

AMY: All right, everyone. Good morning. Thank you. Welcome to our presentation this morning, *Practical Strategies for Chronically Disruptive Youth*. We're very, very pleased to have with us today Dr. Deborah Crockett. Deborah is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist and serves as the Lead School Psychologist and Graduation Coach for a school in Fayette County, Georgia, that specializes in dropout prevention for at-risk high school students.

Among her many accomplishments, Dr. Crockett served as the first African-American President of the National Association of School Psychologists and the Georgia Association of School Psychologists. She's been the recipient of numerous awards and honors for her contribution to the profession of school psychology, including School Psychologist of the Year and the Lifetime Achievement Award, both presented to her by the Georgia Association of School Psychologists.

For many years, Dr. Crockett has been a driving force behind the National Association of School Psychologists Education and Research Trust Minority Scholarship Program, which is designed to provide financial assistance to minority candidates who are entering the field of school psychology. We're very pleased to have her with us today. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Deborah Crockett.

DR. CROCKETT: Can you hear me now? I am very pleased to be with you this morning. I'm coming from the frozen tundra known as Atlanta, Georgia. I was so excited to get to a city where the temperature was higher than where I had left, and where I could walk on the pavement and not slip, slide, and wonder if I'm going to break something that's important or even not important. So I am so happy to be here with you.

And it worked out very well. Our school has been closed all week, and so, I didn't have to have that usual anxiety in the back of my mind, what are my kids doing when I'm not there to intervene? And so, the weather worked out to help me in many ways, even though it has been a challenge, and it was a challenge to get here. But I am so happy to be here. And thank you, Amy, for that introduction.

I want to talk to you a little bit about dropout prevention, and really about our program and how we handle some of the chronically disturbed youth and some of our disruptive youth in the county where I work.

And this cute little girl is me. That is not funny. I'm one of those children who sometimes, when you look at the data, the prediction would be that I would be a school dropout. My father had a third grade education, and he barely read and write, although he had a love for learning. My mother had an eighth grade education, did not work, was basically unskilled, other than just being a woman.

I had five sisters younger than I was. The major books in our home were the King James Version of the Bible, the Old King James, so one that's very lyrical, and poetic, and difficult for some people to read and understand, occasionally one of the local newspapers, and sometimes a magazine that my dad would pick up.

He was what was called a day laborer. He worked what we called, back in the day, is, he worked in white folks' kitchens. He could cook. And he instilled in me and all of us a love for education, a love for cooking, you can see that I don't miss many meals,

a love for God, and a belief in ourselves. But you don't see that oftentimes when you look at so many children.

And just briefly, out of the six of us, all six of us are college graduates. I have a Ph.D. in School Psychology. My sister, Mya, has a Ph.D. in African Art History and Romance Literature, whatever that is. My son is in the Air Force, and I'd tell you what his specialty is if I could remember it. I know it has something to do with computers, and fuel, and planes. That's all I can do. Because when he tells me about fuel school, I go off into a zone.

My nephew, Chris, is in college in Mass Communication, Videography, Set Design, Music, and something else. I don't know. These kids have majors now that just aren't a name. They don't major in psychology. They major in a phrase. And my niece, Mary, has a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from Georgia Tech, and her research specialty is DNA. She sends DNA into outer space. She's worried about this next whatever it is is going up, the Challenger or whoever it is. And she was on the team from Merck that developed the platform for Gardasil, and she was 26 years old when that happened.

And so, I'm saying all that to say when we start predicting about kids who come from certain backgrounds, we need to be real careful. And what made the difference for me and my siblings was school and a nurturing school environment, along with a nurturing home environment. My parents never went to the school. Well then, we were goody-goody little nerds, but they never went to the school.

And so, sometimes I tell, you have to tell the teachers when you say, parents need to come in. We need to meet the parents where they are. My father and mother didn't want to go to school because they felt the people there were educated. They were ashamed to go because they weren't. And they were given pieces of paper to sign sometimes that they couldn't read or understand. So I urge you, and I'm sure I'm preaching to the converted or to the choir, but keep in mind that all people are not at the level where we think they should be when we're working with them.

And these are kids sometimes that you can nurture, shape, hone, and they can become the people who make a big difference. None of us ever thought we would have someone in my family who would get a letter from Merck saying, congratulations, even though she left to come back to, guess what, teach, and they thought she had lost her mind, that the platform your team has been working on has developed the basis for Gardasil for HPV. And who knows, those chronically disruptive and disturbed children that we work with on a day-to-day basis, ten years from now, what they may do to cure the arthritis, the cancer, or whatever, or be on the road to it.

I work in an alternative program by choice. Some people say they are sentenced to alternative programs. I chose to go there. I fought to get there. I waited almost a little over five years to get there, and I will fight if they try to move me, because I love working with children that so many people sometimes have written off, not just the schools, but their families, and, oftentimes, society.

When you think of alternative schools, and this is all I'm going to say about them, I just want you to know, there are typically three types of alternative schools, those that seek to make school more challenging and fulfilling to all involved. And now, we're calling those charter schools. Then there are the type two schools where kids are, essentially, sentenced to attend or they're the type three, where there's presumed to be

some need for remediation or rehabilitation. Our school is probably a combination of the two. Even though they're not sentenced to attend, it's an option for them.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the structure of the school. A lot of times people say, well, why do you talk about the school so much? Because it's a child-centered school, but you need to know all of the parameters that are around that child to buffer that child, so that that student can be successful. And all of those layers have meaning and support, and they're very important for what happens.

Our mission is that we exist, and sometimes we have to remind ourselves, we exist to serve the needs of that middle and high school student who cannot remain in a traditional school setting. That comment is a reminder to me. This can be to prevent them from dropping out, to help them stay on track, and to help them to develop some skills, academic, social, and emotional, in a setting that is supportive and gives them lots of feedback, opportunities to make mistakes, to be corrected, and then, go back into a traditional school setting because that is always our goal.

We have two major goals with our kids. If they're near graduation, to get them a high school diploma, or if they're not, to get them back in a traditional school setting with a set of skills. And all the time they don't make it to the end of that set, but they have that foundation to be able to learn to function in that larger setting, where all of the layers of support that we have are not necessarily in place for them at all times.

We believe that the educational environment for any child, and you've heard this before, we've heard this for years about safe schools. It has to be safe, secure, orderly, and comfortable. And comfort is not just the room temperature. How comfortable does that student feel in that environment to be who they are, yet to have some of those rough edges shaved off of them or curved or whatever?

That education must be developed within an accountable, individualized study plan for each student. And this is not an IEP in the traditional special education setting, but an IEP for this student period. What is that individual plan? What do you need? How are we going to get you there? What's your participation piece? What is it going to look like when you transition back, either to your home school or out into post-secondary options? And then, the educational environment must have clearly defined rules with consistent enforcement.

Amy Smith and I were talking, excuse me, about that last night, that there are times when something happens and the decision made by the principal is not exactly what I would like to see happen. But one of the things that we do is, and the vernacular, we have each other's backs. And he is the ultimate decision-maker, and we support him. We may talk about what happens after this child is out of the room and talk about other ways to do it. He's had to do it with me sometimes. But that's how we work together to keep that environment safe, warm, nurturing for students.

We also feel that effective communication within the school, and then, among people who are with us, not just the school, but the parents, the community, and you will see who we work with in the community, and people within the school system who are not a direct part of our program.

The teachers, staff, all of these people, community people, share responsibility for the students in this setting. We talk about that with all schools. You know, the schools belong to the community, everybody has a share, has a responsibility. We are heavy on enforcing that belief. If you say, I have a responsibility in this school, great.

And we don't tell you, we let you know what our school is about, where our needs are, how can you help us meet that need? Sometimes it's money, sometimes it's people, sometimes it's a ride to the therapist, sometimes it's becoming a mentor. We have a whole list of things that people do.

What's also important is that we do our ongoing self-evaluation, looking at what we do, instead of just sitting back on our laurels, look at what we have done that's successful or is it mediocre, and where do we really need improvement? That can be painful sometimes.

Because you think I'm really doing a good job, these kids are leaving, they don't come back, yea, pat ourselves on the back. But that doesn't necessarily mean that we're doing as well as we can. So we really have to hunker down sometimes, and look in and see what's going on, because in the end, we want our kids to be these confident, self-reliant, ongoing life-learning learners.

When we talk about cognitive development, we know that cognitive development starts at conception and stops when you die. So for some of us who intend to live to be 500, I've got a long way to go. I don't mean I'm going to be working that long anyway.

Let's talk about who is in our school, students who are chronically disruptive. Chronically disruptive at middle school looks very different than chronically disruptive in high school.

Chronically disruptive in middle school can be a kid who has had 20, 25, 30 referrals, discipline referrals, not tardy. Tardies don't count into that. That's an attendance issue.

We're talking about a student who is disruptive in school, to the point they're disruptive to their own education and/or other students in their classroom. We do look at students who cut class, who hide, who run away from the school, because what's happening that this student is not engaged or that this facility, where it's their home school, is not able to keep them within those boundaries. And some of our students, unfortunately, in terms of that chronic status, they have attacked some other student, involved in gangs, drugs, bringing weapons to school. The whole plethora that you see, we see also.

High school level, it's a little different. These kids typically have broken one of the three major rules, drugs, gangs, sex on the school grounds. Although we do see this in elementary, I mean, I'm sorry, in middle school kids, I keep saying that, elementary. Yeah, I know it's happening, but we don't have to do elementary yet, thank God. But we do see it in middle school kids, but not to the degree that we're still seeing it in high school.

Students who have been expelled for whatever reason or who are on long-term suspension, students returning from incarceration, and we have some special kids. Sometimes we have kids who, their behavior at school is exemplary, but in the community, they have done something to get in, they may have charges pending. They have not gone to court yet. They may have a case that's in abeyance.

And so, it's something happened in the community that has brought them to the juvenile justice system. And what I do is intervene in their behalf, and try and get the judge to allow them to come to alternative school for a set time, look at what their behavioral and academic functioning is in that setting.

And then, when that trial comes up again, to go back, when the abeyance is off, and say, this is how successful they've been. What can we do to keep this student in regular school? And there are consequences for behavior. I accept and understand that. But my petition to the judge always is, but there are also consequences for a student who doesn't get his or her education. So how can we keep our populace educated and put some investment in this human capital, before we place that consequence on them? So those special cases are growing faster than I had hoped.

Once we get a referral, we do not seek out students in our program. The schools send them to us. The community sends them to us via the DJJ or DFCS, Department of Family and Children's Services, DFCS. DJJ, Department of Juvenile Justice. Sometimes I forget I talk in letters. We have what we call letters meetings, and we don't say many words. Everything is letters. Especially at people, you know what I'm talking about.

But one of the things that we have found to be very, very successful is, we don't just take kids in, and they come and they register, and you give them a schedule and send them to Mrs. Smith's room. We actually do a face-to-face intake with the parents and the student. At least one parent is mandated to attend. The student is mandated to attend.

I pull all those files. Some of that information goes into the secret files, as everybody at school calls it. Because sometimes I don't want everything that this student has done out into the school. It's not that I don't trust my colleagues, but paper has a way of getting to places we don't want it to get to. And so, that's my first shield for those young people.

But they come in and we explain every aspect of the program. Most alternative programs don't do that. If you don't bring the student and the family in, and explain to them what their expectations are in detail, talk to them about what it means, let them ask you what it means, then you don't have all of this, oh, I didn't know that that was going to happen if my child did A, B, C, D, or E. So immediately, we start out on the same page with the parent, the student, and us. The teacher that this child may potentially be assigned to is included in the meeting, the administrative person who handles discipline is there, and I am there.

They must successfully complete this interview process. Now I have had students to tell me where we could take our alternative school and place it, although that's not anatomically possible, but they have the opportunity to express that desire. 99.99 out of 100 kids choose to come. They don't like it at first.

But once they get there, the major thing they don't like is, we do have a dress code. No gang colors are allowed. Everybody has to, they have to, we all wear khaki pants. You can wear white, gray, or green polo-type golf shirts, cannot have any writing or insignias on them, undershirts are all white, socks can be black or white, sneakers, that's it. And when it's cold, you can wear a zippered jacket. But when you're in school, the jacket has to be plain and simple, so these browns and things are my clothes now. Funny colors. And you cannot wear it zipped up, and you cannot wear that in the building. Kids don't like that.

The laces in the shoes have to come with the shoes. If you have tattoos that are gang signs or could be perceived as gang signs, they have to be covered. The end. No discussion. So you cannot have handkerchiefs and things that are colors, you cannot

wear. If you have religious reasons, then you bring and you show it. And I have yet to see anybody who had a religious reason that says they had to wear a scarf that had a crown in the middle that had to be tied across their head, with the crown exposed to the rear. It may happen.

But we go through that. We talk about the fact that a plan of study will be developed for that student, that there is an attendance contract. We know from research kids who don't come to school do not do well in school. When you start reducing instructional time, what happens? The more the instructional time goes down, the more likely they are to be a chronic in their behavior in school to not to finish school. Personally, I want everybody to get a job and go to work to help Social Security, so I can get mine. So I tell everybody there's a personal investment here. The kids think it's funny, but I'm serious.

There's a behavior contract that students sign. And they say they cannot bring a cell phone to school. They cannot have an iPod, MP3 player. They cannot bring weapons to school. No cigarettes. No lighters. They cannot bring any writings or drawings that are not related to school work. And we know that there are no courses in our program that require you to draw or make drawings, other than biology, and that's handled on the computer, and it doesn't go home.

And so, all of this is spelled out. The jewelry they wear. They cannot wear jewelry that is in my, and I have a gang notebook that's updated daily, and they can't wear any of those things. Anything that will cause disruption in a school environment is forbidden.

They can only wear a black or brown belt. They cannot wear insignias on the belts. Our boys like to wear the big, old Confederate belts to start the fights with the guns. And if the guns are crossed down, well, one thing. If they wear the buckle down, it means one thing. You flip it and it's up, it means another thing, and all of that. So just leave it at home, and we don't have to deal with that.

Kids got upset because they can't wear their Malcolm X shirts. No, because they use that as gang signs and they hang things off of it. So everything is plain and simple. As one girl said, this is the most vanilla place I've ever been. Because over the summer they painted all of our walls just white, and we've got new white tile down on the floor. So if they drop anything, you can spot it easily. And it sounds funny, but, again, it says safe, orderly, controlled environment.

There's a parent responsibility contract to tell the parents, you are responsible for getting your student to school on time. If you don't, you call and you let us know. Because if that child is not there by 9:01 and school starts at 9:00, we call them.

Academics. You're expected to come to school and do your work. The students are not allowed to talk in the classroom, other than to ask the teacher for assistance. So the two of you do not talk to each other during class ever. It's just not allowed. If you don't talk, that means you can't plan the fight whenever or whatever. You have to do that on your own time. At school, it's academics only.

One of the things that we try and do is to make sure that the individual education plan directs the student toward getting those credits they need to move on to their appropriate grade level. Sometimes we do have kids who get, in fact, last semester we had one girl who came in finally, and she had resisted coming to us the whole year. She was out of school a whole year because she was expelled for a year.

When she came back, she said, I don't want to go to my high school. I want to come to the alternative school. And she made up 18 courses in one semester because of self-paced, independent instruction. She wanted to know, what are the courses she needed to go back to her high school in January as a senior? I gave her the list. She said, that many? I said, you want a plan? We can sit down and plan it. We can make it happen, if you will do it. And she did it. I won that bet. Not with her, but with some other people.

Right now, we're not offering all of the courses that our traditional high schools do, and that's physical education, general PE. We keep the kids in our building, and we don't have a gym. Even though there is a gym in the complex, transporting kids from one place to another, you know about transition. And we've made the decision that we don't want to put that onus on the kids or the teacher to take them from building to building. And AP courses, my county is a huge AP county, so they don't get AP courses in our program because we don't have a highly qualified teacher in those areas. We're working on it.

As I said, students are expected to be at school every day. If they're absent, a parent is going to be called. If they don't respond, we have a police officer on staff. And every now and then, he has to make a little run for me. But parents, students, we all know where the children are. We know what's going on.

If you keep coming in regularly and I think you are a little bit self-medicating, especially if one eyelid is down here and the other one is over there, so I think you have a medical problem. There's a school nurse we can call to come and check out your eyesight for us. Or we might have to make a little referral to the super program or somewhere else. You know, as one boy says as he stumbles down the wall, he can't even hold onto the wall to walk. And he's saying, you ain't rolling me. I said, no, it's not you, sweetheart. It's your feet. We're going to work on that with you.

We're not a large school, and these are the people that we have on staff all the time. And so, you can see, we have six teachers. The good thing about our classroom, and the reason once kids get there they don't like it the first week, and then, at the end of their time, they don't want to leave, it's one teacher to ten students. The teachers love it because they get to work with the students who need more time, opposed to the students who can work on their own and who just need assistance when they ask for it.

We have a special education teacher and a para-professional for that special education teacher, in addition to the other two para-professionals that we have that can float among classes.

One of the things, again, I was talking to Amy last night about all of us are everything in the school, except teachers. I mean, sometimes I'm doing bathroom duty. Sometimes I'm calling parents. It depends on what is needed, who's available, and we get it done.

So, you know, and it's lunch time, sometimes I'm, the lady said, every time I see you in a different place. I said, I'm multitasking. I mean, I answer the school phone. Sometimes I'm the school secretary. Whatever. A lot of the work that I do on my computer, I can do it from anywhere. I can work from home, I can work at the secretary's desk, I could work outside the bathroom the work, wherever I need to go.

We have several other supports, and our school system does pay for a police officer to be in our program. Now we do have school resource officers in every middle

and high school, and we have, but they're different. We have a police officer who carries a gun, handcuffs, a Taser that's fully charged, riot stick, the whole, full gear with their bullet-proof vest, all of it. And the K9s sit in the parking lot.

It's so funny. We have wrap-around services personnel that we can call in if we have problems, especially through DFCS and through DJJ. We work very closely with them. DJJ helps us a lot with mental health services for students whose parents cannot afford those types of services, and they help us find either people who do help our kids get, especially if they're involved with DJJ, and so does DFCS help us get insurance sometimes to cover treatment.

We just had a young man come back from a year of residential treatment. He needed it badly to get stable and to really start on that progression to being independent in the schools. We have mentors. And then, we also have access to any of the programs with safe and drug-free schools. In fact, this year, we're going to start one of their programs.

Students who are speakers of other language, other than English, we have translation services, support services there. I pick up the phone, I call Olga, she's there. If it's a language that Olga does not speak, and she speaks five, then she finds someone else for me. I don't have to go running around, trying to find that individual. I can call her and say, I need it. The parent's coming in at 3:30. I know it's 1:00. I need her here then, and she does it.

We have a school social worker that's assigned to our school to help me. Sometimes I can't go out and check on the lice and what have you because I stay in the building, but I have support people who can go out. This, again, keeps these kids in school. Kids will say, you know, they get lice, they can't come to school. They get this, they get that. They have chronic bronchitis, you know, been out of school two weeks. That's too long for bronchitis. Something else is going on. So we have people that can go to the home, do a little investigation, or, if I have to, DFCS can get involved.

The curriculum directors for the system, we are the only school, well, the only program in the system that has direct access to them. And so, as we're looking at this student who is still struggling with ninth grade lit and comp, his reading level is at second grade, we need modified materials.

I can go to the language arts coordinator and say, I've got little Amy, and I can lay it all out. Here's her academic history, here's what she's done in the last two weeks, here's how she's struggling. Here is where I have done some reading probes with her. This is where her problem is. I need other resources. And then, she can get them for me, even if it means she can get me a tutor. I have a list of math and reading tutors that I pull from.

And so, all of these resources are, again, to support these students, not to mention local businesses. What am I doing? Go away. I know I need help, but I just want you, thank you. Again, our program, all aspects of the program, are reviewed and identified. The students and parents sign contracts. I sign a contract with them. We all sign contracts, and that piece of paper becomes a part of our accountability.

The principal and I are the only people where there is contact from parents after school hours. We have numbers where they can contact us if there is a problem. Because sometimes it's so-and-so and so-and-so ran away again. I'm getting ready to call the police.

Let me call the probation officer and let's see if we can handle this, before you call the police, because the police results in another charge. Another charge can mean, if the child is on probation, that's a violation of the probation. They go back into the regional youth detention center. They may ship them out to a long-term youth detention center. And what happens? Education falls through the floor, and this kid is moved around the state. And so, we're trying to keep them where they are and get those supports.

And then, once we get them in the building and get them in the building, we have them. We're going to work on those academics. But that 24/7, 365, I keep saying, we are not Walmart. But when they're in there, what they need from Walmart is there for them. Whoops.

The educational plan is not just written by me. It's not just looking at the transcript and looking what they've done. The classroom teachers in the content areas, we all sit down together and discuss, what is the plan for this student? How are we going to get it done? We might put you on a nine week schedule to complete three courses. You might be on a 12 week schedule. And we might say, oh, my God, this child has had such trouble and the foundation is so poor, we're going to have to reduce and say, if we can get this student, this semester, through three courses, we will call that success. So all students are not treated the same.

We might, whoops, there we go. We look at all sorts of things when we assign students to homerooms, because our students move together from one class to another, one content class to the other. And we try to have a heterogeneous grouping that's not too heterogeneous that it's dysfunctional, but not so heterogeneous that they know each other.

We have five high schools, so the kids all know each other. Twenty thousand students, they all know each other. Eight thousand high school students, they know each other. They're all cheerleading, they're all lacrosse, and soccer, and football, and basketball, and baseball, because the community this school is in is sports saturated. And so, they all move around and they know each other, and sometimes that's difficult. So we try to focus on academic needs and special education, and then, branch out from there. Age, of course, we don't mix middle school with high school.

What are some of the things we do? The kids hate weekly progress reports. The parents love them, because there are no surprises. We tell them in the intake, every Monday, unless school is not open, you get a progress report that you review, review with your student, you sign, you send it back to us.

We tried something new last semester. Our success rate went up to about 99%. If kids don't bring it back, they get silent lunch. Lunch is the only time they can socialize. Nobody wants silent lunch. Not only do you have silent lunch, everybody else knows you have silent lunch because you're sitting at a table over there. Everything is over there, except the dunce cap, so they don't like that. So bringing them back to us, and we don't have to call the parents, that has really helped a lot.

They also get a weekly progress report on how they're behaving in class. If you're sleeping too much, if the teacher has to remind you four or five times the strikes that are on their desks, that you are talking when you're not supposed to be talking to someone, all of this goes home to the parents. Again, it's to let them know, and we talk to them. If you start seeing a pattern of the same behavior, that means we're having

problems in school. We want you to help us address it at home. We will bring you in, if you want ideas about how to do that.

All of the kids are told to have a place where they do homework. I don't care where it is, on the floor, in the garage, on the ceiling, in the bed, wherever, and to have a distinct time when you do your homework. Just because you leave school at 3:00 doesn't mean school is over. You need an hour-and-a-half of work every night because you don't go to school a full day. I want my time.

Rain . . . sleet, snow, weekends, my own children had to go through that. They used to hate me. School is out. School is never out. I want to sleep late. Sleep late. Sleep with your books. When you wake up, I don't care whether you brush your teeth now, bathe, whatever, but you've got to touch that book. After you do your hour-and-a-half, the day is yours. So my suggestion is, when you wake up, do it, get it out of the way. And then, you can go and have the rest of your life. But until you do, you have no life, other than the one I give you.

And boys are a little different, it takes a little while. They like to confront. You know, I tell them, I don't have testosterone, but I have, once they get to be teenagers, this is so easy. I have two things. I have the keys to the car and the remote control. And it's amazing how, oh, anyway. It's amazing. And all of you young men know, you've heard your mother say that. You want the car? Do your homework.

We have a lot of classroom monitoring. And when I'm not on the phone or on the radio or the Internet, and I usually do that before the kids come. Once the kids come to school, I'm in the classrooms. I'm walking around. So they never know when I'm going to bounce up. Prairie dogging is what I tell them. The prairie dog will be out today. I will pop up at any time, at any place, just be prepared. And so, if they are giving one of our teachers a little bit of trouble, then the prairie dog comes in, and I offer her the opportunity to go to the ladies room for a little while. And then, we just have to have an in-class teachable moment. And the principal does the same thing.

Nobody sits in our school, except the secretary, because she has to answer the phone. We're all out moving. We're all monitoring. If we see something about to happen, then we pull those kids, deal with whatever the issue is, that ten minute rule I have, from the time I pull you out to the time you've got to go back.

Students where I see they're going to need a little longer, they can come to my office. They can vent. My office is the one place, my little room where I have for them is the one place they can vent. They can be angry, they can cuss, they can snarl, whatever, and the stopwatch is running. And I'll say, okay. Now it's time for us to talk about what you're angry about, how you're going to handle it for the rest of this day, and what are we going to put in place for you to do the next time you feel this way?

And it may sound hokey, but it's not, because I tell them, the behavior is on you. All I'm trying to do is to get you to see the effects of your behavior on the environment and the effect on you, and what's another way you can be frustrated or angry, continue your schoolwork, and still deal with those emotions, because they're very real.

We all drive. How many times do you want to run over somebody? Not that I would feel that way because I'm a genteel Southern woman, but there are those times when that person cuts you off and you feel like you're going to go down the ravine. And it's like, mmm.

But we have those breaks in place, you know, the little things that come up. They say, if you ride over this, it will cut your tires. Well, we have those little strips in place. And we know that if we give in to that anger at that moment what the consequences are. And that didn't stop us from having them. What stops us is, we don't act on it. And that's what I tell the kids. You can be as mad as you want to. I just don't want you to act on it. Let me show you how to do that. And that's socially appropriate behavior, and a lot of these kids haven't been taught that.

We have a probation officer. We have one probation officer assigned to our school. So any student that's in the program, if they're on probation, that's the only person they have to deal with. So that makes it easy for this person to come to our school. If there's a problem, the student goes missing, I can contact our PO.

We can sit down together sometimes and talk to our kids individually or in small groups. We try not to go over three kids at one time. Again, the goal is to keep them in school, teach them some new behaviors to replace those old ones, or to move up a level maturity-wise and developmentally, and get things done.

I have no control over court-ordered drug testing. We would like very much to take it out of the schools, but we don't have any choice. And when DFCS also does it, we have no choice, legally. But it does happen. There is a gang taskforce, so we have assistance from the people on the gang taskforce with some of the kids. We've got a problem coming in soon. I'm sure that they will be in the school a lot. Did I go back? I think I got something out of order. Sorry.

But anyway, the instruction, let's talk about academics. Students are placed by grade and/or age, as much as possible. The students in our school are in grades 6 through 12. There's a big difference between a sixth-grader and a twelfth-grader. I bet you didn't know that. But anyway, our curriculum, believe it or not, is independent self-paced. That's why, if you really want to get a lot done, you can. And it's not a kid sitting in front of a computer all day. Our teachers are highly qualified in all the subjects that they teach. I'm Nationally Certified. That means I'm highly qualified in my area.

We have instruction packets that they can work on at school and take home. That's why they can be required to work, and we follow the same curriculum in our program that's in the regular high schools. We have some computerized subjects. A lot of kids like to work on computers. But when there are computers involved, there's a lot of monitoring.

All of our classrooms are the 21st century classrooms, got all of that really cute stuff, and the Mobi, and all of that. I love Mobi. And all of that's in there. So a teacher can, if a teacher sees, I've got all of these kids, but the root problem here, without regard to what the course is, is this, she can stop and say, okay. We are going to spend 15 minutes on grammar checks today because, across the board, I'm seeing grammar check problems. Of course, I have those too, so I always try to go in there.

But while they're working on the computer, in addition to the teacher being in there, again, I'm strolling through, because I know some children have difficulty staying on the right page. And so, sometimes I have to sit and help them. Para-pros do it. Sometimes our mentors work with their students.

We have special education services. Their IEPs are reviewed, and the IEP, whatever the IEP called for in their home school, we provide it in ours. For all of our

special education students who have a label of emotional disturbance, they get social skills and study skills in our program automatically. That's a default for them.

We also have a career center, where students can go on the fifth period, if they want to. They sign up, they let me know. We have Georgia, do you all have something called, like we have Georgia 411, where it's online. All students set up a Georgia 411 account. They can take career assessment. They can visit virtually schools in the Georgia Regent system. They can file for their student financial aid. They can sign up for SAT, PSAT, ACT, any of those things. And it's a host of tools for them.

And about once a month, any kids that want to go through the career center, I go with them. There are reading materials that they can take home with them. They check out and they take them home. There are some materials that I give them as they are doing this search. Because we encourage them to start thinking about, what are you going to do after high school? Now we even do that with the sixth-graders also.

Some of our other supports are, are you familiar with Reading 180? Okay. We have Reading 180 for students that are having difficulty reading. It's been very successful for our students. We weren't sure whether we were going to do it or not, but the students that have those very low reading skills, and, again, the reading teacher is highly qualified in her area.

And I talked about OdysseyWare, which is the, we're not in love with it, but we supplement it to meet the Georgia Performance Standards. So we have looked at all the skills under OdysseyWare, and we supplement it with other materials. So again, the students in our program are getting the same instruction as though they were in their home high schools.

We do create other individual pieces for instruction, as needed. We do whatever we can to keep the student engaged in the learning process. The more they're engaged in that academic process, the less behavioral problems we have. And keep in mind, these are the kids that their home schools have said, they're chronically disruptive. They don't participate in school. They're not passing their classes. They're not going to graduate. They can't pass the high school graduation test.

And usually by four weeks, they've got the routine down, they know the prairie dog or the badger. I have a whole lot of names, and some of them I can't even say in mixed company. But whatever they want to call me, that's their problem, not mine.

They know that we're going to be there. They know that we're going to keep kids on task. If it means I have to sit beside you because, in English, you're just not going to do it, you think. So sometimes I have to literally sit beside two kids, put my arm around them, put the pen in their hand, put the pen to the paper, press their head down, open the book, and say, now, let's work.

Nobody likes for me to do that in the classroom. Think about that 6'4" boy. You've got to excuse me, young man. And he's got some woman sitting there, annoying the crap out of him. But we do what we have to do.

The other is, one young man referred to the punishment from the deepest pits of hell. If they get really loud and disruptive in the classroom, and I hate for kids to have all that out-of-school suspension, it just, I don't like that. I said, if I have to be at work, they should be at school. And so, they get to come to my little special academic place, and we spend the day together. And most kids don't like Bolero, Aida, Madame Butterfly. I love opera. I don't care if they don't like it. Shehadazod, I love it. Oh, God,

don't you have any music that was written in this century? No, except this was, probably.

But anyway, they don't like the classical music, and I find it very intellectually and cognitively stimulating. I can't think of anybody this year who came a second time. I just feel so ignored. And all I have to do is walk in the classroom and say, what kind of day are we having today? I'm fine. And I say, I bet you are. I get paid the same . . . one boy said, you're going to lose your job. Nah, I don't have to worry about it. Nobody else wants to sit in here with you.

Behaviorally, we do use some of the components of Project ACHIEVE. And Project ACHIEVE got in this school because we had to start doing something, and Project ACHIEVE was what I was most familiar with, having, through the years, had the opportunity to work off-and-on with Howie Knoff. We choose what we know. Am I wrong? If it works, fine. If it doesn't, we modified it to support it. Howie said, it's not quite Project ACHIEVE. I said, whatever. It works.

I assess in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension. Typically, out-of-school suspension only occurs when a kid has had at least a dozen referrals for discipline problems in the program. And then, we have to do something different. And when there is some kind of physical altercation involved.

A kid yakking back, my hearing is not that good anyway. I'm sorry, what did you say? You want to do double-duty English today? I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. But there are some things.

And if they do other things that are grossly socially inappropriate in the classroom, to the point that it disturbs the classroom continually, then they're out until their parents come in. Out-of-school suspension, parents are required to come back. It's not a matter of can I, will I, should I? They're required to come back. If they don't come back, they might get a little call from DFCS. Because if they're 16 and under, there's mandatory school attendance.

And then, we have to sit down again and say, some things here are not working. And we have to find out, how are their needs being supported at home? Is there something else we need to do? And some of the parents do have to have parenting coaches because those kids have gotten fairly large, they're afraid of them. I mean, we have parents and all of you have those, where the parents are afraid of their students. And they're afraid to say anything or they don't want to hurt their child's feelings. Well, personally, I think parents should have a right to hurt their kids' feelings. They hurt ours. And I tell them that all the time.

My girlfriend tells me, I have sons, so all of us who have boys don't have grandkids. And she said, she has decided that grandkids are God's gift to people who did not kill their children. I said, oh, boy, my son is in trouble.

So the latest thing that we are going to start doing as a part of our safe and drug-free schools, we got safe and drug-free schools money for this. Are you familiar with Habitudes? I have got to learn it. I just got my books Friday, and where have I been? At home, so I didn't take them home with me, which was kind of stupid.

But anyway, but it's a way, it's this man who is a manager, and he started using these principles in his job, but it's a way of talking to kids about themselves and to developing new habits that they can use to be socially appropriate and successful in schools.

I looked at a sample video, and one of them was talking about, are you a host or a guest? And the kids answer the question, you know, I'm a host. You know, I'm the hostess with the mostest and what have you.

But then, what does a host do and what does a guest do? And if you're a host, you're a leader. So what kind of leadership skills are you presenting in your classroom with your students, talking to the students now, your other students, your colleagues in that classroom. And if you're a host, you're leading to good things. If you're a guest, you're a follower. Because if you have a party in your home and you're the host or hostess, you do all of this planning, right? Am I right? Am I right?

WOMAN: Yes.

DR. CROCKETT: Okay. And you try to anticipate things that could go right and things that can go wrong. But as a guest when I come, that's not my job. My job is to receive the hosting, so that means I'm a follower. I might eat the chicken and hate chicken. It might have too much salt. But am I going to say, eww, this is gross, it's got too much salt? No, you're not going to do that. You just won't, you'll find a way to move it around and hide it under the peas or whatever.

And that's what we tell those kids that, you know, we were reviewing this Friday. Are you a guest or a host? That was their homework assignment for Monday. And to look at what happened to cause you to be here with us, and was that guest behavior or host behavior? So that was just a sample of the lesson. I'll learn more when I read the books. And they're, it's a one weekly 20 minute lesson. How many of you are familiar with Second Step?

WOMAN: . . .

CROCKETT: So I guess it's something along the lines of that, but not quite as scripted. The students get a concept, and then, they have to take that concept, and look at their own lives and use it. So I think it will be interesting because a lot of these kids, I mean, you know, my colleagues say, you know, these kids can't be too smart. They're in trouble. I said, they got caught.

WOMAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: They're not stupid. They got caught.

MAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Because sooner or later, all of us get caught at something. The first time in my life I got a speeding ticket, I was doing 39 in a 25 mile an hour zone. The kids have had a field day with that. I didn't see the 25 mile an hour sign, the police stopped me, 39. I said, 39? That's crawling. I thought, well, yeah, it is.

But I said, but there were consequences to that. I was not paying attention to what I was doing, didn't notice the sign had changed, toodling along like I always do. The police stopped me. I am doing 39 in a 25 mile an hour zone. It was \$110 fine.

What do I do now? I look for those signs. That was like taking money and putting it in the street, and putting gasoline on it, and putting the match to it.

And so, what do I do? It has helped me modify my driving behavior. It really has. It was a wake-up call. And I said, a lot of these kids just have a wake-up call. But what we're trying to do is to teach them a new skill set and a behavioral set, so that they don't have to have that kind of wake-up call again.

There will be another one, but it doesn't have to be the one that takes them out of their school, where they can't attend school functions, they cannot go on the school grounds. If they do, they will get arrested for criminal trespassing. It's all these don'ts, and don'ts, and don'ts. And so, that's what we try to teach them.

Did I miss something? Okay. I keep hitting the wrong button. I'm sorry. I am PowerPoint challenged today. I forgot to bring my little thing, and I'm trying to do it, and it's not working.

What do I do, as a school psychologist/counselor? I review a lot of research. You know, my son told me that I needed a vacation from books. But I told you early on, I was never a non-reader. I cannot remember a time in my life when I did not read. I am never without a book. Books are everywhere.

When it's a wreck and the traffic stops, I just sit there and pick up a book. Or I've got books on tape. I've got books on my iPod, whatever. So reading is very, and reading the research, he gave me that job, I think, nobody wanted it. I'll take it. And so, but it also helps to have a conversation with my colleagues about what they do. They learn from me, and I learn from them, and it makes it easier for us to work together.

WOMAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. I thought somebody said something? Okay. Whatever, I don't know what you call it. We have what we call student support teams. And now, since the person who is responsible for response intervention in our system decided our school wasn't RTI level, she hasn't told me what level it is. I said, okay, whatever. I can argue with her, because everything is done independently for students. Traditional RTI does not necessarily work for us.

But we do, we are already looking at kids, and what do they need, and where are they functionally, and what do we need to do, and how do we need to move them around to get their needs met? So in some ways, I guess we are. And we do have a 504 committee, where, periodically, we have looked at kids. We do have kids that have some chronic health issues, and we've had to make modifications for them. We try to, based on our ongoing monitoring, anticipate what some potential student problems might be and address them ahead of time.

We coordinate all of the information that we have with our principal on a daily basis. Every morning, the teachers and I meet, before the kids come to school. Every afternoon, I meet with the principal. That's just habit. We're going to meet, we're going to discuss what happened. If he saw something that I hadn't talked to him about, he would say, well, what was happening with you and so-and-so and so-and-so today? We discuss it. We talk about it.

And he might say, hmm, that's getting to be kind of serious. And if it happens again, bring him to my office. Or he'll say, you know, that's fine, if you think you've got it

under control with that. If it starts to get worse or escalate, I want to get involved. And that's great, because I know I have that support.

And I do the same thing with the teachers. I noticed so-and-so and so-and-so doing, and she said, well, it's been a little bit of a problem. We only have one male teacher, five females. And I'm trying to work out some things with him, to see how do they work. And . . .

MAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Out of 60, 55 are boys, 5 are girls. So he is typically it. We're trying to work out some things to see how we can fix this in the classroom. If it continues to be a problem, I'll let you know. And then, we'll see what we need to do to take it to the next step.

There's a needs assessment that's done that the county requires. I summarize all the information, and discuss it with the faculty and with the principal. I team with other professionals to develop and implement small groups.

Right now, we have a small group of our young men who are gang members, and we're trying to keep that violence, really to keep them separated, even in the community. And so that the violence doesn't break out, all of their trials are in abeyance, right now, and I'm trying to keep them in school through May 27th. I don't have any control over the summer, but I'm just trying to get them through this second semester.

We made it through the first semester. Now we're trying to make it through the second semester to get a full year. If we can get them in a full year, they stay on their track they're on, right now, they will leave us, ready to be eleventh-graders, which is where they should be in the fall. So that's the task.

We do, in combination with other professionals, we teach basic self-management skills to students and sometimes to their parents. I'm a federally mandated reporter. If I see a kid with a bruise and I can see fingerprints where a parent, I tell parents, you cannot hit kids for distance. If you leave marks, and fingerprints, and bruises, and swelling, and cuts, you know, you can't hit for distance with kids.

You know, we've all tapped our kids. I told my son I would go and tap him on the head, not that it would matter, but, you know, you fish hook them, drag them back because something. But it's a difference when you can see marks like that. I mean, I have literally seen fingerprints on girls' arms. And, you know, that had to be some serious holding to get where you can see the little swirls.

And so, we try to teach students, if you're in an environment like that, how do you escape to somewhere else, instead of engaging in an argument and having it escalate? And we do that with the help of the Department of Family and Children Services, and through the police department, and through counseling. There are a million churches in my county, and there's a youth pastor, and I know just about all of them now, the ones that are around the school directly, and they all work with us.

And I meet individually with students every four weeks. And it gets to be kind of rough sometimes, but I like to meet with them. I like to hear their perception of where they are, what they're doing and how they're doing it. How have they made adjustments along the way, and how are their adjustments working for them, and make

suggestions for other things that they might do to make that happen. And the kids like it, after they get used to doing it, because the lights come on and they understand, I'm not telling them what to do.

I keep telling them, school is a walk, and you're walking down this road, and there are dips in the road. And sometimes it's a dip where you can step out by yourself. But then, there are other times when you need a person to throw you a rope and pull you out, help you find out how you got down in that hole, and then, you can walk on. You don't have to go back. You can keep walking forward.

And to use the skills that you're acquiring through school and to see a connection between the coursework that they're doing, especially the literature is the easiest, you know, what do you learn from the literature that you're reading? What are the life lessons you can carry away? When you start reading it, think about it. And even the teachers do that with them also. I talk to the parents. I meet with anybody on staff. And it's a lot of engagement of us and also with the kids. I can't see my watch. Okay.

We review educational plans ongoing, of course. Again, if the students need help, I like to have students develop their own behavioral plans. Mrs. Smith said to me that you are constantly sleeping between 10:00 and 10:15. Would you write three things for me that you think you could do to stop that from happening? I don't sleep then. Whenever you sleep, it's okay. Just, what are three things you could do?

I'm not going to argue with him about the time. I have been known to videotape. But when they get confused and say they're not sleeping, I love these phones now. You can do it right with your phone, you know. Right there, you can videotape and say, do you know who that is? I guess I was asleep. All right.

Now do you want to write three things you want to do or would you like for me to make you some suggestions? Which do you prefer? I'll do it myself. Okay. Just take a few minutes and think about it, and write them down. And then, we'll talk about how you can get it done. I want them to own the problem. I know what I'd do when I get sleepy at work, which is never. I don't have a chance between 8:45 and 4:00, but to let them do it.

And I also let them know I'm going to be monitoring you to see how your plan is working. And so, don't think I'm spying on you. I'm there, in case you need to raise your hand and say, look. I know I said I was going to do A, B, C, but I'm having trouble doing that. Maybe I need to change it. Can you help me or will you tell me, what did you see?

Or we also get, they love, if I can find some chocolate-flavored stickers, I would win the prize. But I do carry Hershey's Kisses because they know that I like chocolate. And they're not supposed to eat in class. And I'll walk in and I'll say, Mrs. Smith? Can I do a candy drop? Yeah. And I'll walk around and say, great job. And they, hey, I got the M&M. I got the first one. I got the this, I got the that. They love chocolate.

And I also have the red bucket. That's what all my candy is in, a red bucket. And they'll ask the teacher, they'll say, everybody got satisfactory on their behavior plan this day. Can she bring in the red bucket? Well, if I bring in the red bucket, they can get two pieces of the candy of their choice. Yeah, it's a little bit of bribery. Yeah, it's candy. But it's Friday, and they're going away. We won't see them until Monday. You know, let their mothers deal with their sugar high.

But it's, I didn't, you know, I said, oh, kids don't want candy anymore. Yes, they do. But it's not just the candy, it's the recognition that you saw them, you think they're worthy.

Like this one boy told me, nobody likes me. I said, well, that is not a true statement. No, you don't like me. I said, I like everybody, until you do something that causes me to change my mind and dislike you. So you start out being liked here. And I do. Some of the worst kids are some of my best friends. They are. I love, I mean, I just love them. They're so different and so easy. They think they're hard, but they're really easy, and we see right through them. We're reviewing . . . plans is needed, and again, that maintaining contact.

In group meetings, most of the people who come in are professional counselors, which helps me a lot. I assist, I watch, I learn from them also. It's like free staff development for me. I can follow up with some of the kids on some of the things that they learn, and I keep parents and teachers informed as necessary.

Some of the outcomes that we always tell our students, we want them to be more aware socially, emotionally, and behaviorally of themselves. A lot of these kids don't know when they're doing some of these things and what the impact of them is. We know, because we've been taught. They haven't. And they will argue with you. That's why, when the boy, I wasn't asleep at 10:00, well, whenever.

And I don't know if it comes from being married to a coach and having boys or being the oldest of six girls and going to an all-girl school, whatever. I've been called so many names and called so many things, it doesn't matter anyway. So why waste time denying it? But just to let them have some ownership.

As one boy said to me last year when he left, he said, the best thing about being here was, even when I am wrong, sometimes you all let me be right. I had never thought about that, until he said it, and how important it is for these young people to be right, even when they're wrong. So some little things, you know, you just let them go. Don't argue. And it's hard. Teenagers don't listen to arguing. Old people don't listen to arguing either. That's why they try to take your driver's license away and we won't allow it.

But, you know, nobody wants to be wrong all the time. Nobody wants to be outcast all the time. Nobody wants to be in trouble all the time. And so sometimes, we have to reframe those acts and activities, even though they're annoying the crap out of us. But we just, oh, whatever. Okay. I love that word now. I used to hate it. But then we have a teachable moment, be it individually or in a class. We want them to learn how to demonstrate successful in a personal, social, problem solving, and all of those nice things.

We had two girls who loved to fight last year, and that's how they got in our program. And they happened to be leaving school on a Friday, and they have to clear the perimeter. They're still on campus until they get off campus, onto the sidewalk across the street. They couldn't make it. They got to the sidewalk here, there's the street. They just needed to get in the street, over to the other side.

Their task was to become friends. We could never become friends. Well, you've got to become friends to get out of here. So do you want to start that process and decide how you're going to do that or do you want me to help you? I'll let Lynn timer do it. Yes, you will. No, you won't. I said, let me tell you something. I could make a

recording that says, yes, you will, and just hit the button as long as you can say, no, we won't.

So what are we going to do here? Let's start with, why do you fight each other? She took my boyfriend. What is it with girls all the time? It's always about boys. Is she still dating him? No. Then why are you fighting? He's gone on to somebody else, and the two of you are still fighting about him? Well, it's how she did it. They had a long discussion about what happened, how she felt dumped, and she felt embarrassed. She didn't know the other one was dating him. And all of this played out in a couple of hours in my office.

And they wrote their own plan as to how, I said, let me tell you something. Everybody is making bets that the two of you are going to fight before the end of the day. You don't tell me what to do. Absolutely. So how are you going to make sure the two of you don't fight? They left the best of friends.

It was touchy at times. They had to have a contract about what words they could not use. And I got tired of it. I said, okay, no B words. No, you can't say the B word that rhymes with witch. You can't say boy, you can't say brew, you can't say bring. You can say no B words, so find another word. I don't know what else to say. Get a thesaurus. It's right on your computer. Use it. And it was just eliminating some words from their language when they interact with each other.

And sooner or later, they were sitting together at lunch, they were talking, they were planning on going to, do you all have Sisters Together here? You know what Sisters Together is? It's a national organization of black women, well, young black women, who come together and talk to young girls about hair, and clothing, and nails, and all these things. And they go around to different cities on the weekends, and girls go, and they go in little packs and all.

Well, they decided to go, to get a group of girls to go to Sisters Together, and they were going to learn all this new stuff about make-up, and hair, and the latest on weave, and they told me all of these things. And I felt my brain swimming. But the thing was, they were so excited that the two of them came together to organize something to do with other girls to have some unity in the school. Okay. But it was a good thing.

Now whether they're fighting or not this semester, I haven't heard, and I haven't seen anything on their behavior reports, because I get to see all schools and every behavior. I can check their behavior, their academics, their everything, once they go back. So they haven't had any discipline referrals for a whole semester. For girls who fight, that is phenomenal. It took a year to get them there, but they managed it. See, I believe if kids are having problems, they should solve them, and all I should be able to do is watch. I'm going to send this to you. I'm not going to go through all of this. And these are just some general expectations that students learn scripts.

When I was learning stop and think, way back when from Kendall in the early '80s, I mean, one of the things I noticed is little kids learned it very quickly. They could say it, they could stop, think, what are my choices? Is this a good choice or a bad choice? I choose the good choice. I'm going to do it, and I'm going to give myself a pat on the shoulder. They could learn to do that.

But as kids get older, they don't want to do those little childish movements, so it has to become internal. And it's the stop part. If we can get kids to stop, you remember when you used to do freeze in schools? You know, people would say, freeze, and you

have to stop where you are. And kids would contort, and stand on one leg, and all that. But what we're trying to do with older kids is to get them to do that internally.

And sometimes I tell kids, you know, I have to stop. Because there are times when you're acting out, and it's something that we have discussed and we have an agreement, and you're breaking the contract. I am upset. You don't ever get upset. Nothing bothers you. And I said, you know why you think that? Because you don't see it. You don't see me doing stop and think, before I speak to you. I said, sometimes you'll see me do this, and you think I'm telling you to be quiet. I'm telling myself to be quiet. This is not a time for me to talk, until the temperature comes down. I have 212 on the board in my office. You know what 212 means? What does 212 mean?

MAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: It's the temperature at which water boils. If I'm working with kids who are boiling and I'm boiling, how much good am I? None. So if they have done something and I am hitting 212, we all chill. Sometimes I'll say, everybody has got to hit a chill seat. You've got to hit the chill seat, I've got to hit the chill seat. We all have got to calm down. You don't ever get upset. I'm upset now. No, you aren't. Why argue? I'm ready to talk. Oh, you're ready to talk? Okay, what are we going to talk about? You've got to stop doing this. I'm still calming down. Can you tunnel(?)?

If you play that music, and then I'll lose it, because they know if I, they don't like opera. And I don't know why? I don't understand that. But we talk about that self scripts. Chill. I need to calm down.

Most of the kids very early on, when they really are getting ready to blow, will tell the teacher, I have an emotional emergency. I need to see Dr. Crockett. They will call me on the radio. I go get them. Our kids don't walk anywhere alone. We go get them. And they'll say, I need some time in your office. Do you need time? Do you need to bring your books with you? Yeah, I need some time. Sometimes they'll just come in and sit down, and go to work. And I let them work, and then I'll say, can we talk about what happened? And they're ready to do it. When you're working with kids, a lot of it depends on you and how you think about handling inflammatory episodes with kids.

I'm better at doing it with kids than I am with myself. I mean, you need to be honest. I am passionate about some things, and I get angry, and I might blah, blah, and I have to do this. And I hate having to go back and apologize, so I've learned to do it more, whatever, to keep those words back. And kids notice that. They've gotten to where they know when I'm struggling. That fascinates them, because they think adults are perfect.

And I'll tell them, I said, you know, it's taken me time to learn some new skills for myself, so I'll give you time, but I need to see that you're trying. I need to be able to put it on paper that you're trying. That's all I'm asking, right now, is that you try. But also, you need to learn to find out, what is your tolerance level for certain behaviors?

Kids in my school where mixed races, Bearer and the N word, oh, my God. We have a boy who, he can't use any word that begins with N. That means no, never, no more, nine, neither, nothing, cannot use them, go to the thesaurus and learn some new words, because they're so inflammatory. But what are the words that inflame you?

I know one thing that makes me just boiling mad is when people refer to kids as trash. White trash, I hate that term, I just can feel my caps cracking, or we're just coming from a trashy part of town. I don't like kids referred to as trash. So you need to do some investigating for yourself also, because it's easy to tell kids not to lose it. What happens when they see us do it? And I don't know about you all, but I just hate self-introspection, where I've got to go and show all of my zits and what have you. Because we all aren't perfect, but, you know, sometimes we forget.

When I was doing my internship, the one piece of trouble I had, and I never mastered, is, I hate child molesters. I just do. And when I came to that recognition, I said to myself, what are you going to do when you're working in a school and there's a child who has molested another child? How are you going to help that child, the one who's the molester and the one who's the molestee, if you're saying, I hate child molesters? Because children molest too. Okay.

So you need to think about those things, especially when we're talking about giving kids the opportunity to practice and apply these skills. Because, sooner or later, they're going to talk about what they've done. Every kid that has been through our program, even when they didn't want me to know what they have done, wind up telling me at a time when I really didn't care because it was over and done with for me. Obviously, it was not over and done with for them.

And they have told me some things that just send a chill down my spine, but I could not shiver and carry on. I had to be the consummate professional. And you need to think about those things that cause you to do that and be prepared to not do it, and think about how you're going to handle it.

Making bad choices and using meaningful consequences. One of the things that I really love is that our teachers, when we talk about this, how many of you have had a teacher who said to you, well, I can't make that exception for A, B, C, because all the rest of the kids would be, it would be unfair to the other kids. I can't do that for this one.

Well, we don't have that issue because everything is individualized. The consequence for you is different from the consequence for this one, for that one, for that one, and so on. And students don't have to know why you get one consequence and this other one doesn't, other than in a broad, generic discussion when we do it in group. Accountability, consequences, and consistency, we talk about that all the time.

I'm going to speed up a little bit, because I want to give you a chance to ask me questions. I want to talk about some of our students that we have had. And we had a student who had an imaginary friend. Now the psychiatrist said it was nothing wrong with him, that he was just making a fool out of me. And I said, well, okay. What's new? I was married for 40 years. So he has his turn. But what we finally did, and I said, you know, he would cheat on tests. And it wasn't him, it was this imaginary friend helping him, because this imaginary friend didn't want him to fail.

I said, okay, here's the deal. Your imaginary friend is not enrolled here. So first of all, he can't come to school until his parents come, and we have to have an intake. What you mean? I said, see, remember when you came here? It was just you and your mother. Well, is your imaginary friend a girl or boy? It's a boy. Well, he has to come here with his mother, and we have to have an intake, in order for him to come to school.

I'm scared to come to school without him. I said, okay, I'm going to help you out. He can come to school, but he can't come to class. We're going to get a box and put

him in it. And when you come to school, you drop him off in the box. And when you leave, you pick him up.

Can he go to lunch? Okay, he can go to lunch with you, but he can't go to class with you. You have to take the tests by yourself, and you have to do all your work yourself. And does this friend have a name? No. Okay, well, if you name him, be sure and let me know, so I know who to call out the box. But he has to go in that box every day. Every day. And you pick him up. Don't leave him here. I said, you leave him here and he might get thrown away.

And I kept thinking, and he was serious. He was not . . . this child, it is something not right. I'm a psychologist. I picked up on that immediately. And I found out that his mother had gotten his Prozac medication confused, and she was giving him a double dose every day. And he was a little bit off. And so, once we got that straightened out, he was very concerned about his imaginary friend still. I think there were other things going on there. But the anxiety and the anguish around not having this imaginary friend, it dissipated.

I said, you know, one day he called me. He said, I'm so worried. I said, about what? I mean, I really think this kid has an anxiety disorder and they think I'm just over, whatever. But anyway, he said, can I just go talk to him for one minute? I said, okay, you know the ten minute rule. I take you out this door from the classroom, we're going to walk up there, you talk to him, and in ten minutes, you have to be in here, back in here, at the seat, doing your work. Okay, okay.

He walked up, I don't know what language they used, since you know word salad, that's on your own. Me, I like Caesar salad. Whatever. Do what you've got to do. We walk back, and he was fine.

But, of course, he's still having a little bit of trouble now that he's back in his home school because they don't want to do that. And my suggestion was to give him a box and let him just carry the box with him. It's empty, anyway. And, you know, just when he walks into his classroom, just say, Miss Smith, I'm sitting my friend up here with you, and I'll get him when I leave. It's harmless. And it keeps him focused, he can do his work, and everybody is happy. Well, most everybody is happy. Well, I'm still working with his teachers on that team.

We had this kid who, think about if you are 14 years old and you've been in 30, 35, I lost count, foster homes all over the Southeast. And after a couple of months, nobody wants you because you're such a pill. And you come to our school. First day, and this kid tells me to go and perform an act on myself that is not anatomically possible. I guess you could, but I don't want to go into that. But anyway, that's how he greeted me. And I said, oh, we're going to have an interesting relationship. What? Whatever.

And he would just, if you told him no or if you told him, you're late, you have to check in, you're tardy. I'm not late. Yes, you are. There's some things I can't argue with and I can't, I mean, it's the rule. If you're tardy, you go to the office, you fill out a tardy slip, you take it to your teacher, and all those things. And, I mean, he would just blow up.

And it had gotten to the point, when he's coming down, because we can see, the offices are such that we can see the driveway when people come in, we can see the

whole front of the campus, and we can see the kids as they walk down the driveway coming.

So my radio, Dr. Crockett, you need to come to the front. Your friend is coming in late. And I'm up there, and I said, look. I have a headache. You cannot blow up today. You trying to say I give you a headache? No, I had the headache before you got here. I just, I'm asking you to not contribute to it becoming exponential and filling up the hall. You use funny words.

I said, well, I tell you what. Sign your tardy slip, and I'll walk you to your classroom, and I'll write down the words, and you can look them up and tell me what they mean at lunchtime. Okay. I thought, how did I get away with that? I couldn't, I said, what can I do to keep this kid from blowing up? Because Mr. Principal will kick his hiney out because he has cussed out everybody in three or four languages.

And it got to the point where every day, I had to meet him. Every day, I had to be up there to meet him to walk him to class. Then we wrote a plan where I would meet him on Monday, but not on Tuesday, and we would see about Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. And I had to gradually taper that off. If we could get him to class before he exploded, he was fine. It's getting him from the front door to the classroom.

Once we recognized that, for some odd reason, as I said, the word in the school is I am crazy, and I use that whenever I have to. As I told one boy, I've been crazy longer than you've been alive, so I have a lot of ways I can show you how to be crazy. So let's not add a new one to my repertoire. What's a repertoire? Okay, I'm going to write this word down for you. Again, you go look it up. But some of these kids, once you figure out their pattern of behavior, they're easy. That's why I said these kids are so easy. Once you know the triggers, and then, you plan for them, then they're gone. Or they're not gone, but we can help him modulate better.

We had a student, and the student's mother was very depressed. All of you have seen depressed parents. You know how the hair looks, the clothes look, the expression on their faces, the way they talk, the way they act. And he would get so embarrassed when his mother would come to school. She was not treated. And he just got upset because they were making fun of him in the classroom.

So, of course, I told the teacher, I'll deal with him. You deal with your class. And I asked him finally, I said, you know, did it occur to you that your mother is sick and she needs help? Why won't she get it? I said, well, maybe she doesn't know how. Would you be upset if I helped your mom get some treatment? Would it make her stop looking funny? I said, well, I don't know. We have to figure out what's going on first. But do you mind if I try? Could I do that for you? Would you mind? And he said, she ain't going to do it. And I said, well, let me give it a shot, you know. Let me try.

I got with the social worker, mom was depressed, mom had had medication, mom had no insurance, went off her medication. The social worker said, let me get with DFCS because she is on welfare and see if we can't get Medicaid. She was kind of just in transition to welfare or transitioning off, I don't know. Because a lot of times, I don't know that information and I really don't need to know it, because there are other social service agencies involved. But whatever it was, either she was on or offing or whatever. And she was in that donut hole-type situation where she was not eligible for some services.

The social worker from DFCS helped her get her medication. You know, some of the drug companies now, if you're unable to afford your medication, they will help you get it. They may give you 90 days free. Did you know that? Especially AstraZeneca, and Merck now is getting on board, and Eli Lilly, but AstraZeneca has been really very helpful with some of our parents. Mom got on her medication, got a job after she got on her medication, and all of that anger, you could see it just, as her life skills went up, his anger went down.

This one was awful. This boy was 16 years old and in the seventh grade. He asked for a driving permit. And to park in our parking lot, the kids have to have a seal. Our tags are registered, but the kids have to have a parking permit. And I thought, this kid is in middle school and he's driving. How do I get around this one? I met with the curriculum instructors. I met with the principal.

We all sat down and discussed, what is the appropriate placement for this young man? The board requires these credits to be in place. The state requires these credits to be in place. Where is the loophole? And my principal said, you're always looking for loopholes.

I said, you know it's, I call it cockroach behavior. If you put the bait across the front door, I'm going to find a window or a crack or something to get in, because cockroaches know how to do that. I live in the South. We have palmetto bugs. You know what I'm talking about? They fly. Oh, my God. I don't care how much I spent on pest control, they get in in the summertime, I guess when you open the door. I don't know.

But anyway, and I said, there's got to be a loophole. And so, we petitioned the state for a waiver to do placement exams on him to move him from seventh grade to ninth grade. Now there's some problems with that because he's never been in eighth grade. So that means the eighth grade skills he has never, well, hadn't passed sixth or seventh grade. He had been placed in those. But there was going to be a skills issue, so how do we make that up?

We gave him the placement tests, school psychologist humor, and they were saying, well, he didn't pass. He's got a 69. I said, but with the standard deviation, he is on the high end. He's a little low on the negative side, but consistent when he's on the high end. He made it. Let's apply the standard deviation here because it falls in the range of the high and the low. Let's move him on.

And they're looking at me. It's like, loophole, it doesn't say we can't do it. The one thing, there's a school psychologist named Don Bersoff, who went back to school and became a lawyer. And the thing Don taught me, in special ed hearings, he said, the only time something is against the law if there's a law stating that. If there's no law stating that and it's not unethical, it's not immoral, then use it. I have never forgotten that. That was one of the best pieces of information I ever received. It's not unethical, it's not immoral, let's use it. When we talk about assessment, we say, we do not deal with a single number, we deal with the range.

We got him placed in ninth grade, we got him through six weeks of school, and what do you think happened? They moved out of town, and we haven't been able to locate him. But we kept him in school six weeks. Can you imagine what it's like that you are 16 years old and the longest you've ever been in school anywhere in your life is

six weeks? Because he's never been in a school that long. A day, two days, a week, four weeks, you know, one month, one school month.

Six weeks we could manage to keep him, and he moved. But you see, he was put there because of special circumstances, because he was older, they didn't want a 16 year old in middle school. Yeah, I mean, you know, he'd start a taxi service.

So I do pre-exit interviews with parents and students before they leave. And then, I'll do pre-exit conferences with the home school counselor and with any other school personnel. Special ed kids, of course, they have the transition, the IEP moved from us back to their home school. I say on here, assistance with developing the student's new schedule. The bottom line is, I develop that student's schedule because I know most of the teachers, and I try not to place kids where they're going to have a lot of difficulty. Sometimes the counselors at the home school don't like that, but usually I send a cc to the principal. And I'm a prima donna. It gets done. It just does.

Transition with any, if there any mental health services, if they're in DJJ, as I said, I will go back to juvenile court for them. If their case is in abeyance, they've had a good, clean record at our school, they're walking away with credits, I go back again. I petition the court on their behalf to get the judge to let their case remain in abeyance. If they're 16, and then, they turn 17, well, then sometimes, they want to take those cases, take them to the state court. As of last week when I was at work, thus far, the juvenile court judge has not moved those cases forward, and they have treated placement in our program as time served, satisfied.

And so, that's the other piece I have to hang over these kids. You're on probation. A part of probation is that you must attend school successfully. You come to school, keep a clean discipline record, have a good attendance record, pass your classes, I will go before the court for you. I will petition for you. But you have to help me. And then, you can go back to your home school without the fear that you're going to have a hearing on X date, and they are going to say, send this person to RYDC or to YDC. RYDC, the max kids can stay is 30 days. YDC, they can stay up to two years.

And so, to keep the kids in school and also, you know, I say, when you go back to your home school, you are going to have to continue what you've been doing here, there. Because the judge can always come back and say, nuh-huh, the fix didn't work. Go to jail. And that's not what you want. And so, even that helps.

Now, for you, if you're working in these settings, and sometimes we forget to do this, and I had to learn the hard way too, you have to take care of yourself and not feel guilty about it. Many times I've taken care of myself, but I've felt guilty. Oh, I should have been, oh, I feel so, well, and, you know, poor kid is doing this and I'm having a good time. Yeah, you need to do that. You need to recharge those batteries. You need to re-energize yourself. Because when you do, and then, you go back, you're fresh, and things that you were struggling for and trying to work out in your mind, they become clearer. You must do that.

At the end of the day, you must leave your work at work. I heard that when I was in my master's program and I thought, how do you do that? I mean, these kids are so needy, and you're going to, you know, when you've got that savior mentality that we get sometimes, you have to leave the work at work. You just have to. If you have to cut off your fingernails and shove your fist down your throat, you must leave work at work.

You must also recognize that you cannot save every child. I have shed lots of tears in my office when things didn't go well. When that boy left after six weeks and he was doing so well, I was devastated.

I give myself the same ten minutes I give kids. All right, you can be devastated for ten minutes. Set the timer. When it goes off, devastation has got to stop. You've got to go back to work. You've got to deal with what's in front of you. You cannot deal with what's gone. At first I thought, that is so cold, but that is so real. Because those kids are right there in my face, I cannot spend my time about that which is lost, when that which is there needs my assistance. So you may think I'm cold too.

You know what? And sometimes, as I said, you have to redefine success. I can write some beautiful behavioral plans that go nowhere, except to the back of the folder, and then, start all over again. And that's okay. I used to think it wasn't okay because, oh, what did I miss? Oh, maybe I was too this or maybe I was too that. Well, this is practice. I'm a practicing school psychologist. There's a reason we call it practice. Medical practice is practice. Psychiatry is practice. And the reason we practice is because we're not perfect.

And that's a hard lesson for people who like to help to learn, because we just want to do it right. We're going to do it, going to do it, fix this kid. And they are not a broken toaster to be fixed. They're individuals, just like we are. As I said, if I were perfect, I would not be starting Weight Watchers 2,040. We're trying to see who can do it the most times. But we're not. We forget that we are human beings too who have needs, and we have to give ourselves a break.

And we pat ourselves on the back, I mean, there have been times when I have said, you know, my principal has said, okay, so-and-so and so-and-so are leaving. Thank God. You know, well, you're the one who's always saying, well, there's always at least one achievement.

And I'll say, you know what? The one boy this year who left in December, I said, you know, he never used another word beginning with N. He had other problems, but he stopped that one. And it's small, but it's a baby step. I don't like baby steps for myself or anybody else sometimes, but we have to do things baby steps. Behavior change is so difficult. And there's some kids who don't change. They come in mad as hell, they leave mad as hell. As long as they're doing their academics, I said, you know what? I will fix what I can.

We've got some time. These are old numbers. Ninety-seven percent of all of our students pass all sections of the graduation tests, all five of them. Twelve out of 14 of our eighth graders pass the criteria and reference competency test that is needed to be promoted to ninth grade. And students who have successfully exited from the past two years, only 4 of 178 have returned. We have a very low recidivism rate. I don't think those numbers are going to hold, because the kids that we're seeing now are so much more violent and so much more difficult. Each year, they get worse. So I said, we're just going to hug these numbers while we can.

Because the reality is, the kids are getting more difficult. And there are a lot of reasons for that. Coming from a county where I do, where people have been so wealthy and so successful, and now, those resources that they once had, they don't have anymore. They don't have the tutors. The kids don't go to the tutoring camps in the summer. And these kids are very frustrated because they've had all of those

supports. And then, they start school in the fall, and they're ahead, because they've taken all of these things and they're able to move faster, and they don't have that now, and they act out.

And divorce and got more people going in the, we have a lot of military families, and they are separated. Sometimes both parents are gone, and the kids have to relocate somewhere or come back. There's a plethora of reasons for this. And the county itself is changing. So there's just a lot of things that are happening, and the kids are looking more and more severe. And we're just going to have to look at them again individually, see what do we need, how are we going to meet their needs, and continue to move forward. We have about, what, 15 minutes? Do you have any questions? Yes?

WOMAN: . . . you mentioned that the parents are required to come in . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Yes.

WOMAN: . . . you also mentioned about parent . . . because parents . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Let me . . . so let's see if I can remember all of this. She said, you mentioned that parents are required to come to the intake. Yes, they are. I mentioned that parents . . .

WOMAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: And do we do that? No, we don't. I have outside resources that do that. We have what we call, our safe and drug-free schools program is called CARE, Children At Risk in Education. And so, all of our kids are considered at risk. And we have seminars throughout the year. They do step parenting. They like that. We have step parenting, and our parents get to go. They don't have to pay the fee, they just have to buy the books. They have to buy the book. They don't have to pay the fee for the course.

If the child is involved with DFCS, then I work with DFCS to get a coach. If the child is involved with the juvenile justice system, I work with the juvenile justice system to get a coach. And we have something that we call community mental health roundtable once a month. And I can take a family in our county and say, this family, I'm working with Mrs. Smith. She's not involved with any other agencies. I need a parent coach for her. The student is having these problems, and I need someone to assist me, if possible, over the next eight to ten weeks to help her, in-home, deal with this. And they will find someone in that wrap-around services network to handle that for me.

And the resources now for mental health services are so slim. I'm sure you all are going through the same thing that we're going through. I find that you have to have your ducks in a row, and ready to jump up and scream first. One counselor told me, you always get up first. Yeah, that's why I sit up front, and I smile and wave, and I call people and thank them so much for what they do, and whatever it takes because we don't have the resources at school.

And I have to use the community resources that I can find and have access to. Some of the churches do mommy's day out and mommy's night out on Wednesdays. And so, we can get parents, even if they're not members of that church, they allow me to send parents, if the parents will go. And I'll tell people. I ask people, I say, are you a member of a church? You know, are you involved with a faith community? And if they say no, I say, are you comfortable if I send you to someone in the faith community for assistance? I have yet to have anybody to tell me, no, they wouldn't. Okay. Any other questions? Okay. Oops. I'm going to have to run, so . . .

WOMAN: I can talk loud . . . community, your businesses? It was on a slide . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Yeah. With the local communities, first of all, jobs for the kids who are old enough. Money, Target gave us a \$50 gift card at Christmas to say, use it however you need to. We do angel trees at Christmas. And, yeah, we have Christmas in Fayette. We don't have to have winter holidays. We have Christmas. And, you know, this . . . the manager said, use this however you want to. If you want to give it to a family for food, if you want to help a kid get uniforms.

Walmart helps us get uniforms. Old Navy lets us have uniforms when they're on sale. They'll say we're, I get a text. The company is having, you know how when you see the sales for Old Navy, I get a text, usually three or four days ahead of time, before the sale goes out. They let me know the sale is coming, if they have gift cards they can give me to help students get uniforms and clothing.

Some of the churches will help us pay, if the parent is about to lose their apartment or their power is going off. Some of the businesses will do that. They have donated bicycles. But my principal, you know, I'll say, Mr. X, so-and-so and so-and-so has this program where they, and the county where I work is one of those old Southern counties, you know, where women are supposed to have those magnolia voices and the men take care of the business. I don't care what they think, as long as we get what I want.

And so, he does a lot of, I'll say, you know, do you know anybody at, can you talk to them for so-and-so? Sometimes, O'Charley's one time sent us lunch for the school. They had heard that we had some kids that didn't have money to buy lunch. They sent lunches. Chick-fil-A is just dynamite. I mean, Truett Cathy is just dynamite. They give us chicken biscuits, all kinds of things. So you just have to find out what companies in your community say that they are dedicated to helping schools and give them the opportunity to help you. And you can't be ashamed to beg. I am never ashamed to beg. Am I?

WOMAN: No.

DR. CROCKETT: I am not ashamed to beg. I think that, if you say no, it's an opportunity for me to help you understand why you want to say yes. And, you know, I hear people say, I hate begging. Oh, I love it. Who's got something that I can beg for that we can use?

One day I walked in, this is so funny, and my principal said, don't ask for any more paper products, okay? I said, what happened? And I walked through the office

and I said, whoa. Do you know how big the boxes are that toilet paper comes in? Well, when you walk in and there's a box, and a box, and I said, is it going to fall and crush us? And this company had some excess toilet paper and paper towels, and it was sitting in the office.

We didn't need to buy toilet paper or paper towels for a whole year. But that money that was in the school budget, we could use it for some other things. So begging is great. I think God invented begging for people who need help. Questions?

WOMAN: What do you . . .

DR. CROCKETT: What do we mean if parents . . . oh, if parents don't . . .

WOMAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: . . . we do with parents . . . placement. The alternative school, they're not mandated to attend. The alternative educational program is provided for students who want to continue their education after they have been expelled, long-term suspension, or returning from incarceration. That is one option. But there is private school they can attend, and there's home school.

And so, if they don't want them to come, I've had people who say, I don't want my child with those children. And I've thought, I'm glad your child won't be here, because our children are not that bad. But, you know, whatever. And they have other options. Again, mandatory attendance, even if they have been long-term suspended or expelled, if they're 16 and under. And so, that parent can be taken to court, if they refuse to do one of those three. Yes, ma'am? I'm sorry.

WOMAN: . . . I've been teaching for a very long time. And each time . . . reading class, of course, they're always . . . so then, I get . . . you know, I do . . . but I'm having a hard time . . . goes to behavior and . . . to use. And I know . . .

DR. CROCKETT: That's okay.

WOMAN: And, you know, and I'm not a social person on . . . so there are several . . .

DR. CROCKETT: . . .

WOMAN: Right . . . still meet when students tell me no, and there's just a . . . so when you're saying . . . you know, but . . . myself, you know, which is why we get along . . . but I . . . long-term, you know . . . that I can use to keep . . . myself. Do you know what I'm saying? If I had children, and if my children . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Not yet, not yet. Trust me.

WOMAN: . . . you know, they . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Be careful. God is listening to you.

WOMAN: Yeah . . . but what I'm saying is, is that . . . tells them no or . . . cusses you out . . . I have a lot of . . . you know what I'm saying? And if I'm not careful, somebody . . . is going to . . . so what I'm saying is, can you help me . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Let me offer you some suggestions. And this is coming from Zorro tongue. My son named me Zorro tongue years ago. There's a book, do you know the author of *Getting to Yes*? There's a book, you can find it online. There's a book called *Getting to Yes* about children who say no. Don't leave.

WOMAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: Okay. There's a book called *Getting to Yes*. But the other piece is, if a kid telling you no and cussing you bothers you that much, there's some issues that, like I said, there's some issues we all have. I'm not blaming you. I understand. I told you how I am about sex offenders. I have a very unique treatment that I would like to apply to adults, but they won't let me. They might offend, but they wouldn't offend that way again.

But anyway, and whether you do it through therapy, see, the good thing about being a psychologist, a school psychologist, I have a lot of school psychologist friends. Amy will tell you, we love to do therapy with each other. It helps save money. It does. It really does.

And if you don't, and I tell people all the time, there's nothing wrong with having a therapist. I have a therapist on speed dial, and I'm serious. I mean, he's right here on the phone. There are times when I have to pick up the phone and call, and pay the fee. I may moan and groan about it, but I have to do what I have to do to remain mentally healthy. In this profession, we need to be mentally healthy. These kids can drive you into the ground, if you let them.

And you have to build up a shore. You have to have some buffers around you too, so that when no comes through, you hear it, but you don't experience it. And that takes practice and coaching for you. It's okay for you to have a coach too.

In fact, I'm telling you, we all have sounding boards. Well, I have 25,000. I can pick up my NASP listing and call, and rant and rave, and there's going to be somebody on the other end of the line who is cool for my hot. Get you a buddy quick, fast, and in a hurry. Wherever you work, find out who the school psychologist is and say, I need a sounding board before I hurt somebody or whatever you think you're going to do. The other thing is, I'm not going to argue with you about no. The kids will learn it . . . your kids are under 12?

WOMAN: No.

DR. CROCKETT: They're under 20?

WOMAN: . . . but . . .

DR. CROCKETT: You haven't heard them say no. They have done no. Trust me. I know. They have done no. My son didn't tell me no, and he's never told me no to my face. He has done no. I know that. So don't worry about it. And if no is an issue for you, that's your issue to work on.

I mean, the kids tell me no all the time, and they tell me no in very colorful language. Sometimes I ask, can you spell that? And they think I'm crazy, but that is my way to calm myself down. Can you spell those words? Could you say that again for me, and let me write that down? That's an interesting phrase. And then, I want to know, can you spell them? It sort of halts everything. You need some, we'll talk afterwards.

WOMAN: . . .

DR. CROCKETT: We need to talk afterwards.

WOMAN: . . . shocked, you know. Then I'll say, well, you . . . if I tell you no, that's . . . so . . . you know, and many times . . . no, you know. And I . . .

DR. CROCKETT: There's another thing we can do. And you thought I was joking when I say to these kids sometimes, whatever. Arguing with them, you cannot win an argument with a child. You just cannot. And anybody in here, if you know how, teach me. I would love to know. You can't win an argument with those students. A, they know you can't hit them, legally. They know you can't kill them. They know a lot of things that we would think we want to do that we can't do, that you really don't want to do. You don't want to hurt that kid. You don't want to destroy that kid's sense of self.

That's why I tell people, they say, these kids have low self-esteem. No, they don't. They've got more self-esteem than everybody in the room put together. But they have compliance issues. Oh, what is the, I just lost it. Maurice Elias. I'll give you some names. I'll see you afterwards, because he has some good activities on compliance for non-compliant children.

Back to the reading, I wanted to say something about the reading. Your mixed groups, it may be you need to team. We have READ 180 for our kids. That's just one piece of the reading. Our reading teacher goes also into the classroom as a second instructor in that setting. And that might be helpful, if you're not doing that.

WOMAN: I tried that before, but the teachers . . . no, I couldn't . . . 80% . . . (inaudible)

DR. CROCKETT: Pick up yourself and come up front. Any other questions? We're going to get to yes with her. Any other questions? We're out of, time's up. Thank you so much.