths, gifts, and even challenges. As disability is simply... diversity. Everyone benefits from meaningful participation and opportunities to learn grade level content with diverse peers. We must trust that all students come to us as incredible whole people who do not need to be fixed.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO CREATE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WHERE ALL STUDENTS FLOURISH!

TO ACHIEVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WE MUST:

- 1. REDESIGN SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES** that center and value our human diversity, foster strong relationships, and create a true sense of belonging between and among us
- 2. PRIORITIZE HIRING** diverse and inclusive-minded leaders, creative and compassionate educators, and skillful paraprofessionals
- 3. ELIMINATE BARRIERS** to students' access, participation, and learning by abandoning inequitable practices, policies, and procedures
- 4. CREATE WELCOMING SPACES** where students' multiple identities are seen and celebrated
- 5. CO-TEACH AND COLLABORATE EFFECTIVELY** by sharing instructional roles, designing authentic lessons, and generating joy filled learning experiences
- 6. PARTNER WITH FAMILIES** to incorporate their dreams for their children
- 7. DIFFERENTIATE TO CREATE ACCESS POINTS** that allow students to engage in meaningful experiences, share their thoughts and ideas, and demonstrate their competence
- 8. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT** and enrichment for ALL - continuously and seamlessly - when and where students need it
- 9. UTILIZE CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS** as an opportunity to create warm and safe relationships, reduce stressors, soothe systems, and nurture students' well-being

BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE, TAKE ACTION, AND WATCH STUDENTS THRIVE!

To Achieve Inclusion we MUST:

1

REDESIGN SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

that center and value our human diversity, foster strong relationships and create a true sense of belonging between and among us

2

PRIORITIZE HIRING

diverse and inclusive-minded leaders, creative and compassionate educators, and skillful paraprofessionals

3

ELIMINATE BARRIERS

to students' access, participation, and learning by abandoning inequitable practices, policies, and procedures

4

CREATE WELCOMING SPACES

where students' multiple identities are seen and celebrated

5

CO-TEACH AND COLLABORATE EFFECTIVELY

by sharing instructional roles, designing authentic lessons, and generating joy-filled learning experiences

6

PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

to incorporate their dreams for their children

7

DIFFERENTIATE TO CREATE ACCESS POINTS

that allow students to engage in meaningful experiences, share their thoughts and ideas, and demonstrate their competence

8

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

and enrichment for ALL - continuously and seamlessly - when and where students need it



UTILIZE CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

as an opportunity to create warm and safe relationships, reduce stressors, soothe systems, and nurture students' well-being

Session Agenda: 5 Things...



Welcome and Get Set!

1. The brain is to blame

2. It's not misbehavior it is a message

3. Use language that lifts

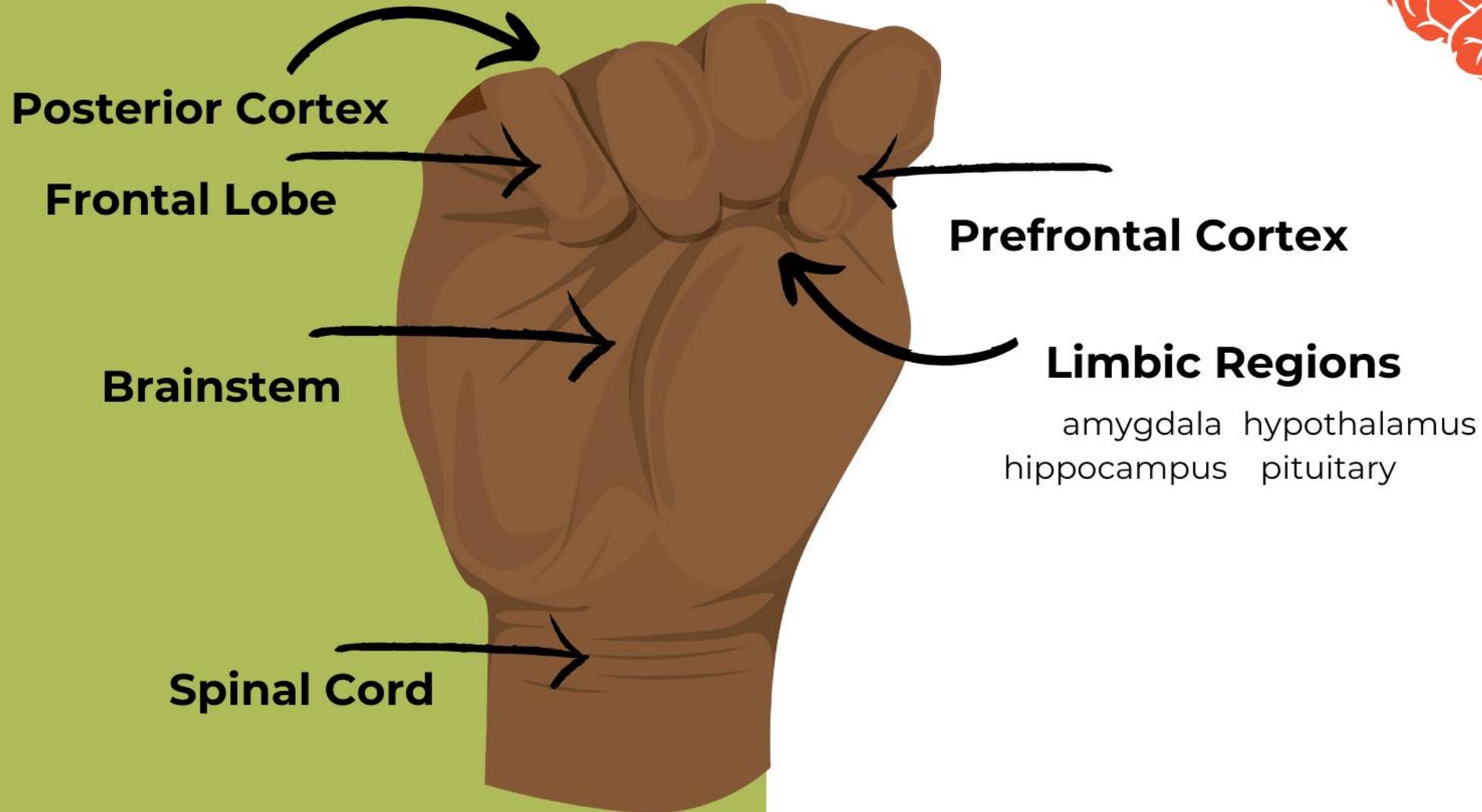
4. Embrace the 4 S's – Safe, Seen, Soothed, Secure

5. Rollercoaster Ride

5 Things Every Early Educator Must Know About Behavior (Before Monday Morning)

1. The **brain** is to blame.
2. It's not **misbehavior**, it's a **message**.
3. Use **language** that **lifts**.
4. Embrace the **4 simple S's**.
5. You are the **safety bar**.

THE HAND MODEL OF THE BRAIN



FLIPPED LIDS

- Prefrontal cortex is no longer the driver
- Reactive vs. Ready state
- Stress Behavior vs. Misbehavior
- Hyperaroused - Hypoaroused
- What we see:
 - Fight
 - Flight
 - Freeze
 - Faint
- What we need:
 - Safe
 - Seen
 - Soothed
 - Secure



Middle Prefrontal Region

- Connects critical areas of the triune brain
- Connects us to the social world of other brains
- Allows us to stop, think, and act

Limbic Regions

- Big Emotions - Is this something that is good or bad? Something I want or fear?
- Area that “controls emotions”

Brainstem

- Downstairs brain
- Aims to satisfy basic needs
- When activated, pushes us to act (F’s)
- Sensory input come through brainstem first

CHECKLIST OF COMMON STRESSORS



BIOLOGICAL DOMAIN -- Stress on physiological systems (e.g., cardiovascular, digestive, nervous); It's where stress starts and is always a central factor



EMOTIONAL DOMAIN -- Stress caused by strong emotions (positive and negative)



COGNITIVE DOMAIN -- Stress caused from processing info; Mental processes involved in knowledge acquisition



SOCIAL DOMAIN -- Stress from social interactions with others

TOP 10 WAYS TO REDUCE STRESSORS

**GO
QUIET**



**GET
CREATIVE**



**REDUCE
INPUTS**



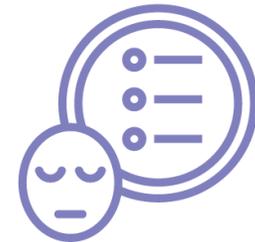
**ASK
OPEN-ENDED
QUESTIONS**



**SHOW
COMPASSION**



**REDUCE
DEMANDS**



**GIVE VISUAL
SUPPORT**



**REDUCE THE SIZE
OF THE GROUP**



**SLOW DOWN AND
GIVE TIME FOR
PROCESSING**





- Stay steady and calm—so the student feels secure, no matter the ride.
- Be predictable—your presence tells them, “I’m here and I won’t let go.”
- Support without squeezing—allow emotions, movement, and expression.
- Stay close, not overwhelming—just like the bar, you’re always within reach.
- Offer quiet reassurance—your tone and posture say, “You’re safe.”
- Keep boundaries firm and loving—guiding, not controlling.
- Hold through the ups and downs—without reacting to every dip or twist.
- Stay in place even when it gets bumpy—your steadiness matters most then.
- Trust the student’s ability to ride it out—you don’t stop the ride, just keep it safe.
- Be the invisible support they count on—but don’t always notice.



Lifelines for Your Teachers—and the Children They Serve



Dr. Julie Causton



<https://inclusiveschooling.com/eltai>

Session Agenda: Lifelines



Welcome and Setting our Intention

1. The boat captain

2. Lifelines

3. What do we believe?

4- The S's – Safe, Seen, Soothed, Secure

5- How to Reframe Behaviors that Challenge Us

It is about our beliefs!

“We often ask...”

“What do we do?”

*“But the better
question is:*

What do we believe?”

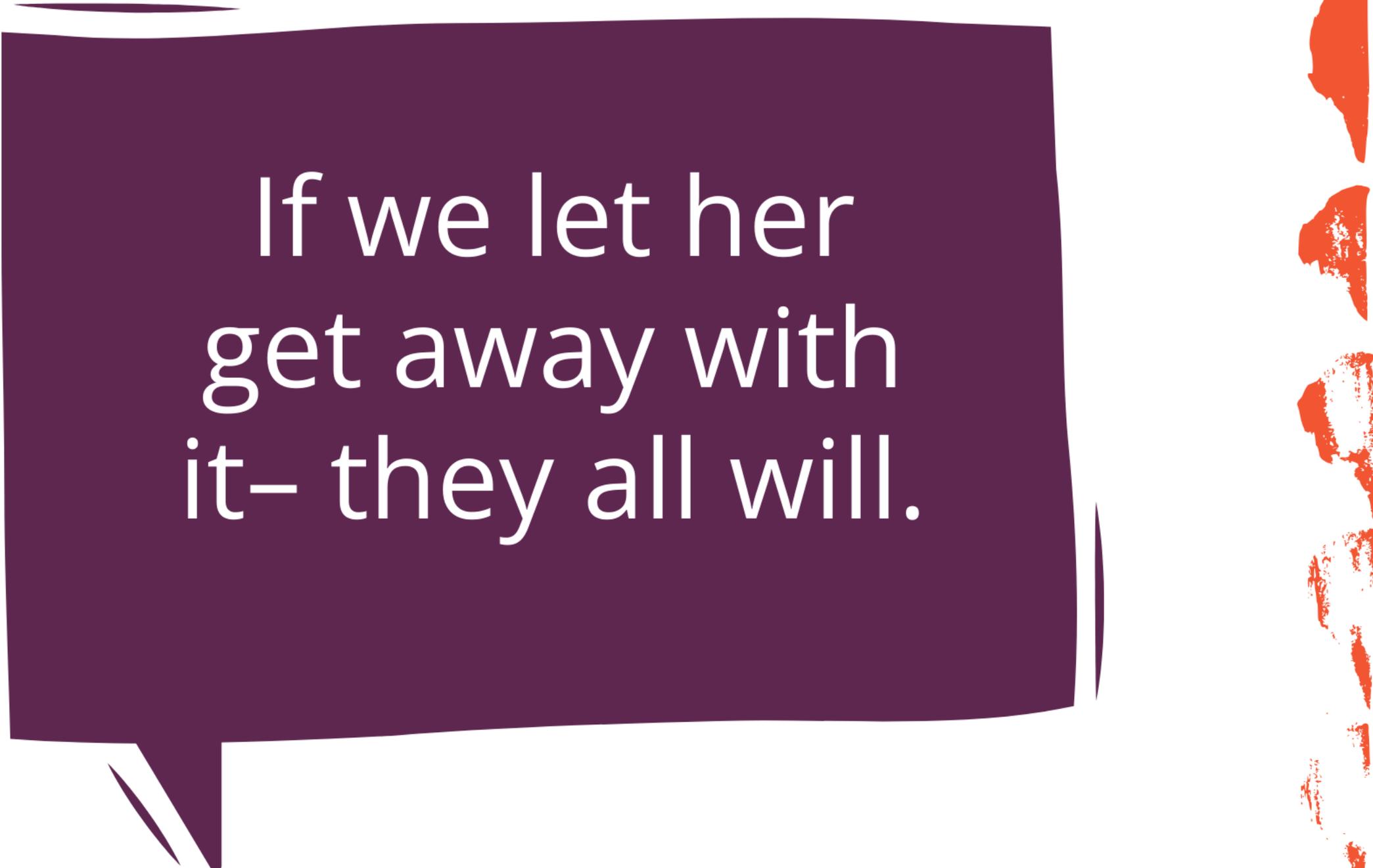
Mindset Reframe- **Let's give it a try!**

They just want
attention.

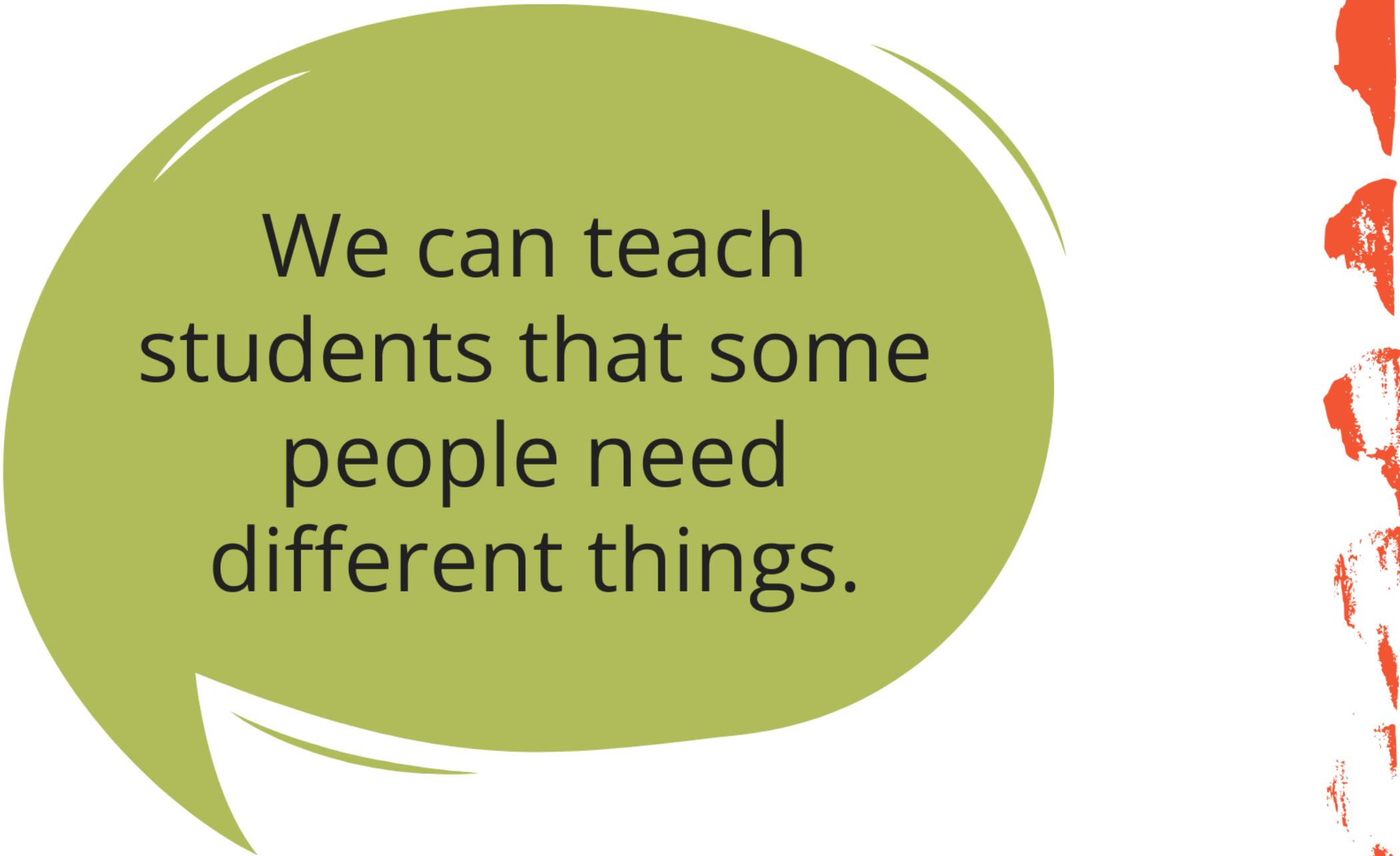


Possible Response...

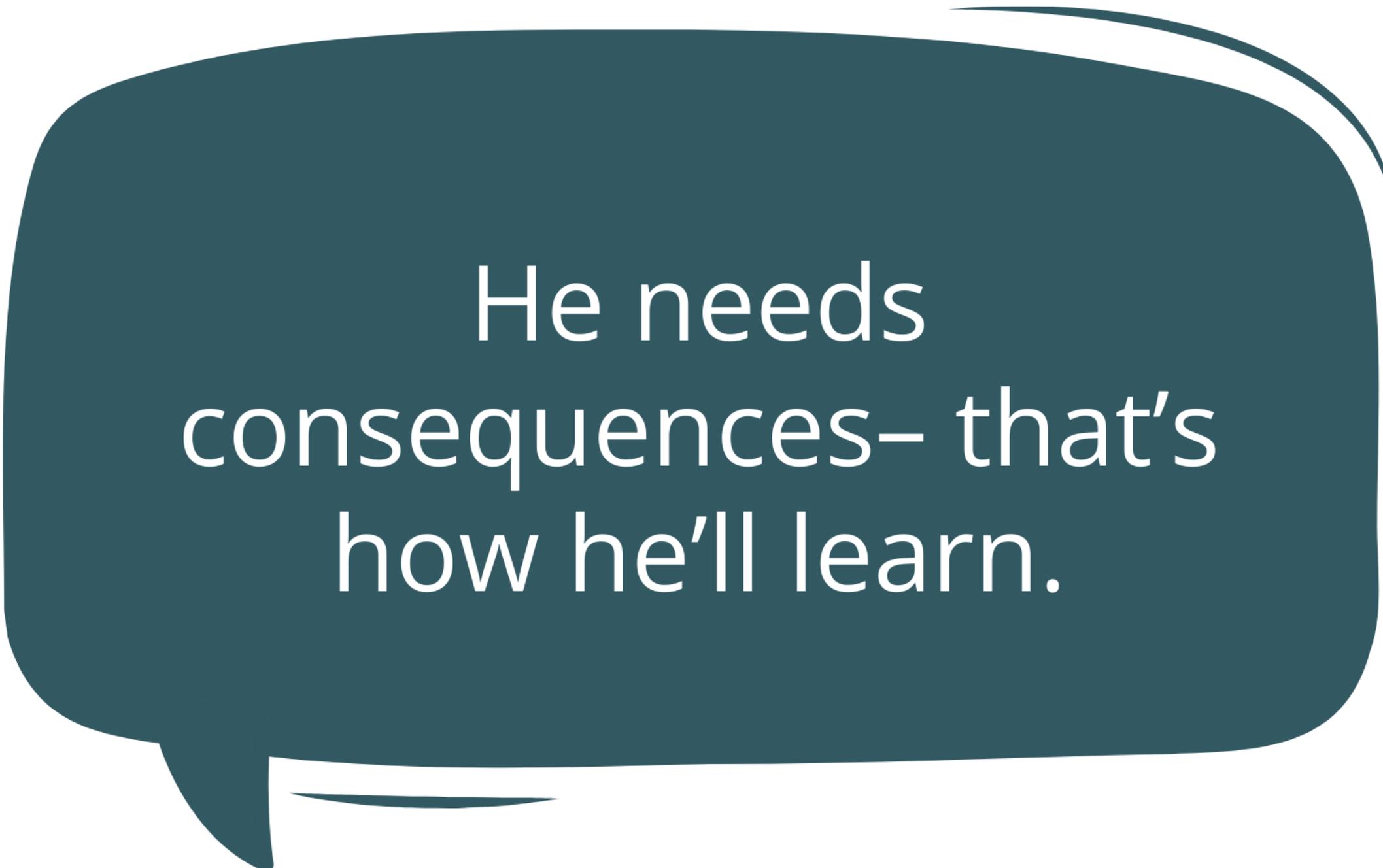
They are seeking connection.
How can we help them
increase connection?



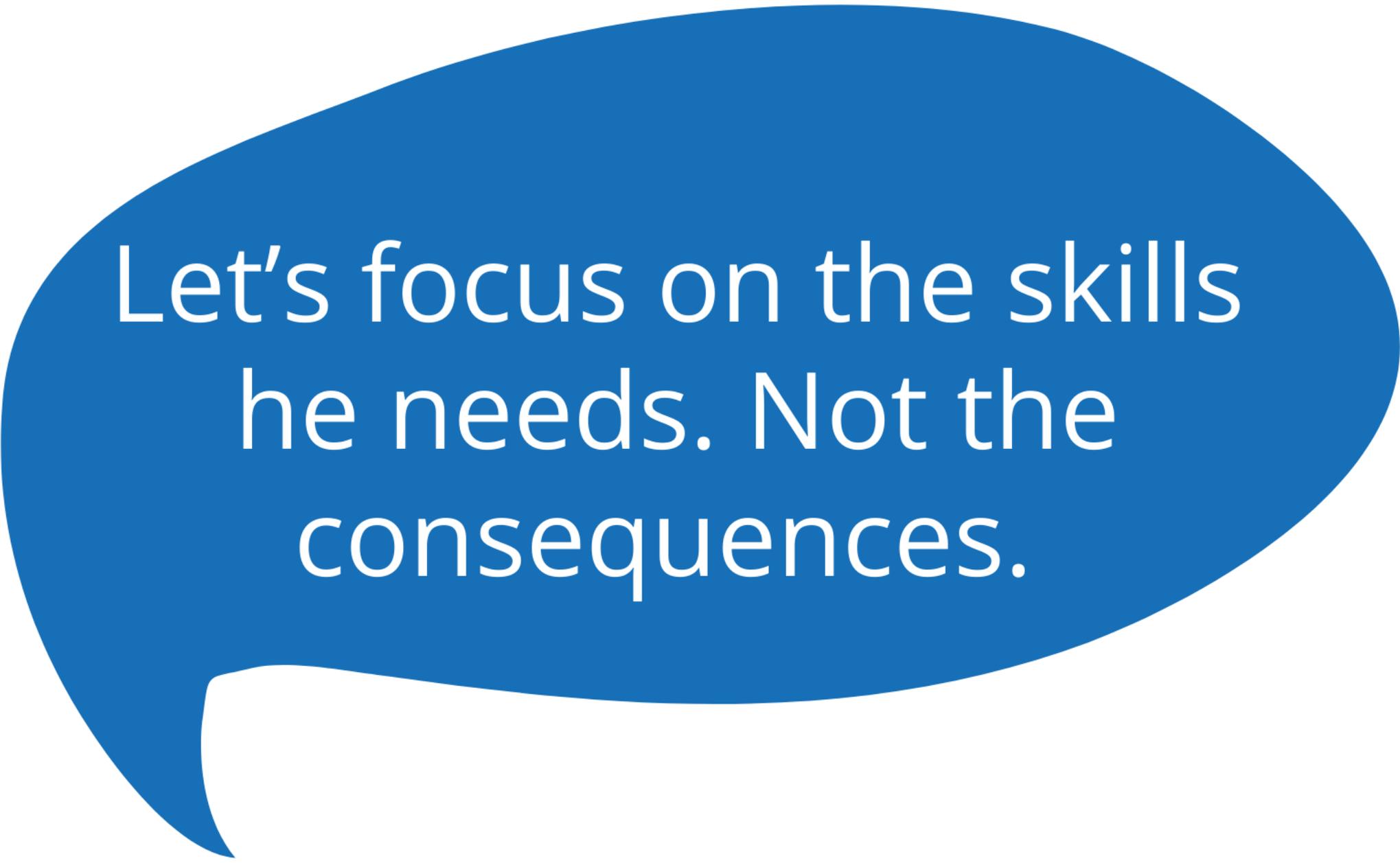
If we let her
get away with
it- they all will.



We can teach
students that some
people need
different things.



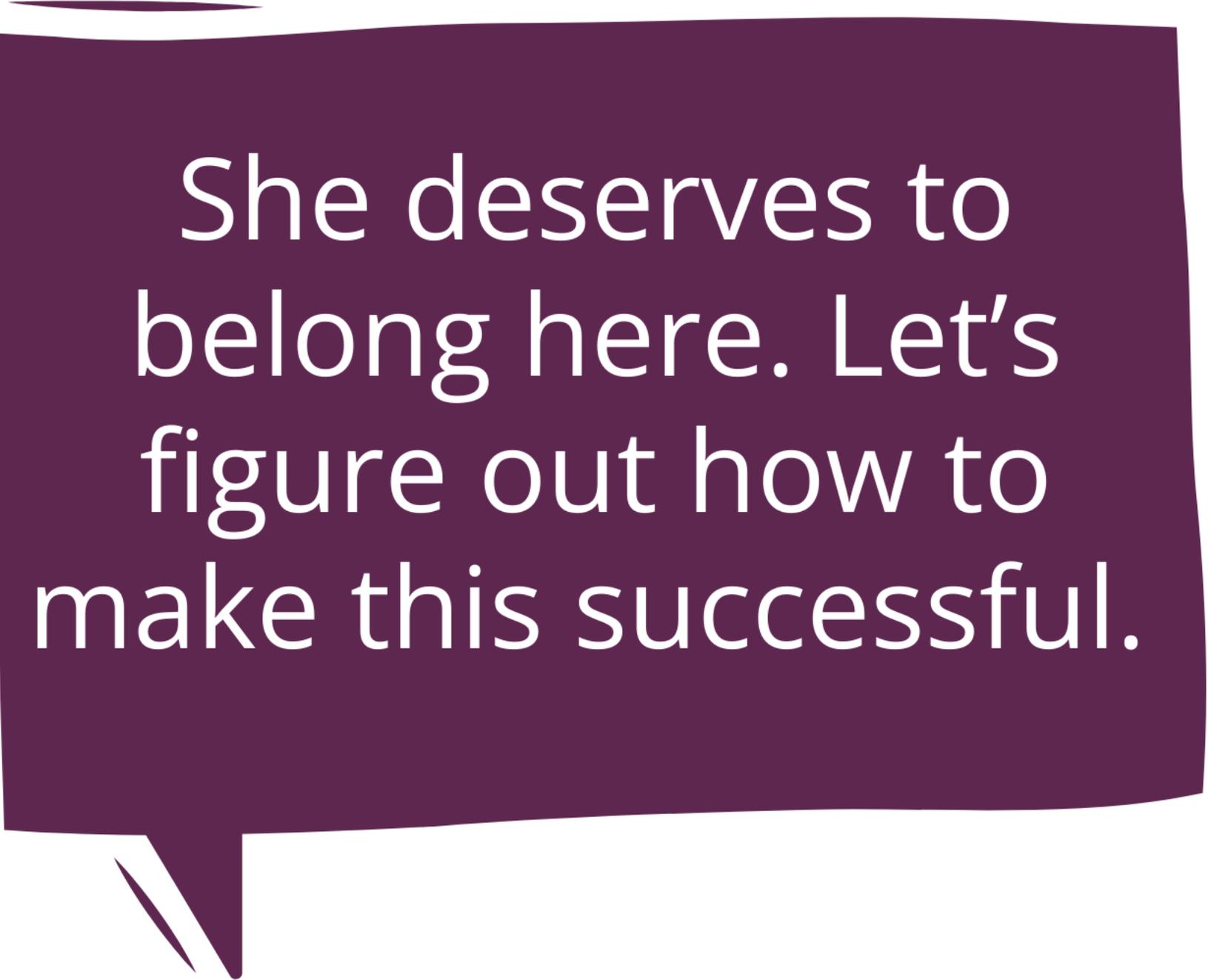
He needs
consequences- that's
how he'll learn.



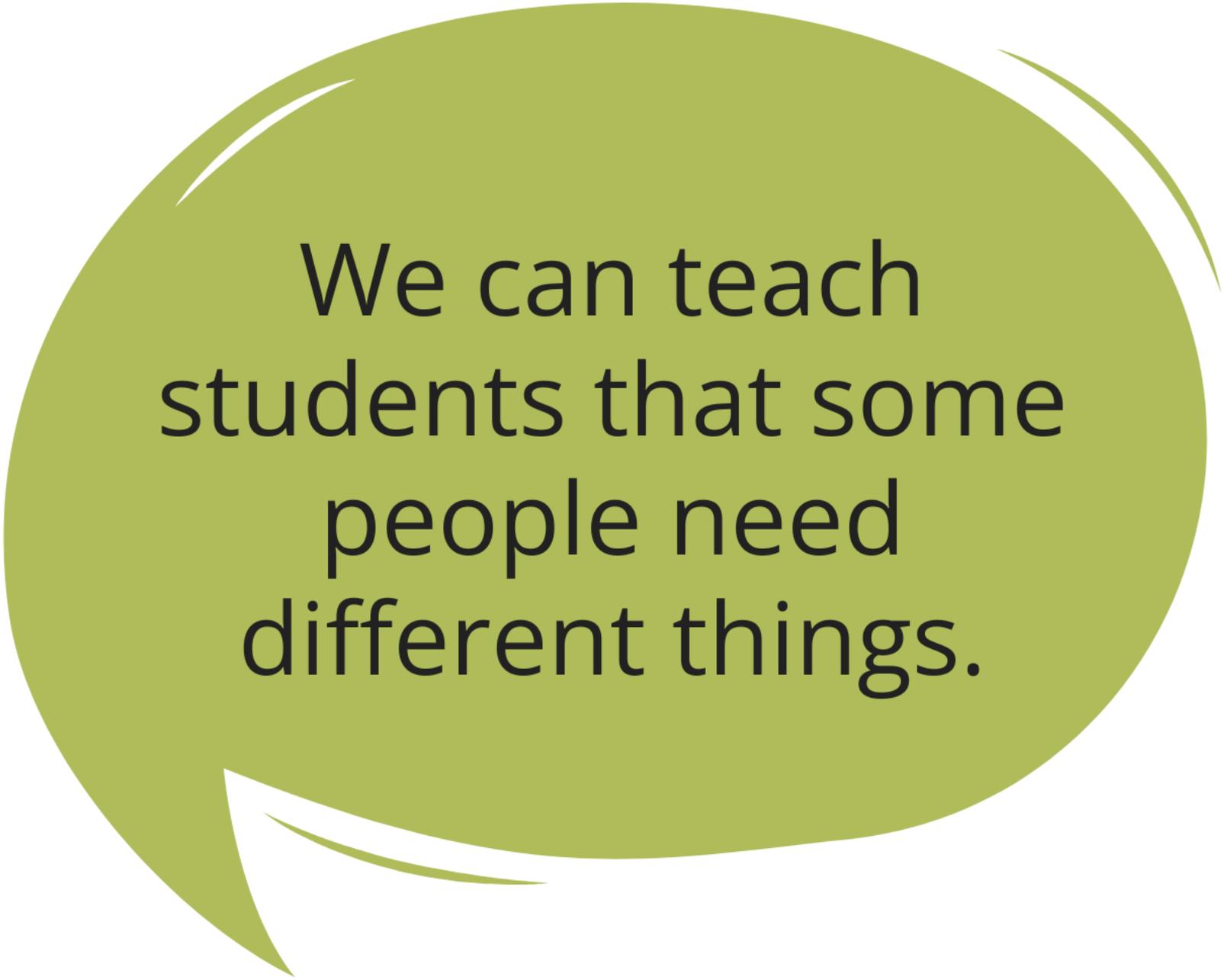
Let's focus on the skills
he needs. Not the
consequences.



She needs
a different setting.



She deserves to belong here. Let's figure out how to make this successful.



We can teach
students that some
people need
different things.

Envelope Full of Ideas Activity

On the outside of your envelope...

- Put your first and last name
- Write a question that you have (something new or something that you came with) - In what ways, how can we? Be specific.
- *For example: "In what ways can we support teachers through the change process to avoid burnout?"*



Now – for the ideas...

- Get an envelope and...
 - Write a solution to the question on an index card and sign your name
 - Be sure to give a little encouragement and put the index card in the envelope
- Only rule- don't commiserate or admire the problem
- Aim to solve or answer the question
- Repeat these steps
- When we're done – return envelope full of ideas to original asker



How to use "Envelope Full of Ideas"

Creates a culture of collaborative problem solving

- Staff meetings
- Problem solving sessions
- Parent meetings



Mindset Shifts and How to Make 'Em Tools

10 Mindset Shifts for Supporting Student Behavior
Rethinking Behavior: A Shift in Perspective

Every behavior tells a story. When students act out, shut back, they're not just being difficult—they're communicating. Moments offer insights into their experiences, emotions.

By shifting our perspective from viewing behavior as a problem as a form of communication, we can respond with empathy and effectiveness.

The following mindset shifts are designed to guide educators to behave constructively, fostering a more supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

1. From "They're being defiant" → To "They're overwhelmed"
What looks like defiance is often a nervous system that's overloaded, not a student trying to get their way. Instead of reacting (like attention or escape), consider whether it's regulation, clarity, connection, or relief from stress.

2. From "Fix the student" → To "Fix the environment"
Instead of asking, "What's wrong with this student?", ask, "What's wrong with this student's environment can we shift to better support them?"

10 Ways to Spark Real Mindset Shifts in Educators
A Guide for Inclusive Leaders

Lasting change begins with what we believe about students, learning, and each other. If we want schools where every student feels a sense of belonging, we must start by **shifting mindsets**—not just practices.

This guide offers 10 high-impact strategies to help you spark meaningful mindset shifts in your team. Each one is designed to open hearts, challenge assumptions, and create space for more inclusive thinking. And as you explore, you'll find curated links to tools, stories, and resources to help you bring each strategy to life—one conversation, one connection, and one step at a time.

1. TELL TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES
Share real-life examples of inclusion in action—where students and teachers grew in unexpected ways. Stories humanize the mission and make change feel possible.

2. CREATE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE
Gently disrupt outdated beliefs by asking questions like: "If we believe in belonging, why are some students separated for some or all of the school day?"

The discomfort opens space for new thinking.

© All rights reserved. <https://www.inclusive.org>

inclusive
LEADERS



Crisis Moments... Are Not the Time to Wing It

When emotions are high, we don't rise to the occasion...

we fall to our level of preparation.

20 De-Escalation Ideas that Work

20 De-Escalation Ideas that Work



When a student's emotions start to boil over— when voices rise, language escalates, or things get thrown—it's easy to feel like we're losing control of the moment.

But what students need in these intense situations isn't more control. They need calm. Safety. Regulation.

And that begins with us.

The 20 strategies below are designed to help you de-escalate behavior in real time, with connection and clarity—not force. You'll find ideas that interrupt the cycle gently, bring energy down without shame, and give students a pathway back to regulation. These aren't rewards. They aren't consequences. They're in-the-moment moves that help everyone.

Use them when:

- A student is yelling, swearing, or escalating fast
- You're feeling triggered or targeted
- You want to shift the energy without making it worse
- You're not sure what to say—but know something needs to change

Another Important Reframe

Exclusion
"Feels" Safer

But Inclusion
IS Safer

HOW to Assure Educators That Inclusion and Safety Can Co-Exist

HOW to Assure Educators that Inclusion and Safety Can Co-Exist

Inclusion and Safety Are Not Opposites

For many educators, the idea of inclusion can feel at odds with the need for safety. When students exhibit behaviors that challenge or overwhelm, it's natural for fear and frustration to surface. But safety and inclusion are not mutually exclusive—they can, and must, co-exist.

This handout offers seven practical ways school leaders can acknowledge those fears, reinforce a shared vision, and provide the tools, support, and structures educators need to feel confident—not just compliant. Because when teachers feel safe, supported, and equipped, students do too.

1. NAME THE FEAR AND FRAME THE VISION

- **Acknowledge concerns:** It's crucial that administrators validate educators' real and emotional experiences around student behavior.
- **Frame inclusion as a shared responsibility:** Help educators see that inclusive classrooms are built collaboratively, and that support will be ongoing—not one-off.
- **Reinforce the "why":** Connect safety efforts to a larger vision of equity, student growth, and inclusive values. Make it clear that no student is disposable.



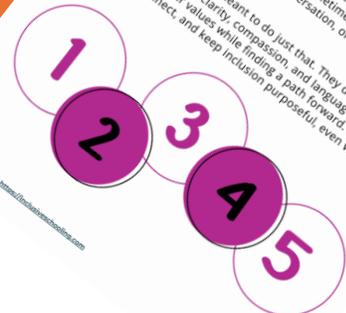
© All rights reserved. <https://www.inclusivelearning.com>

FIVE PHRASES to help Educators navigate the tension between inclusion and behavior

When Inclusion Feels Hard, Words Matter

Supporting inclusion in the face of challenging behavior is complex—and emotionally exhausting at times. When frustration builds, it's easy to slip into blame or burnout. But sometimes, the right words can interrupt the spiral, ground a conversation, or simply remind us why we're in this work.

These five phrases are meant to do just that. They don't dismiss the difficulty—they offer clarity, compassion and language to help teams stay rooted in their values while finding a path forward. Use them to reframe, reconnect, and keep inclusion purposeful, even when it feels hard.



© All rights reserved. <https://www.inclusivelearning.com>



5-Minute Fixes – Collaborative Problem-Solving That Works

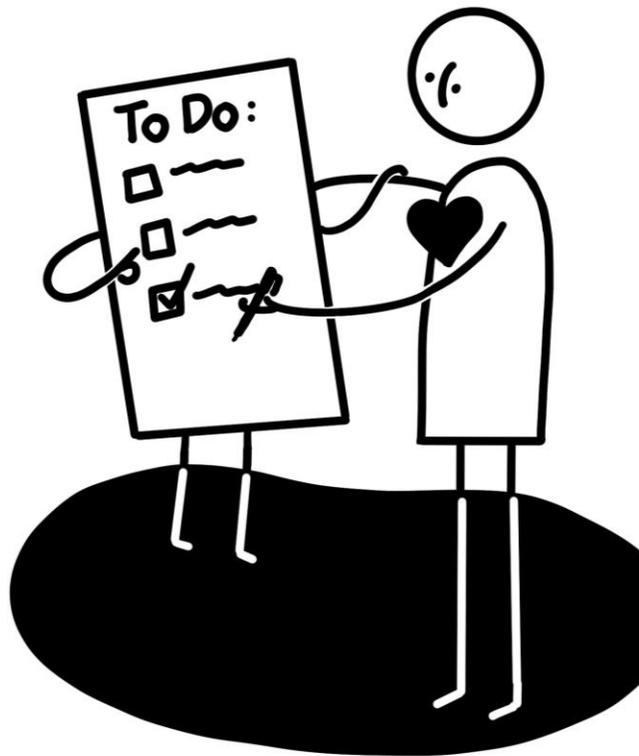


Dr. Julie Causton



<https://inclusiveschooling.com/eltai>

Session Agenda: Collaborative Fixes



Welcome!

1. The 5 Minute Fix

2. An Example

3. If your Challenge is Behavior...

4. Your Turn- Challenge A

5. Your Turn- Challenge B

6. Reflection



SOLVE ANY PROBLEM IN 5 MINUTES

1 MINUTE Describe your challenge/problem to others

1 MINUTE Write a mutually agreed upon solvable question (e.g., In what ways can I/we...)

2 MINUTES Brainstorm silently at least 20 solutions to answer the solvable question

55 SECONDS Select a first step from the brainstormed list

5 SECONDS Celebrate your success (e.g. high-five, dance)

STEP 1 DESCRIBE YOUR CHALLENGE/PROBLEM TO OTHERS

1 MINUTE



SAMPLE PROBLEM

- Evidently my family (humans and pets) need to eat every night
- I'm exhausted after working all day and the last thing I want to do is be in the kitchen
- Even when I want to cook, I am out of ideas for what to make for dinner
- Everyone wants something different and I want everyone to eat healthy
- I have a food budget and it's harder and harder to stay within that budget...sometimes fast food feels like the easiest and cheapest solution

1 MINUTE

**STEP 2: WRITE YOUR PROBLEM
IN A SOLVABLE FORM**



SAMPLE SOLVABLE QUESTION:

In what ways might I easily provide a nutritional, economical, and diverse dinner for my family?

EXAMPLES OF SOLVABLE QUESTIONS



- In what ways might we...
- How can we...
- What strategies can we implement to...
- How might we improve...
- What steps can we take to...
- In what ways can we enhance...
- How can we address...
- What approaches can we use to...
- How might we support...
- What methods can we employ to...
- In what ways can we promote...
- How can we ensure...
- What initiatives can we introduce to...
- How might we facilitate...
- What practices can we adopt to...
- In what ways can we foster...
- How can we develop...
- What actions can we take to...
- How might we overcome...
- What measures can we implement to...

STEP 3: SAMPLE OF BRAINSTORMED IDEAS...

AS MANY AS
POSSIBLE...

WITHOUT
JUDGMENT OR
CRITIQUE



Plan out meals for a month and batch shopping and cooking	Ask AI for 5-ingredient meals based on what's in your fridge	Pre-prep grains and proteins on Sundays	Aim for 3 out of 7 meals to be nutritional	Offer only two dinner options, max
Pair up with neighbors to share meal prep nights	One time a month freeze something for a future night	Do this problem-solving with my family	Start pinning recipes that are more doable	Schedule "freebie" nights so I don't feel guilty about having fast food
Pair weekly meals that cover two nights even if not in a row	Hire a chef	Rotate between other family members each week or month	Batch cook & freeze 'dinner kits'	Theme nights (Meatless Monday, Taco Tuesday, etc.)
Potluck-style family dinners	Set up a "leftover bar"	Use a meal kit subscription temporarily	Have a "pantry challenge" night	Create a "dinner wish list" board



Step 4 – Select your first action step

Plan out meals for a month and batch shopping and cooking	Ask AI for 5-ingredient meals based on what's in your fridge	Pre-prep grains and proteins on Sundays	Aim for 3 out of 7 meals to be nutritional	Offer only two dinner options, max
Pair up with neighbors to share meal prep nights	One time a month freeze something for a future night	Do this problem-solving with my family	Start pinning recipes that are more doable	Schedule "freebie" nights so I don't feel guilty about having fast food
Pair weekly meals that cover two nights even if not in a row	Hire a chef	Rotate between other family members each week or month	Batch cook & freeze 'dinner kits'	Theme nights (Meatless Monday, Taco Tuesday, etc.)
Potluck-style family dinners	Set up a "leftover bar"	Use a meal kit subscription temporarily	Have a "pantry challenge" night	Create a "dinner wish list" board



Step 5: Celebrate! Here are a few ideas

1

Draw something fun on your list!

2

Give your partner a high five!

3

Go and get a cup of coffee!

4

Take a moment to acknowledge we did it!

DOES THE SOLUTION...

1. Appeal to the student?
2. Enhance the student's image?
3. Increase social connection?
4. Support voice and choice?
5. Is it based on strengths, not deficits?
6. Protect the student's dignity?
7. Support inclusion and belonging?
8. Reflect our values?



A NON-Example

- **Behavior Challenge:** A student is calling out during group time.
- **Proposed Solution:** Move the child's spot to the edge of the rug with a behavior chart. Every time they stay quiet, they earn a sticker. After 10 stickers, they get to pick a prize.
- **Why This Doesn't Meet the Criteria:**
 - ✘ Doesn't appeal to the student – isolation may feel like punishment.
 - ✘ Reduces the student's image – others may see them as "the problem."
 - ✘ Limits social connection – the child is physically and socially distanced.
 - ✘ Relies on external rewards – not meaningful or sustainable.
 - ✘ Focuses on control, not inclusion or belonging.



These might work...

- **Rethink the format:** *Rarely use large group time for young children—keep it short, active, and meaningful.*
- **Give the student a meaningful role** (e.g., question reader, idea collector, discussion launcher).
- **Use a Turn & Talk prompt** so everyone shares with a partner before group sharing.
- **Introduce “Think Time + Share Time”** with a visual timer to teach waiting.
- **Pass a talking object** to signal who is speaking—everyone takes a turn.
- **Use “Popcorn Share”** with students saying their name before speaking in an agreed rhythm.
- **Give students response cards or whiteboards** to hold up their answers at the same time.
- **Teach hand signals** (e.g., hand on heart, finger to chin) to show “I have an idea.”
- **Use a “Secret Signal” with the student** to cue self-regulation privately and respectfully.
- **Let the student co-create the group time routine** so they have ownership and buy-in.
- **Offer drawing tools** for expressing ideas before or during group time.

