



THE VIRTUES PROJECT™  
*Bringing Virtues to Life*

# A Trauma Responsive Approach to Cultivating Resilience and Wellbeing in Staff and Students



“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

*~Frederick Douglass*

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# GEMS I WANT TO REMEMBER...



www.darafeldman.com Blog Posts entitled:  
“Dear Compassionate Colleague, What Do You Kow About Trauma”  
“Why Mindfulness and How to Get Started”

Cortisol: (H) Supplies Energy (Uh-oh!)  
Epinephrine: (H) Alerts all systems (Yikes!)  
Serotonin: (N) Induces Calm (Ahhh!)  
Dopamine: (N) Produces Pleasure (Yahoo!)





# *Virtues: The Gifts of Character*

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Assertiveness</b> | <b>Integrity</b>       |
| <b>Caring</b>        | <b>Joyfulness</b>      |
| <b>Cleanliness</b>   | <b>Justice</b>         |
| <b>Commitment</b>    | <b>Kindness</b>        |
| <b>Compassion</b>    | <b>Love</b>            |
| <b>Confidence</b>    | <b>Loyalty</b>         |
| <b>Consideration</b> | <b>Moderation</b>      |
| <b>Cooperation</b>   | <b>Modesty</b>         |
| <b>Courage</b>       | <b>Orderliness</b>     |
| <b>Courtesy</b>      | <b>Patience</b>        |
| <b>Creativity</b>    | <b>Peacefulness</b>    |
| <b>Detachment</b>    | <b>Perseverance</b>    |
| <b>Determination</b> | <b>Purposefulness</b>  |
| <b>Diligence</b>     | <b>Reliability</b>     |
| <b>Enthusiasm</b>    | <b>Respect</b>         |
| <b>Excellence</b>    | <b>Responsibility</b>  |
| <b>Flexibility</b>   | <b>Self-Discipline</b> |
| <b>Forgiveness</b>   | <b>Service</b>         |
| <b>Friendliness</b>  | <b>Tact</b>            |
| <b>Generosity</b>    | <b>Thankfulness</b>    |
| <b>Gentleness</b>    | <b>Tolerance</b>       |
| <b>Helpfulness</b>   | <b>Trust</b>           |
| <b>Honesty</b>       | <b>Trustworthiness</b> |
| <b>Honor</b>         | <b>Understanding</b>   |
| <b>Humility</b>      | <b>Truthfulness</b>    |
| <b>Idealism</b>      |                        |

Illustration: Brian Lofgren  
Poster & Virtues Materials: 1-888-261-5611

*The Virtues Project*



*Bringing Virtues to Life*

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# VIRTUES - CHARACTER STRENGTHS OUR TRUE SOURCE OF POWER

Acceptance	Fidelity	Passion
Accountability	Flexibility	Patience
Appreciation	Forbearance	Peacefulness
Assertiveness	Forgiveness	Perceptiveness
Awe	Fortitude	Perseverance
Beauty	Friendliness	Purity
Caring	Generosity	Purposefulness
Certitude	Gentleness	Reliability
Charity	Grace	Resilience
Cheerfulness	Gratitude	Respect
Cleanliness	Helpfulness	Responsibility
Commitment	Honesty	Reverence
Compassion	Honor	Righteousness
Confidence	Hope	Sacrifice
Consideration	Humanity	Self-discipline
Contentment	Humility	Serenity
Cooperation	Idealism	Service
Courage	Independence	Simplicity
Courtesy	Initiative	Sincerity
Creativity	Integrity	Steadfastness
Decisiveness	Joyfulness	Strength
Detachment	Justice	Tact
Determination	Kindness	Thankfulness
Devotion	Love	Thoughtfulness
Dignity	Loyalty	Tolerance
Diligence	Mercy	Trust
Discernment	Mindfulness	Trustworthiness
Empathy	Moderation	Truthfulness
Endurance	Modesty	Understanding
Enthusiasm	Nobility	Unity
Excellence	Openness	Wisdom
Fairness	Optimism	Wonder
Faith	Orderliness	Zeal
Faithfulness		



# Stress in Childhood

Stress is a natural & inevitable part of childhood, but the TYPE of stress can make a difference in the impact on a child's brain & body.

“STRESS is a mental, physical or biochemical response to a perceived threat or demand”

## Positive Stress

Mild stress in the context of good attachment



Temporary, mild elevation in stress hormones & brief increase in heart rate

No buffering support necessary

Increased **RESILIENCE** and confidence  
Development of coping skills



www.70-30.org.uk  
@7030Campaign

## Tolerable Stress

Serious, temporary stress, buffered by supportive relationships



More severe, continuing cardiovascular and hormonal response

Presence of buffering caring adult



Adaption and recovery with some possibility for physical/emotional damage



## Toxic Stress

Prolonged activation of stress response system without protection

Prolonged activation of stress response system & disrupted development of brain and immune system



No adult buffers



Lifelong consequences:

- Heart disease
- Alcoholism
- Memory & learning difficulties
- Anxiety/depression
- Cancer



## ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
Physical	Physical	Mental Illness	Incarcerated Relative
Emotional	Emotional	Mother treated violently	Substance Abuse
Sexual		Divorce	



**“There is a cost to caring.” - Charles Figley**

Trauma takes a toll on children, families, schools, and communities. Trauma can also take a toll on school professionals. **Any educator who works directly with traumatized children and adolescents is vulnerable to the effects of trauma**—referred to as *compassion fatigue* or *secondary traumatic stress*—being physically, mentally, or emotionally worn out, or feeling overwhelmed by students’ traumas. The best way to deal with compassion fatigue is early recognition.

### TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

1. **Be aware of the signs.** Educators with compassion fatigue may exhibit some of the following signs:
  - Increased irritability or impatience with students
  - Difficulty planning classroom activities and lessons
  - Decreased concentration
  - Denying that traumatic events impact students or feeling numb or detached
  - Intense feelings and intrusive thoughts, that don’t lessen over time, about a student’s trauma
  - Dreams about students’ traumas
  
2. **Don’t go it alone.** Anyone who knows about stories of trauma needs to guard against isolation. While respecting the confidentiality of your students, get support by working in teams, talking to others in your school, and asking for support from administrators or colleagues.
  
3. **Recognize compassion fatigue as an occupational hazard.** When an educator approaches students with an open heart and a listening ear, *compassion fatigue* can develop. All too often educators judge themselves as weak or incompetent for having strong reactions to a student’s trauma. Compassion fatigue is not a sign of weakness or incompetence; rather, it is the cost of caring.
  
4. **Seek help with your own traumas.** Any adult helping children with trauma, who also has his or her own unresolved traumatic experiences, is more at risk for compassion fatigue.
  
5. **If you see signs in yourself, talk to a professional.** If you are experiencing signs of compassion fatigue for more than two to three weeks, seek counseling with a professional who is knowledgeable about trauma.
  
6. **Attend to self care.** Guard against your work becoming the only activity that defines who you are. Keep perspective by spending time with children and adolescents who are not experiencing traumatic stress. Take care of yourself by eating well and exercising, engaging in fun activities, taking a break during the workday, finding time to self-reflect, allowing yourself to cry, and finding things to laugh about.

Resource: Figley, C.R. (1995). *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized*. New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc.

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**What can be done at school to help a traumatized child?**

- Maintain usual routines. A return to “normalcy” will communicate the message that the child is safe and life will go on.
- Give children choices. Often traumatic events involve loss of control and/or chaos, so you can help children feel safe by providing them with some choices or control when appropriate.
- Increase the level of support and encouragement given to the traumatized child. Designate an adult who can provide additional support if needed.
- Set clear, firm limits for inappropriate behavior and develop logical—rather than punitive—consequences.
- Recognize that behavioral problems may be transient and related to trauma. Remember that even the most disruptive behaviors can be driven by trauma-related anxiety.
- Provide a safe place for the child to talk about what happened. Set aside a designated time and place for sharing to help the child know it is okay to talk about what happened.
- Give simple and realistic answers to the child’s questions about traumatic events. Clarify distortions and misconceptions. If it isn’t an appropriate time, be sure to give the child a time and place to talk and ask questions.
- Be sensitive to the cues in the environment that may cause a reaction in the traumatized child. For example, victims of natural storm-related disasters might react very badly to threatening weather or storm warnings. Children may increase problem behaviors near an anniversary of a traumatic event.
- Anticipate difficult times and provide additional support. Many kinds of situations may be reminders. If you are able to identify reminders, you can help by preparing the child for the situation. For instance, for the child who doesn’t like being alone, provide a partner to accompany him or her to the restroom.
- Warn children if you will be doing something out of the ordinary, such as turning off the lights or making a sudden loud noise.
- Be aware of other children’s reactions to the traumatized child and to the information they share. Protect the traumatized child from peers’ curiosity and protect classmates from the details of a child’s trauma.
- Understand that children cope by re-enacting trauma through play or through their interactions with others. Resist their efforts to draw you into a negative repetition of the trauma. For instance, some children will provoke teachers in order to replay abusive situations at home.
- Although not all children have religious beliefs, be attentive if the child experiences severe feelings of anger, guilt, shame, or punishment attributed to a higher power. Do not engage in theological discussion. Rather, refer the child to appropriate support.



# HOW ARE YOU REALLY?



“The unexamined life is not worth living.” ~Socrates

*Directions: Choose a partner and take turns interviewing one another, asking all nine questions of one person, and then switching roles. Be present to one another without writing.*

1. How do you spend your time and energy? What “hats” or roles do you wear?
2. In three words, how are you, really?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), what is your current stress level?
4. What stresses you? What is one of your biggest challenges? Is there any aspect of your life that feels overwhelming?
5. How is your fatigue level at this time, on a scale of 1 to 10?
6. What in your life nurtures you emotionally and spiritually? What activities give you a sense of joy and well-being?
7. Name 3 virtues that are strong in you. How do you live them?
8. Name 3 virtues that are underdeveloped in your life now? What would it be like to have them in balance in your life?
9. In seeking balance in your life, describe one change or boundary that would make a great difference?

*Interviewer, please give your partner a VIRTUES ACKNOWLEDGMENT*





# INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW



Directions: Choose a partner and take turns interviewing one another. Do not write or take notes. Just be present and listen.

1. Name someone you admire. This person may be a figure in history or a person in your life. What is the core virtue this person practices? What attracts you to this virtue?
2. Name one of your own strength virtues, one that is strong and well-developed in you. Say a few words about how you live it.
3. Name a virtue you would like to grow, one that is underdeveloped in you. Say a few words about how it is needed in your life.
4. What is one of the biggest challenges in your life right now? What virtue would help you meet that challenge?
5. What are your hopes for the semester?
6. What is a source of joy in your life at this time?
7. Virtues Acknowledgment: Interviewer, please give your partner a virtues acknowledgment by telling them a virtue you notice in them and specifically how you see it.

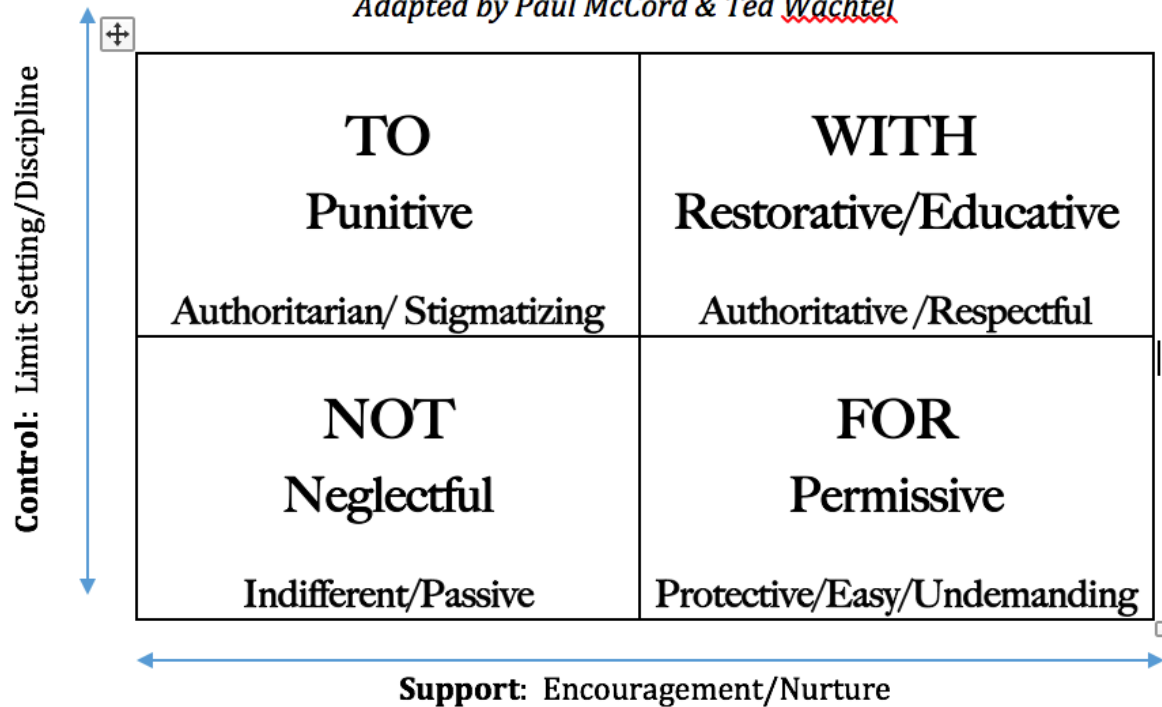
“I want to acknowledge you for the virtue of \_\_\_\_\_ and the way you show it is \_\_\_\_\_.”

*Taken from The Virtues Project Educator's Guide page 43.*



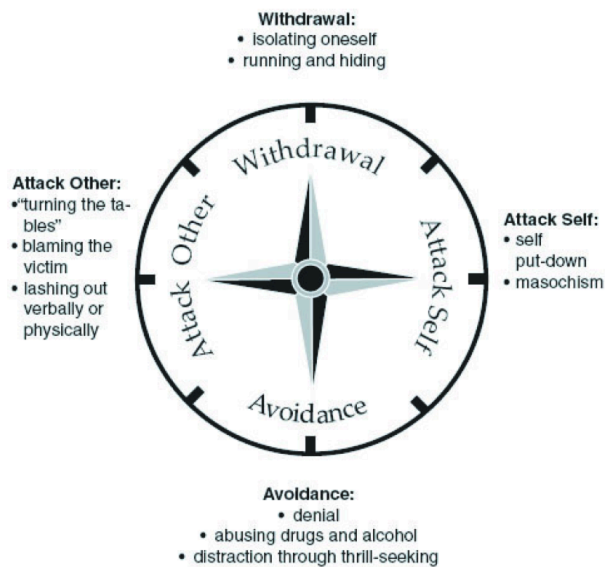
# Social Discipline Window

Adapted by Paul McCord & Ted Wachtel



# The Compass of Shame

Adapted from Nathanson 1992, p.132



**Reintegrative Shame:** Labeling the act, not actor. Separating deed from doer.



# Mindful Minute: This Work is Personal!

Where are you in the Social Discipline Window?

Punitive, Permissive, Neglectful, Restorative/Educative

What is your biggest trigger?

1. Outside Stress
2. Embarrassment
3. Shock or Fear
4. Values Violation
5. Authority Challenge

What virtue will help you respond instead of react? \_\_\_\_\_

## Detachment

Detachment is experiencing our feelings without allowing them to control us. We step back and look at things objectively. We let go and accept what we cannot change. We detach from others' choices, knowing that their spiritual work is not ours to do. We choose how we will act rather than just reacting. We step away from harmful cravings. Detachment is a deep breath of peace and patience in response to unexpected anger. We can listen without losing ourselves. With detachment, we see our mistakes honestly, make amends and start afresh. Detachment allows us be in the world but not of it. It frees us to lead our lives with grace.

  
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*"You always have the choice to take all things evenly, to hold on to nothing, to receive each irritation as if you had only fifteen minutes to live."*

TOLBERT MCCARROLL



### The Practice of Detachment

- I recognize my feelings without letting them control me.
- I resist interfering with others' spiritual lessons.
- I choose to act instead of react.
- I free myself from impulses and cravings.
- I listen in order to understand.
- I have the humility to amend my mistakes.
- I lead my life as my soul chooses.

*I am thankful for the gift of Detachment.  
It lifts me up.*

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Photograph © Steve Snyder



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

## SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."

- ➔ IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS
- ➔ ACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTION
- ➔ RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
- ➔ SELF-CONFIDENCE
- ➔ SELF-EFFICACY

## SELF-MANAGEMENT

The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- ➔ IMPULSE CONTROL
- ➔ STRESS MANAGEMENT
- ➔ SELF-DISCIPLINE
- ➔ SELF-MOTIVATION
- ➔ GOAL SETTING
- ➔ ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

## SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- ➔ PERSPECTIVE-TAKING
- ➔ EMPATHY
- ➔ APPRECIATING DIVERSITY
- ➔ RESPECT FOR OTHERS

## RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

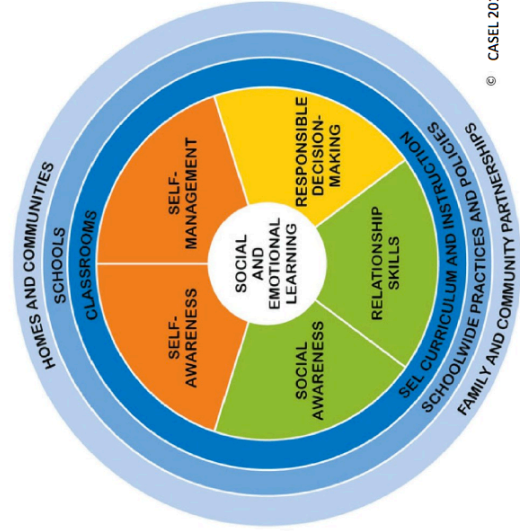
The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- ➔ COMMUNICATION
- ➔ SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
- ➔ RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- ➔ TEAMWORK

## RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- ➔ IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS
- ➔ ANALYZING SITUATIONS
- ➔ SOLVING PROBLEMS
- ➔ EVALUATING
- ➔ REFLECTING
- ➔ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY



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# THREE SIGNATURE SEL PRACTICES for the CLASSROOM\*

## Creating the Conditions for Student Learning



*OUSD Core Values: Students First • Equity • Excellence • Integrity • Culturally Responsive • Joy*

### WELCOMING RITUAL (2-10 minutes)

#### Activities for Inclusion

Ritual openings establish safety and predictability, support contribution by all voices, reinforce norms for respectful listening, allow students to connect with one another and create a sense of belonging. To be successful, these activities must be: carefully chosen, **connected to the learning of the day** and engagingly facilitated.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSROOM:

- Every voice is heard
- Purposeful social interactions
- Class meetings
- Smile & greet each person by name

#### SCHOOL-WIDE:

- Adults express joy in seeing students
- Stack of breakfast items on office counter = glad to see late arrivals
- Morning announcements include student voice

### ENGAGING PRACTICES (1-15 minutes)

#### Academic Integration, Sense-Making, Transitions & “Brain Breaks”

Engaging practices are brain-compatible strategies that can foster relationships, cultural humility and responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. Intentionally build student SEL skills and then authentically practice these skills throughout the school day. Provide thoughtful transitions and opportunities for brain breaks that help integrate new information into long-term memory, otherwise it is soon forgotten. Balance opportunities for quiet reflection and writing with more active activities.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSROOM

- **Opportunities for Interaction:** Cultivate practices that involve interactions in partnerships, triads, small groups and as a whole group
- **Explicitly teach** SEL skills through evidence-based programs
- **Turn To Your Partner:** Sharing and listening to make sense of new input
- **Co-create and regularly revisit** working agreements with your students
- **Brain Break - Stand and Stretch:** Refresh and reset the brain with movement, music, quiet reflection

### OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE (3-5 minutes)

#### Reflections and Looking Forward

Provide intentional closure by having students reflect on and then name something that helps them transition on an optimistic note. This provides a positive way to reinforce learning, can connect school to home/community, and creates a moment of looking forward to coming back.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSROOM:

Think of...

- Something I learned today
- Someone I was able to help
- Something I want to share with an adult
- Something I’m looking forward to doing tomorrow
- Something I enjoyed about the day
- Someone who was kind/helpful to me

\*Adapted from the work of Ann McKay Bryson, CASEL SEL Professional Learning Consultant



# HOW TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF VIRTUES



THERE ARE USUALLY THREE ELEMENTS OF A VIRTUES STATEMENT:

- 1) an opening phrase
- 2) a virtue
- 3) how the virtue is being shown or needs to be shown.

## ----TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND THANK---

*When you see someone demonstrating a virtue, especially a growth virtue.*

I acknowledge your	<i>determination</i>	completing this task without giving up.
It was	<i>helpful</i>	of you to show the new student to their locker.
I honor your	<i>reliability</i>	being here on time every day.
You demonstrated great	<i>courage</i>	being the first one to share your report.
Thank you for your	<i>flexibility</i>	meeting with me after school hours.

## ----TO GUIDE--

*When you are inviting someone to call on a virtue.*

Please be	<i>diligent</i>	taking the time to look over your assignment.
We need to be	<i>respectful</i>	when listening to what each person says.
Who will be	<i>courageous</i>	and volunteer to tackle this project?
I encourage you to be	<i>honest</i>	and tell me what is on your mind.
I appreciate everyone's	<i>patience</i>	waiting in line quietly for lunch.

## ---TO CORRECT--

*After there has been a mistaken behavior and you are bringing someone back to a virtue.*

Please be	<i>reliable</i>	and come to the meeting on time.
We need everyone to	<i>cooperate</i>	and fully participate.
What would help you be	<i>purposeful</i>	and complete this task?
There needs to be	<i>justice</i>	What would be fair to both of you?
Please be	<i>orderly</i>	and put things back after using them.

Write your own virtues statement below. Check to see that it has all 3 elements.



# Virtues Acknowledgments

Stem	Virtue	Behavior/Evidence (calling out)
I see your	Self-discipline/Patience	Raising your hand and waiting to be called on.

# Virtues Guidance & Corrections

Stem	Virtue	Behavior/Evidence (calling out)
What will help you call on/Please remember to	Self-discipline/Patience	Raising your hand and waiting to be called on.



# PERSONAL PEACE/SELF CARE PLAN



## A GIFT I AM TAKING



## A COMMITMENT I AM MAKING

