

A CHILD FIRST

Anthony Frazier

The handicapped person who doesn't ask for help, was a child first

The dependent individual who has been abused by those he trusted, was a child first

The delinquent youth who runs away and steals, and refuses to let anyone get close, was a child first

The troublemaker who is unwilling to make commitments and achieve goals, was a child first

The sex offender who has learned and used power to overcome others, was a child first

The "foster placement" who struggles with friendships and holds little hope, was a child first

**THE CHILD CARE WORKER WHO IS ABLE TO SEE PAST
THE LABELS, ALWAYS SEES A CHILD FIRST**

CARROTS

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I think it's safe to say that Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd elevated the role of "carrots" to practical and scientific uses. Elmer not only knew what Bugs wanted but also, more importantly, was able to manipulate Bugs' environment by using a carrot.

Elmer was not interested in Bugs' well being at say the least. In the child care world, we become privy to what youth in care want and need, but we cannot afford to act as Elmer Fudd did with Bugs. Elmer was never interested in Bugs' best interests.

Years ago, cigarettes and other rewards were used as carrots in child care with youth. Today, much has changed, but as a science, stimulus-response thinking is alive and well. In the scientific world, Pavlov did the experiment involving dogs, bells, and food. He built a strong foundation for stimulus-response thinking, but he left out one very important element: the holistic best interest of the subject being used in the experiment.

Elmer and Pavlov had a lot in common. Simply dangling the "carrot" in front of, or hanging what someone wanted, over his head, met their needs for power. As counselors, we must both provide a safe and nurturing environment, and teach youth how to satisfy their needs and wants responsibly. There are many different ways of viewing and using "carrots."

In life, some people like carrots, some don't. In child care, it's important to find out not only what youth want, but also to teach life skills. If Elmer would have simply taken Bugs out of his quality food picture, he might have found a friend. Come to think of it, Elmer didn't have many friends in his cartoon world.