

PRACTICE TOOL

WILLING AND ABLE

WE
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
VE

MANAGING OUR EXPECTATIONS

‘When an expectation is not met, it does not become an issue of noncompliance, but a challenge to help the child meet the expectation in the future.’ (Holden, 2009)

When a child fails to meet an expectation or complete a task, it is an opportunity for adults to teach important life skills like self-regulation and problem-solving skills.

CARE PRINCIPLES

- Relationship Based 
- Developmentally Focused 
- Trauma Informed 
- Family Involved 
- Competency Centred 
- Ecologically Oriented 

To help us find out why a child is struggling we need to observe, assess and then respond. Chapter 15 of the CARE book provides lots of details about this and a process that helps us decide how best to respond. **The ‘Willing and Able’ grid is a tool that can help.**

WILLING AND ABLE GRID

	WILLING	NOT WILLING
ABLE	<p>ACKNOWLEDGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give positive attention Join in the activity Ask them to teach others <p>For example ... <i>‘You are doing such a great job putting away all the games. Can you show Katie how to stack the books?’</i></p>	<p>ENCOURAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act ‘as if’ they will meet the expectation Offer assistance and give choices Predict the future Make a request <p>For example ... <i>‘I’ll help you pack away the games, and then you will be ready to have a jump on the trampoline.’</i></p>
NOT ABLE	<p>TEACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen, validate and respond Define the problem Find a solution <p>For example ... <i>‘I can see you really want to go outside and play. I think you will be able to get the games packed up quicker if you start with the puzzles first.’</i></p>	<p>CHANGE OR DROP THE EXPECTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change the expectation Redirect the activity Drop the expectation – you can pick it back up again when everyone is calm <p>For example ... <i>‘I know you’ve been inside for a while and really need to have a bounce on the trampoline. Let’s pack up the games a bit later.’</i></p>



Changing or dropping the expectation is a way to avoid unhelpful power struggles with children.



PRACTICE TIP

‘When I am working with teams and they are struggling with a child not meeting an expectation, I like to draw the Willing and Able Grid so we can decide what is going on for the child. It helps us to work out the best way to respond.’ (Courtney Patterson, Clinician Southern QLD)



ACTIVITY

Think about a child you know.

1 Think about times when you see the child successfully meeting an expectation or completing a task – when they are both willing and able.

- What are ways you could consciously acknowledge the child?
- How do you think giving them positive attention or joining in might help build your relationship?
- How might the child feel when you do this?

2 Think about times when you have noticed they were willing but not able to complete a task or expectation – they might be trying to do something they haven't done before and are getting frustrated.

- How can you use this time to help the child learn to self-regulate and problem solve?
- What could you say or do to validate their feelings?
- What are some ways you can help them define the problem and find a solution?

3 Think about tasks or expectations where you know the child is able, but not willing. You might have seen them do it before, but this time they are distracted or simply not in the mood.

- Could you encourage them by saying something that communicates high expectations? Think about something you could say 'as if' they are going to do the task.
- How could you use your tone of voice to help the child hear you prompt rather than 'nag'?
- How do you think offering assistance could help you and the child? What might the child learn from this, about themselves as well as about adults and the world?
- Are there ways you could give the child choices in the moment?

4 What are some examples of when the child is neither willing or able. For example, they might lack the skills, knowledge, self-belief or trust. They could be overwhelmed with anxiety or something else is going on for them that is making the task too hard.

- What are your worries about dropping or changing the expectation?
- How could changing or dropping the expectation help them experience success?
- What might happen if you pushed them to complete the task?

References