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Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. Today, we are talking about five ways to reduce stress through using the CORE Model.

So for the last couple of episodes, I have been talking about what the CORE Model is, and how the systems within it can help you to run your classroom more efficiently, to keep your students more engaged, and essentially just to get back to being able to really focus on teaching your students instead of managing your classroom.

So today, I thought it would just take this episode to talk about why we really want to do this and how it is that having these systems in place can reduce stress and make you happier, for lack of a better word.

And I wanted to focus on that because I recognize that these steps do take some time upfront to put in place. I will say the more that you do them, the faster they go, just like with almost anything we learn how to do, so that it becomes much faster to write a TIP. It becomes much faster to plan a schedule over time.

So if you're a first year teacher, and you have been struggling with these things, don't fret. That is true for a lot of first year teachers. And it does get easier, the more that you do it. And if you in fact set up good systems ahead of time and they become a habit, it's even easier.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about why you want to spend that time. And that's what I'll focus on today.

So let's get started. The CORE Model is based on setting up the structure of your classroom so that your classroom runs on its own, so that things happen as part of a regular ordered system that you

your classroom runs on its own, so that things happen as part of a regular ordered system that you have established and practiced and reinforced.

So one of the things that is one of the biggest reasons, I think, that you benefit from the CORE Model and its efficiencies is that you're making decisions about your instruction, about your behavior, about all different scheduling issues and things like that, you're not making those at the moment.

You're not making those decisions as they come up. You're thinking about them ahead of time and thinking about them when you're calm, when you're not stressed, when you're not in the middle of a crisis.

It's one of the reasons that I recommend that teachers create a one man down plan so that they have a schedule and a zoning plan already in place should they have somebody absent and not get a sub.

It becomes something that it's a whole lot easier at 630 In the morning when you find out you're going to be down a staff member, if you can pull out a schedule and say this is what we're doing today, than if you're like, "Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, we have to move everything! Who we're going to move with?"

Because you're gonna have to recombine groups of students you're going to have to reassign staff. The same is true if you have to be absent. If you have to be absent, most of us really kind of feel like we can't be absent because the classroom won't run without us.

We need our classroom to run even when you're not in it. We need our staff to get used to doing the same things as if we were there. And over the course of this series, I will give you some tips about how we do that and how we create that culture within our classroom as well.

And it it will mean giving up some of the things that you've just organized in your head and making them more apparent to everyone else so that they can access them more easily.

So an example might be you have a set of tasks that you think of that you pull out when there's a crisis or downtime that you weren't expecting. And they're probably you probably have a list in your head of things you can do in different situations.

We need that to be posted somewhere so the staff, A: knows where it is and can use it but, B: so that you can model using it by showing that, "Oh, I'm going to, let's do number three on the list on the board." Because that's going to send the message that I'm not the only one who can think on the spot

about what to do. Anybody can. So if I'm not in the room, and this happens, here's what you would do.

So that piece of it is one of the reasons that it works well.

So one of the biggest reason why the CORE Model can actually reduce stress is because it reduces decision fatigue. As I said, you're not making decisions at the moment. You're not making decisions in the middle of a crisis. You're not making decisions when you're, hopefully when you're exhausted.

And by making decisions when you're not in the middle of a problem situation, you make better decisions. And you can think of more options to solve a problem when you're not in the middle of it as well.

But the biggest piece that it makes a difference for is the fact that we're no longer making 1000 decisions a second, now we're down to a couple 100, which you know, is still a lot. But decision fatigue is something that got a lot more play during the pandemic, but it existed in research back before then.

And it really explains why sometimes, you know, when I was in a classroom, I would get to the end of the day, and I would just literally stand in my kitchen. And I'd be like, I can't decide what to eat. Like, I only have three choices. It's not like I went to the Cheesecake Factory, I got overwhelmed with choices, I have two choices in my refrigerator, and I'm literally staring at them. And I cannot figure out what to do. Because I cannot my brain cannot make another decision.

We don't even realize how many decisions we're making in the classroom every single second. And it's a lot.

And then when you add to the fact that your head is also doing that running dialogue of counting your students to make sure they're all there. Oh, no, one is missing? Where? Oh, wait, he's in the bathroom. Okay, and what am I going to use as a reinforcer here? And what's the next skill I'm going to teach? And what's my next trial going to be and what's my next activity? How was everybody's engagement at morning meeting? Should I do this activity or that activity? It just goes on and on and on.

There's so many decisions that we make on the fly, that the more that we can make in advance, the more that your brain can settle down, and really focus on what you're doing.

Otherwise, what I find is that when the decision fatigue gets really bad, and my brain can't make a

Otherwise, what I find is that when the decision fatigue gets really bad, and my brain can't make a decision, it is literally kind of just going in circles. And it won't stay on one thing when I'm really tired because of that.

So when you thought about the processes beforehand, when you have set them up, when you've got a list of things that you can go to. I'm I put everything in writing in the classroom, not for documentation, I don't mean that kind of writing. But I mean, I cut the center schedule out of the schedule grid, and I taped it to my work table. So I have it right there whenever I need it.

I write everything on the whiteboard so I can look at it really quick. I keep lists of students' reinforcers so that, at different work areas, so I can look and remember. And that way, I don't have to hold that information in my head. I can look at a list and pull it up. And I don't have to remember it, I don't have to think about it, I don't have to take the time for my brain to access that information.

So the more things that you can set up in those ways, the fewer decisions you have to make. I have always called it the less you have to think, which allows you more to do. And so it allows you to really focus on who you're with at that time.

Another reason why the CORE Model reduces stress and makes things easier is because it increases your student engagement. So I talked a lot about that in the last couple episodes. But engagement is critical in our classrooms. Not just because our students don't have time for downtime, because they have so much to learn. But because engagement is what prevents challenging behavior.

When students are engaged, they're not acting up. When they're engaged, they're focused on what they're doing instead of what they want or don't want.

Now, that's not to say that we don't have students who have behaviors to escape from that engagement. But the more that we can get them engaged through the way that we run our activities, one of which is that we run it on a routine schedule with very little downtime, the more likely we are to keep their engagement and if we do that we don't have to spend all our time trying to regain it.

Think about a time in your classroom that you have had a crisis. That's a time where it's really hard to get that student back reengaged with the class. You gotta get through the crisis. You got to get to the end of the behavior. You got to get back to where the student is calm. Then you have to reintegrate them back into the group.

Okay, that takes a long time at times. The same is true just with kids getting off task and becoming unengaged. It's harder to get someone engaged, who is not engaged than it is to take somebody who's already engaging. But when someone is already doing something with you, they're more likely

to do something with you new. But if they're off doing their own thing and you present that new thing, they're going to be more resistant.

So the fact that we're increasing the engagement by tightening up our structure means that we have fewer crises, and our students stay engaged.

Number three, I've alluded to already that we make better decisions when we're making decisions and we're not completely overwhelmed or in the middle of a crisis. Our choices that we come up with the way that we problem solve is just better when we're calm.

Number four, you have systems and strategies in place for what happens when you're absent, or when you go to a meeting. So the fact that you can now leave your classroom to go to the bathroom or leave your classroom at a planned time, and your staff has a system that they're used to, and they're going to run the system, it's going to be a lot easier.

So I take that one man down plan and we run it as a way for you to train staff. So that's one thing that you can use it for as well.

The good part about doing that is, A: you work out the kinks while you're there as opposed to somebody running it when you're not there and having it not work. The other advantage to that is that you can get the staff engaged in doing that routine, and that one man down plan, and that makes it more likely that they're gonna follow that plan when you're not there if they are familiar with it, and they've done it before.

So I think that that is another reason why we want to think about some of these things ahead of time.

And finally, a big reason why this is a big stress reliever is that once the systems are set up, your classroom is running more efficiently. And the fact that you now can think at the end of the day, because you're not making a million decisions at once, you're only making 1000 decisions at once, that allows you to be more efficient in your time.

And we'll talk about some ways and some strategies to create time efficient systems. You know, how can you take less time to do your lesson plans? How can you take less time to analyze and review your data? Those kinds of things.

But if you've already got a plan for your data collection from your Teaching Implementation Plan, then you don't have to spend the time thinking, what am I going to do? What should I do for data tomorrow? It's done. It's decided. It's over. So that increases your teaching efficiency and that gives

tomorrow? It's done. It's decided. It's over. So that increases your teaching efficiency and that gives you more rest time for you.

So those are five ways that I've seen that the CORE Model can really reduce stress and frustration with this job, which is challenging enough by itself.

I would love to hear what your thoughts are. If you have found systems that work for you in the classroom, definitely come in and share them in our Facebook group at specialeducatorsconnection.com. We would love to have you just answer the two questions and we will be sure to get you in.

And if you are looking for more in depth information about how to create these systems, we have the how-to in the Special Educator Academy. That is where we have a whole course on organizing your classroom, on setting up behavior support plans, on creating data collection systems, and we can help you figure out how to make this work in your situation.

So I hope you have an amazing week and I hope to see you again next week when we will continue to talk about what the CORE can do for us but I will also be sharing some quick ways to make your planning and your work more efficient and easier.

Have a great week.