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Where is the Magic?

By Robert P. Bowman, Ph.D.

“Where is the magic?” asked the child.

The magician pondered this question for a moment and replied,

“The real magic is in you.

It is in your head, when you think carefully through difficult situations before acting on them.

It is in your heart, when you are caring and patient with yourself and others.

It is in your arms, when you reach out to help someone, especially when most others would not.

It is in your legs, when you have the courage to walk up and face your difficulties honestly, without running away.

And, it is in your whole self, when you have faith that all the answers do not lie within you.

You must also know when to seek guidance from others.”

Table 2—Tricks for each Success Strategy Topic

<i>Topic.....</i>	<i>Primary Trick #s.....</i>	<i>Variation Trick #s</i>
Self-Confidence & Self-Worth	10, 39, 41, 49, 50	42, 44
Personal Character	3, 6, 40	1, 13, 24, 33, 50
Feelings & Emotions	2, 13, 23	1, 10, 33, 50
Responsible Behavior	21, 40, 43	1, 2, 4, 11, 23, 37
Constructive, Clear Thinking	15, 28, 34, 35, 36	49
Decision Making	9, 11, 27, 34, 43	5, 38
Anger Mgmt.	5, 16, 22, 24, 30, 48	3, 9, 26, 35, 45
Social Skills, etc.	4, 18, 20	5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 22, 24, 48
Grief & Loss	47	8, 9, 20, 26, 28, 46, 49
Coping & Resiliency	8, 12, 14, 23, 25, 29, 30, 37, 45, 49	
Substance Abuse Prevention	32, 46	4, 12, 23, 27, 29, 30, 31, 43
Study Skills.....	8, 19, 33, 41	9, 15, 21, 36
Career Development.....	7, 45	1, 17, 22, 25
Disabilities	17, 28, 42	7, 14, 41
Support Systems	27, 38, 44	6, 19, 39
The Role of the Prof.	1, 23, 26	2, 25, 47
Patriotism.....	14.....	13, 22, 32, 39, 42, 44

MAGIC TRICK #1

Catching Invisible Stones (In a Paper Lunch Bag)

Preparation Required

Level 1—No set-up

Performance Difficulty

Level 3—Some practice needed

Topic(s) Covered

- The Role of the Professional Helper (or Parent)
- Responsible Behavior
- Career Development
 - Personal Character
 - Feelings & Emotions

Materials Needed

- Standard brown paper lunch bag
- Write in magic marker or crayon, a label that represents your role with the child/children—for example, CB (Counselor's Bag), TB (Teacher's Bag), or PB (Parent's Bag).

THE TRICK

This is my favorite trick for introducing the role of the professional helper (or parent). You show the children (child) a plain brown paper lunch bag, which is empty. Then, as you pretend to grab invisible stones from your pockets, you appear to read aloud what is on the stones. Each stone has a different message for the children (child) to remember. After you pretend to read one of the messages, throw the invisible stone high up into the air. Look up as if you were watching it fly into the air and fall back down. Then, you hold out the open end of the bag and pretend to catch the stone. The bag will make a popping sound as it jerks down. It will appear dramatically like you just caught the stone in the bag. Then, repeat the trick as you read, throw, and catch each stone.

The Secret

Practice snapping your finger and observe which finger you snap against your thumb. Hold the bag with your thumb on the outside and only your snapping finger on the inside (see Figure 1). It is imperative that your thumb be placed on the outside of the bag. It also helps if you can curl your other fingers back into your hand so that only your snapping finger is in the inside corner of the bag.

Practicing this trick will help you improve your snapping sound. Especially practice your timing so that it appears that the stones are hitting the bag at just the right time. Rehearsing in front of a mirror can be especially helpful. Try throwing the stone high up towards the ceiling, and catching it when it comes down. Then, try catching the rock by lifting one leg and reaching the bag under it. Next, try bouncing the stone like a rubber ball against the back wall of the room. Catch it as it comes back to you.

Note that if your bag makes a faint swishing sound instead of a dramatic pop, just pretend to the children (child) that you are using small stones. They will still be impressed.



Figure 1

The Story — *The Role of the Professional Helper (or Parent)*

"All of us have our own 'bags.' Your bag is what you are all about. It holds the things you know and what you can do well."

Pull out the paper bag and open it up.

"If this were a baseball player's bag, what would we put into it?... That's right... a baseball, bat, and glove. What else?... What kinds of things do baseball players practice hard at that we can also put into the bag?... Yes... catching, hitting the ball, running."

"What if this was a teacher's bag? What would we put into it? Yes... some markers, books, paper... and a lot of knowledge and *patience*."

Show the other side of the bag to reveal the label.

"This is the 'Counselor's Bag (or Teacher's or Parents, etc).' There are lots of things that I do that could be placed into this bag. To help me remember them all, I have written them on invisible stones that I keep in my different pockets."

Reach into one of your pockets.

"Let's see... Here is one. It has a picture of an ear and says that the I am a *good listener*."

Pretend to throw the stone high into the air. Then, catch it in the bag with a snap.

"Next, I'll reach into this other pocket and grab another stone. Here it is... It has a picture of

a heart and says that I care very much about you."

Pretend, once again to throw the stone high into the air. Then catch it in the bag.

"Now, let's see... Oh yes, here is another invisible stone. It has a picture of a lock and says that I can *keep a secret*.* Of course we know that you can tell me about anything. I will keep what you say just between us unless you talk about something dangerous to yourself or others. Then I may have to tell someone else so they can make sure the situation becomes safe again."

For variety, throw the stone at the back wall of the room. Wait for it to bounce and then catch it horizontally in the bag.

"Here's another stone. This one has a picture of a hand and says that I can help you when you are sad, lonely, angry, or afraid. I can also help you when you are feeling happy."

This time hand the ball to the child (children) and have him/her throw a baseball like pitch at your bag. Catch it and show how you are impressed with that pitch.

Add more stones if you would like, but eventually take out each stone and read it to review your traits and roles. Then, fold up the bag and put it away.

* Note: Teachers and parents may want to modify this part of the story. It is about confidentiality, which will vary according to your role. Parents, for example, may want to emphasize the importance of family talks and the value of being a good listener.

Variations & Hints

Responsible Behavior can be covered with this trick. Provide examples of some behaviors that are responsible and others that are not responsible. Throw a pretend stone up into the air for each, but catch only those that exemplify responsible behavior.

Career Development: Adapt the items written on the pretend stones to include different careers. Have the children (child) name some careers. Then talk about the preparation someone would have to complete before he or she could enter each of these careers.

Personal Character. Ask the children (child) to think of the character words they have been learning (or introduce them to some). Then, have them name character words as they throw each one into the bag. Or, have each child to name (and throw into the bag) at least three character words that best describe his or her personal strengths.

Feelings & Emotions. Help the children (child) test their feeling word vocabularies. See how many words they can name and throw into the bag. First have them name words that describe unpleasant feelings like sad, scared and angry. Then have them tell words that describe pleasant feelings like happy, proud, and relaxed.

Extension. This trick is so versatile, it can be used to teach any success strategy topic. Simply identify the key points you would like the children (child) to remember and pretend each is written on a different stone.

Extension: Before your presentation, teach a child who has low self-confidence how to catch the invisible stones in the bag. Then, during your presentation, ask for a volunteer to assist you, and choose this child who will catch the stones you throw.

Extension. Keep a paper bag with you at all times during your work with the children. As you pass by some children, they may want to throw their own invisible stones into your bag. Some children have shared personal difficulties much sooner with their counselor, teacher, parent (etc) when they were invited to tell about their concerns as if they were reading it on an invisible stone. Then they throw the stone into your bag, put the bag away and encourage the child to continue sharing about his or her feelings.