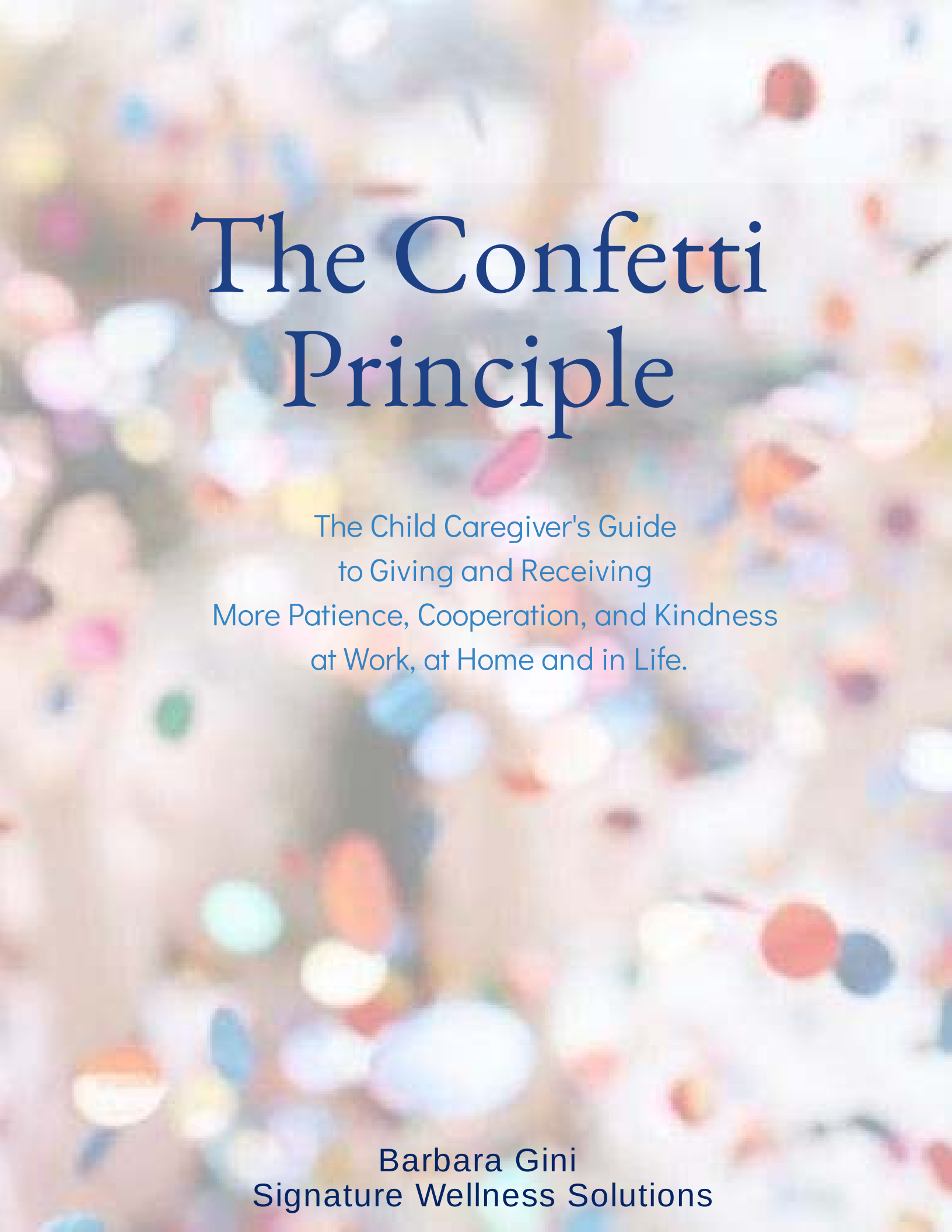


The Confetti Principle

The Child Caregiver's Guide
to Giving and Receiving
More Patience, Cooperation, and Kindness
at Work, at Home and in Life.

Barbara Gini
Signature Wellness Solutions

The Confetti Principle



Working with children is rewarding in so many ways, but it can get pretty intense. Kids' energy comes in waves and sometimes the peaks bring on bursts of emotions and behaviors that create challenges for students and staff .

At some point, tension can build and conflicts arise, whether it's with students, other staff, or a parent. When this happens you want to respond in the best way possible, rather than react to external or internal stress, and sometimes that's difficult to do, especially when you're running out of energy, ideas and patience.

Part of addressing this lies in your own self-care skills: proper nutrition and hydration to keep your energy up, proper sleep to keep your head clear, exercise to keep you agile and stress reduction exercises so that you can handle intense situations in a much more steady and calm manner.

When we haven't focused on what WE need first, and we feel depleted, stressful events and interactions become more difficult to deal with. But there IS something else you can do to take charge of a situation and not react in frustration (which, by the way, is a very normal human reaction), to the children and adults who are irritating you.

Sometimes we're in situations where we need to shift perspective, re frame it, and move forward with a cool head, neutral facial expressions, calm body language, constructive communication, and actions that DE-escalate and work towards a reasonable solution.

This is where the Confetti Principle comes in.

How it Works



Picture yourself holding a confetti canon – which is a tube filled with confetti that enables you to project the contents into the air by pulling a cord or twisting the container. They work using compressed air, a spring mechanism, and some types are worked simply by flicking the wrist to release the confetti.

The basic purpose is the same, and that is to shower little bits of colorful paper and foil happiness, mixed with shimmering glitter shapes out into the world.

Now I know some of you probably don't like cleaning up messes, and maybe you're not a fan of glitter either, but you have to admit that its really hard to stay frustrated and angry with confetti flying in the air, because the whole point of confetti is to help us celebrate something happy, joyful and positive, isn't it?

So lets apply this imagery to a childcare situation where a child may be acting out or you disagree with the way a co-worker is handling it. The next time you feel that pressure and tension building up, I want to picture this as clearly as you can:

Picture yourself with two confetti canons, one in each hand. The one in your non-dominant hand contains dirt, rocks, bottle caps and other random projectiles that when released, have a very good chance of injuring anyone within range, including yourself. The other one that you're holding in your dominant hand, contains harmless, beautiful confetti - tiny bits of soft, shiny and colorful, paper and foil shapes that will fly and float down softly on anyone standing nearby, including yourself.



Now, ask yourself, which one would you rather unleash? The one with the rocks in it? Or the one with the one filled with confetti?

You may be tempted to think, it humorous (in your own mind) to (metaphorically) release the rocks onto another adult that you have stressful interactions with, but let's move on from that thought quickly, because its not really helpful. We should be stacking rocks - like in this picture - not throwing them.

I want you to remember that your thoughts are the single biggest influence on your actions, reactions and interactions, and will determine how well you resolve problems and recover from stressful situations. Your thoughts create feelings, and feelings create actions, and those actions give us results and feedback.

Of course ultimately, because we're all good people, we would much rather bombard someone with something that's NOT really going to injure them. And that would be the confetti. So remember to lead with your own thoughts rather than your emotional reactions.

Here is the the basis of the Confetti Principle: You, your facial expressions, your words, and your actions are like the contents of the confetti cannon, and you get to decide what to fill up with, and what to project outwards: rocks, or confetti.

Speaking harsh, angry or sarcastic words and engaging in destructive, spiteful actions are like projecting dirt and rocks everywhere, and you can't project dirt without showering it down on yourself as well. Always remember this.

An Alternate Perspective

Think of this from an alternate perspective: would ***YOU*** want to cooperate or listen to someone who is showering you with rocks and dirt?



And even more important, and at the center of this is your classroom kiddos. Children are very good at picking up on subtle body and micro-expressions. So flinging (imaginary) rocks and dirt, in the form of your body movements, facial expressions, tonality of your voice, affects children more than it does an adult. Kids will usually follow and copy what the adults in their lives do, rather than what they're asked to do. So do your best to model the behaviors you want to see your students and own children to exhibit.

So the big question in your mind right now may be, "But what if I forget? What if I just get so frustrated and lose my patience - again?"

Here's my perspective: Caregivers and educators (and parents and guardians) put a lot of pressure on themselves. When you catch yourself doing this, I want you to talk with yourself the way you would want to talk with your own students. What do we tell our kids? That *as long as you are making an honest attempt, you're on the right track*. Remember that the same goes for you. Make your best effort.

So if you catch yourself losing patience, here's what I'd like you to do:

FIRST - take a breath, ***literally.*** Take. A. Breath. Breathe in slowly to the count of 4 and out to the count of 6. This works because its based in your biology. Exhaling longer than you inhale activates the part of your brain that calms you. So when you breathe, make sure the exhale is slightly longer than the inhale.

The Bigger Picture



SECOND: give yourself some *Grace* and look at the bigger picture. The most important thing is that you stay calm and centered as much as possible, not just for your kiddos and coworkers, but for your own well-being. YOUR well-being is what helps you help others take care of ***their*** well-being. You can't give to or help anyone if your energy and personal resources are depleted, and its when your resources are used up and you're tired, dehydrated, hungry, that you are more likely to get frustrated, lose patience and not show up or function as your best self.

And when you don't show up as your best self, it greatly affects your overall outlook, your happiness, and your quality of life. You ensure everyone's well-being by taking care of yourself first, so you're better equipped to handle, diffuse and recover from stressful days, much better.

THIRD: set your self-criticism and self-judgment aside. Do NOT judge yourself if you lose your patience, but just notice it, and simply begin again, by asking yourself, how you can model more patience?

Here's your script: *"Oh wow. I just did that again. OK. No worries – I can do better by....."*

No drama, no judgment, just a quick observation, assessment and correction. Think of it as "*Approaching the Standard*". Your objective is to meet or exceed the standard through consistent effort. You can unpack it and figure out why your not "meeting the standard" later, and come up with a long-term solution. In the moment, put forth your best effort.

Transform the Way You Express Yourself



Earlier, I asked you to imagine the rock-filled confetti canon in your non-dominant hand for a reason. Those rock-throwing impulses, (real or imagined) are also your non-dominant tendencies, and can be transformed into a more positive form of release If you really need to release tension, there are other, healthier ways to do that, that we talk about in our other programs.

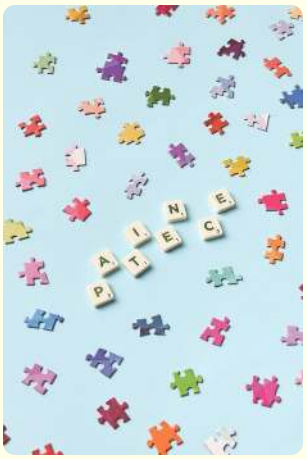
In contrast, gentler, constructive, objective, emotionally mature words and actions, expressed without drama, are more like confetti, flying out of the tube, floating into the air, spreading farther and lingering much longer than the rocks and dirt. It gently lands on those who are nearby without hurting anyone, including children and yourself.

I asked you to imagine the confetti-filled cannon in your ***dominant*** hand because your true nature is of cooperation and that is your dominant tendency, which motivates you to project the best of who you are out into the world, as much as possible. The confetti represents all of your constructive emotions and characteristics: care, compassion, understanding, cooperation, camaraderie, truth, integrity, unity, responsibility, etc.

The dirt and rocks would represent destructive qualities: anger, sarcasm, spite, deception, judgment, envy, fear, etc. And all the power to release one or the other is in your hands. Which would you rather shower people (and yourself) with?

No matter what the situation, you are in complete control of how you react OR respond- with rocks or confetti. At any moment you can choose to release either damaging projectiles or beautiful sparkly bits of color.

Constructive Problem Solving



This simple confetti imagery alone will transform the way you interact with children, yourself, and other adults and will improve your approach to stressful situations & problem solving.

Now, with that said, showering your coworkers or students with physical, verbal or emotional confetti (whether in reality or just in your mind) will not entirely solve whatever the problem, conflict or annoying behavior is. That will take some deeper thought.

BUT what the confetti principle WILL do is give you a moment to stop, re-frame and respond with more patience to solve the problem at hand. And every time you lead by responding calmly and constructively in the moment, you and the others involved, whether children or adults, become more trusting, more unified, more confident, more motivated and more resilient. And isn't that what we all want?

Good solutions take self-reflection and cooperation among all the parties. What remembering and applying the Confetti Principle will do is help everyone approach that conflict or problem from a calm, expansively thinking brain rather than a stressed, constricted thinking one. This gives everyone a much higher and more empowered perspective rather than a helpless one. In this way you can celebrate creative problem-solving genius, instead of sinking down into frustration and negativity.

The Confetti Principle is simple, but applying it may take some practice, especially if you're prone to feeling stressed, or have a style of communication that is more direct and intense than most. Keep practicing consistently and I'm certain that in a few short weeks or even days, you'll find the consistent practice is well worth it!

Final Thoughts & Some Notes

Important Note:



In applying the Confetti Principle, I'm not suggesting that you ignore your intuition or undermine your own feelings about a situation, nor am I suggesting that you don't express yourself. I'm also not suggesting that someone being out rightly aggressive or abusive, whether passively or intentionally, verbally or physically, shouldn't be addressed. It absolutely SHOLUD be addressed as soon as possible.

But handling these particular types of situations takes more than what we can cover here in this short guide. For now, what I recommend you do is take your concerns to your supervisor, HR department, therapist or clergy, along with the proper legal authorities to help you navigate and protect yourself from the situation or intervene on your behalf. (While a situation like this is out of our scope of knowledge, if you need resources, please contact us and we will do our best to connect you with someone who can give you the direction and assistance that you need.)

What applying the Confetti Principle does, is give you practice in not allowing your emotions to dictate how you respond in the moment, and allows you room to be more patient and constructive in your interactions, whether its with children or other adults. This is especially important when you're in a care giving, or other professional situation. The key is to keep practicing it until it becomes second nature.

Practice doesn't make "perfect", but it DOES make ***progress***!

Your Feedback is Welcome!

I truly hope you found this guide helpful!

I'd like you to set a goal to commit applying the Confetti Principle for the rest of this week and see how it reduces stress, improves your patience, encourages constructive communication and enhances and transforms your interactions with kids and adults.

Then feel free to pop into our online Facebook community,Signature Wellness Solutions on Telegram, and tell us what you noticed. You can find the link to our online community right here.

Please reach out with any questions, if you need suggestions or you just want to chat.



Barbara Gini is the Founder & Lead Trainer at ***Signature Wellness Solutions***. She is an author, therapeutic art facilitator, and workplace wellness educator who works with with child caregivers, early educators and other child professionals to help them live and lead with more patience, passion and purpose, without sacrificing their own well-being.

You can learn more about our newest course and program releases here.

To schedule a live or virtual workshop or training class, please contact:

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Notes: