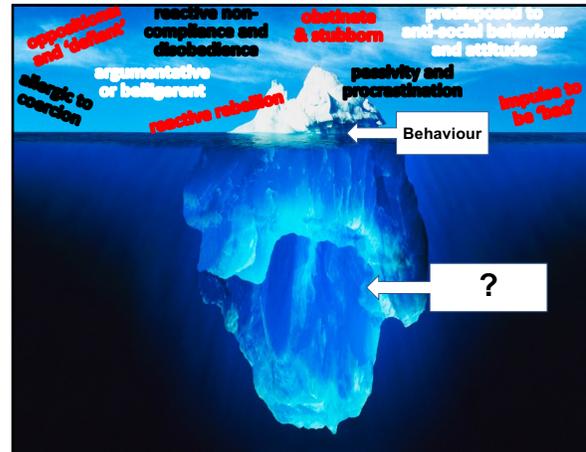
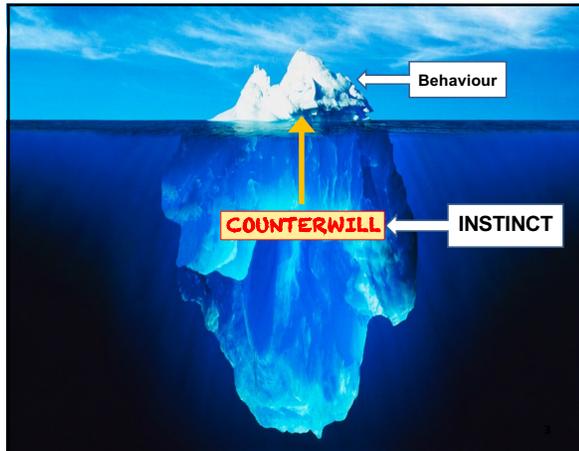


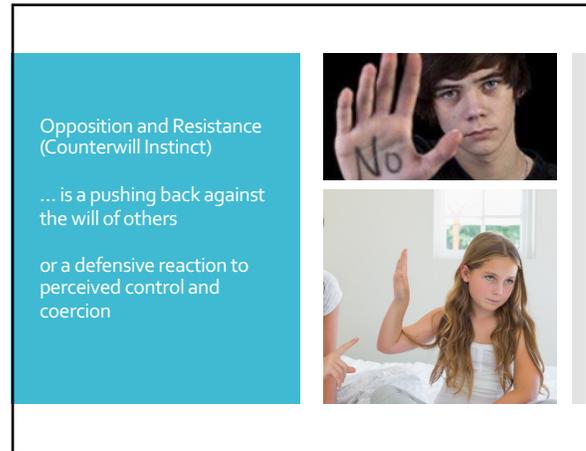
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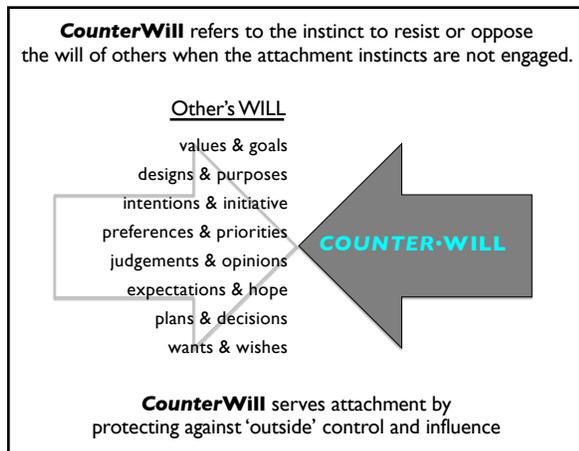
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5

**CounterWill** is NOT a learned response, but an **EMOTIONAL REACTION** that plays a critical role in **PRESERVING** the self and becoming a separate person.

The belief that resistance and opposition must be unlearned (a) doesn't recognize or **value the developmental benefits of having one's own mind** and (b) fails to appreciate that we need to **GROW the person out of resistance**, not punish or teach a teen to behave otherwise.

*from Rest Play Grow by Deborah MacNamara*

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**Counterwill Instincts**

**Why are teens moved by their counterwill instincts?**

- There is a **natural** and **intended** purpose to the counterwill instincts. We are all born with this instinct.
- It is quite **healthy** for a person to show counterwill tendencies.
- When teens stay **stuck** in counterwill, they may be **having difficulties with**:
  - Experiencing vulnerable feelings
  - Trusting the adult (may not feel cared for or may be feeling exploited)

7

**What is the purpose of counterwill?**

- It serves **attachment** by protecting against outside influence and direction.
- It serves **development** by preparing the way for separate functioning.
- It is quite healthy for a child to show counterwill tendencies.

8

**Resisting because of a LACK OF CONNECTION**

**COUNTERWILL** serves attachment by **protecting against outside influence & direction** from those NOT within the parent-sanctioned village of Attachment.

At the base, "children were designed to be impossible to manage unless **sufficiently attached** to those in charge"

It is the default dynamic in a child that serves to **PROTECT** them.

Hence the importance of good parent-teacher-school relationships.  
And the problem with Substitute teachers

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**ATTACHMENT & CounterWill**

**Why does a teen oppose an adult to whom he/she is attached?**

- When the teen isn't engaged with the adult, the moment they're attempting to give a directive.
- Counterwill has been displaced earlier and now it re-emerges.

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**CounterWill** happens when the **pressure or coercion** felt is greater than the child's **pursuit of attachment**.

<b>commands</b>	>	<b>impulse to comply</b>
<b>obligations</b>	>	<b>urge to make it work</b>
<b>expectations</b>	>	<b>desire to please</b>
<b>demands</b>	>	<b>inclination to defer</b>
<b>pressure</b>	>	<b>desire to measure up</b>
<b>forcefulness</b>	>	<b>desire to be good</b>

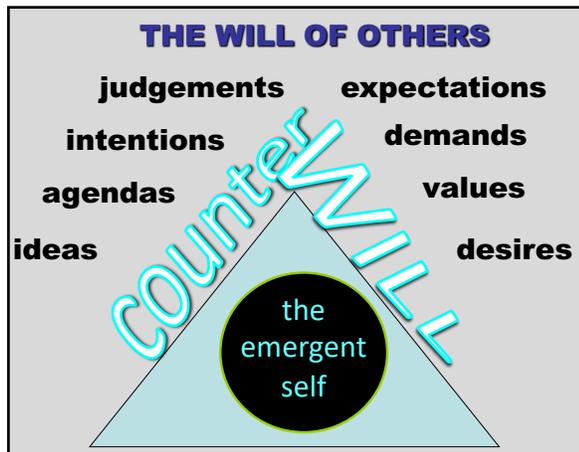
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**CounterWill and DEVELOPMENT**

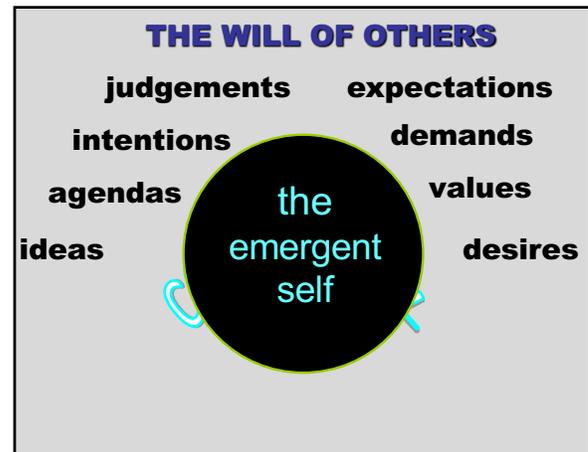
**COUNTERWILL** serves **DEVELOPMENT** by preparing the way for **SEPARATE FUNCTIONING**

The first step in finding one's own **WILL** is to **resist** and **counter** the **WILL** of others.

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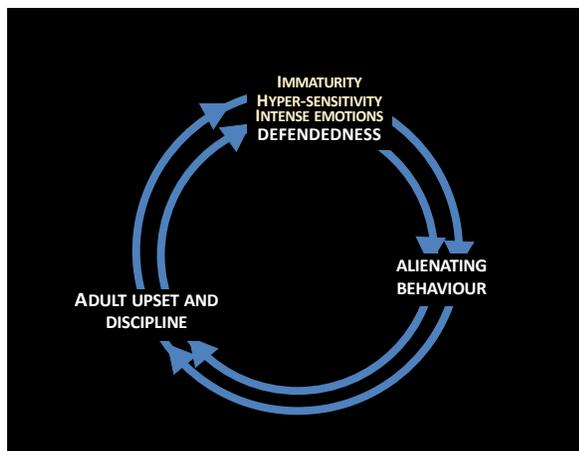


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**CounterWill** happens when the experience of coercion is greater than the sense of one's own WILL

expectations	>	initiative
pressure	>	purpose
demands	>	desires
have to's	>	want to's
directives	>	intentions
input	>	curiosity
incentives / rewards	>	interest

16



17

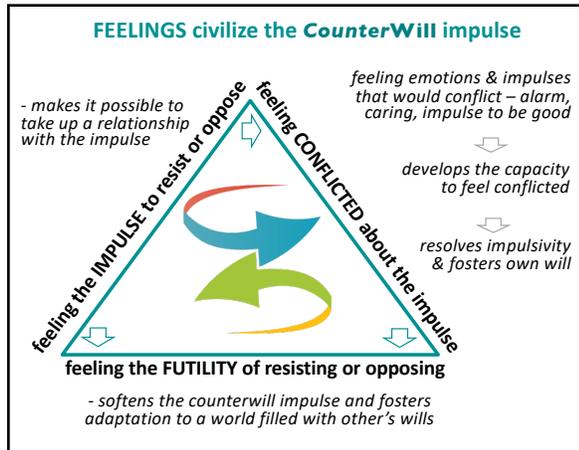
**BEST PRACTICES**  
Gaining insight to inform practice

**From:** What's wrong with you? This behaviour has to stop.

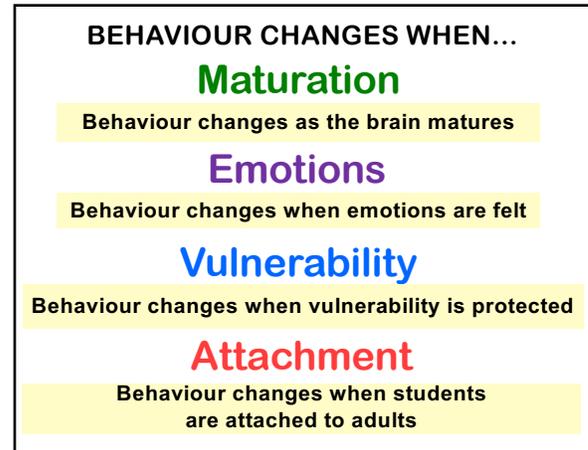


**To:** He's experiencing too much **coercion**  
*How can I help reduce the pressure?*

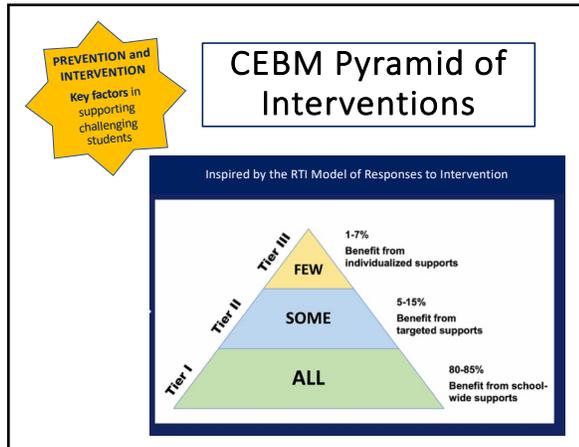
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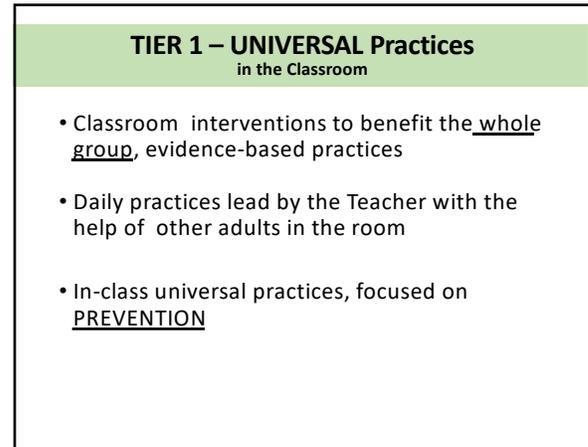
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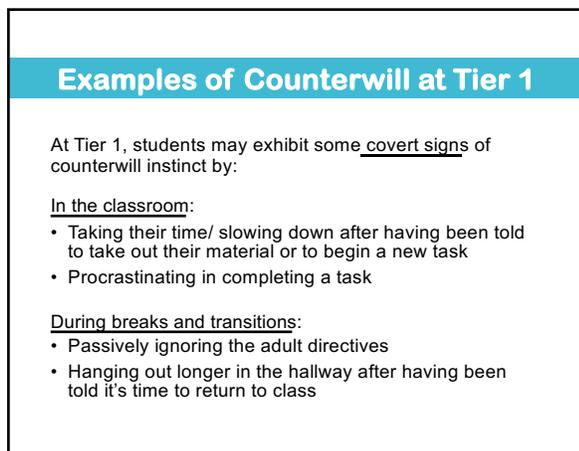
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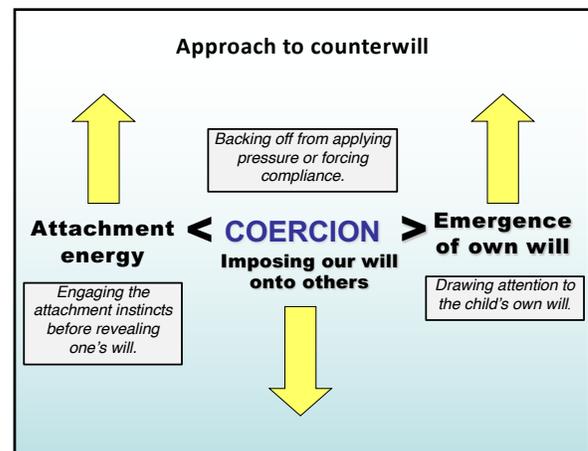
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### REDUCE COERCION

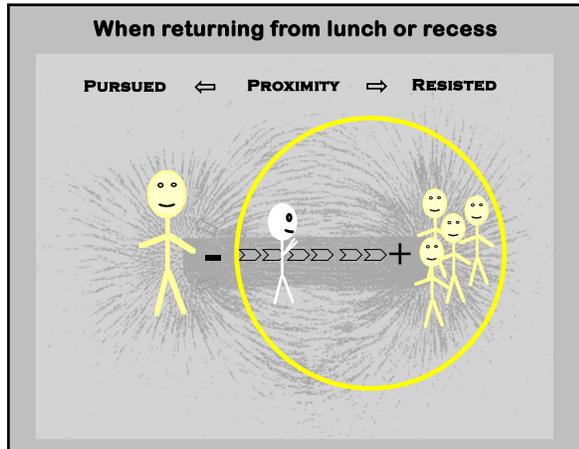
- Minimizing exposure to additional pressure/coercion by relying on **structures** and **routines** to convey directives and to avoid surprises.
- Engaging student's attachment and receptivity before moving on to a task.
- Offering an array of support measures to answer to a variety of student needs and challenges.

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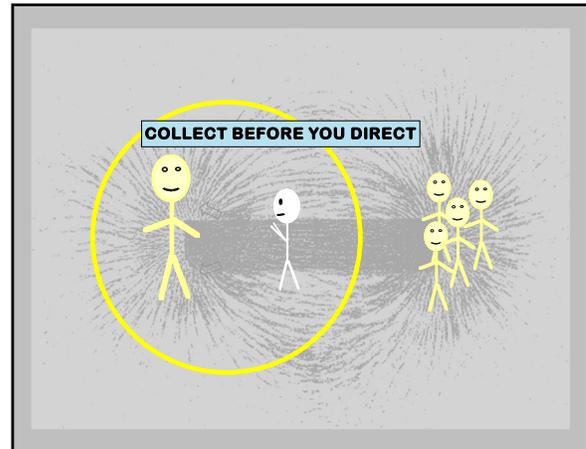
### ENGAGE THE ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS

1. Ensure to **collect** students at the beginning of each class and throughout the day (following a transition), where there is no apparent reason to engage them other than to affirm the relationship
2. Make certain to **engage** students prior to giving a directive or starting a task
3. Use the engaging power of **playfulness/humour** if necessary to jump-start the relationship dance (especially if there is reticence to attach)

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### TIER 2 – TARGETED Practices in the Classroom and School

- At Tier 2, the student requires a more targeted support.
- These supports measures and accommodations are meant to be assigned to or scheduled for the student.
- Practices lead by the Teachers with the help of Support Staff.
- The student continues to benefit from Tier 1 supports in addition to supplemental Tier 2 measures.

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### Examples of Counterwill at Tier 2

At Tier 2, some students in the group may exhibit more overt signs of the counterwill instinct by:

In the classroom:

- Refusing to do work
- Openly not participating in group work

During breaks and transitions:

- Resisting to go to a specific class after the bell has rung
- Opposing others' rules during a sports activity

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### “HAVE-TO” INVENTORY

How many “Have-tos” are involved into the **classroom/school** experience?

What “Have-tos” are added involved a **learning** situation?

What other “Have-tos” are present, or have been present, in this **student’s life**?

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### Handling *CounterWill*

**Understand what makes a student feel **VULNERABLE**, evoking counterwill**

- New learning
- Not knowing what is expected
- Looking inadequate, especially in front of peers
- Confirming inadequacy



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### REDUCE COERCION

- **Address student privately** (if possible) to avoid escalating the power struggle – this also protects their dignity and preserves the adult’s position vis-à-vis the other students.
- **back off** until you get a better attachment hold.
- **LEAD** the teen out of the **impasse** (power struggle).
- draw attention **AWAY** from the coercive elements of the situation (making the adult’s agenda less explicit).



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### REDUCE COERCION

- refrain from using a **commanding or prescriptive** manner.
- make agendas **less explicit**.
- refrain from focusing on the **SHOULDs**, the **MUSTs** & the **HAVE TOs**.
- use as **little** force and leverage as possible.




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### ENGAGE THE ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS

- Talk about **how hard it is** to always “have to do” things.
- **Normalize** that there are times when we all want to refuse to do what we “must”.
- Allow the teen **time and space** to handle their Counterwill instinct.



### COME ALONGSIDE

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### USE PLAYFULNESS TO DIFFUSE

- Being playful helps to diffuse tense situations.
- Being playful helps to get our directives across without pressure and coercion.



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### ENHANCE EMERGENCE

- provide for some sense of **choice**.
- put the focus on the teen's **will**.
- make room for the teen's **initiative** and **involvement**.
- solicit **good intentions** where possible.
- place **in charge** where appropriate and possible.



37



What practices do you use to **MAKE ROOM** for the student's **own WILL** (their initiative and involvement)?

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### TIER 3 – INDIVIDUALIZED Practices

with the help of Support Staff and/or Professionals

- At Tier 3, the student requires a more intensive and individualized measures. One-to-one support is needed.
- These accommodations and adaptations are tailored to the student's individual needs and interests. The student may require an adapted schedule as well.
- A collaboration is needed between the school team, the board consultants/professionals, the parents, as well as outside partners (if present).
- The student continues to benefit from T1 and T2 supports in addition to supplemental T3 measures.

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### Examples of Counterwill at Tier 3

At Tier 3, few students in the group exhibit frequent and disturbing behaviours resulting from the counterwill instinct. At this level, the student may exhibit a range of different behaviours, which originate from a multitude of sources.

In the classroom:

- Railing against the daily routine and adult expectations
- Interrupting and speaking over others
- Doesn't willingly respond to adult authority. Says things like: "you're not the boss of me!"

During breaks and transitions:

- Imposing themselves onto others and invading their personal space
- Disrupting other's activity/project when not invited to join

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Teens stuck in counterwill are challenging



much **less receptive to being lead** in general

**highly resistant** to direction and guidance

**often are less endearing**, tending to **alienate the adults** responsible for them

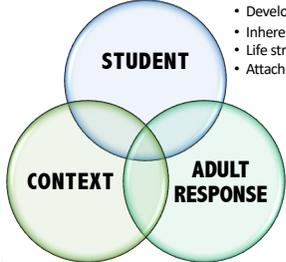
**appear independent and much less needy** and so not as likely to evoke care-taking responses in the adults responsible for them

**very difficult** to bring to state of **REST and SATIATION**

**consequences and sanctions** are **highly PROVOCATIVE**

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### Considering all the elements involved

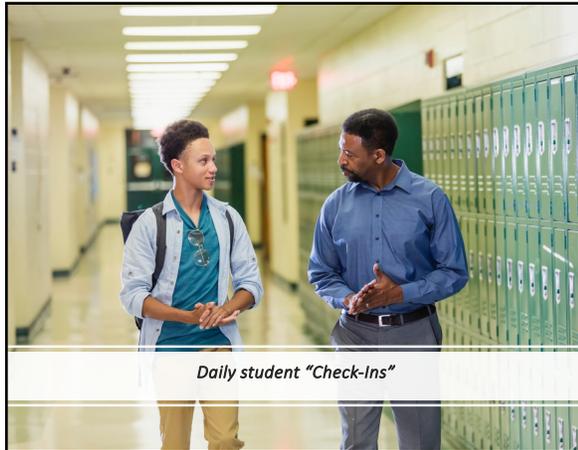


- Developmental maturity
- Inherent sensitivity
- Life stressors/trauma
- Attachment depth

- Environmental stressors
- Student emotional state/intensity
- Instinct driven to defend and protect
- Engagement/receptivity to the adult

- Adult stress level
- Insight on the student and the context
- Reflective vs. Reactive
- Type of verbal and non-verbal responses

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Daily student "Check-Ins"

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*Instead of a time-out, use TIME AWAY*

- If necessary, use TIME AWAY (rely on your school team for support and respite).
- Send the student to someone or to a pre-determined location.
- Use a dignified way to have the student leave. E.g. Send the student on an 'errand'
- Let the student know explicitly that the relationship is still intact (i.e. bridging).
- It is **always up to the adult** to restore and maintain the relationship with a student.

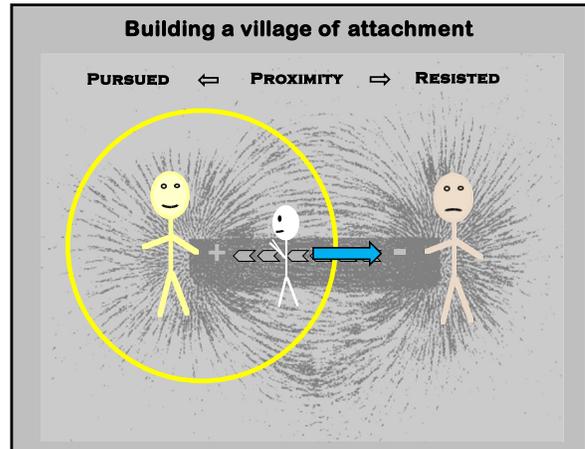
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**Nurturing Support Centre (NSC)**

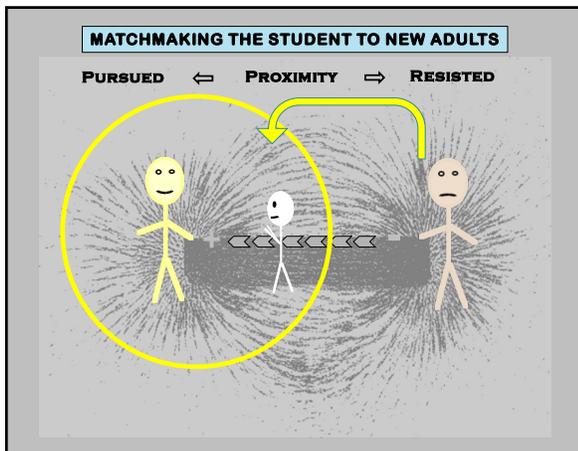
- Provide student with passes to visit the NSC, to work, to talk, to have supervised 'alone time'
- Participation in 'interest clubs' with adult supervision during recess and lunchtime
- Sheltered lunch (small group) – orchestrate the schedule to 'divide & conquer' clusters of students who struggle together

<https://www.cebm.ca/nurturing-support-centre>

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**Don't let counterwill  
Break the CONNECTION**

- don't take counterwill personally
- anticipate and expect counterwill
- reflect the resistance as natural & normal
- don't use separation as a consequence
- don't make behaviour the bottom line
- repair damage done by counterwill fallout

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When faced with a challenge of the 'wills'

- Be careful about finding yourself into a **power struggle**.
- Don't let yourself be **alienated** by their behaviour and don't take the behavior personally. **Detach your anger from your discipline**.
- Separate the response from the incident and **choose a more suitable time** (\*except in case of emergency or security)
- **Change the circumstances** affecting the child rather than trying to control their behavior.
- **Bridge and repair** any fallout from counterwill confrontations.



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**YOUR WORDS MATTER**

Instead of that, try saying this	
No you won't	Yes, I understand this is important to you, how about (...)
Not right now	Yes, that's a great idea, let me see when (...)
You should / must / have to	Let's / We can / How about
Be quiet	I see you are eager to share / this is really important to you.
Stop it / Calm down	I see you need to let it out. How about (...)
Don't be so defiant	It sounds like you need to follow your instincts and listen to what your body is telling you.
That's enough	How about we take a pause.
You better do as I say, right now	I've decided this is not a good time to address this issue
If you don't listen to me, I will (...)	I see this is tricky for you, we are going to solve this later. How about we go for a walk / a drink of water.
Leave my classroom	How about we go to a quieter place to figure this out.

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**Our ROLE as the adult**

teacher  
Educator  
**Parent**  
COACH  
Technician  
Principal  
counsellor

- Adjusting our VIEW**
  - Taking things **LESS PERSONALLY**
  - Recognizing that **instinct is involved**
  - Aiming to **"do no harm"**
- Adjusting our STANCE**
  - Normalizing** by conveying that some pushback is part of the process
  - Placing child **in charge** when possible
  - Being **patient**
- Making ROOM for**
  - For child to display **own "will"**
  - To be indulged in the **play mode**

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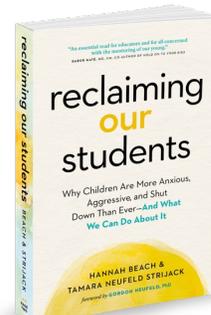
**Catherine Korah and Martine Demers**  
Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management  
[www.cebm.ca](http://www.cebm.ca)



**Also visit the CEbM Resource Center**  
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/resistance-and-opposition>

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11  
The Child Who Is Resistant



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***Editorials on Counterwill***

			
<b>Why Kids Resist and What We Can Do About It</b> by Deborah MacNamara May 9, 2016	<b>The Surprising Secret Behind Kid's Resistance and Opposition</b> by Deborah MacNamara May 1, 2017	<b>The Counterwill Storm: Making Sense of Adolescent Resistance</b> by Darlene Denis-Friske Oct 10, 2019	<b>The Five Things Master Teachers Know and Do</b> by Deborah MacNamara Dec 17, 2016

<https://macnamara.ca/portfolio/why-kids-resist-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/>  
<https://macnamara.ca/portfolio/the-surprising-secret-behind-kids-resistance-and-opposition/>  
<https://neufeldinstitute.org/the-counterwill-storm-making-sense-of-adolescent-resistance/>  
<https://macnamara.ca/portfolio/the-five-things-master-teachers-know/>

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