Handout #1
SAA Conference – 2014
A New Approach to Parent Education: Introspection, Inspiration & Involvement
Susan Kempter

A NEW APPROACH TO PARENT EDUCATION: INTROSPECTION, INSPIRATION & INVOLVEMENT

by

SUSAN KEMPTER

Sources

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Susan Kempter
SAA 2014
Handout #2

Long fuse - Slow to anger

Short fuse - Fast to anger

Know your own "Fuse Length" and how to control it

Handout #3
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"Strategies I Use to Control Anger"... A Selection of Parent Suggestions

The good news: parents noticed they could use these same techniques in other situations.
I have tried to acknowledge ideas taken from other sources utilized in our classroom readings – see "Sources"
The following insights have been edited for this handout (names removed, some grammatical corrections, etc.)
The messages they contain are unchanged

When my child stalls and wastes time, I say, "I can see you're not ready to practice, so I'm going to leave. You can sit here and be quiet, but no television, phones, pads or pods." *Parent then has cup of tea, or a short walk to collect....* [Kempter]

I love the jelly bean game! Each practice session I put 5 jelly beans on the table (my child is 5 years old). Whenever she tries hard, I slide a jelly bean toward her. Each time she grumbles or complains, I slide a jelly bean toward me – at the end of practice, we can eat the jelly beans in our own pile *... can be raisins, cheerios, etc.* [Kempter]

[mother of a 10 year old]...when my child struggles, I sit quietly and watch. I've learned that letting them struggle and try to solve problems without being rescued is a key to developing persistence and discipline. *Our parents had several discussions about how long to let children struggle, and a consensus was never reached, but they did agree that age and temperament needed to be taken into account, and that the struggle was a valuable part of learning!* [Sprunger]

I try to be keenly aware of what my child is feeling. I want to show compassion without rescuing my child – [Sprunger?]

When I'm ready to strangle my son, I have learned to pick up his violin and try it myself. I try to do everything our teacher, and I, am insisting he do. I have come close to smashing the violin several times! Knowing how hard this is helps me be more understanding and patient. I think it makes me a better parent.

If you feel real anger growing, say, "I am getting angry, and I don't want to be angry during practice. I am going to walk away, and will come back when my anger has passed" – Kempter

I decided to let my child teach me one day each week, as you suggested, and I was shocked to see me teaching myself! It was exactly like I was looking into a mirror! I saw my own facial expressions, heard my own frustration and felt my own impatience <u>as my daughter scolded me</u>. This is the biggest lesson I have learned in this class! I have decided to make a habit of letting my child teach me each week, so I can keep trying to improve my own practice habits!

We played Ed Sprunger's game with cards. I ran out in about 2 minutes. I was completely humiliated! My goal is to <u>never</u> run out of cards again! My child and I are now competing for who gets the fewest cards during practice, and it has become a game that makes us both laugh. I know this won't work forever, but it is working for the present – [Sprunger]

A friend from Lab School and I decided to exchange children for a week's practice because you (Susan) said it was a good idea, and might give us insights into our behavior with our own children. We were both amazed at how we handled someone else's child, which was very different from the way we handled our own. <u>We thought we were bringing our children to the Lab School for lessons.</u> We are the ones who learn the most!

After our discussion about "mistakes being an important part of learning" we decided to try to remember all of the mistakes in each piece. After playing the piece all the way through, we recalled and labeled the mistakes as 1. **Teeny ones** that probably won't happen again, 2**. Middle-sized ones** that we need to think about, but probably can easily fix and 3**. Big ones** that need attention and drilling....our child is getting as good at this as we are, and wants to make her own decisions about how to handle her mistakes. As parents, we feel less pressure and are pleased that she feels more in control. [8 years old]

We learned that tying "effort to outcome" is an important part of our job as parents. We want to instill this concept in our children in every part of their lives....thank you for introducing it to us! [Kempter]

I have a very short fuse! I have known it for a long time, but have not tackled it head on, like we have here. I discovered recently that I can negotiate <u>with myself</u> **before** practice. If I feel like I might explode during practice, I do two things: I make the practice time shorter, to fit my "fuse length", and I create a practice reward for myself. I am happy that our practices are better now, and that I have found a way to be a better mom. My rewards are simple, but give me something to look forward to:

We get take-out for dinner so I don't cook and clean up
I watch my favorite movie that night, after the kids are down
I love gardening, so I treat myself to a flat of flowers and plant them
I buy myself a new pair of shoes, blouse, etc
One time, I made a favorite cake and invited friends over for coffee

You (Susan) read us the little blerb Dr. Suzuki wrote about deciding that anger is not necessary in our lives. Like him, I have having an adventure! [Suzuki]

Susan Kempter
Handout #4

OBSERVATION # ____

DATE ____

TIME ____

1 5 10 15 20 25 30 → secs.

→ off task

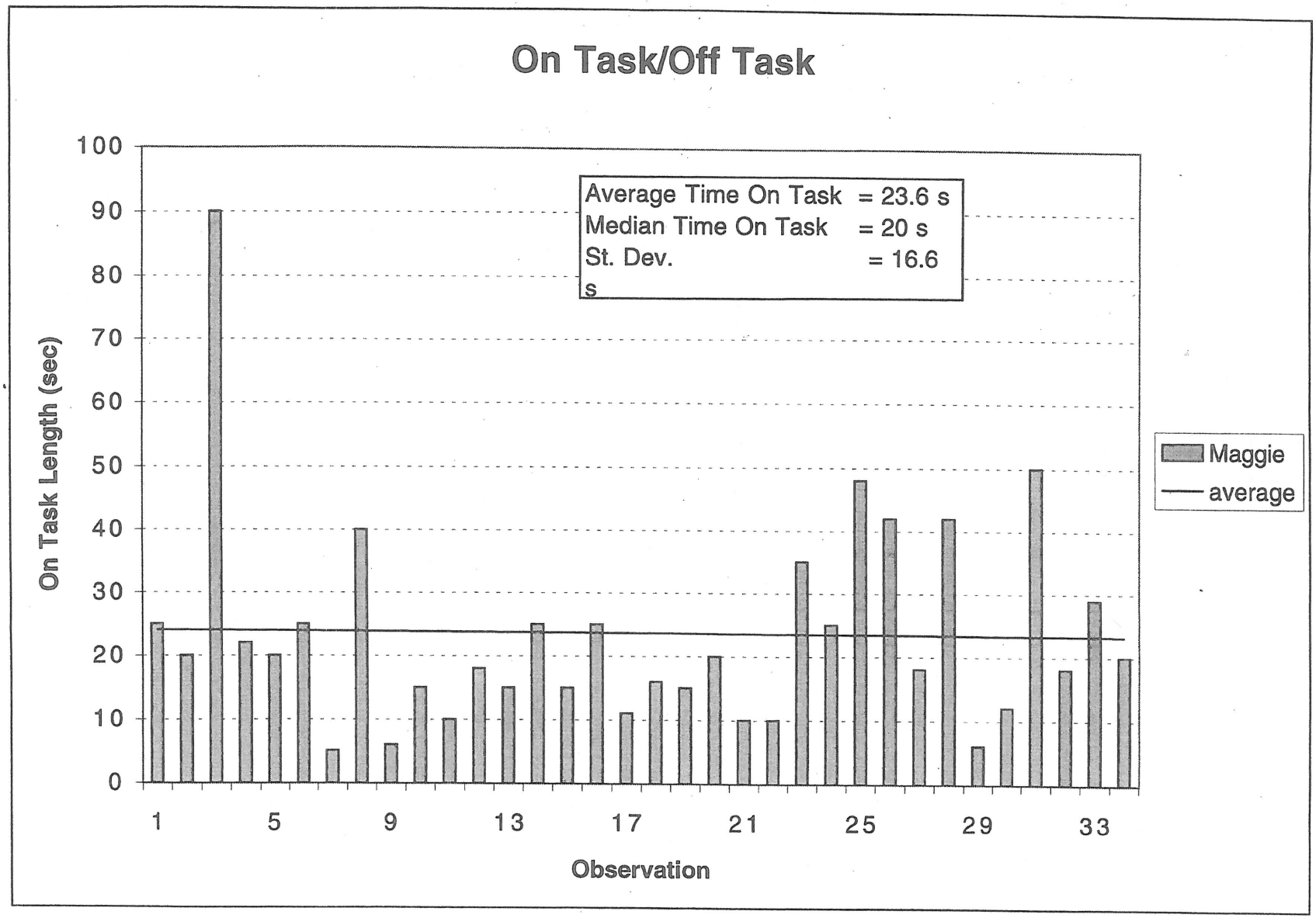
→ on task

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

This chart = a 5-minute observation

Susan Kempton
Handout #5



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GETTING READY TO PRACTICE…
IDEAS TO HELP OUR CHILDREN QUIET THEMSELVES

[These are ideas parents have shared in our program….add them to the ones you use, too]

Go outside for a short walk – walk slowly and notice things [clouds, flowers, bugs, etc] along the way
Read a book chapter, or short story, each day before practice time
I rub my child's hands, or back….a back rub soothes and quiets her
We listen to music and draw
We find a quiet spot to sit down and have a drink or snack and talk about what we want to do during our practice
Sing….we sing a lot in our family. I choose something a little slower, about 60 beats/minute, or slower…sometimes we sit on the floor and move to the music
I'm a teacher, and sometimes when my class needs to quiet down, I talk very quietly and breathe slow deep breaths help bring children into a more relaxed state
My son's favorite: bake cookies! I take forever forming the cookies on the baking sheet, and I won't let him taste the dough. We practice while they bake, and if he practices well, he gets a cookie while I get the next batch on the sheet…he is sometimes still eager to practice when I am out of dough
Try putting a sheet over your child's head while she is sitting on the floor. Turn on soft music ….my child loves having a paper and crayons to draw while she is under the sheet. [3 – 5 minutes]
Pretend you and your child are a mirror: sit facing each other. Parent moves hands and child follows, keeping hands about 1" apart. When child understands, let him/her lead
Sorting activities help quiet my child. Sometimes we sort using tweezers (colored tooth picks) and sometimes by fingers (lima, kidney and black beans). Depending on the age of your child, begin with 4 or 5 "things" and work up to over 20 (Montessori technique)
Place 4 or 5 different shaped leaves on a piece of paper and let the child make a "rubbing" of them by placing a thin sheet of paper over the top and rubbing with the flat, longer side of a crayon. We hang them where we practice
Last month, we lay outside together and looked at clouds. It was magic. Now we do it often
We "draw" in our carpet. Use one finger to trace large numbers, letters, figures in our carpet. Rubbing the carpet with the nap erases our art, and we're ready to begin again
Place a piece of paper on a table. Give your child a pencil. Turn off all the lights [or use a blindfold]. Tell him to draw a horse - begin with the nose, then the tail, then the ears, mane, hoofs, legs, etc. Turn on the lights and see the funny drawing. Draw anything your child wants to try
Get a plastic ziplock container and fill it with common items: eraser, pencil, paper clip, peanut, rubber band, penny, button, piece of string, bottle cap, bolt, etc. Have child identify each by feeling it. No peeking!
Sit on the floor with your child in front of you with his back toward you. Draw numbers, letters, shapes, etc. on his back. Some days, my child just wants me to draw and be quiet; other days he wants to guess what I'm drawing
Establish a ritual for daily practice…Suzuki had the bow. In our family, we made cocoa on cold days, and juice on hot days. When the cups clink in place, the practice has begun….a sip during practice can act as a short decompression time. Put your arms around your child at the end of each practice and tell them something he did that was good (Don't make it up! This compliment has to be real)
I love Bill Starr's suggestion: sit in a room with eyes closes, listening intently to all audible sounds. After a few minutes (when he fidgets) I ask my child to slowly open his eyes and quietly tell me all the sounds he heard