

Supporting Parents in Public:
The Wakanheza Project

Workshop Facilitator Guide

*Keeping children safe by lending a hand to
parents during difficult situations*

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This guide was developed by Minnesota Children’s Museum and the Initiative for Violence Free Families and Communities in Ramsey County.

To the Facilitator:

This workshop is split into multiple sections. It mostly consists of lecture topics and discussion questions, and also includes role-playing scenarios that allow participants to act-out intervention skills. Follow the Facilitator's Guide to lead participants through the orientation. The Power Point Presentation can assist you in navigating the discussion, but is not necessary for a successful workshop.

Throughout the Facilitator's Guide, there are places to ask participants discussion questions. Group participation is important to this orientation. If the group is hesitant to participate, some of the included examples should help the facilitator lead participants to recall and share their own experiences. Encourage discussion and questions throughout the workshop.

Supplies Needed	
<u>Presentation:</u> Wakanheza Power Point Presentation (optional) Laptop computer Projector Projector screen Facilitator's Guide	<u>Handouts:</u> Booklets (optional) Pre-Post test Note cards
<u>Role Playing:</u> Scenario cards	<u>Miscellaneous:</u> White board or flip chart Markers Pens

Prior to starting the session, cover the following basic information with the participants.

1. Introduce yourself to participants. If members of the group are not familiar, introduce them to each other.
2. Explain the materials you have distributed to participants. This might include an agenda, booklets and pre-post test.
3. Explain the outline for the course: 1) The History of Wakanheza (Introduction); 2) Principles of Wakanheza; 3) Application: Interventions that Work; and 4) Role-playing Scenarios.
4. Inform the group about the breaks scheduled for the session.
5. Instruct participants to complete the pre-test. Explain that is a self-evaluation containing no right or wrong answers.
6. Explain that participants should feel free to share their personal opinions and experiences in this orientation. What they gain from the session will depend on what they share.
7. Have fun!

Facilitator Tips

Know Your Audience

Different audiences respond to the principles in different ways. Think about the group you are presenting to. If they are mostly younger people who might not have kids, you might need to spend more time talking about why it is hard to be a parent in public. If your group is more likely to have children, you can spend less time on that.

Prep Your Audience

Tell them at the beginning of the session that this is a discussion, and everyone will be participating.

Use the Stories

Have plenty of stories on hand. Stories help keep the topic alive and relevant for the audience.

Don't be afraid to use other people's stories. The point is not whether or not they happened exactly the way you say they did, the point is to get people to relate the topic to their own life and experiences.

Role-play

Role-play can be daunting for some people to have to do in front of a group. However, it is very important that people get to practice the principles before they go out and attempt them. If you really can't use role-play with your group, make sure to go through the scenarios verbally.

If the group keeps coming up with the same types of answers, challenge them to try the situation over with another focus -- maybe it means to focus more on the child, or trying a different technique with the adults.

Having the group do scenarios in different ways also helps them see that there are many different ways to approach a situation, and that they can choose the one that is best for them and the situation.

Don't Be Afraid to Change

Sometimes it is necessary to change the order of some of the topics or discussion questions to make it work better for the group you have. Don't be afraid to mix it up a little.

Talk About Trying

It is important that the group understands that the things they try aren't going to work every time. Share a story where you tried to help and it backfired. Explain to them that they will have similar moments, but that it is important to keep trying.

Introduction and History

Scenario: While shopping in a grocery store, the sound of a child crying catches your attention. You investigate the source of the crying and find an adult with three kids. While the adult is attending to the child crying, the other two are arguing about who gets to push the cart. The adult looks embarrassed about his or her children's behavior. At this point, the adult roughly scoops up the crying child and yells at the others, "Behave, or we're going home!"

How would observing this situation make you feel? What would go through your mind? Could you do something to help? What could you do?

Most people would like to help in this situation, but may do nothing because they feel too uncomfortable. Today's discussion is about the simple things we can do to assist families experiencing stressful situations.

Main Message:

- "Wakanheza" is the Dakota word for child. Literally translated, it means "Sacred Being." The underlying philosophy of the Wakanheza initiative is that if we were all to regard children as "Sacred Beings," and our actions were to reflect this, our communities would be far more welcoming and supportive places for families and children.
- People across our communities and country are often confronted with the question of what they could have done after witnessing parents struggling and perhaps treating their children harshly in public places. The goal of Wakanheza is to provide community members with the knowledge and ideas of how to better support parents and families in stressful situations. By doing this, we can reduce the incidents of harsh treatment of children, and ultimately, child abuse.

Group Activity: Have participants turn to the person next to them and share a story like the one described.

Principles of Wakanheza:

Empathy

Main Message:

- Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand another person's situation, feelings and motives. Parenting is a difficult job. When caretakers bring children into public places, they are forced to display their parenting skills and children's behavior while any number of strangers are watching and judging. In order to empathize with parents, we must understand the stress that parenting in public may cause.

Discussion Question:

Why might a parent or other adult experience stress when supervising children at the museum or in other public places?

Examples: It's a lot of responsibility and pressure, lack of control over the environment, parents' peers are judging their parenting skills, our society generally supports harsh judgment of parents, etc.

Parents might feel even more pressure when visiting a children's museum, because they perceive the staff to be "experts" who have training that they as parents don't have.

Principles of Wakanheza: The Role of Environment

Main Message:

- Visiting a setting like a shopping mall, grocery store, restaurant or airplane is often the greatest fear of parents. Just the thought can raise parents' anxiety to an extreme levels.
- Children's temperaments and behaviors are dependent on their environment. However, even when parents have no control over factors like noise levels, crowds and temperature, they are expected to control and appropriately respond to their children.
- If the environment in which a family lives is very different from the environment within your museum, more stress will result.

Discussion Question:

What are characteristics of a family-friendly place – shopping malls, restaurants, museums?

Examples: Coloring placemats at restaurants, toys at doctors' offices, seating areas at shopping malls, family restrooms, friendly staff.

In what ways is our museum NOT a family-friendly place?

Examples: It's not necessarily convenient or easy to find, parents have little control over the environment, it can be crowded at times, etc.

Facilitator Note: *Environmental changes don't have to be big or expensive. It can be as simple as posting a welcome sign or moving a bench into a more convenient location.*

Principles of Wakanheza:

Non-judgment

Main Message:

- We make judgments every day, and these judgments help us make choices. We need to be aware of the judgments we make about people and situations, and how those judgments might keep us from empathizing.
- In order to be of assistance to parents and families, judgment must be avoided. If one labels a parent “bad,” or a situation “abusive,” it will be difficult if not impossible for that person to be of any assistance. In fact, intervening with a judgmental attitude will be likely to make a situation worse; when people perceive they are being judged, they typically react defensively.
- It is not our job to tell parents *how* to parent. Our role is to be supportive to parents when they are in our museum or in our community. No one *wants* to be a bad parent.

Discussion Question:

Have you made a judgment about a person that turned out to be incorrect?

Examples: Assumptions about relationships between people – husband and wife, grandparent and grandchild, etc. Assumptions about a person’s character that turned out to be untrue.

Exercise: Non-judgment

Hand out a note card to each participant.

Instruct participants to use this note card to privately write down an instance in which they felt they were judged unfairly. Tell them we will not be sharing these stories. Allow 2-3 minutes for participants to write down notes.

How did you react to the situation? How did it feel? How does it feel now to think back on it?

The next time you find yourself judging other people, think about what you wrote on your card, and how it felt to be the one being judged.

Facilitator Note: *Non-judgment can be one of the toughest topics. Many times people believe that they don’t judge others, but really don’t realize the judgments they are making. Pay attention to the language that people are using throughout the rest of the discussion, and try to gently point out when people are making judgments that might be unjust.*

Defining Abuse

Although this section is not part of a traditional Wakanheza session, it is included in the museum version because abuse is a topic that often arises in these settings. The word “abuse” is very inflammatory, and can often make a situation worse, and it is helpful for people to have an understanding of what abuse actually is. You should also be prepared to answer questions about your organization’s procedures for addressing situations that are believed to be abuse. Although it is not the point of this section, it will come up in the discussion.

Main Message:

- The term abuse is often thrown around when behaviors of an adult toward a child do not match the observing individual’s expectations of how a child should be treated. In actuality, while these behaviors may be inappropriate, in most cases they are not abusive.
- By using the principles of Wakanheza, we are trying to support families in a way that will prevent harsh treatment of children before it ever nears abuse. To understand the extreme of harsh treatment, let’s define abuse, and discuss what should be done if an act of abuse is observed.

Abuse is categorized into four types:

Physical – Beating with a closed fist or object, burning, biting, strangulation and other violent actions that cause bodily harm and leave marks on the body.

Sexual – The use of a child for sexual gratification of an adult.

Emotional – Repeated and irrational criticism, insults, humiliation and rejection.

Neglect – Failure to provide the basic physical needs of a child. Includes: food, shelter, clothing and medical care.

If you observe behavior that fits one of the above definitions of abuse, you have witnessed a crime. Notify the police. Understand that emotional abuse and neglect are difficult, if not impossible, to observe for someone who does not have an ongoing personal relationship with the victim. If you witness abuse at the museum, follow our procedures for notifying the police.

Group Activity:

Write the group’s answers to the following question on a white board or flip chart.

At the museum, what parental behaviors are commonly seen or reported as being disruptive or abusive?

Examples: yelling, spanking, dragging, name-calling, etc.

Once a list is generated, *ask the group to label each behavior “Abusive,” “Inappropriate” or “Appropriate.”*

Facilitator Note: *As the group is labeling each action, push them to think about the action in other contexts. Is it ever appropriate to yell at a child? Is it ever appropriate to ignore a child? When can ignoring a child be abuse? From this activity, you can see that most behaviors we see at the museum do not fit the definition of abuse, and have many possible contexts. The behaviors, a result of a parent’s stress and frustration, may not be positive. Reaching out to stressed parents is one of the most effective methods to prevent child abuse.*

Principles of Wakanheza:

Powerlessness

Main Message:

- When one observes a parent or caregiver losing control with their child, one is often observing an adult feeling powerless. Often, this feeling of powerlessness evokes in adults the need to gain control-- gain it quickly and physically. It is this need for perceived control that leads caregivers to act in ways that are harsh and at times violent.
- When we have empathy, we are able to assist in the process of restoring one's personal power without the act of violence. We are able to join our neighbors and offer the support necessary to restore self-esteem, rebuild a damaged self-image and demonstrate that there is great significance to the job of parenting – especially in public!

“Acts of violence in our society are performed largely by those trying to establish their self esteem, to defend their self image, and to demonstrate that they, too, are significant... violence arises not out of power but of powerlessness.”

– Rollo May, clinical psychologist

“A person will act out violently when they are overwhelmed by a sense of shame and humiliation.”

– Dr. James Gilligan, psychiatrist who studies the underlying causes of violence

Discussion Question:

Can you recall a time in which you felt powerless?

Examples: Car breaking down, losing a sporting event, a child getting lost in a public place.

Facilitator Note: *Depending on the group, some participants might interpret this principle as making an “excuse” for violence. You may need to point out the difference between inappropriate behavior and abuse again. There is no excuse for abusive behavior, and if that behavior is witnessed, you should follow the appropriate procedures for your environment. This will be discussed again in the “Call for Help” section.*

Principles of Wakanheza: Culture

Main Message:

- The norms of parenting vary between cultural groups (or even different family groups), and cultural differences may influence the level of stress parents experience in a given situation.
- We tend to use perceived cultural differences as a reason not to act. “I am not going to say anything because I don’t want to offend this person,” or “I don’t know if they will understand me,” are common thoughts. But if we don’t even try, we will never have the opportunity to succeed.
- It takes a village to raise a child. Although children may be influenced primarily by the examples set by their parents, they also learn from the examples of community members. The museum is part of the “village.” You are part of the “village,” whether at work or in another public place.

Part of the definition of **culture**, according to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary:

Customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.

Exercise: Culture

Hand out a note card to each participant.

Instruct participants to use this note card to privately write down how you define your personal culture. Tell participants that you won’t ask people to share what they wrote on the card.

Chances are that no two participants in this room have identified their culture in the exact same way, even though we share a lot in common. While individuals of a particular cultural group do share some traits with each other, far more characteristics are unique.

Facilitator Note: You may need to prompt people with examples of culture. Ask questions like: *What is your faith? What is your heritage? What is your family situation?*

Principles of Wakanheza: The Moment

Main Message:

- We must realize that we can only help in the moment – we can't control what has happened before or what will happen afterward. We can help people through a difficult parenting moment, and therefore make harsh treatment of a child as a result of that moment less likely.

Facilitator Note: *Sometimes participants can get very caught up in the act they see the parent doing. We need to remind ourselves that it isn't our job to teach people how to parent, and just because it isn't the way we might do it, doesn't mean it is wrong. And perhaps, though what we see happening isn't perfect, maybe it is better than that parent was doing the day before. This is where we drive that message home again.*

Application:

Prepare Yourself

- **Avoid judgment of parents.**

If you approach the situation believing you need to “set a bad parent straight,” it will be difficult, if not impossible, for you to connect with them as a fellow human being who could use your understanding and support.

- **Assess the situation.**

If you think you may be able to help and calm the situation, intervene early. If you think that you might make the situation worse or place the child in physical danger, seek assistance from security or the police.

- **Assess yourself.**

Quickly decide whether you are in the proper frame of mind to step in to the situation. If you do not feel prepared, trust your instincts. At the museum, if you do not feel prepared, find someone else to help.

- **Decide what to do.**

Remember that your response may be directed to an adult or child when appropriate. Always intervene with a smile and positive attitude. There are many ways to respond to any one situation.

Application:

Simple Tips

Families say these simple things help reduce the amount of stress they experience when parenting in public:

- **Appreciate families and the job of parenting.**

Smile.

Say something positive about parents and their children. “Your children are so well behaved,” or “You are doing a wonderful job with your children in this store, especially with so many distractions here for them.”

- **Assure parents their children and behaviors are okay** – children are supposed to act like children.

Show understanding. “Children always cry when it’s time to leave the museum. Although it’s probably stressful to adults, it lets us know they had a fun time.”

Share a similar story of your own. “My brother did the same thing at that age, and my mom was so frustrated with him.”

- **Help out**

Lend a hand by opening a door, bagging some groceries, allowing them ahead of you in the line.

Ask if there is anything you can do to help them. Usually offering to do something specific, like carry a bag or watch a stroller, is more successful than just a general offer to help.

Application:

Escalating Situations

In a situation that seems to be escalating, something should be done. If you do not feel prepared to help, find someone who is. If you are ready to intervene, here are some things you can do:

- **Show understanding.** “I know how frustrating it can be when shopping with children.”
- **Offer the parent encouragement.** “You are being so patient with your child – can I do anything to help?”
- **Strike up an unrelated conversation.** Sometimes re-directing the parent’s attention can help them to calm down. “Do you know how to get back to the freeway from here?”
- **Offer a positive comment.** “If you could bottle your child’s energy, you would be rich!”

Group Activity:

What other sayings could you use to make a positive comment about a child who is acting in a way that is viewed to be inappropriate in most public places, but you understand to be normal behavior for a child? For example, what positive words could you say to an adult caring for a child who is crying or otherwise making a “disruption?”

Example: “I don’t think I ever went anywhere with my child where they didn’t throw a fit. You are being really patient.”

Facilitator Note: *It is really important to keep the group focused on positive comments, and not let them get off track about whether the behavior is appropriate or not. Also, try to keep the group focused on things they might actually say to someone. Sometimes when creativity gets flowing things can get off track.*

Application: Call For Help

Call for help if you see a child in danger of serious physical harm, or if you think a child has been left alone.

- Follow the museum's procedures when assisting families at the museum.
- If you are in a public place -- in a city park, for example -- contact the police.
- If you are in a store, shopping mall, amusement park, or other similar place, contact an on-site security guard or an employee who you think would be able to help.

Facilitator Note: *You may choose to review your museum's policies on handling these types of situations. Be careful not to let the discussion get off track. Remember, most of the situations we are going to see are not going to rise to this level.*

Application: Try It!

Now that we have discussed ways of helping out in stressful situations, it is time to practice. Because these types of situations are challenging, it is important to practice before we go out and apply the tools. This way we can prepare for possible reactions, and see what techniques might work in different situations.

Implementation Worksheet

Ask participants to work in small groups. Give each participant an Implementation Worksheet and ask them to work together on a single scenario. Sometimes it is helpful to use the scenarios that participants brought up earlier in the session. With groups from diverse organizations or departments, it can work better to assign each group a scenario so that they have enough time to complete the worksheet.

After the groups have had some time to work, ask groups to share their scenarios and suggestions with the rest of the group. If the groups don't touch on the Wakanheza principles pointed out, be sure to bring them up with the group, perhaps asking, "Who might be feeling powerless in this situation?" This ensures that participants are thinking about all aspects of the situation.

Role-play

Role-play is another great way to allow participants to practice the techniques in a safe environment. You can role-play any scenario that you think would be helpful to the group. Here are some tips:

Involve many people in the role play, so one person isn't relied on to be the one who intervenes. This takes the pressure off one person and makes the role play more realistic.

Encourage people to take it seriously, we are all here to learn. If people start getting silly, stop the scene and ask them to get back on track.

If you see a really salient point, or something you want to emphasize, stop the scene for a moment to discuss it. If you wait until the end, the group might not remember what was going on at the important moment.

Run through the same scenario several times, encouraging participants to try different techniques each time. The first run-through should be with no intervention. Talk to the participants about how they felt in their different roles, who was being judged, who was powerless, etc.

Sometimes participants will focus only on the child, especially if that is the group they are used to working with. Make sure that as the group runs through scenarios, they are addressing the adult as well.

Sometimes participants will try something and be rejected. This is important! In real life you might be rejected too. But the important thing is that you tried to help someone who was having a tough time.

Conclusion

Recap:

- “Wakanheza” is the Dakota word for child and is literally translated to “*sacred being*.”
- Important concepts are *Empathy*, *Non-Judgment*, the *Role of the Environment*, *Powerlessness*, *Culture*, and the *Moment*.
- Intervention Techniques

Booklets:

Hand out booklets to participants now, if you have them.

Facilitator Note: *You may choose to hand them out earlier in the workshop, but be aware that people will read ahead, and may not be paying attention to the discussion.*

Post-test:

Have participants complete the post-test now.

Evaluation:

If you choose, you may ask participants to fill out a workshop evaluation form.

Supporting Parents in Public:
The Wakanheza Project

Appendix

*Keeping children safe by lending a hand to
parents during difficult situations*

Supporting Parents in Public: *The Wakanheza Project*

Workshop Pre-Test

Please respond to the following scenarios based on the comfort level you would have in addressing each situation. This evaluation will be given again at the end of the training. This information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

1. While in a grocery store, you overhear a baby crying from the next aisle; you continue to hear the crying while you shop. When you get to the check-out lane, the parent and baby who is still crying are in the lane next to you.

Very uncomfortable	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Very comfortable
Don't know what to do	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Know exactly what to do

2. You're sitting on a plane and the passengers that are sitting next to you are a parent and their infant. The baby begins to get fussy and the parent becomes anxious about calming their baby down.

Very uncomfortable	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Very comfortable
Don't know what to do	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Know exactly what to do

3. You and your spouse are having a wonderful dinner in a nice restaurant. You notice a family of parents and three children are being seated at the next table. During the course of the evening, the family seems to also be having a wonderful time talking and laughing and really enjoying each other's company. You and your spouse will pass by their table as you leave.

Very uncomfortable	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Very comfortable
Don't know what to do	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Know exactly what to do

4. You are in a store when you see a four-year-old child reaching for a toy from a tall shelf. The child knocks several toys onto the floor. As you are coming down the aisle, the child's parent is speaking in a raised voice to the child about "touching things you're not supposed to..."

Very uncomfortable	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Very comfortable
Don't know what to do	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Know exactly what to do

5. You see a child begin to get agitated in a check-out line, and the parent becomes anxious. There are many items yet to be rung up by the cashier.

Very uncomfortable	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Very comfortable
Don't know what to do	1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10	Know exactly what to do

Supporting Parents in Public: *The Wakanheza Project*

Workshop Post-Test

Now that you have gone through the workshop, please respond to the following scenarios based on the comfort level you would have in addressing each situation.

1. While in a grocery store, you overhear a baby crying from the next aisle; you continue to hear the crying while you shop. When you get to the check-out lane, the parent and baby who is still crying are in the lane next to you.

Very uncomfortable
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Don't know what to do
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Very comfortable
Know exactly what to do

2. You're sitting on a plane and the passengers that are sitting next to you are a parent and their infant. The baby begins to get fussy and the parent becomes anxious about calming their baby down.

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1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
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1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Very comfortable
Know exactly what to do

3. You and your spouse are having a wonderful dinner in a nice restaurant. You notice a family of parents and three children are being seated at the next table. During the course of the evening, the family seems to also be having a wonderful time talking and laughing and really enjoying each other's company. You and your spouse will pass by their table as you leave.

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4. You are in a store when you see a four-year-old child reaching for a toy from a tall shelf. The child knocks several toys onto the floor. As you are coming down the aisle, the child's parent is speaking in a raised voice to the child about "touching things you're not supposed to..."

Very uncomfortable
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Don't know what to do
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Very comfortable
Know exactly what to do

5. You see a child begin to get agitated in a check-out line, and the parent becomes anxious. There are many items yet to be rung up by the cashier.

Very uncomfortable
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Don't know what to do
1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10
Very comfortable
Know exactly what to do

Supporting Parents in Public: *The Wakanheza Project* Implementation Worksheet

Location: Where do stressful situations happen in your organization or in your life?

Situation: List an example of a difficult or stressful situation that might occur in this location.

Relationships: Who might be involved in this situation?

Principles

Now that you have described the situation and the relationships of the people involved, look at how the Wakanheza principles might apply.

Judgment: Who in this situation might be feeling judged? Why?

Culture: Are there any cultural factors that might be contributing to this stressful situation?

Powerlessness: Who in this situation might be feeling powerless? Why?

Environment: How is the environment either contributing to or detracting from the stress of the situation?

Empathy: Who in this situation can you empathize with? How can you show that empathy?

Helping Out:

Write down three ways you can help out in the situation you have described above. Add any helpful changes you might make to the environment.

Sample Role-play: Bus Scenario

Overview of scenario: Passengers on a bus going to work on a weekday morning. A mother with a young child gets on the bus. The child doesn't want to get out of the stroller (she got back in after getting on) but the bus rules state that all strollers must be folded up and stored while the bus was moving. The bus driver is in training, and the bus driver supervisor is watching to make sure the trainee follows the rules.

Set up chairs to form a "bus."

Give everyone in the group a card or a role. Explain to the group the situation and who everyone is.

We will run through the scenario several times (but I don't usually tell participants that). As the group acts out the scene each time, pay attention to what they are doing so you can discuss it afterwards.

First run-through: Don't intervene, just act out your roles.

Questions/ Main Points:

- How long did the scenario last?
- How long did it actually last?
- How did you feel (adult, driver, passengers)?
- What did you do?
- Who was feeling judged?
- Who was feeling powerless?

Subsequent run-throughs: Intervene if you wish.

Questions/Main Points:

- How did they intervene?
- What was effective?
- What might have been better?

Do the scenario at least three times total. Depending on how people choose to intervene, the discussion will follow those points. Here are some common topics:

Q: People in the back of the bus don't want to get up and walk all the way up to the front and then help because it makes a bigger deal out of the situation.

A: If you are in the back, making a general empathetic comment to those around you helps others have empathy, and helps ease the tension, even if the parent never hears it.

Q: How does the bus driver's role differ from the passenger roles?

A: The bus driver is in the perceived position of authority. If the driver were to step in and help, that is going to set the tone for the rest of the passengers. Talk about how that relates to your work environment.

Bus Driver

You are in training, and your supervisor is sitting on the bus making sure you follow all the rules.

One of the rules is that all passengers must be in their seats, and all strollers folded up before the bus can move.

Passenger

You are a passenger on the bus. You are running late for work and are anxious to get going.

After the first round, you can step into the situation whenever you feel comfortable.

Passenger

You are a passenger on the bus.

After the first round, you can step into the situation whenever you feel comfortable.

Parent

You are a parent with a three-year-old child. You have taken the bus with your child many times. You know that one of the rules of the bus is that all passengers must be in their seats, and all strollers folded up before the bus can move.

Bus Driver Supervisor

You are training a new driver. It is important that you are upholding all the rules and setting a good example for the new employee.

One of the rules is that all passengers must be in their seats, and all strollers folded up before the bus can move.

Passenger

You are a passenger on the bus.

After the first round, you can step into the situation whenever you feel comfortable.

Passenger

You are a passenger on the bus.

After the first round, you can step into the situation whenever you feel comfortable.

Child

You are a three-year-old child riding the bus with your parent. You don't want to get out of your stroller and sit in the bus seat, even though your mom keeps telling you to.

Sample Scenarios

You are working at the box office selling a membership to a woman with two small children – one child is pulling on her mother’s arm and whining, “Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, Mommy…” and the other child is wandering into the gift shop.

Possible interventions could include:

- Signal another employee to entertain the kids while you help the woman with the paperwork – or vice versa.
- Tell the woman it’s ok to attend to her kids – there are other options for purchasing a membership.
- Smile and let the woman know you understand how challenging keeping track of kids may be.

You walk into a gallery on a busy day. A two-year-old is crying and appears to be alone. Suddenly a very stressed-out looking woman picks up the boy by his arms and sets him down on a stool. Next she growls, “Here!” and shoves a cookie into his open mouth. He stops crying and eats the cookie. The woman sits down beside him, hands him a bag of cookies, and then puts her head in her hands.

Possible interventions could include:

- Do not enforce the “no eating in the galleries” rule.
- Start playing with a prop or exhibit nearby.
- Encourage the woman by saying something like, “You are being so patient.”
- Strike up an unrelated conversation.

It is closing time and a parent is carrying/dragging their six-year-old child to the door. The child is having a tantrum and the parent is looking very frustrated and embarrassed. You hear the parent say to the child, “Just wait until I get you home.”

Possible interventions could include:

- Smile and say, “thanks for coming today.”
- Let the parent know it’s common for kids to have a tantrum when it’s time to go home.
- Offer a poster or other give-away item if it’s available. But, don’t try to sell something.

Non-Museum Scenarios

A family of three children and one parent is seated next to you at a restaurant during the dinner hour. The parent appears to be helping the smallest child settle into his seat when the older children begin asking when will they get the soda pops they ordered. The children are growing louder starting to complain. The parent begins to sound agitated and stressed.

Possible interventions include:

- Asking mother directions to the bathroom.
- Offering a story of your own about a time when you brought children to a restaurant and things didn’t go totally smoothly.
- Offering compliment: “Your children are beautiful.”
- Smile, tell the parent it is okay.
- Say to one of the children, “Isn’t it hard to wait when you are so hungry and thirsty?”

You are in a large grocery store when you begin to hear a child crying somewhere out of sight. As you turn down the next aisle you see a child sitting in the infant seat of the cart, crying, and a toddler in the basket also crying. The parent appears to be looking for something away from the cart but is also telling the children, “stop that crying” from down the aisle.

Some possible interventions include:

- Smile at children.
- Approach the mother and ask if you can help her find an item.
- Approach the mother and state, "Isn't it hard to shop with the kids? You are doing a great job!"
- Approach the mother and say, "I know she/he is upset, but your child has great pitch!"

You are on a very crowded airplane when a parent and small child are seated next to you. The child is agitated and begins to whine. The parent is looking around appearing nervous...

Some possible interventions include:

- Smile at the parent.
- Strike up a conversation about airplanes and how difficult it is to travel with children.
- Play peek-a-boo with the child.
- Offer to help reach toys or blanket.

You are in a department store shopping when you come across a father and young preschool-age child. The child appears to be having a tantrum and is on the floor yelling and kicking. The father is looking very stressed and is attempting to get the child to stop. The father starts to raise his voice...

Some possible interventions include:

- Approach the father and say: "It's okay, it happens at least once to all parents. You are doing a good job."
- Ask the father an unrelated question, "Do you know where the shoes are located?"
- Offer an understanding smile.
- As you pass by, say to the father: "I totally understand," or "Hang in there."

Other Scenarios

- You are in a crowded elevator. A parent is holding an infant who is crying very loudly. The anxious looking mother apologizes to the other passengers as the baby cries even louder.
- In the lobby you observe a kindergartner run to the front door screaming. Her parent grabs her by the arm, but the girl breaks free and tries to open the front doors, still screaming. Her parent puts both arms around the child, who is now kicking, flailing and wailing, and physically restrains the child. This continues for three to four minutes with no sign of stopping.
- You are in the museum when a parent carrying a screaming child passes you on the way to the stairs. The parent is trying to calm the child by telling him that they're going to stop at McDonald's, but the child just screams on.
- You are cleaning up after an activity when you see a woman with her hands on her hips. Her child is heading down the stairs when she calls to him loudly, "Did you hear me?" The boy appears to ignore her, at which point she yells, "Did you hear me?"
- In the coatroom, a four-year-old girl refuses to put on her coat. Her parent pulls her arm and tries to force the coat onto the girl, but is not successful. Next the parent pushes the girl to the floor.
- A mother has been trying to coax her three-year-old daughter into leaving the museum for the last 10 minutes. Each time the mother says, "It's time to go," the daughter shakes her head and says, "One more minute." The mother is beginning to look and sound frustrated.

- You walk into a gallery and hear a father telling his toddler that it is time to go home. The little guy starts screaming and his father, with his face turning red, picks him up and heads for the door.