Life Space Crisis Intervention: Working with Students in Crisis

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Life Space Crisis Intervention
Building Better Relationships and Responding Effectively to Conflict

Advanced, verbal skills for professional staff working with challenging children and youth.

www.lsci.org

Life Space Crisis Intervention

A therapeutic skill that enables us to make the best out of a stressful student incident when we get the worst of it.
Integrating LSCI with Existing School and Organization-Wide Interventions

• Life Space Crisis Intervention is a strategy that is being used in pre-schools, schools and districts throughout the country as a part of their PBIS/RTI initiatives.

• LSCI supports school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) and Response to Intervention – behavior (RTI) initiatives in a number of ways.

• Provides a systematic, comprehensive approach to addressing escalating behavior that can be used for students in preschool through high school across all three tiers of the PBIS/RTI model as well as in special education settings.

Walker & Muscott, 2011

Life Space Crisis Intervention
Three Possible Outcomes of a Crisis

Staff- Child Relationship  Improved

Staff- Child Relationship  Unchanged

Staff- Child Relationship  Damaged

Life Space Crisis Intervention
Three Possible Outcomes of a Crisis

If managed well, crisis can become an opportunity for positive change.

LSCI can help an adult take a bad situation and make something good of it.

LSCI can help the student and the staff build a relationship based on trust which leads to changes in perceptions, feelings, and behaviors.
"The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult. These relationships provide the personalized responsiveness, scaffolding, and protection that buffer children from developmental disruption.

They also build key capacities—such as the ability to...regulate behavior—that enable children to respond adaptively to adversity and thrive.”

(Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2016)
### Think & Write

1. Write about a student who is exceptionally ‘easy’ to work with...

2. Write about a student who is exceptionally ‘challenging’ to work with...

### Think & Write

1. Write about a teacher or adult from your childhood who made a positive difference in your life.

2. Write about a teacher or adult from your childhood who made a negative impression on your life.

### How do you want to be remembered by a child?
• They will not remember what we said.
• They will not even remember what we did.
• But they will never forget how we made them feel.

The Conflict Cycle & Differences in Psychological Worlds:
What kids believe about themselves is more important in determining their behavior than any facts about them.

What does every child need in order to develop a Positive Self-Concept?

Differences in Psychological Worlds: A Student in Stress and a Helpful Adult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Student in Stress: One-dimensional Sees Only One Perspective</th>
<th>Helpful Adult: Able to Consider Multiple Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>Negative Thinking Stuck (Options Limited) Irrational/Logical/Generalized</td>
<td>Logical Cognizant of Options Positive Self-Talk Thinks: How Do I Validate the Child's Experience?</td>
</tr>
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<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Flooded Volatile Defensive; Self Protective</td>
<td>Accepts &amp; in Control of Feelings Calm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Aggressive; Passive-Aggressive; Passive-Resistant</td>
<td>Models Self-Control Responds to Student Needs Rather than Behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Types of Stress

**Positive Stress**
- Adverse experiences that are short-lived
- Part of the normal developmental process

**Tolerable Stress**
- More intense but relatively short-lived
- With adequate support, unlikely to cause long-term problems

**Toxic Stress**
- Sustained adversity
- Children are unable to manage toxic stress by themselves
- Can lead to permanent changes in brain development

### Summary

1. The **brain stem** is responsible for survival functions, such as heart rate and respiration. “State” memories are stored in the brain stem and can be triggered during periods of stress (e.g., why your heart beats faster when you are nervous).

2. The **limbic system** is the emotion center of the brain. It plays the major role in the body’s response to stress. “Sensory” memories are stored in the limbic system. This part of the brain has no language.

3. The limbic system houses the Amygdala, which is responsible for the fight, flight, or freeze reaction.

4. The **neocortex** is the executive functioning center of the brain, where planning, problem-solving, reasoning, and abstract thought all take place. This is also the storage area for facts, figures, dates, numbers, etc.

### Summary (continued)

5. The memories of a child who lives in chronic stress, or who has suffered trauma, are stored largely in the limbic system where there is no language. Without language and the ability to “time stamp” a troubling event, the difficult memories are always live and playing in the background.

6. These kids operate at a constantly high state of arousal—at toxic stress levels—and experience many events in their environment as safety threats and emotional triggers.

7. The goal of LSCI is to bring language to emotion—to interrupt repetitive trauma and crisis re-enactment patterns.
Differences in Psychological Worlds: Thoughts Triggered by Stress Can Lead to Conflicting Adult-Student Goals

Stressed Adult’s Thoughts/Behaviors that may be Triggered by Student Behavior in Response to Stressful Task Completion:

- "We have to get this work done"  
- "Children should comply, don’t question authority."  
- "My time and effort should be spent on kids who try."

Stressed Student’s Thoughts/Behaviors that may be Triggered During Task Completion causing feelings and actions:

- "Why do I have to do this?"  
- "Why do people need to learn this crap?"  
- "I wish everyone would just leave me alone!"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9m9CI74Ozw
**COGNITIVE THEORY**

- **Stream of Consciousness:** Continuous flow of observation and thought in the present.
- **Perceptual Set:** Fundamental beliefs based on personal history.
- **Active Self-Talk:** Conscious internal dialogue filtered by the Perceptual Set.

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**Stream of Consciousness**

Kids may be wordless, but they are never thoughtless. They are flooded with “consciousness.”

Kids may become confused or silent as they sort through their many thoughts in search of an acceptable response.

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**Perceptual Set**

- Pre-disposed mindsets (beliefs based on personal experience) influence the stream of consciousness.
- All experiences are filtered through our Perceptual Set and shape our feeling about events:
  - Reading aloud
  - Running a mile
  - Doing a math problem
  - Socializing during lunch
  - Any everyday event
Active Self-Talk

- Our Perceptual Set triggers an interpretation of an event and influences what we say to ourselves; our internal dialogue.

- Self-talk generates associated feelings; it's not the event which causes the feeling, it's how we think about it.

- Some self-talk is irrational.

It's not the event which causes the feeling...

It's HOW you think about it.

Common Irrational Beliefs of Children and Youth

- I must be good at everything I do (otherwise, I am a failure).
- Everyone must like me (otherwise, I am a loser).
- If people do things I don't like, they are bad people (and they must be punished).
- Everything must go my way all the time (otherwise, I am unimportant).
- Everyone must treat me fairly all the time (because I am entitled to it).
- I never have any control over what happens to me in my life (and therefore I am not responsible for my problems).
- When something bad happens to me, I can never forget it (and I must think about it all the time).
Five Cognitive Traps

- Mental Filter
- Discounting the Positive
- Jumping to Conclusions
- Emotional Reasoning
- “Should” Statements

Most troubled students are not motivated to seek self-improvement programs, but to seek ways of justifying their faulty thinking.

WE HAVE CHOICES IN HOW FEELINGS ARE EXPRESSED

- Perceptions drive thoughts
- Thoughts drive feelings
- Feelings drive behaviors
Three Choices in Managing Personal Feelings

- Act them out
- Deny and defend
- Accept and own

Defense Mechanisms

Displacement

- A person transfers the emotion or blame from the original situation or object to another situation or object.
- Example: A student is angry with a parent but yells at his/her brother or sister.
- Exempli – Continuously taking anger out on an innocent person.
RATIONALIZATION
When something happens that we find difficult to accept, then we will make “excuse” why it has happened, by give a different reason instead of actual one.
Example:
You don’t get a job that you really wanted. You rationalize the failure by saying that the only reason the other person got the job was because they knew someone who works there in management.

Projection
• Projection is a defense mechanism that involves taking our own unacceptable qualities or feelings and blaming them on other people.
• For example, if you have a strong dislike for someone, you might instead believe that he or she does not like you.
• Projection is often the result of a lack of insight and acknowledgement of one’s own motivations and feelings.
• It’s always someone else causing the problem.

I’m NOT BITTER!
LEMON IN DENIAL
1. Stream of consciousness refers to the continuous flow of thoughts going through our minds. It is our awareness of what is happening in the moment and is always ongoing.

2. Our perceptual set is our fundamental beliefs about the world, based on our life histories. All of our experiences are filtered through our perceptual set.

3. Active self-talk is the constant internal dialogue we have with ourselves. It is heavily influenced by our perceptual set. What we say to ourselves generates how we think.

4. It’s not the event that causes the feeling; it’s how we think about it.

5. LSCI uses this understanding of the link between perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to help the child create lasting changes in behavior.

6. Under stress, kids often experience irrational self-talk that drives self-defeating behavior. LSCI helps kids examine and change their irrational self-talk, in order to bring about real changes in behavior.

7. Kids engage in five rigid patterns of perceiving and thinking known as Cognitive Traps. Each of these thinking errors contributes to a negative operating mind-set and distances the student from taking responsibility to improve his behavior.

8. Cognitive re-structuring uses good listening, responding, attending and decoding skills to change a child’s operating mindset and self-talk.

How Stress Can Drive Behavior

The Conflict Cycle
4 Choices – Student Behavior

- Permit
- Tolerate
- Stop
- Prevent

“With most kids, a crisis is a predictable and repetitive part of a cycle of ineffective behavior. For young people to be able to change a pattern of behavior into something more effective and socially acceptable, they must see that pattern. The best way to show them that pattern is for a caring adult to [enter] into the middle of a crisis with them.”

(Nawrocki, 2007, p. 8)
1. What are the most common behavioral issues that come up in school?

2. When a student does X behavior, what do you think he is really trying to say? What need does he have?

Summary

1. LSCI takes into account key differences in the psychological worlds of helping adults and students in stress.
2. Kids are often concrete in their perceptions. Under stress, they have difficulty considering things from alternate points of view.
3. In stressful situations, a child’s thinking may become illogical. LSCI helps kids challenge their irrational beliefs and illogical thinking.
4. In a crisis, kids can become explosive and flooded by their feelings. Helping adults can show kids how to accept and control overwhelming emotions.
5. For some kids, accepting responsibility for behavior is like admitting failure. It is a painful process and one that benefits from adult support.
THE CONFLICT CYCLE PARADIGM

- A **STRESSFUL EVENT** occurs which activates a troubled student's irrational beliefs.
- These **NEGATIVE THOUGHTS** determine and trigger feelings.
- FEELINGS, not rational forces, drive inappropriate behaviors.
- Inappropriate **BEHAVIORS** incite adults.
- Adults take on the student’s feelings and may **MIRROR** his behaviors.
- This negative adult **REACTION** increases the student’s stress, escalating the conflict into a self-defeating power struggle.
- The student’s **SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY** (irrational beliefs) is **REINFORCED**; the student has no motivation to change thinking or behavior.

Student's Feelings: **ANXIOUS**

Student's Behavior: “I'm not going to do it. Leave me the #$% alone.”

Adult Reaction: “Don't talk to me that way. You'll do as I say.”

Teacher: “Answer the next question.”

Conflict Cycle 1

Student's Feelings: **ANGRY**

Student's Behavior: “You can't make me! You're not my mother!”

Teacher: “Don’t talk to me that way. You'll do as I say.”

Conflict Cycle 2
Student’s Belief: Adults are all unfair. I can’t trust anyone. I can’t do anything right!

Student’s Thoughts: How am I supposed to behave? I don’t know!

Conflict Cycle 3

Teacher: “No, if I were your mother, I would have taught you some respect!”

Student’s Belief: Adults are all unfair. I can’t trust anyone. I can’t do anything right!

Breaking the Conflict Cycle

THE CONFLICT CYCLE

1. STUDENT’S SELF CONCEPT
2. EMOTIONAL EVENT
3. MULTIPLE REACTIONS
4. STUDENT’S EMOTIONS
5. STUDENT’S BEHAVIOR
6. ADULT’S REACTIONS
7. STUDENT’S BELIEFS
8. STUDENT’S BEHAVIOR
Kids in stress create in adults their feelings, and if not trained, the adults will mirror their behavior.

Why Staff Become Counter-Aggressive

- Caught in the Conflict Cycle
- Personal irritability
- Embarrassed for not meeting our professional expectations
- Fury due to personal helplessness
- Student behavior triggers our own unfinished business
- Pre-judging a troubled student
- Student violates our middle class values

Personal Plan for Button Pushing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What am I sensitive about?</th>
<th>What do I THINK &amp; FEEL when a student tries to push my buttons?</th>
<th>What do I DO?</th>
<th>How can I change my typical response?</th>
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</table>
Unbroken, the Conflict Cycle spirals into crisis

Cycle 1 - Trenton breaks the saw blade

Cycle 2 – The teacher asks Trenton to put the saw away.

Cycle 3 – The teacher puts the saw away.

Remember, during crisis act like a thermostat, not like a thermometer!
“You Messages” which Escalate the Conflict Cycle

- Can’t you do anything right?
- With your attitude you’ll never amount to anything.
- You are a disappointment to me, your friends, and your family.
- You apologize immediately!
- Don’t you dare use that language with me!
- Why do you have to be so disgusting?
- You better start acting your age!
- You have no respect for anyone or anything!
- You don’t listen to anyone, do you?
- You never use your head.
- You’re more trouble than you’re worth.

“I Messages” Are...

- Less likely to provoke more aggression.
- Less threatening to others.
- A model of honest exchange between people.
- Likely to open up communication
- Helpful in interrupting a power struggle.
- Helpful in releasing adult stress in a healthy way.

“I messages” model healthy coping behavior and respect.
Students are more inclined to listen.

“You messages” rob students of their dignity.
Anger, resentment, and disrespect are the result.
The Art of Listening

Effective Communication Skills

Attending
Responding
Decoding
Listening

The path to self-regulation for troubled children and youth

- Emotions are processed in the right hemisphere, and done so nonverbally & subconsciously
- Language to communicate about emotions is processed in the left hemisphere
- Learning to “link” the two hemispheres through interaction with a caring adult provides the first step towards effectively understanding and self-regulating feelings and behaviors
- When kids learn how to communicate positively about their needs and emotional experiences, they are able to develop empathy and compassion.
### Attending Skills

#### Entering the Dialogue
- Being fully present with the student
- Attending to verbal and non-verbal communication
- Managing counter-aggression

#### Deepening the Dialogue
- Remaining fully present
- Being aware of one’s own verbal and non-verbal messages to the student.
- Establishing “resonance” with the student, so that he senses at a subconscious level that you “feel his feelings.”

### Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication

The meaning transmitted from any interaction is the result of:

- **Facial Expression**: 55%
- **Tone of Voice**: 38%
- **Words**: 7%

100% Communication

### Responding Skills

#### Entering the Dialogue
- Keeping the dialogue going
- Reducing stress
- Remaining non-judgmental
- Building trust
- Verbal and nonverbal messages MUST be congruent

#### Deepening the Dialogue
- Affirming
- Checking for understanding
- Creating a sense of mutual experience and problem-solving.
Decoding Skills

**Entering the Dialogue**
- Searching for the meaning behind the message
- Listening to what is not being said
- Linking emotions to words (left and right hemispheres)
- Helping the student to calm down, feel supported, and access the frontal lobe or “high road.”

**Deepening the Dialogue**
- Connecting feeling and behavior
- Adding more meaning
- Leading student to insight

Listening Skills

**Entering the Dialogue**

**Attending**
- Being fully present with the student
- Attending to verbal and non-verbal communication

**Responding**
- Keeping the dialogue going
- Reducing stress
- Remaining non-judgmental
- Building trust

**Decoding**
- Searching for the meaning behind the message
- Listening to what is not being said

**Deepening the Dialogue**

**Attending**
- Remaining fully present
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**Responding**
- Affirming
- Checking for understanding
- Creating a sense of mutual problem-solving

**Decoding**
- Connecting feelings and behavior
- Adding more meaning
- Leading student to insight
### Reassuring Skills

**Helpful Statements:**
- “I am here to help.”
- “I want to understand exactly what happened.”
- “I want to understand things from your point of view.”
- “I’m sure we can figure this out together.”
- “We’re going to work this out.”
- “It takes courage to talk about what you are thinking and feeling.”
- “The more I hear things from your point of view, the better I’ll be able to help.”

### Affirming Skills

**Helpful Statements**
- “I like the way you’re using words.”
- “You’re doing a great job settling down and getting ready to talk about this.”
- “Thank you for telling me that.”
- “Thank you for being patient.”
- “You are handling a difficult situation really well.”
- “I can see that was hard for you to say.”
- “You are really trying to get yourself together.”

### Helpful Validating Statements
- “Throwing the book told me that you were frustrated with the assignment, and that’s really important information for me – it’s OK just to tell me next time.”
- “It made you sad when no one picked you to play during recess and cursing at me was a way to show me that something was bothering you.”
- “Saying I’m stupid is a way to ask for help when you don’t understand the directions, I understand, but I want you to know that it’s my job to help clarify whenever students don’t understand something – I do that for students all day long.”
### Validating Skills

Validating statements convey to the student that you non-judgmentally accept their thoughts, feelings and behaviors as important, real and understandable. You really hear them.

“Validate” Table Activity

### Summary

1. Learning to link the left and right hemispheres of the brain through interaction with a caring adult provides the first step towards understanding and self-regulating feelings and behavior.

2. When we are listening to kids, we are always trying to link emotions with words.

3. It’s difficult for many kids to sit down and dialogue with an adult. It’s up to the adult to create the right conditions for making a child feel heard and understood.

4. Communication skills are critical to effectively listening to a child and encouraging him to link emotions and language.

### The Art of Listening: TIMELINE
Most troubled students want to tell their story but lack the necessary skills and trust.

LSCI helps the student and staff build a relationship based on trust which leads to changes in perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

Summary

1. In the Timeline stage, the adult helps the child recount the events of the crisis situation by asking key questions.
2. In the Timeline, the adult uses the sequence of the Conflict Cycle to find out about the child’s unique set of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and to learn about others’ roles in the conflict.
3. Adults use the Timeline to understand the child’s active self-talk and to understand how he perceives things.
4. Most troubled students want to tell their story but lack the necessary skills and trust. The LSCI process helps a child build trusting relationships with adults and develop skills to bring language to his emotions.

The Structure of LSCI

The Six Stages
Cognitive Map of the Six Stages of LSCI

Stage 1: Drain-Off
Staff de-escalating skills to drain off the student’s intense feelings while controlling one’s counter-aggressive reactions.

Stage 2: Timeline
Staff relationship skills to obtain and validate the student’s perception of the crisis.

Stage 3: Reconstruction
Staff diagnostic skills to determine if the crisis represents one of these LSCI patterns of self-defeating behavior.

Stage 4: Insight
Staff clinical skills to pursue the student’s specific pattern of self-defeating behavior for personal insight and accountability.

Stage 5: New Skills
Staff empowering skills to teach the student new social skills to overcome his pattern of self-defeating behavior.

Stage 6: Transfer of Training
Staff consultation and contracting skills to help the student re-enter the classroom and to reinforce and generalize new social skills.

Summary of the Six Stages of a Successful LSCI

How to use a youth’s crisis as an opportunity for personal insight and social skills learning.

Stage 1: The Drain Off

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Stage</th>
<th>Staff Stage</th>
<th>Staff Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Stage</td>
<td>De-Escalation Stage</td>
<td>De-Escalation Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I’m upset and out of control | I need to drain off the youth’s intense feelings and help him control his inappropriate behavior | • Understanding the dynamics of the Conflict Cycle  
• Listening  
• Attending  
• Reassuring  
• Affirming  
• Validating  
• Decoding |

Stage 2: The Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Stage</th>
<th>Staff Stage</th>
<th>Staff Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeline Stage</td>
<td>Relationship Stage</td>
<td>Interviewing Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| This is what happened to me as I remember it | I need to encourage the youth to tell his story, to feel heard and understood. I need to validate the youth’s perceptions, thoughts and feelings about the crisis. | • Understanding the dynamics of the Conflict Cycle  
• Listening  
• Attending  
• Reassuring  
• Affirming  
• Validating  
• Decoding |
Stage 3: The Central Issue

Central Issue Stage

So this is the central issue of my crisis!

Staff Stage

I need to determine:

1. Is this crisis characteristic of how this youth perceives, thinks, feels, and behaves during a crisis?
2. Is this crisis best managed by short-term intervention, in order to get the youth back into the program?
3. Is this crisis best managed by using one of the six LSCI's?

Staff Skills

- Understanding the youth’s history and current stressors
- Knowing the six LSCI’s and selecting the right one
- Stating the central issue in developmentally-appropriate language

Stage 4: The Insight

Insight Stage

Now I understand how I contribute to my crisis and make it worse.

Clinical Stage

I need to facilitate the youth’s insight into his pattern of self-defeating behavior

Staff Skills

- Carrying out the most appropriate LSCI

Stage 5: New Skills

New Skills Stage

These are the social skills I need to improve my interpersonal relationships.

Empowering Stage

I need to teach specific skills that will help the youth improve his self-concept and interpersonal relationships

Staff Skills

- Cognitive & Behavior Modification Skills
  - Pro-social skills
  - Self-monitoring skills
  - Self-control skills
  - Role-playing skills
**Stage 6: Transfer of Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Stage</th>
<th>Staff Stage</th>
<th>Staff Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of Training Stage</td>
<td>Transfer &amp; Follow-Up Stage</td>
<td>Transfer &amp; Follow-Up Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is how I need to behave to get more of my needs met when I return to class.</td>
<td>I need to prepare the youth to return to his program.</td>
<td>Understanding group dynamics of the program</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Collaboration with significant staff</td>
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<td>Assisting co-workers in developing positive reinforcement programs</td>
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**The Structure of LSCI**

**The Six Reclaiming Interventions**

- **Red Flag:** Imported Problems
- **Reality Rub:** Errors in Perception
- **New Tools:** Poor Social Skills

- Identifying the Real Source of Stress
- Learning New Ways to Understand
- Building Pro-Social Skills

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**Summary of the Six Stages of a Successful LSCI**

*How to use a youth’s crisis as an opportunity for personal insight and social skills learning*

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**Stage 6: Transfer of Training**

- This is how I need to behave to get more of my needs met when I return to class.
- I need to prepare the youth to return to his program.
- I need to reinforce his new insights and social skills.

- Understanding group dynamics of the program
- Collaboration with significant staff
- Assisting co-workers in developing positive reinforcement programs
The Six Reclaiming Interventions

Symptom: Estrangement
- Justifying Harmful Behavior

Symptom: Massaging Numb Values
- Behavior Driven by Guilt

Symptom: Manipulation of Body Boundaries
- Exploitation of Peers

Fostering Social Responsibility
Nurturing Self-Regulation
Finding Positive Friends

Red Flag

Stress in a person’s life space is carried to another setting where it sparks conflict.

- Over-react to normal rules and procedures with emotional outbursts
- Attempt to create a no-win situation by engaging staff in a power struggle which ultimately results in more rejection and feelings of alienation.

Reality Rub

Distorted perceptions and thinking errors lead to chronic emotional and behavioral problems

1. Have blocked perceptions of reality due to intense feelings
2. Misperceive reality due to triggering of personal emotional sensitivities
3. Have a restricted perception of reality due to perseveration on a single event leading to the crisis
4. Privately reconstruct their own reality as events are interpreted through rigid perceptual filters derived from personal history
5. Manipulate reality to test limits
New Tools

Problems are caused by an inadequacy in social skills and self-management competencies

1. Has the correct attitude and behaviors but lacks the appropriate social skills to be successful
2. Experiences confusion, frustration or shame by the failures experienced

Symptom Estrangement

Person may be comfortable with bullying or delinquent behavior and show little conscience

1. Do not seem motivated to change.
2. Justify their verbally and physically aggressive behavior.
3. Perceive themselves as victims and respond aggressively.
4. Receive secondary pleasure from the pain they cause to others.
5. Appear to be very comfortable in their approach.

Massaging Numb Values

Feelings of worthlessness, guilt and lack of self-respect result in self-destructive acting-out

1. Act out impulsively then feel guilty about their behavior.
2. Are burdened by intense feelings of remorse, shame, or inadequacy and seek additional punishment to cleanse their guilt.
3. Internalize their anger and assume responsibility for all that goes wrong in their life.
4. Make self-abusive statements and may engage in self-injurious behaviors.
Youth entangled in destructive peer relationships are vulnerable to manipulation.

1. A naïve student has been set up by a false friend or a manipulating peer and doesn’t see it.

2. A neglected, isolated, or loner student develops a self-defeating & false friendship with an exploitive classmate.

3. A manipulative student takes pleasure in taking advantage of vulnerable peers.

Identifying the Real Source of Stress: The Red Flag

Reclaiming Intervention

A Red Flag Crisis is explosive and difficult to manage because the student is actively resistant to help and is his own worst enemy. Like a student drowning emotionally, he uses his last breath to push his head underwater.
When you jump in the water to rescue a drowning student, frequently you end up struggling with him.

Nothing comes from nothing.

Nothing is so small that it can’t be blown out of proportion.

The Need for Drain Off
Drain Off Techniques:

1. Attend to the student.
2. Maintain reassuring communication.
3. Use plenty of affirmation
4. Validate the feeling
5. Decode the meaning behind the message

The Red Flag
Reclaiming Intervention

Use with students who:

• Over-react to normal rules and procedures with emotional outbursts
• Attempt to create a no-win situation by engaging staff in a power struggle which ultimately results in more rejection and feelings of alienation.

Click to View Video:

Red Flag
I’m not going to open that book!”

Video Example
Student's Perception:
“Everybody is against me. No one understands what's going on with me and no one cares. I can't take it!”

Process of the Diagnostic Stages:

1. Recognize that the student’s behavior is different today.
2. De-escalate self-defeating behaviors and determine the source of the intense feelings and behaviors.
3. The adult controls personal counter-aggressive feelings toward the student while working through multiple layers of resistance.

The Role of Trauma in a Red Flag Crisis

- Children who withhold emotional expression until they reach a safe setting demonstrate a degree of emotional control not available to seriously traumatized children.
- Their fight or flight reaction is under some level of modulation, though it is likely not conscious.
- Yet, children who wait to express their anger, resentment, or fear have a paradoxical problem: the real life struggles that are the source of their stress require support systems, but their unleashing of abusive or violent behavior upon “safe” individuals alienates the would-be supporters. In that way, the child’s underlying belief that he is unworthy is validated.
- The LSCI process helps adults avoid furthering the child’s self-fulfilling prophecy and helps him gain self-awareness and insight into his self-destructive pattern.

The Sequence of a Red Flag Reclaiming Intervention

- The student experiences a stressful situation at home (e.g. is beaten, over stimulated)
- The experience triggers intense feelings of helplessness, anger, guilt, etc.
- These feelings are not expressed to the abusive person for fear of retaliation.
- He contains the feelings until he boards the bus or enters the school building.
The Sequence of a Red Flag
Reclaiming Intervention (continued)

• Rather than ask for help, he acts out his feelings in the safer environment by creating intense conflict with staff.

• He over-reacts to normal requests.

• He actually wants to fight with staff.

• His interpretation of interactions is illogical.

• He quickly creates massive counter-aggressive feelings in staff.

THIS IS THE DYNAMIC OF DISPLACEMENT

Outcome Goals:

• To identify the source of the Red Flag problem:
  • Carry-In: Problem occurs early in the day. Has source in other setting.
  • Carry-Over: Frustration occurs in one setting (e.g. classroom) and is carried over and acted out in the next class.
  • Tap-In: Problem occurs during a discussion or task which triggers personal issue. Student is overwhelmed and acts out.

• To identify the dynamics of displacement and to acknowledge that the problems kids cause are not the causes of their problems.

• To practice new ways of managing the thoughts which arouse intense feelings and drive problem behaviors.

Student’s New Insight:

• Someone does understand my personal pain and can read beyond my behavior.

• I need to talk to staff about my real problems and not create new ones.

• I need to stop this self-defeating pattern of behavior.
The problems kids cause are not the causes of their problems

Red Flag Reclaiming Intervention Video Example

Summary

1. The Red Flag is the most frequently used Reclaiming Intervention.
2. In a Red Flag crisis, the child:
   • Over-reacts to a minor request with a huge and uncharacteristic emotional outburst
   • Tries to engage an adult in a no-win power struggle, resulting in more rejection and alienation
   • Displaces his anger onto an unsuspecting person
3. The key to managing a Red Flag situation is the Drain Off.
4. The helping adult must also:
   • Recognize that the child’s behavior is different than usual
   • Identify the dynamics of displacement
   • Control counter-aggression and avoid getting caught in the Conflict Cycle
5. There are 3 types of Red Flag crises: Carry In, Carry Over & Tap In
Integrating LSCI with Existing Programs & Interventions

LSCI provides a systematic, comprehensive approach to addressing escalating behavior that can be used for students in preschool through high school across multi-tiered systems of support in both general and special education settings.

- LSCI supports school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) initiatives in a number of ways, including:
  - Tier 1 Prevention training and practice focus
  - Connects multiple foundation skills to real student needs and behaviors
  - Links with Schoolwide SES screening for decision-making and proactive planning
  - Reaches to students, staff, and families
  - Links to PBIS/MTSS practices
  - Foundation for LSCI practices at Tiers 2 & 3
  - Embed with FBA/PBS planning (Conflict Cycle Worksheet)

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Tentative dates for LSCI certification and graduate class summer 2017: June 19 – 23.

Life Space Crisis Intervention