



# **Four Strategies To Help Your Child With Emotional Behavioral Issues At Home**

proven tools to start  
incorporating today

[www.JacobsLadderResources.com](http://www.JacobsLadderResources.com)

# WELCOME!

During this unprecedented time, as families are navigating the challenges of schools being closed, we understand how difficult this season can be for children who have emotional and behavioral regulation challenges, high-functioning autism, mood disorders and children with oppositional tendencies.

We want to help.

At Jacob's Ladder we have served over 4,000 students in the last 26 years with various neurological and behavioral diagnoses including high-functioning autism, anxiety, ADHD, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

Although your child may not have completed an evaluation with us, we want to share four specific strategies that we regularly utilize with our students. You can use these strategies today to start helping your child build a strong foundation to reach their full potential.

We hope this brings you a little bit of hope.

Sincerely,

## Amy O'Dell

Founder & Director, Jacob's Ladder



# Four strategies to help your child today

1 Start A Running Program  
To create new brain growth

2 Limit Screen Time  
To encourage brain capacity

3 Offer Effective Praise  
To celebrate your child's character & utilization of skills, not their performance

4 Utilize Zones of Regulation During The Day  
To teach your child self-regulation



# Strategy #1

## Start A Running Program

- For students who experience aggressive behaviors, engagement in self-stimulatory behaviors, hyperactivity, and global learning challenges, we see that engagement in regular cardiovascular activity, specifically a running program, has been proven to create new neuronal growth in the brain. This is a critical factor in creating new capacity, learning, and growth
- Running has also been proven to reduce aggressive behaviors, self-stimulatory behaviors and hyperactivity
- As the child falls into a natural cross-pattern arm swing, the two hemispheres of the brain are forced to communicate and important connections are formed. As the two hemispheres in the brain are more balanced and in sync, overall neurological function improves including emotional regulation.



## Get Started

1. Start slow with a fast walk for 15 minutes
2. Begin alternating with a few moments of running/jogging until you reach 20-30 minutes of jogging speed
3. Ideally, this should be completed 4-5 days per week

# Strategy #1

## Benefits of Cross-Lateral Movement Like Running

1

### Learning

Exercise forges new connections between cells to relay information. This is important because when we learn something, a wide array of connected areas of the brain are called into action.

2

### Stress

Stress is a threat to the body's equilibrium, challenging it to react and adapt. Because of the wide gap between our biology and our society (the evolutionary instinct of "fight or flight"), active, rather than passive, coping is important in helping our bodies get out of this territory. Exercise controls the emotional and physical feeling of stress.

3

### Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural reaction to a threat that happens at a certain point in the stress response; however, longstanding anxiety often happens in the absence of any real threat, causing your brain to lose perspective. Aerobic exercise works to immediately fend off the state of anxiety and, when put into consistent practice, it helps the brain to reorganize its way out of the muddled perspective an anxiety disorder can give.

4

### Depression

Mood is not just psychological, it's biological – depression is caused by a deficit in norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin. Therefore, aerobic exercise addresses the broad spectrum of the symptoms that come out of depressions, as it produces endorphins, which work to calm the body. Beyond this, and back to the psychological aspects, exercising also makes you feel good about yourself. The routine of exercise creates stability and allows you to more readily count on yourself, thus elevating your mood.



# Strategy #1

## Benefits of Cross-Lateral Movement Like Running

5

### Attention Deficit

ADHD stems from the brain's connection of neurons that link together areas controlling arousal, motivation, reward, executive function, and movement. Because dopamine and norepinephrine work to regulate the attention system, exercise does not just help burn off energy, but it helps increase the baseline of those two neurotransmitters.

### Additional Cross-Lateral Activities

Can be completed throughout the day and for students who are unable to engage in a running program.

- Opposite Shoulder Tap - [video link](#)
- Figure 8's on a Whiteboard - [video link](#)
- 10 Piece Crossover - [video link](#)
- Wind Sprints - [video link](#)
- Cross March - [video link](#)
- Opposite Toe Touch - [video link](#)



# Strategy #2

## Limit Screen Time

- Though we understand that through this season components of the school day may require the use of electronics, the use of devices as a measure of entertainment during down time is counterproductive for creating new growth and capacity. These habits also directly impact areas of physiological health such as sleep patterns and exercise.
- In fact, in some cases, it is the number one factor inhibiting growth and success towards building a good balance between the left and right hemisphere of the brain. iPads, iPhones, video games, computer games, and excessive movie viewing all lead to excessive left hemisphere activation, which works against a well-communicating brain.
- When the brain is not able to communicate effectively, a child's physiology, learning, and emotional behavioral wellbeing suffers.



# Strategy #2

## Negative Effects of Screen Time

1

### Game Transfer Phenomena (GTP)

A study conducted with over 1,600 video gamers, showed that every single participant at some point experienced GTP, a pseudo-hallucinatory experience in which the individual believes they are still in the game once back in the real world. Additional studies also indicated internet-related psychosis wherein the individual had trouble distinguishing what they were viewing on the screen from reality.

2

### ADHD

The constant excitement and stimulation make it hard for children to “downshift” and focus on cognitive endeavors.

3

### Addiction

As humans, we are evolutionarily wired to seek dopamine spikes as related to specific survival mechanisms. Video games and various forms of social media act as a short cut to the reward process of dopamine in a way that is not necessary for survival, much like that of drugs. Because of this, the more someone experiences these quick surges of dopamine, the more they will seek it out in the future, thus leading to an addiction to electronics.

4

### “Failure to Launch”

Because evidence shows that there is a spike of dopamine when taking part in electronic usage as mentioned above, there is also a correlation to “perpetual pleasure-seeking adolescence”. That is to say that children who engage in excessive electronics usage have difficulty breaking from self-indulgent tendencies characterized in adolescence well into adulthood.

5

### Suicidal/Homicidal Ideation

Due to a state of abnormally high arousal as a result of frequent dopamine surges, a correlation has been seen to an increase in suicidal/homicidal ideation for chronic technology users.



# Strategy #2

## Negative Effects of Screen Time

6

### Decrease in Pain Sensation

Research with injured military veterans showed that electronic usage causes such a large cognitive distraction that engagement with devices had the same effect as morphine.

7

### Anxiety/Depression

In correlation to the addictive tendencies of game use, there is an increase in isolation, as the individual spends more and more time solely engaging with the screen in front of them. Several researchers have found a significant increase in anxiety and depression in individuals who engage in excessive screen time in comparison to individuals who have limited screen time.

8

### Agoraphobia

With the increase in isolation, too comes a decrease in human interaction. Studies have shown that some individuals develop agoraphobia as a result of increased screen time.

9

### Electronic Screen Syndrome (ESS)

Excessive electronic usage can lead to ESS, which is a disorder of dysregulation, wherein children show an inability to modulate their mood, attention or level of arousal in an appropriate or healthy manner.

10

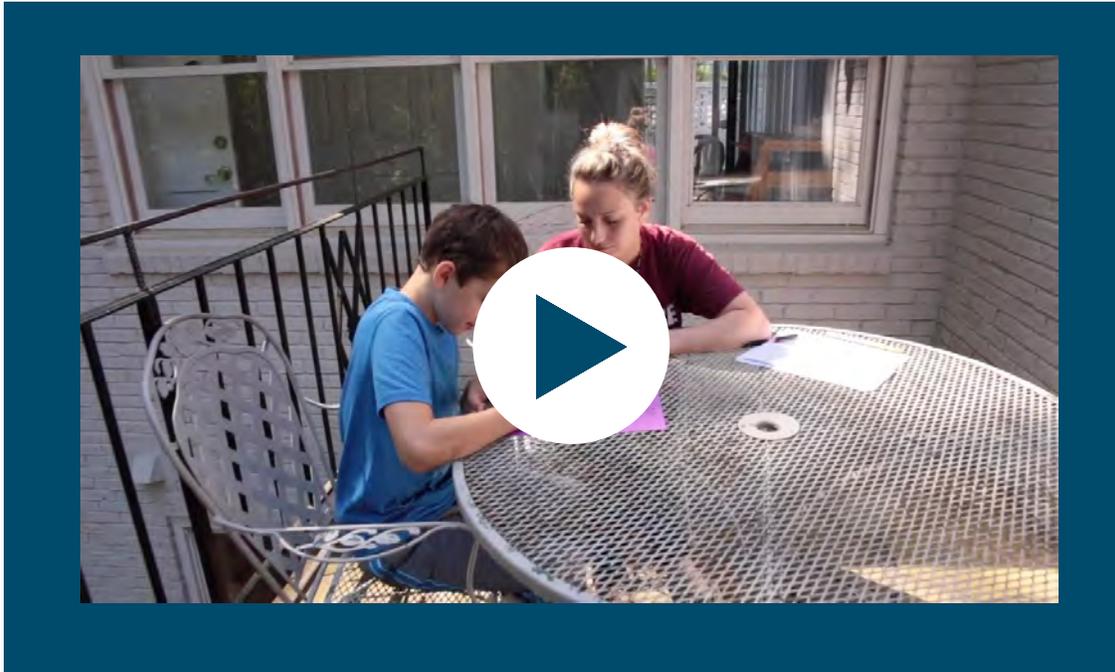
### Aggression

In developing children who engage in excessive screen usage, studies have shown an increase in myelination abnormalities in regions of the brain involving executive functioning, decision-making, emotional generation and aggression control.



# Strategy #3

## Offer Effective Praise



- For children with emotional regulation challenges much of their anxiety revolves around their fear of failure, often prompted by years of missteps within the school structure. They begin to hang their hat on their performance and therefore feel shame as related to any perceived failure.
- It is critical that we learn as parents to praise effectively. This means that we are praising the character and skills utilized in any given moment that resulted in a favorable outcome, rather than praising their performance.
- Instead of telling your child “great win today”, you could simply change the wording to “Wow- I was so impressed by your effort and teamwork out there on the field.” This way your child is learning that their internal traits are what is being valued- who they are- not what they do.



## Effective Praise Is...

### 1 Mindful of Timing, Frequency, and Sincerity

Ill-timed, too frequent, or praise that comes off as insincere, can strip praise of our kids of all of its effectiveness at motivating growth. Some kids accept praise well in a public way, others receive it better when they're not the center of attention, and many respond well to written praise. Knowing how praise is best received by our individual kids can be important. If praise is too frequent, it can come across as background noise, or even as insincere. Praise should be communicated in a way that is thoughtful, specific, and genuine.

### 2 Encouraging of Independence

We do not want to communicate to our kids that praise is the end goal of putting forth effort and striving to grow and succeed. We want to encourage independence with our praise, and not stifle our kids' intrinsic motives to do something well. Leading our kids to find their praiseworthiness for themselves is the goal - to become less dependent on us, not more so. Prompting questions leading feelings of self-confidence can often times be more effective than explicit statements of praise.

For example: "Wow! It looks like you did some good work today, how did you feel about the things you accomplished?" Then we can agree with their positive comments. Or, "I noticed you're finding it easier to complete your math work (or, keep your frustration from overtaking you, or get along with your sister, etc.) What did you do to accomplish that?" and then praise those steps.

Questions like as these encourage self-reflection and focus on our kids' feelings rather than our own.

# Effective Praise Is...

## 3 Encouraging of Effort, Progress & Character Development Rather Than Just Performance

Effective praise focuses on effort and progress rather than ability. Research has shown that if students are praised for their ability (“you’re so smart”), over time their effort and achievement decreases. But, if students are praised for their effort (“I can tell you worked hard and finished your difficult assignment.”), over time their effort increases, as does their achievement.

It’s important to consider how we phrase our praise. Character-focused praise is also important to incorporate. We want to deliver the message that how we live life is even more important than what we achieve in life. Instead of just stating, “great job completing your chores”, we can try, “I love how you completed those chores even though you really wanted to do other things. That showed a lot of grit and perseverance.”

## 4 Not Perceived As Acceptance

Sometimes our praise can backfire if it is too focused on performance. Our kids can develop a performance-based anxiety, and perceive praise as pressure. Sometimes instead of praise, we need to express relational acceptance. Sometimes, instead of saying, “Great job winning the game!”, we can try, “I love playing games with you.” or, “I love to watch you play and have fun.”

Effective praise also is paired with expressions of love and acceptance especially when dealing with nonpraiseworthy behaviors. This is not to say that we praise their unacceptable behavior, or look past the behavior as not to hurt their feelings. That would be disastrous. It is important to uphold boundaries or consequences firmly, while still communicating that we are on our kid’s side.

We must avoid the appearance that we accept our kids when they are doing well, and that we withhold love and acceptance from them when they aren’t behaving well. Effectively delivered praise can be neutralized if our kids believe they are only valued by us when they are performing well. We must communicate with our words, our tone, and our actions that our love and acceptance of our kids is unconditional, not affected by their performance. We must be sure they understand that their actions do not define them as people, and that we are for them no matter what.



# Strategy #4

## Utilize Zones of Regulation

- In tandem with identifying specific character traits through effective praise, as well as eliminating inappropriate electronic content, it will be important to begin exposing your child to the process of identifying and understanding the connectivity between target thoughts, feelings and actions following challenging moments.
- [The Zones of Regulation](#) is an excellent resource for providing this visual support. Utilizing this tool throughout the day will help your child identify the root of their emotions, increase their ability to communicate feelings more readily and self-regulate prior to escalation.



# Strategy #4

## The Zones Of Regulation

	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
How Your Child Is Behaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tired</li> <li>• Hungry/Thirsty</li> <li>• Laying head on the desk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calm</li> <li>• Communicating effectively</li> <li>• Engaged in tasks presented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distracted</li> <li>• Pacing through room</li> <li>• Engagement in self-stimulatory behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-compliance</li> <li>• Agression</li> <li>• Cying/Yelling</li> <li>• Tantrum/meltdown</li> </ul>
Self-Regulation Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross motor and cross-lateral movements</li> <li>• Snack/drink</li> <li>• Movement break</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High praise and encouragement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calming sensory input</li> <li>• Gross motor and cross-lateral movements</li> <li>• Deep breathing</li> <li>• Change of environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space alone to calm</li> <li>• Deep breathing</li> <li>• Swinging in a hammock</li> <li>• Cross-lateral movement within a controlled space</li> <li>• Organized deep sensory input</li> </ul>

- We regularly use this tool throughout the day with the students we serve. We encourage you to start using it with neutral (green) moments at home so that when your child becomes heightened, they have a basic understanding of those tools and can begin to gain the skills to self-regulate.





# Take The Next Step

Call us to develop a game plan for your child

While these four strategies can be helpful for your child, we recognize that each child can have **various complexities**.

That is why at Jacob's Ladder, we evaluate and create a customized plan around the **whole child**, pulling from thousands of potential activities to help each child develop a better-connected brain and reach their full potential.

If you are looking for someone to talk to, we are here to listen and help. Schedule a call with us if you would like to discuss your child's needs and begin **developing a game plan** for your child.

[Schedule A Call](#)

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