

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach

Transforming the Difficult Child: The Nurtured Heart Approach

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach is a profound journey that many parents, educators, and caregivers embark upon with hope and sometimes frustration. Children who display challenging behaviors often leave adults feeling overwhelmed and unsure of how to respond effectively. Traditional disciplinary methods might seem to fall short, creating cycles of conflict and misunderstanding. However, the Nurtured Heart Approach offers a refreshing and transformative perspective that shifts the focus from punishment to empowerment, helping difficult children thrive emotionally and socially.

Understanding the Nurtured Heart Approach

The Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) was developed by Howard Glasser and his wife, Dr. Jennifer Easley Glasser, as a method to awaken the inner greatness of children who struggle with behavior issues. Unlike conventional techniques that often emphasize correcting negative behavior, the NHA centers on recognizing and energizing a child's positive qualities. This method nurtures a child's heart by building strong relationships rooted in warmth, clear boundaries, and consistent recognition of positive actions.

At its core, the approach believes that every child has an inherent greatness that can be cultivated through specific communication strategies. For children labeled as “difficult” — those who may be impulsive, defiant, or emotionally intense — the NHA provides tools that empower them to redirect their energy in constructive ways.

Why Traditional Discipline Often Fails

Before diving deeper into the Nurtured Heart Approach, it's essential to understand why many traditional disciplinary methods may not work effectively with difficult children. These children often have heightened emotional sensitivity or neurological differences such as ADHD or trauma histories, making punitive measures less effective or even harmful.

Traditional discipline often:

- Focuses on what the child did wrong, reinforcing negative attention.
- Uses punishment or rewards that may not resonate with the child's emotional needs.
- Creates adversarial dynamics between the adult and child.
- Fails to recognize the child's strengths and potential.

This approach can unintentionally reinforce negative behaviors by giving them attention, while the child's positive actions go unnoticed. The NHA counters this by deliberately shifting attention toward positive behaviors and inner strengths, which can transform the child's self-view and behavior patterns.

Key Principles of the Nurtured Heart Approach

1. Energizing the Positive

One of the most powerful elements of the NHA is the intentional “energizing” of positive behavior. This means adults actively notice and celebrate even the smallest demonstration of effort, kindness, or self-control. By focusing on what the child is doing right, the approach builds a positive feedback loop that encourages repetition of those behaviors.

2. Setting Clear and Consistent Boundaries

Children, especially those who are challenging, thrive when they know exactly what is expected of them. The NHA emphasizes clear, firm boundaries that are consistently upheld without emotional escalation. These boundaries provide safety and structure, helping children understand limits without feeling shamed or rejected.

3. Refusing to Energize Negative Behavior

Instead of reacting to negative behavior with anger, frustration, or lengthy discussions, the NHA teaches adults to respond in ways that do not fuel the behavior. This might mean calmly redirecting or simply not giving attention to outbursts, thereby reducing the behavior's power.

4. Building Relationships Through Connection

The NHA prioritizes developing strong, authentic relationships between adults and children. Emotional connection is the foundation that allows children to feel valued and understood, which is crucial for lasting behavior change.

Practical Strategies to Implement the Nurtured Heart

Approach

Applying the Nurtured Heart Approach in daily life involves intentional shifts in communication and interaction patterns. Here are some actionable strategies:

Use Specific and Immediate Recognition

Avoid vague praise such as “Good job.” Instead, describe exactly what the child did that was positive: “I noticed how carefully you shared your toys with your friend just now.” Immediate and specific

feedback helps the child connect their actions to positive attention.

Create “Energy Frames” Around Success

An energy frame is a narrative you build around a child’s positive actions that magnifies their inner greatness. For example, “You showed such courage by speaking up in class today!” These frames help children internalize their strengths.

Set Clear Rules and Follow Through Calmly

Outline what behaviors are expected and what is not acceptable. When rules are broken, respond with calm, brief reminders rather than emotional reactions. For instance, “We use kind words here,” without engaging in arguments or punishments.

Use “Spotlight” Techniques

A spotlight is a focused moment where an adult deliberately highlights a child’s positive behavior in front of others. This not only boosts the child’s confidence but also encourages peers to recognize and emulate positive traits.

Limit Attention to Negative Behaviors

Instead of scolding or giving negative behavior prolonged attention, try ignoring minor misbehaviors when safe and appropriate. If intervention is necessary, keep it brief and unemotional to avoid reinforcing the behavior.

How the Nurtured Heart Approach Benefits Difficult Children

Children who have been labeled as difficult often carry a sense of failure or frustration that can lead to low self-esteem and strained relationships. The Nurtured Heart Approach helps reverse this cycle by:

- **Building Self-Worth:** By consistently recognizing their positive qualities, children develop a stronger sense of identity and confidence.
- **Enhancing Emotional Regulation:** Clear boundaries combined with positive reinforcement help children learn to manage their emotions more effectively.
- **Improving Social Skills:** The approach fosters empathy, cooperation, and communication by focusing on strengths and connection.
- **Reducing Power Struggles:** When negative behaviors no longer generate the attention they crave, children are less likely to act out.
- **Supporting Long-Term Growth:** The NHA creates a foundation for children to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Integrating the Nurtured Heart Approach at Home and School

The beauty of the Nurtured Heart Approach is its versatility. Whether you're a parent managing a child's challenging behavior at home or an educator seeking new strategies in the classroom, the principles can be adapted to various settings.

For Parents

Implementing the NHA at home might involve creating daily rituals of positive recognition, setting family rules with clear explanations, and practicing calm, consistent responses to behavior. Parents often report improved relationships and a noticeable decrease in challenging behaviors when they focus on nurturing their child's inner greatness.

For Teachers

In the classroom, teachers can use NHA techniques to spotlight positive student behaviors, establish classroom norms that emphasize respect and kindness, and reduce disruptions by minimizing attention to negative behaviors. This approach fosters a more supportive learning environment where difficult children feel seen and valued.

Collaborating with Professionals

Many therapists, counselors, and behavioral specialists incorporate the Nurtured Heart Approach into their work with children facing emotional or behavioral challenges. Collaborating with professionals trained in NHA can provide additional support and tailored strategies to meet individual needs.

Challenges and Considerations When Using the Nurtured Heart Approach

While the Nurtured Heart Approach is powerful, it requires patience, consistency, and a willingness to shift long-held habits. Some challenges include:

- **Initial Resistance:** Children and adults alike may initially resist changes in interaction styles, especially if they are accustomed to traditional discipline.
- **Consistency Is Key:** The approach works best when all caregivers and educators involved maintain consistent use of its principles.
- **Emotional Discipline:** Adults must manage their own emotional responses to avoid reinforcing negative behaviors inadvertently.
- **Time Investment:** Recognizing and energizing positive behavior requires mindfulness and attention, which may feel demanding at first.

Despite these challenges, many families and schools find that the long-term benefits of transforming

the difficult child through the nurtured heart approach far outweigh the initial efforts.

Witnessing a child once considered difficult begin to show resilience, kindness, and inner strength is a powerful reminder of the impact of nurturing rather than punishing. The Nurtured Heart Approach invites us all to see beyond difficult behaviors and to celebrate the greatness within every child, offering a path toward healing, growth, and lasting connection.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the core principle of The Nurtured Heart Approach in transforming difficult children?

The core principle of The Nurtured Heart Approach is to focus on recognizing and energizing a child's positive qualities and behaviors, rather than giving attention to negative behaviors, thereby transforming difficult children by building their inner wealth and motivation.

How does The Nurtured Heart Approach differ from traditional disciplinary methods?

Unlike traditional disciplinary methods that often rely on punishment or time-outs, The Nurtured Heart Approach emphasizes consistent, positive recognition and firm boundaries to encourage desired behaviors, helping children feel valued and motivated to improve.

Can The Nurtured Heart Approach be effective for children with behavioral disorders?

Yes, The Nurtured Heart Approach has been found effective for children with behavioral disorders such as ADHD and oppositional defiant disorder by providing clear structure and positive reinforcement

that helps them build self-regulation and confidence.

What role do parents and educators play in implementing The Nurtured Heart Approach?

Parents and educators act as active participants who consistently acknowledge and energize the child's positive actions, set clear boundaries, and avoid reinforcing negative behaviors, thus creating an environment conducive to transformation.

How long does it typically take to see changes in a difficult child's behavior using The Nurtured Heart Approach?

While timelines vary, many parents and educators report noticeable positive changes within a few weeks to a few months of consistently applying The Nurtured Heart Approach techniques.

Are there any resources or trainings available for learning The Nurtured Heart Approach?

Yes, there are books, workshops, online courses, and certification programs available for parents, educators, and professionals interested in learning and implementing The Nurtured Heart Approach effectively.

Additional Resources

Transforming the Difficult Child: The Nurtured Heart Approach

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach has increasingly gained attention among educators, psychologists, and parents seeking effective strategies to foster positive behavioral change without punitive measures. Developed by Howard Glasser, the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) offers a paradigm shift in managing challenging behaviors by focusing on building inner wealth and recognizing a child's strengths rather than solely attempting to suppress negative behaviors. This

professional review explores the core principles, applications, and implications of the Nurtured Heart Approach in transforming the difficult child, supported by contemporary research and comparative insights.

Understanding the Core Philosophy of the Nurtured Heart Approach

At its essence, the Nurtured Heart Approach is designed to transform the way adults respond to difficult children, particularly those labeled as oppositional, defiant, or aggressive. Rather than reacting to negative behavior with punishment or exclusion, NHA emphasizes the power of positive recognition to build resilience and self-regulation. The approach posits that children who act out often do so because they crave recognition and connection, albeit through negative means.

Unlike traditional behavioral interventions that may rely heavily on consequences or rewards, NHA centers on three foundational principles:

- **Refusing to energize negative behavior:** Adults consciously avoid giving attention to disruptive actions.
- **Intensely energizing positive behavior:** Specific and enthusiastic acknowledgment of good deeds or progress.
- **Establishing clear, consistent boundaries:** Defining non-negotiable limits with calm firmness.

These elements collectively create an environment where children experience a sense of accomplishment and intrinsic motivation, thus gradually transforming their behavioral patterns.

Key Features of the Nurtured Heart Approach in Practice

The practical application of the Nurtured Heart Approach involves deliberate strategies that can be integrated into home, school, or therapeutic settings. These features distinguish NHA from other behavioral frameworks:

1. Positive Recognition Over Punishment

Central to NHA is the notion that difficult children often seek attention—even if negative—and that by redirecting this need towards positive acknowledgment, adults can encourage desirable behaviors. For example, instead of reprimanding a child for shouting, the adult might ignore the outburst but immediately praise moments when the child speaks calmly or follows instructions.

2. Energizing the Child's Inner Wealth

Howard Glasser introduced the concept of “inner wealth,” which refers to a child’s energy, intensity, and capacity for greatness. NHA practitioners focus on uncovering and amplifying this inner wealth through sincere, detailed praise that goes beyond superficial compliments. This nurtures self-esteem and a positive self-identity, which are critical for long-term behavioral change.

3. Structured and Consistent Boundaries

While the Nurtured Heart Approach celebrates positivity, it does not neglect the importance of limits. Boundaries are communicated clearly and consistently, providing children with a secure framework in which to express themselves. This balance prevents permissiveness and ensures that children understand the consequences of crossing established lines.

Transforming the Difficult Child: Comparative Perspective with Traditional Methods

When juxtaposed with conventional disciplinary practices such as timeout, reward charts, or punitive consequences, the Nurtured Heart Approach presents several distinct advantages and some limitations worth noting.

- **Emphasis on Relationship Building:** Traditional methods often prioritize behavior correction over relationship, potentially alienating the child. NHA, by contrast, strengthens the adult-child bond.
- **Long-Term Behavioral Change:** By fostering intrinsic motivation, NHA aims for sustainable transformation rather than temporary compliance.
- **Reduction of Power Struggles:** Avoiding negative attention reduces confrontations and defiance.
- **Challenges in Implementation:** NHA requires consistent vigilance and skillful communication, which may be demanding for some caregivers or educators.
- **Limited Empirical Data:** Although growing, empirical studies on NHA's efficacy are still fewer compared to established behavioral interventions.

These points highlight that while the Nurtured Heart Approach is promising, it is not a universal solution and may work best when tailored to individual contexts.

Who Benefits Most from the Nurtured Heart Approach?

The approach is particularly effective for children with high energy levels, intense emotional responses, and those diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), or other behavioral challenges. Educators in specialized classrooms and parents of children struggling with traditional discipline often report improvements in engagement and emotional regulation.

Implementing the Nurtured Heart Approach: Practical Strategies

Professionals and caregivers interested in transforming the difficult child through the Nurtured Heart Approach can consider the following actionable steps:

1. **Shift Focus from Negative to Positive:** Consciously monitor your responses to avoid reinforcing disruptive behavior.
2. **Use Specific and Immediate Praise:** Highlight exact behaviors (e.g., “I noticed how quietly you waited your turn, that was very responsible!”).
3. **Set Clear Boundaries:** Define limits in advance and communicate consequences calmly without emotional escalation.
4. **Practice Consistency:** Apply the approach uniformly across settings and caregivers for maximal impact.
5. **Engage in Reflective Practices:** Regularly assess what behaviors receive attention and adjust strategies accordingly.

Integrating these strategies can help adults create a nurturing environment that encourages difficult children to thrive emotionally and socially.

Research Insights and Emerging Trends

Recent qualitative studies and anecdotal evidence from schools and family therapists suggest that the Nurtured Heart Approach can decrease instances of aggression, improve peer relationships, and enhance self-esteem. One pilot study published in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies* indicated that children exposed to NHA techniques demonstrated significant improvements in emotional regulation compared to control groups using traditional behavior management.

Moreover, the approach aligns well with trauma-informed care principles, recognizing that many difficult behaviors stem from unmet emotional needs and adverse experiences. As awareness of social-emotional learning grows, frameworks like NHA are gaining traction as viable complements or alternatives to conventional disciplinary models.

Potential Challenges and Considerations

Despite its benefits, the Nurtured Heart Approach is not without challenges. It demands high levels of adult self-awareness and emotional regulation. Caregivers must resist the instinct to react negatively and instead maintain patience and positivity, which can be taxing in high-stress environments.

Furthermore, some critics argue that the approach may overlook the need for direct consequences, potentially leading to permissiveness if boundaries are not enforced rigorously. Therefore, training and ongoing support are vital for successful implementation.

Conclusion: Shaping a New Narrative in Child Behavior Management

Transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach invites educators, parents, and professionals to rethink traditional behavioral paradigms by emphasizing affirmation, inner strength, and relational connection. While it is not a panacea, its growing application across diverse settings underscores a shift toward more compassionate and effective strategies in addressing challenging behaviors. As empirical research continues to develop, the Nurtured Heart Approach stands as a compelling framework for nurturing not only behavioral compliance but also the holistic development of children often misunderstood in conventional systems.

[Transforming The Difficult Child The Nurtured Heart Approach](#)

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transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: **Transforming the Intense Child Workbook** Howard Glasser, 2016-12-23 This book by best-selling author and child psychotherapist Howard Glasser is about a time-tested, highly effective for educators and therapists, has an evidence base that is building fast. It is being successfully employed in thousands of homes, classrooms, therapy and coaching practices, and a growing number of schools and treatment programs across the U.S. and overseas. In learning the Nurtured Heart Approach, you will discover that the intensity that has gone awry in the difficult child is an energy source that can be tapped and

directed. With a method that works at the level of energy, this intensity can blossom into greatness. The more intense a child is to begin with, the more powerful this force of greatness can be when parents have the right tools. A child who isn't challenging also possesses vast stores of greatness that can be activated. In this workbook - the most comprehensive, up-to-date resource on the Nurtured Heart Approach - parents, educators, and therapists will

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transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: New Pathways in Teacher Preparation and Certification Eric Wearne, 2023-11-23 In this compelling and timely collection, Eric Wearne and a group of diverse contributors make the case for a new approach to teacher preparation and certification, in which institutions are empowered to educate, prepare, certify, hire, and develop teachers who have been prepared by different educational traditions. In the first part, contributors offer a background in history, policy, and economics to argue the need for more creativity in teacher preparation. In the second part, Wearne and contributors showcase how a variety of different, creative educational organizations have prepared teachers more clearly suited to their specific school models— from Montessori teacher preparation, to teaching online, to teaching in classical schools. Overall, this collection prompts those involved in teacher preparation to work to

find creative solutions for improving teacher education, certification, and hiring and is relevant for scholars, policymakers, educators, and administrators working in or studying teacher education programs.

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transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: Foster Parent Handbook Mary R. Rapshaw, 2002-04-11 BECOME A FOSTER PARENT A mom, dad, house and dog do not make a home. Everyday, there are children who experience this sad fact when they are removed from their home due to neglect or abuse. Not every foster child has a foster family. In some regions, foster children must wait for long periods of time in shelter care. More than one-half million children in the United States rely on foster families to provide a safe and loving home. Many wonderful and caring families would like to open their homes to these children, but are clueless about how to get started. There are many misconceptions, myths and misunderstandings surrounding foster care. These concerns must be shattered and waiting children must be nurtured. This book details for prospective foster parents the requirements, qualifications and screening process. Step by step, foster parents are guided through the crucial decisions and directed to the vital information they will need to foster parent effectively. Foster Parent Handbook provides an indispensable guide for navigating through the foster care system. It is designed for use by prospective foster parents, those who are currently foster parents and professionals providing foster care services.

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: The Truth About Special Education Robert Evert Cimeria, 2003-01-09 Few parents and educators understand special education-its terms, philosophies, and process. This easy-to-read book contains a step-by-step discussion of the special education process and has hundreds of additional resources for parents including professional organizations, support groups, and useful websites. It will help parents and students minimize the inevitable anxiety associated with enrolling in a special education program. They will also gain insight into the legal rights and responsibilities associated with having a child in special education and learn how to develop effective educational plans and strategies for building effective educational teams along with basic information regarding common disabilities. Primarily written for family members of children with disabilities, this book will also be useful for educators who are unfamiliar with special education as well as special educators who are new to the field.

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and cultures; and a cutting-edge journal with up-to-date briefings on latest developments in neuroscience relevant to psychotherapy and counselling. Articles - Attachment in the age of austerity by Kate Brown - Sexuality in Old and New Psychoanalysis by Louis Breger - Trauma at Home: How Betrayal Trauma and Attachment Theories Understand the Human Response to Abuse by an Attachment Figure by Rosemary E. Bernstein and Jennifer J. Freyd - Therapeutic Alliance with Abuser Alters in Dissociative Identity Disorder: The Paradox of Attachment to the Abuser by Ruth Blizard - "Taking Off": Attachments and Exploration in a Therapeutic Writing Group by Elizabeth Sarkany - Ideal Mother Image -- Realisation Through Video by Eti Wade and Fiona Yaron-Field

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: Am I Doing This Right?

Familius, Rebecca Fox Starr, 2025-03-25 An interactive gift book adventure to combat mom guilt from social worker Rebecca Fox Starr. Which path will you choose? Motherhood is a constant barrage of choices. Bottle or breast? Alone time or playtime? And how much is too much screentime? No matter the choice we make, mothers often end up feeling guilty, as if we are never doing enough. But no more! In the style of a decision-making game, social worker Rebecca Fox Starr guides moms through the apocalyptic newborn phase, the jungle of toddlerhood, and the dead ends and booby traps of raising teens with one simple message: You are doing a great job. You are more than enough. Every page leads to a new choice, and every choice you make creates a personalized journey where healing tools and practical advice are your companions. Which path will you choose? The perfect gift for mothers who are doing their best every day, Am I Doing This Right? is the comforting affirmation we need to show ourselves some compassion and appreciate the choices we make each day for the families we love.

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: Inspiring Dialogue

Mary M. Juzwik, Carlin Borsheim-Black, Samantha Caughlan, Anne Heintz, 2015-04-26 Inspiring Dialogue helps new English teachers make dialogic teaching practices a central part of their development as teachers, while also supporting veteran teachers who would like new ideas for inspiring talk in their classrooms. Chapter by chapter, the book follows novice teachers as they build a repertoire of practices for planning for, carrying out, and assessing their efforts at dialogic teaching across the secondary English curriculum. The text also includes a section to support dialogic teacher learning communities through video study and discourse analysis. Providing a thorough discussion of the benefits of dialogic curriculum in meeting the objectives of the Common Core State Standards, this book with its companion website is an ideal resource for teacher development. Book Features: Dialogic tools for step-by-step planning within a lesson, over the course of a unit, or during an entire academic year. A user-friendly, interactive layout designed for new teachers who are pressed for time. Classroom examples addressing the challenges English teachers may face in stimulating rich learning talk in an era of standardization. A companion website with additional examples, activities, and course material. "Real talk. Real classrooms. Real students. The authors of Inspiring Dialogue have given teacher education programs a tool for introducing dialogic teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms while meeting Common Core State Standards objectives." —Maisha T. Winn, Susan J. Cellmer Chair in English Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison, author of *Girl Time: Literacy, Justice and the School-to-Prison Pipeline* "Inspiring Dialogue covers a comprehensive and practical set of tools and strategies for implementing dialogic instruction. . . . It is a program that has been fully tested at Michigan State University in one of the most thorough and carefully crafted teacher education programs nationally." —From the Foreword by Martin Nystrand, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin–Madison "One of the most exciting aspects of English language arts is the discussion that can occur in the classroom. For many teachers, however, it is often a struggle to structure and implement real dialogue. Inspiring Dialogue provides specific guidance to encourage authentic conversations between teachers and students with practical advice for implementation." —Leila Christenbury Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning, Commonwealth Professor, English Education, School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University Mary M. Juzwik is associate professor of language and literacy in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University (MSU), and co-editor of the journal *Research in the*

Teaching of English. Carlin Borsheim-Black is assistant professor of English language and literature at Central Michigan University (CMU). Samantha Caughlan is an assistant professor of English education in the Department of Teacher Education at MSU. Anne Heintz is an adjunct professor in the Master of Arts in Educational Technology program at MSU.

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transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: Parenting the Whole Child: A Holistic Child Psychiatrist Offers Practical Wisdom on Behavior, Brain Health, Nutrition, Exercise, Family Life, Peer Relationships, School Life, Trauma, Medication, and More . . . Scott M. Shannon, 2014-02-03 Understanding child health and wellness through a holistic lens. Complementing his book for professionals, here Scott Shannon equips parents and caregivers with a better way to

understand the mental health challenges their children face, including how cutting-edge scientific concepts like epigenetics and neuroplasticity mean new hope for overcoming them. Readers learn how the most common stressors in kids—inadequate nutrition, unaddressed trauma, learning problems, family relationships, and more—are often at the root of behavioral and emotional issues, and what steps can be taken to restore health and wholeness, without immediately turning to medication.

transforming the difficult child the nurtured heart approach: The Solution-focused Parent Ben Furman, 2023-12-05 This practical book presents readers with a skills-based, child rearing approach to supporting a child's growth and helping them overcome both minor and major developmental challenges. In contrast to conventional approaches to child psychology, this innovative approach focuses on developing children's abilities rather than concentrating on and trying to fix their "problems." Additionally, instead of blaming caretakers for their child's challenges, the skills approach offers them the keys with which they can coach and motivate their children to overcome challenges by learning required skills. Readers will find it easy to grasp the idea of the skills mindset through the book's wealth of eye-opening stories, case examples, and the author's personal insights as a psychotherapist, parent, and creator of the Kids' Skills method. Clear, detailed instructions will help readers immediately put the ideas into everyday practice with their own children and families. This book is a must-have, hope-instilling toolbox for anyone involved in the task of raising a child. Parents, grandparents, teachers, mental health professionals, and more will find this a valuable resource in ensuring the future success of the children in their lives.

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