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Extended Participant Notes

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# Introduction to Nurtured Heart Approach

Howard Glasser created NHA in early 1990s to help parents with challenging kids. It is now applied to all relationships, and is used by parents, teachers and therapists all over the world.

## Intensity Is Not the Enemy

Traditionally, schools have valued calm and quiet behaviors. Students with challenging behaviors have often exhausted the capacity of conventional methods, leaving families, school staff, and medical professionals exasperated. Even with the help of medication, negative behaviors often persist.

When channeled in the right direction, intensity is a beautiful thing. It's our drive, our motivation, our life force. When children are taught to embrace their intensity and channel it, they can use it to propel their lives. That's what we're going for in NHA.

## Building Inner Wealth

Children first learn about themselves through their interactions with the adults around them. Whatever adults call out the most is what kids feel the most celebrated for, creating what Howard Glasser calls their *Inner Wealth Portfolio*. Just like an artist carries around the most work they're most proud of, our Inner Wealth Portfolio holds the character traits we feel most celebrated for. Conventional methods accidentally give energy and connection to negative behaviors, so kids who are a little more sensitive, needy or intense can get the idea that they are most celebrated for their negative behaviors. Through NHA, we can help all kids to build positive Inner Wealth Portfolios that will inspire them to great behaviors.

In *The Horse Whisperer*, Robert Redford's character helps Scarlett Johansson's character by giving her a first-hand experience of success. When she says that she can't drive the car, he says, "It's not a matter of whether you can your can't, you are," proving to her that she can do things that she thinks she can't do. In NHA, we create first-hand experiences to prove to kids who haven't seen themselves as behaving successfully that they actually can (and are!), thus helping rewrite their Inner Wealth Portfolio.

NHA is more than a behavior management program because instead of using fear to motivate kids to have good behavior, we are helping them to change how they see themselves, taking every moment - frame by frame - to point out their successes. When they see themselves as great, they do great behaviors. That's NHA transformation!

## The 3 Stands of NHA

NHA is beautiful in its simplicity. Everything is centered around the Three Stands.

- **STAND 1: Absolutely No!** I refuse to energize negativity with my energy, connection & relationship.
- **STAND 2: Absolutely Yes!** I will create and energize successes with my energy, connection & relationship.
- **STAND 3: Absolutely Clear!** I will create clear rules and enact consistent, unenergized consequences.

## Toys-R-Us & Energy

When kids open a toy or a smart phone they instinctively check out all of its features, seeing where it lights up, makes noise and is interesting to them. Ultimately, they only go back to the features that they find compelling, and they stop seeking out the boring features (or apps!).

Even though it doesn't always feel like it, kids and adolescents are built to seek connection with the adults around them. Like they do with a toy or phone, they are reading us for what makes us light up. Whatever we are the most interesting, alive, and compelling for is what we'll get more of, especially in kids who are a little more needy, sensitive or intense.

In NHA, we stop giving 'better broadband' for negative behaviors and stop being boring for the good behaviors. We are intentional in how we expend our energy - giving the biggest response for the best behaviors. As a result, kids learn that their prosocial behaviors garner them the best connection with those around them and are internally inspired to do more of those behaviors.

## Stand 1: Absolutely NO!

***I refuse to energize negativity through my energy, connection and relationship.***

The first step in shifting our energy is to notice how we respond to behaviors and ask ourselves how we can give less energy to negative behaviors. How can we reduce our reactivity, which might actually feel like connection, relationship and celebration to some kids and accidentally inspire them to do more of those negative behaviors?

For most of us, embracing Stand 1 means saying less around problems, in our own minds as well as aloud. It is easy to get caught in the trap of thinking about all of the things that aren't going as well as we'd wish, all of the ways that we aren't living up to our expectations of ourselves (or to the social media posts of our friends), and all of the times that we are slighted in a day. Embracing Stand 1 means refusing to energize negativity in our own minds and relationships (no more gossip, for example), while committing to energize all of the positives in our lives.

## Video Game Theory

It's no accident who kids who can't sit still in class or for homework can focus on video games for hours. Video games propel kids to success by their structure. Howard Glasser noticed this inspiring structure and created NHA as a real-life simulation of it.

In video games, players are rewarded for rule-following with music, lights, new lives and levels. The incentives are exciting and ever-present, and the rules are always clear and predictable. The rules never change because the player is tired or hungry, yet kids are inspired them to follow them anyway. And, every time a rule is broken, there's a consequence. Although 'losing a life' sounds dramatic, in truth, video game consequences are no more than a short break from the action. A player breaks a rule, loses a life, and is right back in the game more inspired than ever to not break that rule. That's the real-life structure we try to create with NHA.

Sometimes, the nicest of us, like the librarian that Howard Glasser encountered at one of his talks, is actually sharing our loving kindness in a way that's accidentally inspiring negative behaviors. By sitting at her desk and

only getting up to interact, in the nicest & kindest way, with the kids who were talking instead of working, she accidentally inspired more talking instead of more working.

## **No Blame**

In NHA, there's no reason to blame parents, teachers or even kids with intense behaviors. We've all been doing our best with the resources at our disposal. There's greatness in our desire to continue to grow our abilities to best serve the kids in our lives.

## **Stand 2: Absolutely YES!**

***I will create and energize successes with my energy, connection & relationship.***

After drying up the energy, connection and relationship kids get from their negative behaviors, the second step is to amplify our response to the good stuff-to call out greatness. As much as possible, we work to immediately identify, describe, and express appreciation for the steps, large and small, a child takes in manifesting their positive choices as well as their intrinsic greatness. For most of us embracing Stand 2 means saying more when things are going well.

## **It's All About Intention**

By steeping ourselves in the Intentions of Stand 2 and learning the recognition language, we can create first-hand experiences of success that propel children to more and more success. We get to play the role of Robert Redford in *The Horse Whisperer*!

## **Intention 1 - Baby Steps**

When babies are getting ready to take their first step, we celebrate their every move toward walking. We *ooh* and *aah* as they pull themselves up, teeter, take a step and plop on the ground. And, when they put a couple steps together watch out, the room erupts!

Those early milestones are easy to recognize as gifts, and no one ever says, "First step. That's great. Now, let's talk about your first 5k." But, somewhere along the way, we often lose touch with the celebration of what our children are accomplishing in the moment, instead, anticipating the next achievement, and sometimes desperately trying to keep them falling behind. When we subscribe to the Baby Steps intention, we release ourselves of the burden of pushing our kids to the next achievement and allow ourselves to truly appreciate them and cheer them on for who they are and the great things they're doing in this moment.

## **Intention 2 - Toll Taker**

When a professor was heading to the airport in San Francisco one early morning, all of the toll booths were open and he picked the one where he heard loud music. The toll taker was dancing and friendly as the professor drove to the window. When asked about his positive demeanor, the toll taker explained that his job afforded him a great view of the bay, time to play his music, practice his dance moves, and opportunities to meet new people. Impressed, the professor asked him about his unhappy toll taker colleagues, to which the toll taker replied, 'Who, those guys in the stand up coffins?'

It wouldn't be hard to think about all of the arduous elements of working as a toll taker - the repetition, fumes and grumpy drivers to name a few, but the toll taker in this story chooses what parts of the job he puts his energy into, finding a lot to celebrate and thus creating more good times.

Yogi and philosopher Wayne Dyer said, "When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." Many school staff have found the Toll Taker story and Dyer's quote to be life changing. Just like the toll taker job, there are many challenging parts of working in a school that are available for energizing - initiatives, district demands, parent complaints, student behaviors, to name a few. However, when school staff intentionally focus on the parts of the job they love, the other parts are still there, but tend to fade to the background. Adapting this philosophy has re-energized more than one school staff member's commitment to and love of their professional work.

## **Intention 3 - Making Miracles Out of Molecules**

Making Miracles Out of Molecules is the converse of *making a mountain out of a molehill*. Instead of amplifying what students do wrong, we're amplifying what's going well. Like a video game, we're creating a time-in that's exciting and compelling. It also sets timeouts up to be successful. In a video game, the small amount of time between lives can feel like an eternity because the player is excited to get back into the game. In NHA, we want students' time-in with us to be so rich that they don't want to be out of the action. NHA teachers from pre-K to high school have reported seeing kids almost lean in when the teacher walks in the room, anticipating what sparkling thing they'll say about their students.

## **We Edit Every Moment**

Another way of looking at Making Miracles from Molecules is to think of ourselves as the Directors, Producers and Editors of every moment of our lives. We have the opportunity to decide what goes into our lives' movies and what gets left on the cutting room floor-what to turn into a miracle and what to leave as a molecule. For many of us, this means that we intentionally engage in less venting, gossiping and complaining. What seemed like necessary rituals now seem like wasted pixels in the movie that is our lives.

## **NHA Recognitions**

### **(See Recognition Techniques handout for more details)**

Recognitions make up the language of NHA. This language, more than just praise, is lent to us from the therapy world and validates the person as well as reinforces behavior. For recognitions to help students rewrite their Inner Wealth Portfolios, so they see themselves as successful and motivate them to take on more positive behaviors, the recognitions need to be authentic, truth-based, and with the intention of building Inner Wealth.

Kids with a history of unsuccessful behaviors have likely experienced an adult or two who have made a mountain out the mole hill that was their bad behavior. At the very least, like Jordan's first day, they've probably endured several small corrections throughout every day. An occasional vague, "Thank you," or "Good job," isn't going to be enough to help them rewrite their Inner Wealth Portfolios. Recognitions provide us with specific language that downloads as believable success, helping them to see themselves differently and act upon that vision.

Schools are places with many rules and expectations, and recognizing when those rules ARE being followed is a great way to teach the rules as well as ensure that you'll get more of those great behaviors. However, to

rewrite someone's Inner-Wealth Portfolio, you need to do more than just recognize them for just following the rules. They also need to be told about how their actions reflect their beautiful, effervescent & unique essence.

## Active Recognitions

Active Recognitions describe what's happening in front of us. As you practice Active Recognitions, use "I see...", "I hear...", and "I notice..." to help you. Some examples: "I see you reading a book." "I hear problem-solving language." "I notice that you shared a pencil with Tammy when she forgot hers."

In NHA, we intentionally don't say, "I like that you..." or, "Thank you for..." Even though many students would be unaffected by those sentence starters, the most challenging students may interpret this language as you saying, "Ha! You're doing exactly what I want you to do," when we're what really trying to convey that they are making great choices, and we just happened to notice. This way, *they* are the hero of their story.

Recognizing students' feelings is another great way to use Active Recognitions. More than one student has de-escalated after the simple recognition, "I see you're having strong feelings." There's power and healing in being seen, heard and noticed.

## Experiential Recognitions

Experiential Recognitions go beyond the description of what's happening and let the student know what it says about them. This is where we start to rewrite the Inner Wealth Portfolio. Here are the Active Recognitions from above turned into Experiential Recognitions, "I see you reading a book. That shows that you're dedicated to your literacy growth." "I hear problem-solving language. That reveals that you care about our peaceful community." "I see you sharing a pencil with Tammy. That shows that you are a generous and kind-hearted friend."

## Proactive Recognitions

Proactive Recognitions not only recognize what's going right, but also what *could be* going wrong. In schools, we typically teach the rules at the beginning of the year, then don't mention them again unless they're being broken. In NHA, we teach the rules when they're NOT being broken, so we're often talking about the rules. To continue with the example from above, "I see you reading a book. You could be talking to friends, but you're not. That reveals that you make good use of your work time." "I hear problem-solving language. You could be arguing, but you're not. That shows that you're respectful & peaceful problem-solvers." "I notice that you shared a pencil with Tammy when she forgot hers. You could have ignored her request, but you didn't. You showed what a compassionate friend you are."

Proactive Recognitions are impactful in recognizing healthy power and control in the midst of strong feelings. "You're feeling angry that Tammy broke your pencil. You could have hit her, but you didn't. That reveals your self-control."

## Creative Recognitions

Creative Recognitions are actually a combination of a clear request followed up with a recognition of the smallest amount of progress in that direction. "I need you to get your book...I see your toes are pointed in the

direction of your cubby, now your hips, and you're on your way. You're making the choices of a student who cares about their learning."

Students with oppositional behaviors are sensitive to the options that "Would you..." "Could you..." and "Please..." advertise. Therefore, especially when first taking on NHA, we stick with clearer directions like, "It's time to..." or "I need you to..." which doesn't leave as much room for a student to decline the request.

## **Build the Foundation First**

If you're building a house, Stand 1 is like pouring the foundation and Stand 2 is like building the ground floor. After they're done well, you're ready for the roof. Stand Three is the roof. The roof is essential, but it goes on last. You can't build a house without the foundation, walls and roof, and you can't do NHA successfully without all three Stands in play.

## **Stand 3: Absolutely CLEAR!**

*I will have clear rules and consistent consequences.*

Stand 3 is about having clear and consistent rules and consequences. For many of us it means taking stock of our rules and holding ourselves to a higher standard of consistency.

## **Setting Limits with Clarity**

The first step to limit-setting is to know what your rules are. For example, if you have a rule, "No talking when the teacher is talking," you have to be prepared to enforce that rule every time. For most of us, this means being more clear with ourselves about what our rules are and noticing where we can be more consistent in enforcing them.

For maximum clarity, NHA rules start with, "No..." Teachers in schools that employ the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) often use the "No.." rules to support the PBIS school values. For example, "No talking when the teacher is talking," might be listed under the PBIS value of Respect in the classroom.

## **Rules of the Game & Warnings**

In a basketball game, the rules are clear, the lines are painted, the hoop is at regulation height. The referees are there to consistently call fouls and keep order. It would be so NOT great if the rules changed, the lines were curvy and moving, and if the hoop had a lid on it. As logical as that is, some of us have been inadvertently making our classrooms confusing for students who are a little more sensitive, needy or intense by not having consistent routines, procedures, rules and responses to rule-breaking.

One of the ways we've inadvertently created confusion is by using warnings. Warnings put kids ill at-ease, and invite kids who are more intense to test to see how many warnings it takes before we blow our tops. Warnings also communicate that we are afraid of rule-breaking and that rule-breaking must be prevented. The truth is, we can't stop anyone from breaking the rules. In NHA, we communicate that we don't mind rule-breaking, and that, just like when a referee calls a foul in a basketball game, we're not going to be mad when rules get broken. We know exactly what we're going to do - give a small, unenergized consequence called that we call a *reset*.

# Resets

Once you're not energizing negativity, are hyper-energizing the positive and know what your rules are, you're ready for the NHA consequence, the reset.

A reset is a short, unenergized time-out that lasts only as long as it takes for the student to get back to NOT breaking the rule. Here's how it might look... If the rule is, "No talking when the teacher is talking," and Tammy is talking when you're talking, you say, "Tammy, reset," and you turn your energy in another direction, but listen for her to stop talking. When Tammy stops talking you say something like, "Tammy, welcome back. Thank you for not talking when I'm talking. You're being respectful."

In this exchange, you addressed the talking without energizing it. Then, you energized the great choice she made to stop talking and retaught the rule of, "No talking when the teacher is talking." And, the whole exchange may have taken less than a minute.

Resets allow you to keep small problems small by addressing rule-breaking every time it occurs in the amped-up positive environment you're creating around non-rule-breaking. Kids get your energy, connection and relationship while things are going well, and an unenergized, but consistent, response when things are not going well. This bumps the kids with intense behaviors to success and shows the kids who are prone to perfection that they can be accepted when they're not being perfect.

## YOU & Resets

As it turns out, for many of us, embracing NHA involves resetting ourselves first. Doubtless, schools are challenging work environments and student behaviors can be exasperating. Creating a more positive climate by being intentional about what we give our energy to, in our own minds and in our classrooms, is a tall, yet worthy pursuit. Many teachers have reported they now realize that they set the weather in their room, and they have new confidence in dealing with behaviors that used to them.

Teach resets as a life skill, not a punishment for negative behavior. Follow the four-step process below, using the first three steps for weeks before using the fourth. When you reset a student, you want to convey that you *believe in them enough to guide them back to their greatness*. You're not annoyed by or punishing them for their behaviors, and you don't mind if you have to give them several resets.

- 1. Reset the Environment:** Dry up energy to negativity and amp up energy to positivity. Employ clear protocols & rules.
- 2. Reset Yourself:** Model resetting for students. "I'm feeling frustrated. I'm going to reset myself and try again."
  - 1.
- 3. Recognize Resetting in Action:** "I see you grabbed a pen for your math work, then reset yourself, and grabbed a pencil."
  - 1.
- 4. Reset Students:** After you have normalized Resets as a life skill, they'll land for students as a gift, not a punishment.



## Transformation - The 3 Stands working together

When students realize that there's no relationship to be gained from negative behaviors and that the real connection comes through great behaviors, they build prosocial Inner Wealth. You'll see some students respond immediately. Other students will continue to push limits for days, weeks or months. NHA teachers of those students say that NHA helps them to feel confident that they are offering up a positive structure that will benefit the student, whether the outward signs are evident now or later.

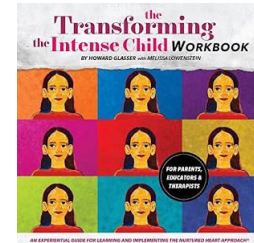
## What is the Nurtured Heart Approach?

**One Possible Answer** - A new standard that we hold ourselves to that decreases stress and increases connection in all of our relationships..

## Want to Learn More?

### Possible Next Steps

- Read, *Transforming the Intense Child Workbook*, by Howard Glasser
- Lead a Book Study
- Check out the NHA Podcast on iTunes
- Do a free video E-Course at [www.childrensuccessfoundation.com](http://www.childrensuccessfoundation.com)
- Join the NHA facebook group



# TO YOUR GREATNESS!!!

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Howard Glasser, Creator