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Understanding Children's Mood and Affect

With Dr. Rona Novick

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Our Guest:



Rona Milch Novick, PhD, Co-Educational Director, Hidden Sparks, directs the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Doctoral Program in Jewish Education and Administration, Yeshiva University. She also serves as an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. For many years, Dr. Novick was Coordinator of Child Psychology in the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Schneider Children's Hospital and Clinical

Director of the Alliance for School Mental Health, providing outreach services, treatment and training to schools, families and communities. She developed The BRAVE bully prevention program and is a trained cognitive behavior therapist with her own private practice. As a one of two educational directors for Hidden Sparks, Dr. Novick is involved at a leadership level in Hidden Sparks programs an growth, and provides training and mentoring to Hidden Sparks coaches, principals and Internal Coaches.

Overview of the Session

- Understanding of common moods that can be challenging to students
- Guidelines for how they can be recognized and addressed.
- How teacher and environmental stimuli contribute to difficult student moods
- Techniques for helping children shift from unproductive to healthier moods
- Tools for teaching children to recognize and modulate their own moods
- Reflective practices to prevent teachers' moods, beliefs and expectations from escalating challenging moods.



Session Goals:

- *Better understand children's moods*
- *Better understand our moods*
- *Create environments and situations that support healthy moods*
- *Provide students with tools to understand and manage their own moods*



What Are Moods? What Do They Look Like?

- *Think of a time you were upset*
- *If you could give the “upset” a definition – what would it be . . . Sad, mad, anxious, frustrated*
- *What did your body feel like?*
- *What thoughts were in your head?*
- *What did others see? Would they guess your mood?*
- *Moods vs. feelings*
 - *Moods are a conglomerate – last longer, more complex*



Children's Moods

- What words or phrases do you hear adults and children use to describe children's moods?

- *Temper*
- *Edgy*
- *Irritable*
- *Angry*
- *Moody*
- *Cranky*

- *Depressed*
- *Grouchy*
- *Elated*
- *Giddy*
- *Happy*
- *Anxious*



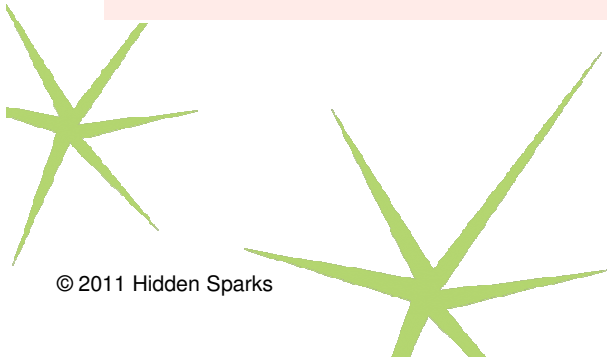
When Are Moods Problematic/Challenging?

- Intense
- Erratic
- Developmentally inappropriate
 - Tantrums at 2 vs 20
- Interfere with child's learning or development
- Interfere with other students' learning or development



Inside Vs. Outside - Can you match the mood to the behavior?

Behavior	Moods
Joey runs to the blocks and tells everyone there it is his turn to play.	Happy
Hannah throws her paper in the air.	Frustrated
Dan announces he has the worst grade in the class and closes his book.	Angry
Jessica sits quietly on the side while her group works on the project.	Sad



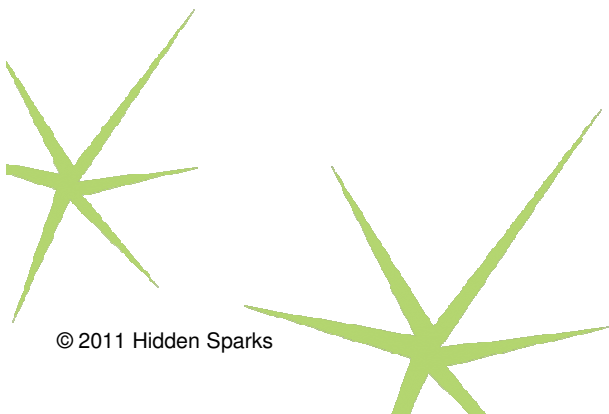
Clues to Mood

- Facial expressions
 - Context – what was happening
 - History/knowledge of child
 - Nonverbal communication (i.e. body posture)
 - Child's verbalizations
-
- The more you know someone, the better you are able to recognize their moods accurately
 - **HOWEVER**
 - The only true knowledge of moods comes from the person experiencing them!



The Rationale for “Meta-mood-ition”

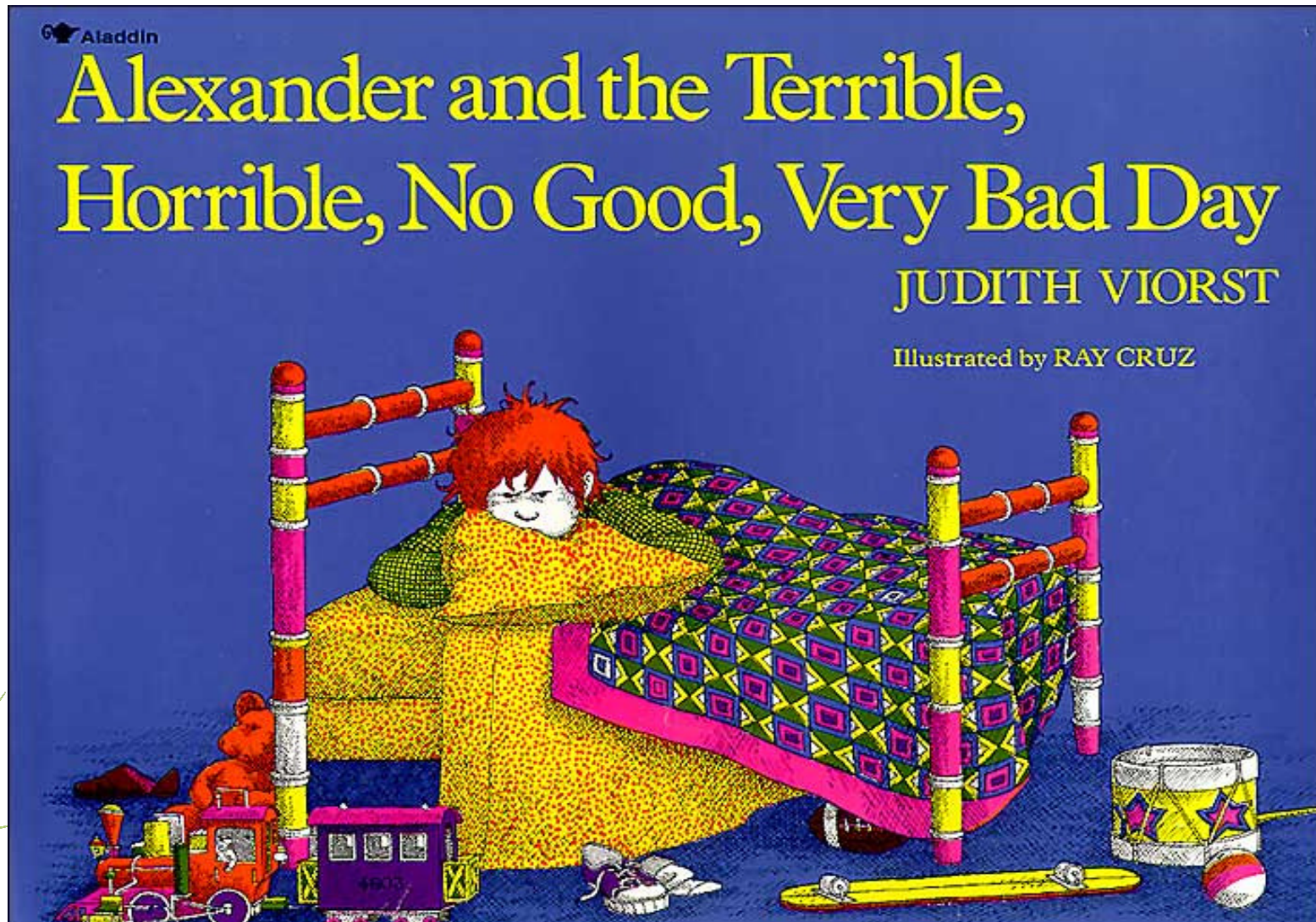
- Since children can be the only true judge of their mood
- It is greatly advantageous for them to learn to recognize and label their moods
- It is extremely helpful to have them identify the common events, individuals, situations that prompt certain moods
- Children can use that information to
 - Help adults provide healthy supports for them
 - Advocate for their needs



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Tools for Teaching About Mood



From Looking at Alex, what would you say is his mood? Why? What clues do you have?



Has anything like this ever happened to you? Did it have an impact on your mood?

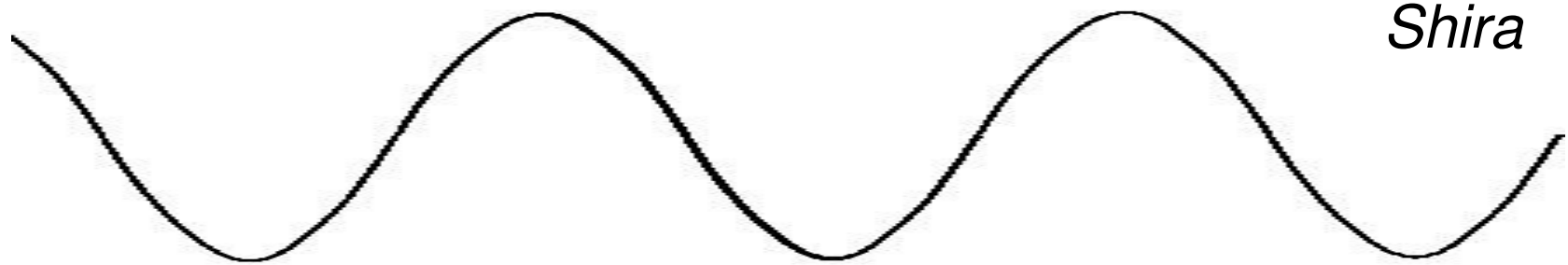


*What would you
guess is the
mood of the cat
in the hat? Of
the fish? Of the
children?
What clues do
you have?*

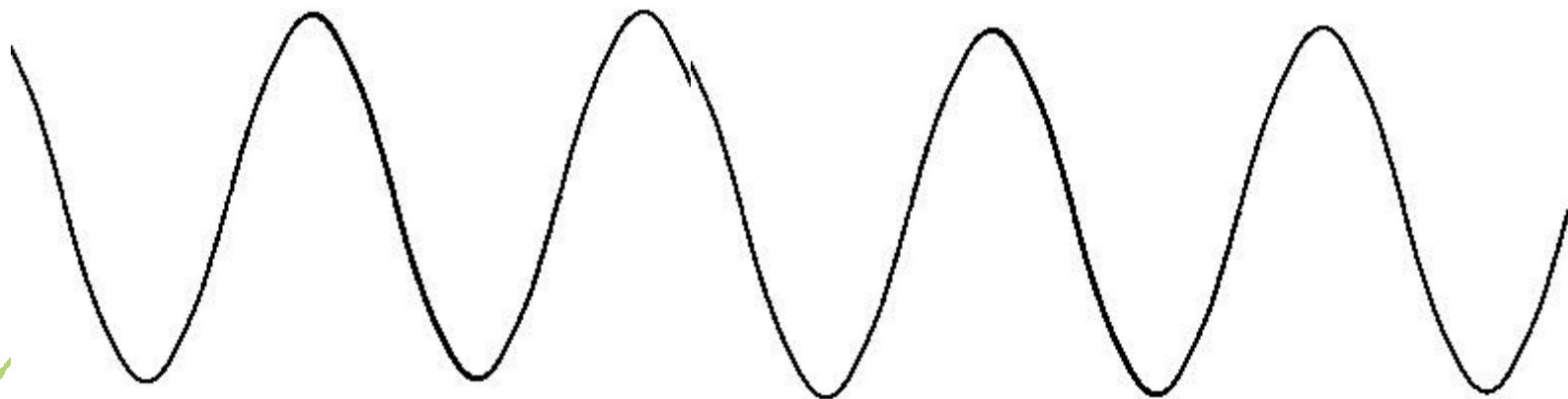
*Do the words
help?*



Moods – Ups and Downs



Shira



Sammy



What Makes Moods Challenging?

- Duration – how long does it last
- Lability – how quickly and frequently does it change, how “unstable” is it?
- Intensity – how high are highs, and how low are lows
- Tone – what is the “feeling” of the mood – positive, negative, engaging, hostile, etc



Moods and Biology

- What is your mood like when . . .
 - You have not eaten
 - You have over-eaten
 - You have not slept
 - You have over-slept
 - You have been forced to sit still through a boring presentation
 - You are under the influence of medications or drugs that make you jumpy, sedated, etc



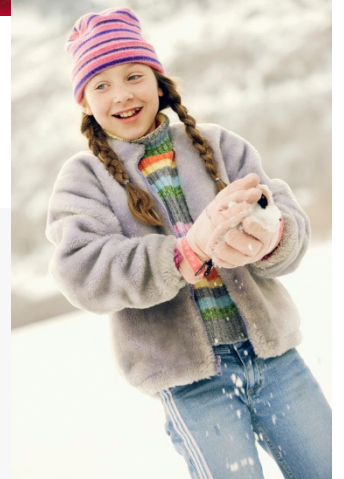
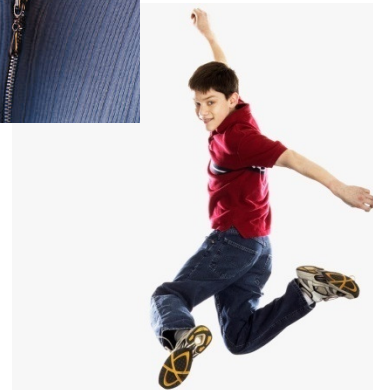
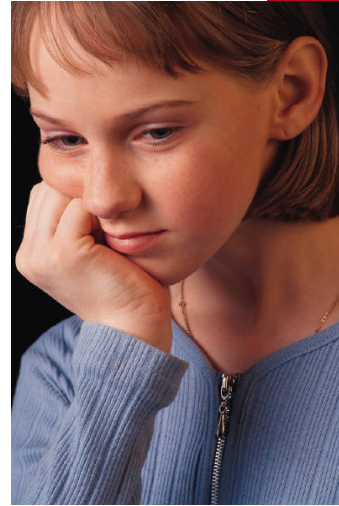
Managing the Biology

- Consider schedule – snack time, etc
- Provide opportunities for physical activity
- Provide opportunities for rest/quiet
- Consider children's medication status
- Assist children/parents re: bedtimes and sleeping needs



Moods and Temperament

- Activity
- Regularity
- Initial reaction
- Adaptability
- Intensity
- Mood
- Distractibility
- Persistence/attention span
- Sensitivity



- Which temperamental factors would contribute to which moods, or moodiness in general?

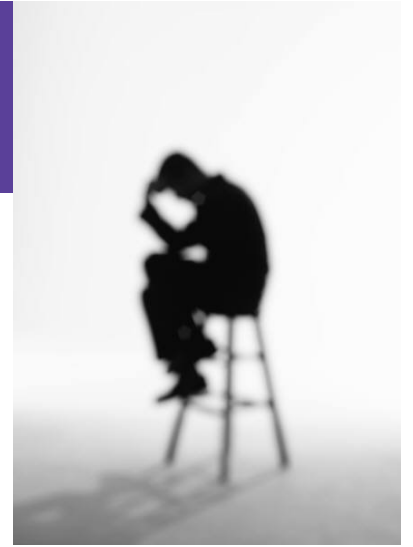
Temperamental Adjustments

- Consider temperaments in your lesson/activity planning
- Recognize the strong biological contributor to temperament – not unchangeable, but challenging to change
- Teach temperament and temperamental awareness
- Help students discover their strategies for managing temperament



Moods and Thinking

- Particular thinking patterns are more common in particular mood states
- Moods may make certain negative, unhelpful thinking patterns syntonic or congruent
 - Happy . . . Think things will go well
 - Depressed . . . Think bad things are likely to happen
- Chicken/egg question unresolved, however, altering the thinking has been shown to powerfully impact mood



Addressing Common Mood Congruent Thought Errors

Mood	Thought Patterns	Alternative
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Pessimistic•Guilty,self-blaming•Hopelessness•Helplessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Guardedly optimistic•Multiple determinism•Dispel forever thinking•Focus on strengths and past successes
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Hypervigilance – danger is everywhere•Self-doubt•Awfulizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Realistic worry and assessment•Focus on strengths and past successes•Dispel catastrophic thinking
Anger/Irritation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Personalizing•Aggressive attribution•Finger pointing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Broadening causality•Seeing neutrality•Accepting portion of responsibility

Moods and Environment

- What is your mood like when
 - You've been stuck in traffic for an hour?
 - The bank messed up your account?
 - Your mate was brusque with you?
 - You are concerned you don't have enough time to complete your work?
 - You are in a room that is too hot?
 - You are in a cramped airplane, stuck on the tarmac?
- What are the equivalents for students?



An Environment for Healthy Moods

- Consider physical plant issues
 - Lighting
 - Noise
 - Spacing
- Consider mood boosters after mood busters
 - Apres test activities
 - Apres recess regrouping
- Help students discover their personal mood management



Teacher Moods

- Our moods set the tone for the classroom
- Our moods are impacted by the classroom
- Our moods are impacted by adult issues that have nothing to do with the students in the room
- We are the adults in the equation . . . We need to take more of the burden to create the mood/tone of classroom

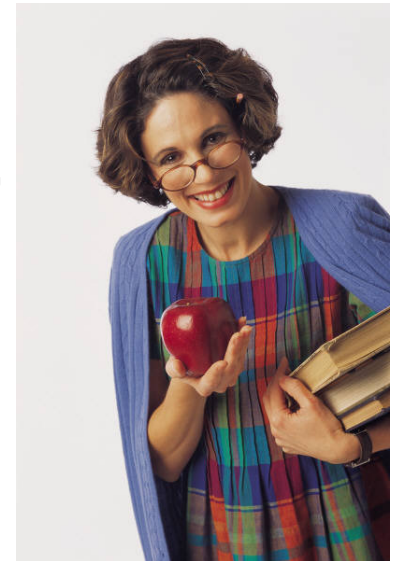


Reflective Mood Assessment

When I am . . .	I tend to . . .	Instead, perhaps I can/will
Angry	Yell	Track my anger, try not to talk to children until I am calmer
Frustrated		
Pressured		
Depressed/Sad		
Happy		
Excited		

Personal Mood Managers

- Mini stress management
 - Tense/relax
 - Imagery
- Cognitive clean-up
 - What we think greatly impacts mood
 - Consider personalization, finger pointing, forever thinking
- Physical activity
 - Good for you and students
- Diet (caffeine, sugar)



Summary and Questions

- Moods and moodiness can be challenging
- Exploring our own moods is critical
- Understanding student moods can help teachers create classrooms that promote healthy moods
- Teaching students about mood and helping them find their mood shifters can give them critical tools for self-regulation and self-advocacy



Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

Wednesday, February 8, 2012	Assistive Technology with Shannon Stringer
Wednesday, February 29, 2012	What's the Big Idea? Developing Reading Comprehension Skills with Dassi Berg
Wednesday, March 21, 2012	Study Skills with Zippora Schuck
Wednesday, May 2 , 2012	Transition to High School with Karen Kruger

For more information visit: www.hiddensparks.org

About Hidden Sparks

Hidden Sparks is a non-profit fund whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit. Hidden Sparks' programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching. The Hidden Sparks model and program is currently in 21 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and 7 in Boston, through a partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education.



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