



# LSCI

Life Space Crisis Intervention



## LSCI Online Refresher Training: Level 2 Certification

## Participant's Manual

Developed by the Life Space Crisis Intervention Institute  
[www.lsci.org](http://www.lsci.org)



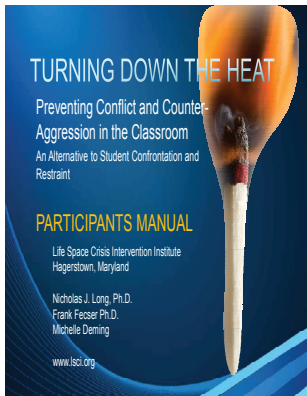
# LSCI

Life Space Crisis Intervention

## Products & Courses

### Turning Down the Heat

#### *Preventing Conflict and Counter-Aggression in the Classroom*



The LSCI Institute is announcing a new one-day, field tested course called *Turning Down the Heat; Preventing Counter-Aggression and Conflict in the Classroom*.

Most teachers are irritated by the behavior of select, challenging students. This is to be expected. Few teachers are trained to understand and acknowledge these normal counter-aggressive feelings. Problems develop when competent teachers stay angry

at a student. When a conflict develops, teachers are less likely to perceive accurately, think clearly, and reason coherently. Though competent teachers rarely initiate conflicts with students, they often keep them alive though their unintended, counter-productive reactions.

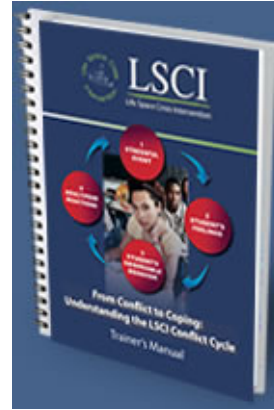
*Turning Down the Heat* documents four of the most common reasons that teachers become counter-aggressive with select students. This unique training program also offers specific skills to manage conflict in the classroom. Teachers will learn how to manage their counter-aggression when it is manageable, simmering, boiling and even when it boils over.

*Turning Down the Heat* is a unique opportunity and the missing piece of most professional training programs. This course is about you and not your students. It leads to powerful insights which will change the way you think and behave when you are angry.

### From Conflict to Coping:

#### *Understanding the LSCI Conflict Cycle*

*The Conflict Cycle™* is LSCI's major paradigm for understanding the dynamics of escalating power struggles between adults and children. On the surface, the Conflict Cycle appears simple. Yet, its underlying concepts are complex and each individual component is important to fully comprehend in order for adults to understand how to prevent and de-escalate conflicts with kids.



*From Conflict to Coping: Understanding the LSCI Conflict Cycle* curriculum is used to train professionals to:

1. Understand and recognize the dynamics of conflict and escalating power struggles between students and adults.
2. Develop effective strategies to control counter-aggression and de-escalate conflicts with kids.

In this curriculum, participants will learn and practice specific skills for understanding—and breaking—Conflict Cycles with kids. The ultimate goal of *The Conflict Cycle* training is to help adults recognize their central role in making students feel safe and supported enough to choose to talk about their feelings rather than acting them out in self-defeating ways.

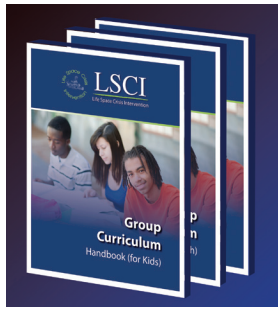
For more information or to find training in your area, please contact Signe Whitson at [swhitson@lsci.org](mailto:swhitson@lsci.org) to find a National Training site in your area.

The *From Conflict to Coping: Understanding the LSCI Conflict Cycle* curriculum is also available for purchase by schools and youth-serving organizations for use during in-service training. Please contact Signe for details.

**For more information on the courses described here or to purchase any of the featured items, please visit [www.lsci.org](http://www.lsci.org)**

LSCI Group Curriculum  
CONFLICT in the Classroom  
The Angry Smile Course

## LSCI Group Curriculum



The eight-session *LSCI Group Curriculum* is designed to teach child and adolescent students and clients the basic concepts of Life Space Crisis Intervention. The social-emotional curriculum helps kids learn about self-defeating behaviors and how to avoid falling into these troublesome patterns.

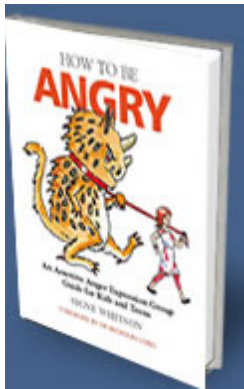
**The *LSCI Group Curriculum* is sold as a three-piece set, including:**

1. The Facilitator's Guide that walks group leaders step-by-step and session-by-session through eight unique aspects of LSCI for Kids.
2. The Group Handbook for Children, designed for participants with more limited capacity for self-reflection and/or writing skills.
3. The Group Handbook for Youth, designed for participants who are able to engage in some self-reflection and independent writing.

The *LSCI Group Curriculum* is available to participants of the LSCI certification course at a special, discounted rate. Please ask your LSCI Trainer(s) for the promotional code, to be entered at checkout.

## How to Be Angry:

### *An Assertive Anger Expression Group Guide for Kids & Teens*



*How to Be Angry* is a complete social-emotional curriculum that provides step-by-step guidelines for educators, counselors, social workers, youth care professionals, and parents to help small groups of kids develop specific anger management and assertive emotional expression skills. Participants will learn specific skills such as:

Standing Up to Bullies • Disagreeing without Arguing • Making and Refusing Requests • Responding to Anger • Finding Win-Win Solutions

Engaging, hands-on activities and discussions are customized for children ages 5-18 in school, treatment, and recreational settings and help

youth reflect on important topics such as:

Personal Anger Styles (Aggression, Passive Aggression and Passivity) • Choices in Anger Expression • Public Faces vs. Private Realities • Body Language and Tone of Voice • Replacing Self-Defeating Patterns and Committing to Assertive Behaviors

Each session of *How to Be Angry* features a special "Suggestions for Customizing the Curriculum" section that provides ideas for adjusting the activities, discussions, and Weekly Journal topics to the age, ability, interests, and developmental needs of group participants. *How to Be Angry* also features a special "Notes for Parents" section that provides discussion-starters and advice for parents who want to extend their child's learning experience beyond the group or adapt the lessons for one-on-one instruction.

## The Angry Smile Course



*The Angry Smile* course is designed for anyone who lives, works, or interacts with a passive aggressive student and wants to better understand and manage the often-troubling dynamics.

*The Angry Smile* takes an in-depth look at the roots of passive aggressive behavior in children, exploring masked anger at five distinct and increasingly pathological levels. The course features the Passive Aggressive Conflict Cycle as well as eight specific skills that professionals (and anyone interacting with a passive aggressive person) can use to respond effectively to the troubling behavior.

*The Angry Smile* course trains participants in a six-step process for confronting and changing passive aggressive behaviors in the long-term, using extensive discussion, video examples, and role play.

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***The Angry Smile* is available as a 1-day LIVE course or in an ONLINE format.**

For more details and registration information for *The Angry Smile* course, please contact Signe Whitson at [swhitson@lsci.org](mailto:swhitson@lsci.org)

## The Angry Smile:

### *The Psychology of Passive-Aggressive Behavior in Families, Schools, and Workplaces (2nd Edition)*



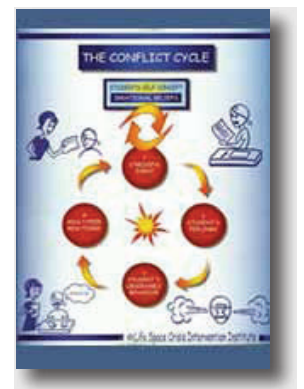
*Learn the Powerful Skills of Benign Confrontation!*

What is passive-aggressive behavior? The authors of this three-part book have studied the psychology of this behavior for over four decades in both clinical and educational settings. They offer real-world examples and empowering, practical strategies for working with or when confronted with individuals who exhibit any of the five levels of passive aggressiveness.

## LSCI Poster

*Poster illustrates the conflict cycle.*

Perfect for school classrooms and hallways or residential and group home common areas, the LSCI Conflict Cycle Poster is a great visual reminder and cue for staff and students alike.



**For more information on the courses described here or to purchase any of the featured items, please visit [www.lsci.org](http://www.lsci.org)**



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## **Welcome to Life Space Crisis Intervention**

You are about to participate in a training experience unlike most others. The techniques used in delivering the skills of LSCI have been developed over decades of experience and practice with professionals across the United States, in Europe Canada, and Australia.

You will be challenged and supported, and by the end of the program, you will have gained walk-away skills that will serve you well in your work with troubled and troubling children and youth.

The authors are interested in your feedback and suggestions, and we invite you to share your comments. Information can be forwarded through the web site, [www.lsci.org](http://www.lsci.org).

We hope you enjoy the training.

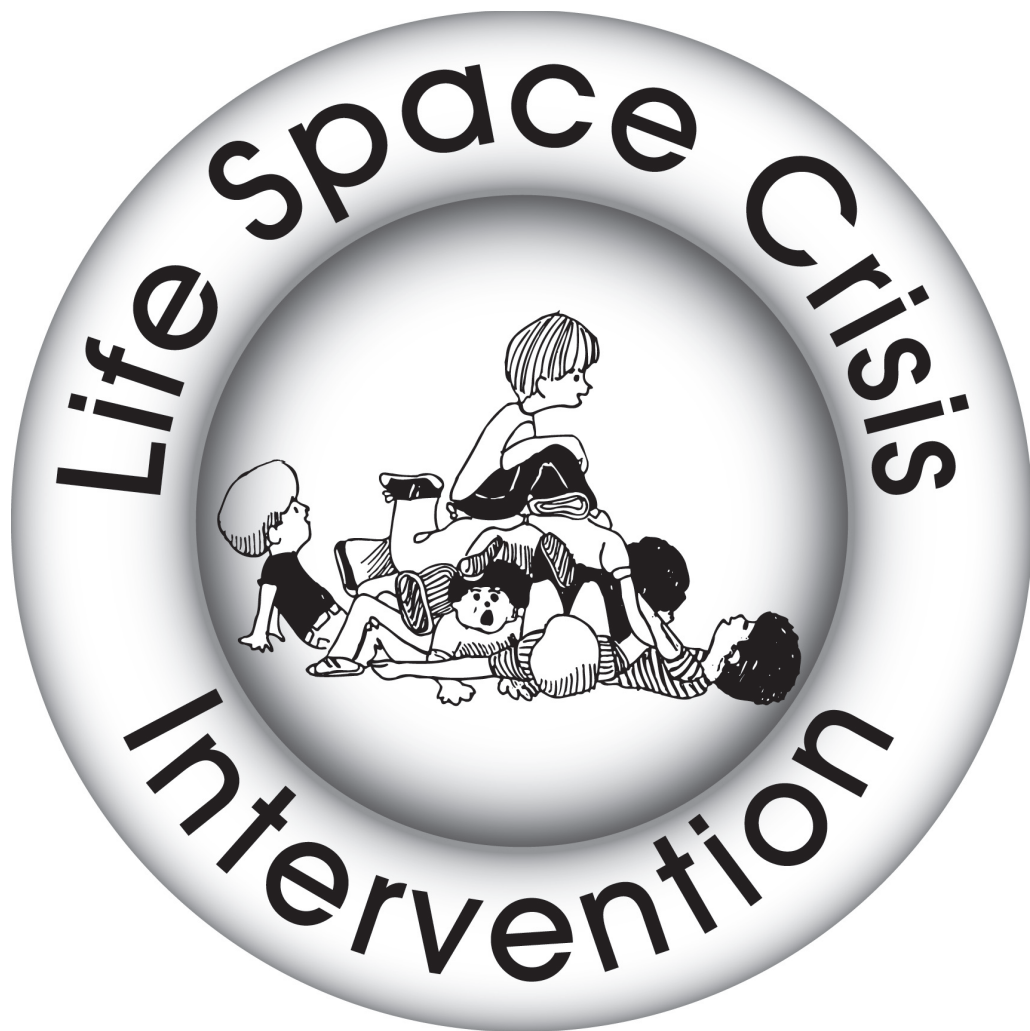
Nicholas J. Long

Frank A. Fecser

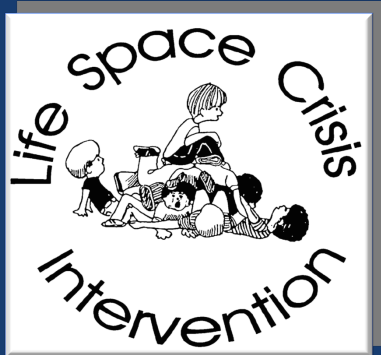




# ***The Foundational Skills of LSCI***



## LEVEL 2 Certification ONLINE REFRESHER TRAINING

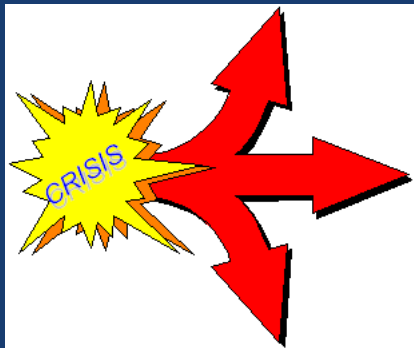


Advanced, verbal skills for professional staff working with challenging children and youth.

[www.lsci.org](http://www.lsci.org)

### Life Space Crisis Intervention *Three Possible Outcomes of a Crisis*

Staff- Child Relationship **Improved**



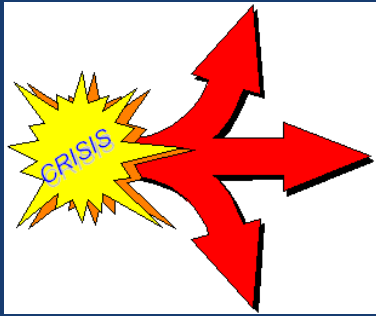
Staff- Child Relationship  
**Unchanged**

Staff- Child Relationship **Damaged**



# Life Space Crisis Intervention

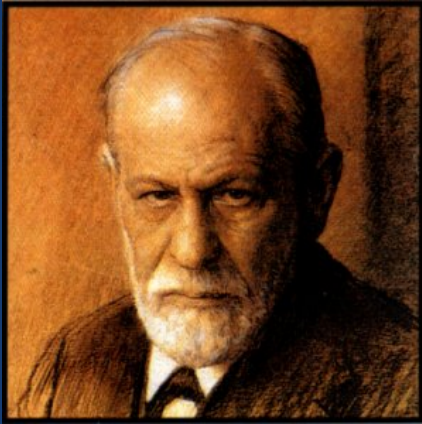
## *Three Possible Outcomes of a Crisis*



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

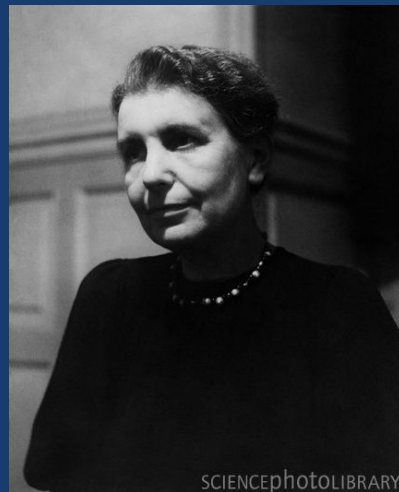
LSCI can help an adult take a bad situation and make something good of it.

LSCI can help the student and the staff build a relationship based on trust which leads to changes in perceptions, feelings, and behaviors.



Sigmund Freud

Anna Freud

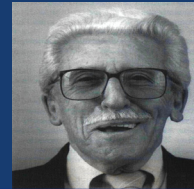


Fritz Redl



Fritz Redl

David Wineman



David Wineman



William Morse



Nicholas Long

## *The Six Reclaiming Interventions*

**Red Flag:**  
Imported Problems

**Symptom Estrangement**  
Justifying Harmful Behavior

**Reality Rub:**  
Errors in Perception

**Massaging Numb Values**  
Behavior Driven by Guilt

**New Tools:**  
Poor Social Skills

**Manipulation of Body Boundaries**  
Exploitation of Peers

## 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

## Manipulation of Body Boundaries

*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.

## Introduction to LSCI Course Objectives

### *You will learn:*

1. How stressful and traumatic memories are stored in the brain
2. The importance of learning how to express feelings through language
3. Unconscious forces that protect us from overwhelming stress
4. The dynamics of conflict

## Introduction to LSCI

### *You will learn:*

5. The importance of creating a sense of safety
6. How to listen to young people in stress
7. How to drain off a young person's intense emotions
8. How to help a young person express thoughts and feelings about a stressful event
9. The importance of changing our approach as adults towards responding more supportively and effectively to troubled children.

## The Difference in Psychological Worlds between a Student in Stress and a Helping Adult

	Staff Reactions	Student Reactions
Perceptions	Diverse Multi-dimensional	Concrete One-dimensional
Thoughts	Logical Cognitively-Based	Illogical Omnipotent Irrational Cognitive Traps
Feelings	Accepts & controls	Flooded Explosive
Behaviors	Accepts responsibility for behavior	Does not accept responsibility for behavior



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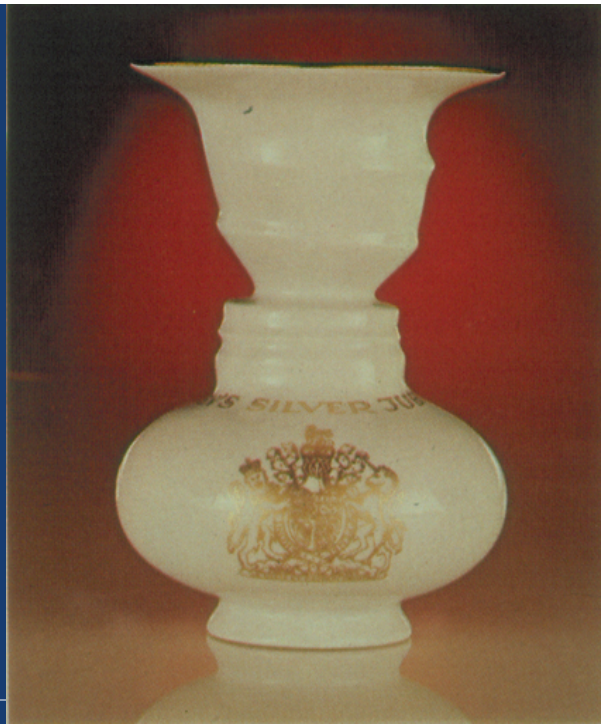


What is interesting about this photo of a vase?

Notice that you can see only one image at a time.

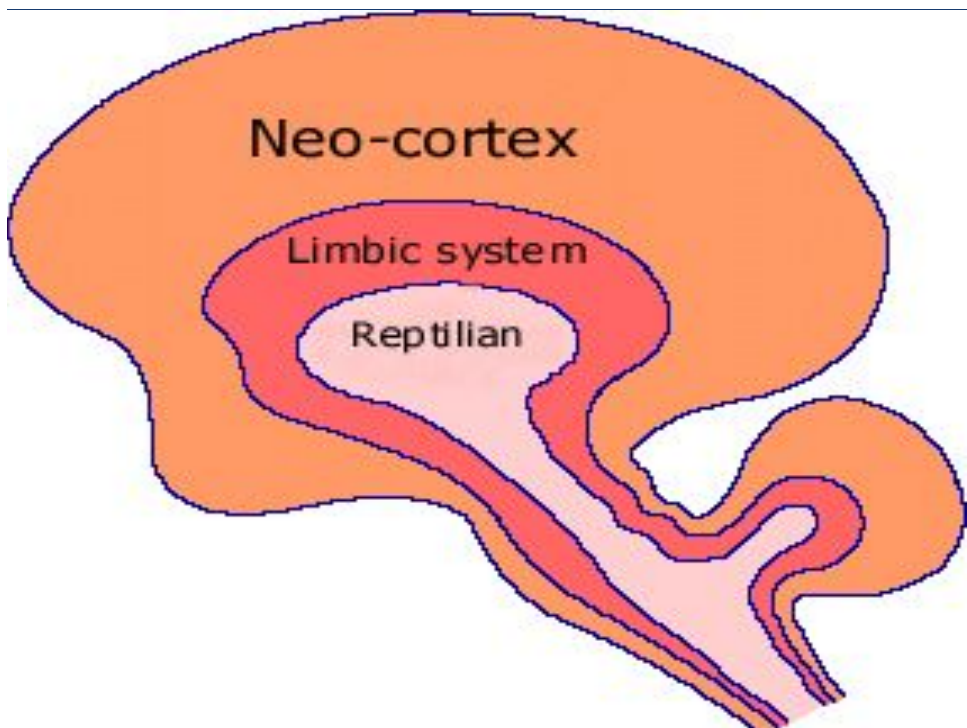
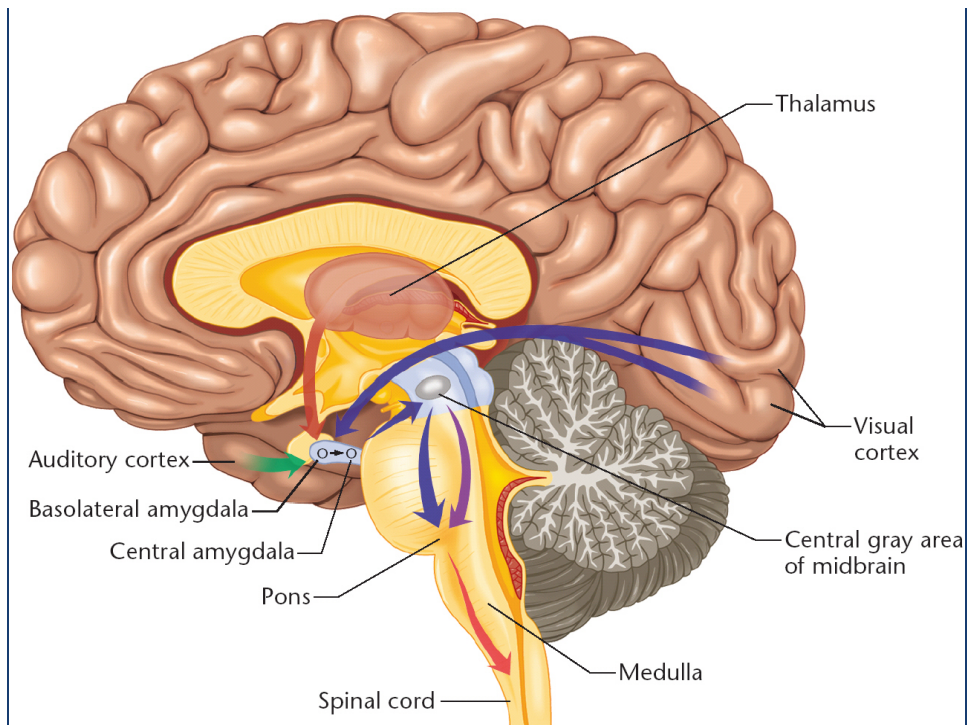
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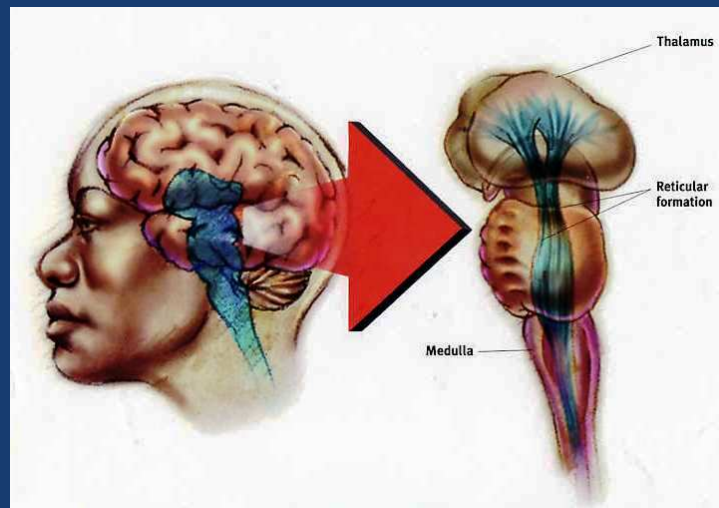
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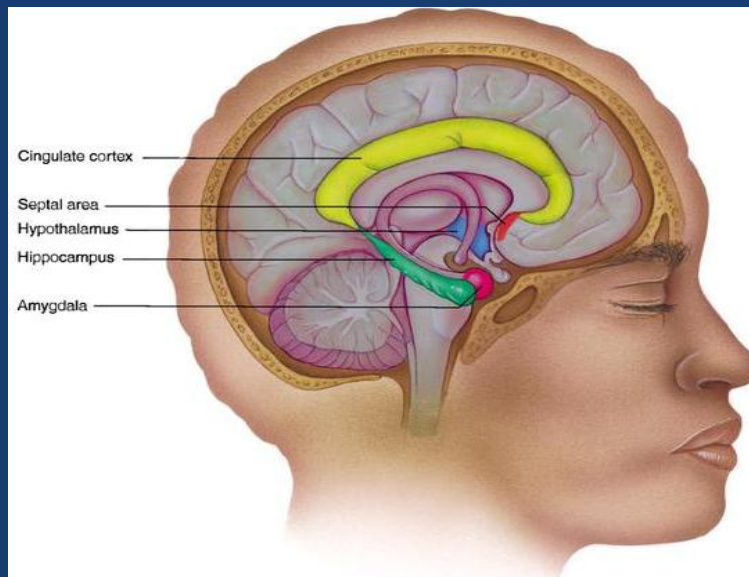
## Summary

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.

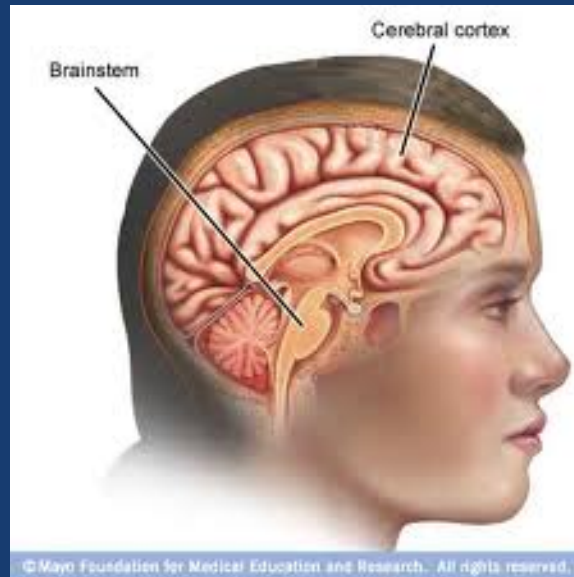




The Brainstem



The Limbic System



## The Neocortex

## 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



## Effects of Toxic Stress on Brain Development in Early Childhood

1. Impairs connection of brain circuits and in extreme cases, results in smaller brain development.
2. May cause development of low threshold for stress, resulting in over-reactivity (chronic hyperarousal).
3. High levels of stress hormones, including cortisol, can suppress body's immune response.
4. Sustained high levels of cortisol can damage the hippocampus, responsible for learning and memory. Cognitive deficits can continue into adulthood.



## 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.



Developmental Stage	Existential Question	Irrational Belief if Not Resolved
Abandonment	Is the world a safe place?	I can't trust anyone but myself— I'll do whatever it takes to meet my needs!
Inadequacy	Can I measure up to my parents' expectations?	I'll never measure up, so why try?
Guilt	Can I measure up to my own expectations?	I'm no good so I deserve to be punished!
Conflict	Can I measure up to my peers' expectations?	I'm an outcast so screw them all!
Identity	Do I have what it take to be the kind of adult I want to be?	I don't have what it takes to make it; I'm lost!

## Developmental Anxieties & Stress

### Stage 1: Abandonment

*Is the world a safe place?*

Reality Stress	Physical Stress
<i>Will someone care for me?</i>  <i>Will my basic needs be met?</i>	<i>Comforted, held, and kept warm, dry &amp; full</i> vs. <i>Lacking nurturing touch, and left cold, wet, hungry</i>

## Developmental Anxieties & Stress

### Stage 2: Inadequacy

*Can I measure up to my parents' expectations?*

Reality Stress	Physical Stress
<i>I can't seem to do anything quite right.</i>	<i>Complete dependence on caregivers for nutrition, rest, exercise, hygiene</i>

## Developmental Anxieties & Stress

### Stage 3: Guilt

*Can I measure up to my own expectations?*

Reality Stress	Physical Stress
<i>Compared to others, my weaknesses and failures become realities.</i>	<i>Conforming to the demands of school: sitting still, managing bodily demands</i>

## Developmental Anxieties & Stress

### Stage 4: Conflict

*Can I measure up to my peers' expectations?*

Reality Stress	Physical Stress
<i>I must compete for acceptance.</i>	<i>Hormones, growth, body type, personal appearance</i>

## Developmental Anxieties & Stress

### Stage 5: Identity

*Do I have what it takes to make it as a self-sufficient adult?*

Reality Stress	Physical Stress
<i>Intellect, finances, opportunities, expectations, uncertainties</i>	<i>Adjustment: demands of work, school, independence</i>



## Summary

1. A child's perceptions and beliefs about the world are heavily influenced by how the existential questions of each developmental stage are resolved.
2. The perceptions a child forms from his earliest stages can become the operating principles that drive the way he approaches life.

3.

Stage	Existential Question
Abandonment	Is the world a safe place?
Inadequacy	Can I measure up to my parents' expectations?
Guilt	Can I measure up to my own expectations?
Conflict	Can I measure up to my peers' expectations?
Identity	Do I have what it takes to make it as a self-sufficient adult?

## Types of Memory

### Implicit Memory

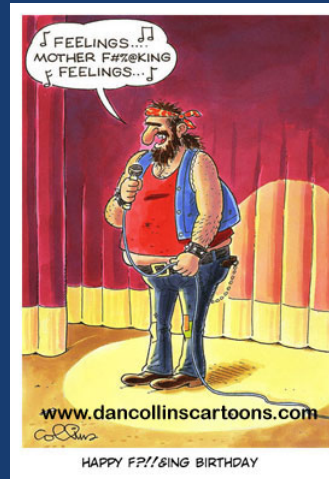
- Associated with stress and trauma
- Stored in the limbic system
- Sensory, not language-based

### Explicit Memory

- Available to language
- We think about them in words
- How we think about them influences how we feel

## WE HAVE CHOICES IN HOW FEELINGS ARE EXPRESSED

- Perceptions drive thoughts
- Thoughts drive feelings
- Feelings drive behaviors



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## Three Choices in Managing Personal Feelings

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

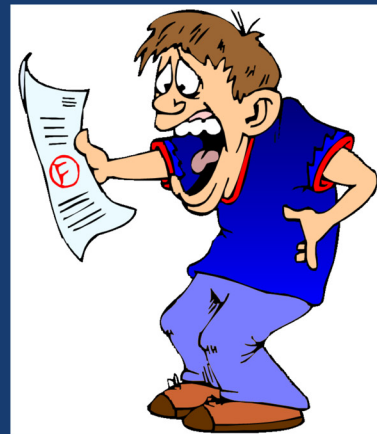
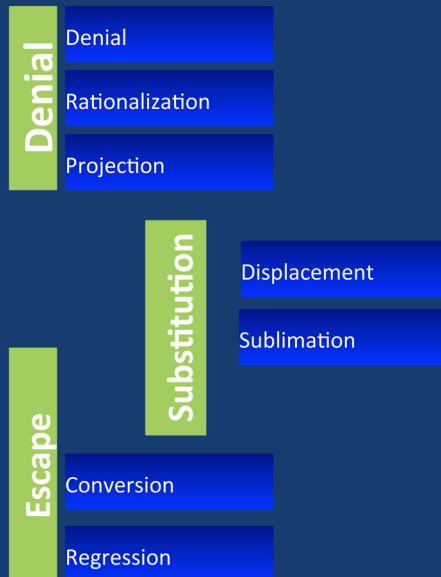
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Most troubled students are not motivated to seek self-improvement programs, but to seek ways of justifying their faulty thinking.



## Seven Defense Mechanisms





## Summary

1. **Implicit memory** is stored in the limbic system. It is the kind of memory associated with stress and trauma. Implicit memory is sensory, and not language-based.
2. **Explicit memories** are language-based. We can think about these memories in words and how we think about these memories leads to how we feel about them.
3. One of the goals of LSCI is to move “raw” memories and thoughts from the part of the brain that doesn’t have language to the part of the brain that does, so that kids come to realize they have choices in the way they express their feelings.
4. We have three choices when it comes to expressing our feelings: we can act them out, deny and defend them, or accept and own them.

## Types of Memory

### **Implicit Memory**

- Associated with stress and trauma
- Stored in the limbic system
- Sensory, not language-based

### **Explicit Memory**

- Available to language
- We can think about them in words
- How we think about them influences how we feel

# 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.

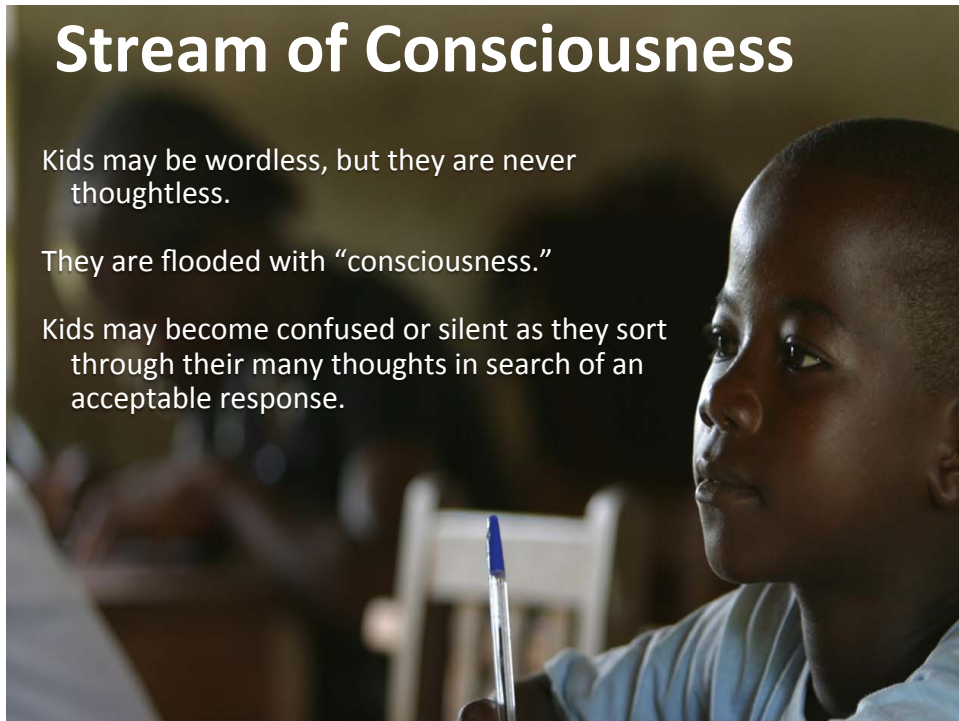
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## Stream of Consciousness

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.

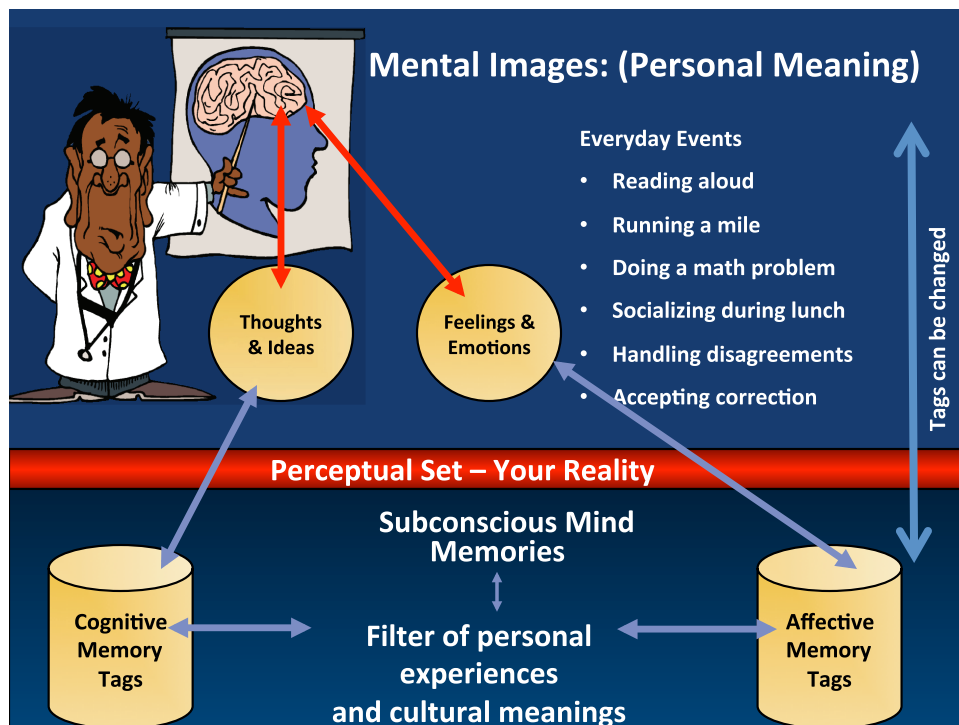


# Perceptual Set

- 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



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- 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.



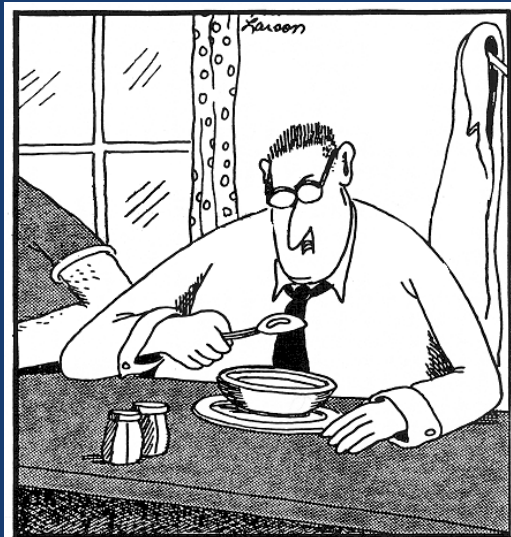
Maya Angelou

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## 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.

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Darrell suspected someone had once again slipped him a spoon with the concave side reversed.

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

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## Cognitive Restructuring

In order to change perceptions and feelings we must tap into the student's self-talk.

- Requires excellent *listening skills* including:
  - *Attending skills*
  - *Decoding skills*
  - *Responding skills*

*You can change the student's self-talk!*

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People are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them.

--- Epictetus,  
1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.

What kids believe about themselves is more important in determining their behavior than any facts about them.





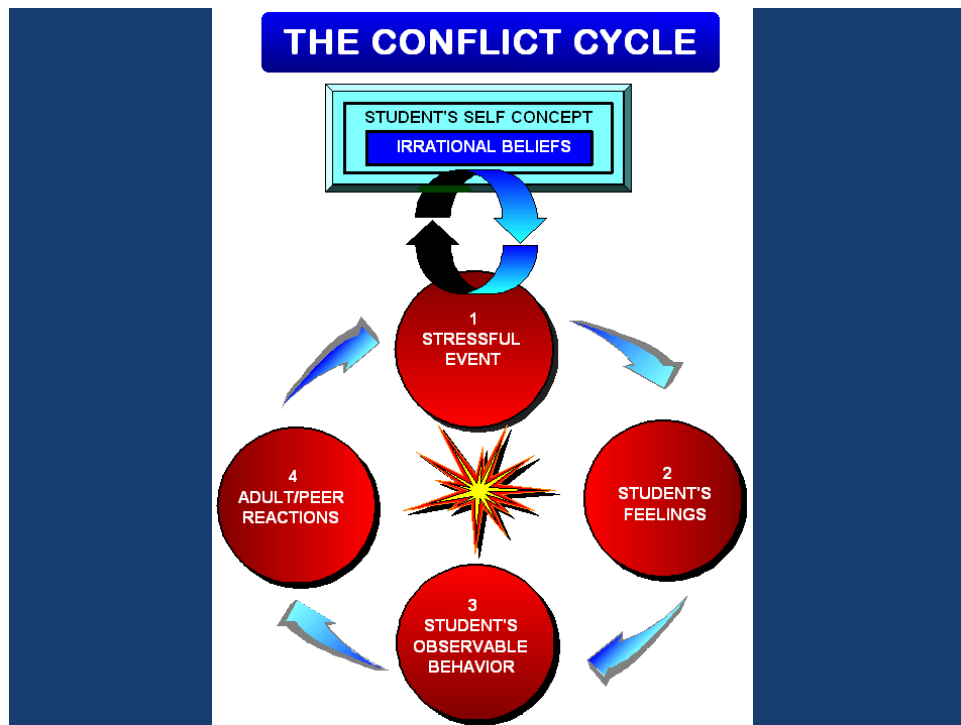
## Summary

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.

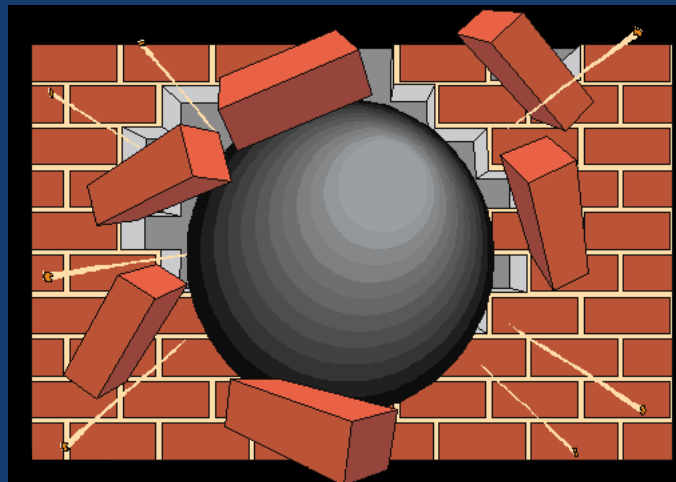


## Summary (continued)

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.



Kids in stress create in adults their feelings,

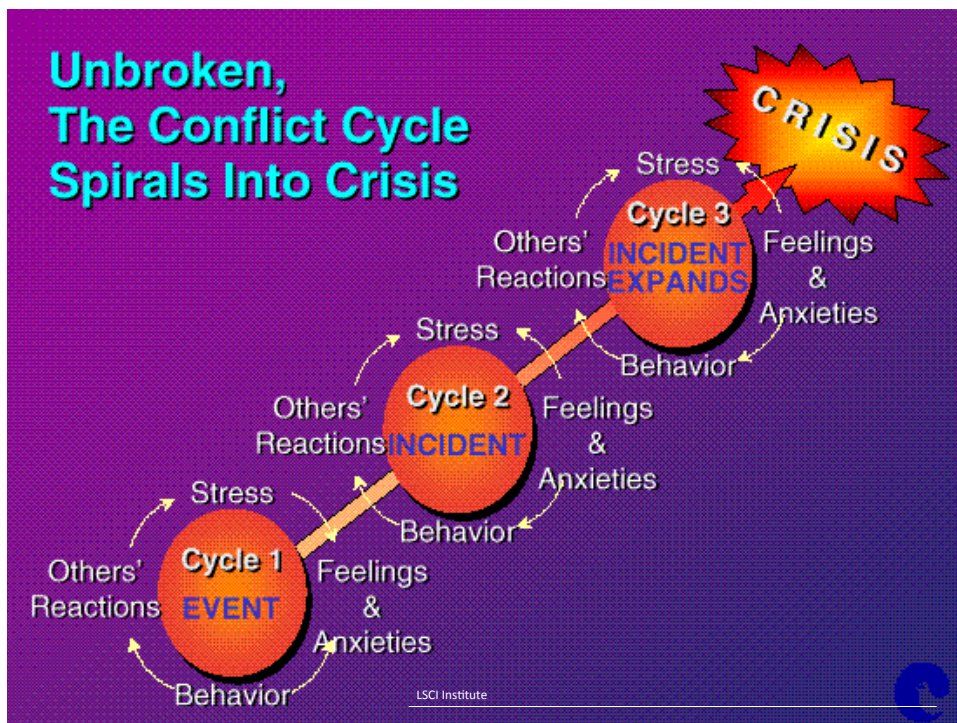


and if not trained,  
the adults will mirror their behavior.

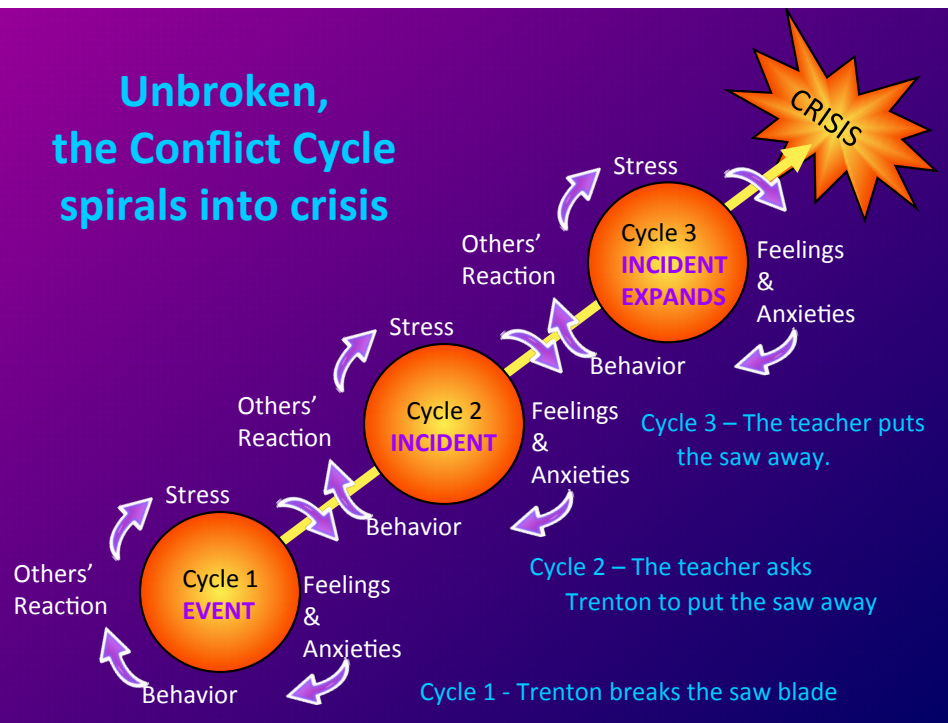


## THE CONFLICT CYCLE PARADIGM

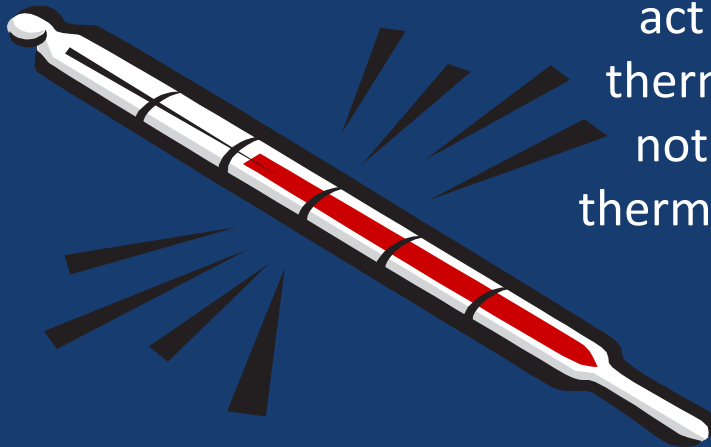
- A **STRESSFUL EVENT** occurs which activates a troubled student's irrational beliefs.
- These **NEGATIVE THOUGHTS** determine and trigger feelings.
- **FEELINGS**, not rational forces, drive inappropriate behaviors.
- Inappropriate **BEHAVIORS** incite adults.
- Adults take on the student's feelings 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.



**Unbroken,  
the Conflict Cycle  
spirals into crisis**



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.



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## “I Messages” Are...

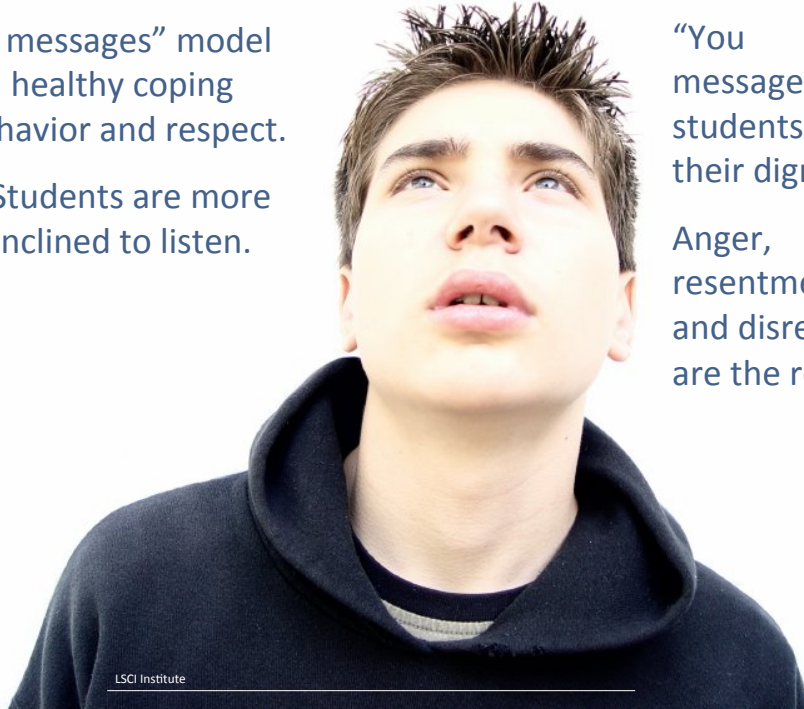
- Less likely to provoke more aggression.
- Less threatening to others.
- A model of honest exchange between people.
- Likely to open up communication
- Helpful in interrupting a power struggle.
- Helpful in releasing adult stress in a healthy way.

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“I messages” model  
healthy coping  
behavior and respect.

Students are more  
inclined to listen.



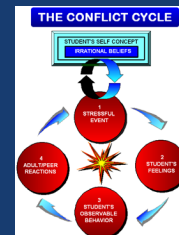
“You  
messages” rob  
students of  
their dignity.

Anger,  
resentment,  
and disrespect  
are the result.

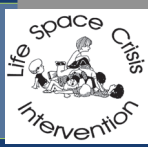
I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am  
the decisive element in the classroom. It's my  
personal approach that creates the climate; it's my  
daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher,  
I possess a tremendous power to make a child's  
life miserable or joyous.

I can be a tool of torture, or an instrument of  
inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.  
In all situations, it is my response that decides  
whether a crisis will be escalated or  
de-escalated or a child humanized or  
de-humanized.

--Haim Ginott







## Summary

1. The Conflict Cycle is LSCI's major paradigm for understanding the dynamics of the interactions between students in stress and staff who work with them.
2. Kids in stress create in adults their feelings and if not trained, the adults will mirror their behavior.
3. Understanding the Conflict Cycle is the first line of defense against reinforcing the student's irrational beliefs and self-fulfilling prophecies.
4. To make a difference, we must do what's best for the student, not act on our feelings. In effect, we must act like a thermostat, not a thermometer.
5. "You messages" fuel conflict cycles.
6. "I Messages," in contrast, model a healthy way to cope with stress and build trust between the student and the adult.

## The Art of 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**.

## Effective Listening Involves Three Skills

*Attending*

*Responding*

*Decoding*



## 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."

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## 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.

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## 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

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The most  
important  
listening skill  
is to listen to  
what is not  
being said!

## The Art of Decoding

On his first visit to kindergarten, while mother was still with him, Bruce, age five, looked over the paintings on the wall and asked loudly, "Who made these ugly pictures?"

Mother was embarrassed. She looked at her son disapprovingly and hastened to tell him, "It's not nice to call the pictures ugly when they are so pretty."

The teacher, who understood the meaning of the questions, smiled and said, "In here you don't have to paint pretty pictures. You can paint mean pictures if you feel like it." A big smile appeared on Bruce's face, for now he had the answer to his hidden question, "What happens to a boy who doesn't paint so well?"

Next Bruce picked up a broken fire engine and asked self-righteously, "Who broke this fire engine?" Mother answered, "What difference does it make to you who broke it? You don't know anyone here."

Bruce was not really interested in names. He wanted to find out what happened to boys who break toys. Understanding the question, the teacher gave an appropriate answer. "Toys are for playing. Sometimes they get broken. It happens."

Bruce seemed satisfied. His interviewing skill had netted him the necessary information: "This grownup is pretty nice. She does not get angry quickly, even when a picture comes out ugly or a toy is broken. I don't have to be afraid. It is safe to stay here." Bruce waved good-bye to his mother and went over to the teacher to start his first day in kindergarten.



Between Parent & Child, Haim Ginott, 1958

## Decoding



If you connect a feeling to a student's behavior, and if the student accepts it, the student is less likely to act out this feeling in destructive behavior.

# 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

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# Listening Skills

## Deepening the Dialogue

### Attending

- Remaining fully present
- Being aware of one's own verbal and non-verbal messages to the student.

### Responding:

- Affirming
- Checking for understanding
- Creating a sense of mutual problem-solving.

### Decoding:

- Connecting feelings and behavior
- Adding more meaning
- Leading student to insight

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## 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. Attending, responding, and decoding skills are critical to effectively listening to a child and encouraging him to link emotions and language.
5. Non-verbal communication is an essential component of good listening; studies show that the majority of meaning in communication comes from body language and tone of voice.

## Timeline: The 7 Essential Questions

Where?

When?

Target?

Duration?

Frequency?

Intensity?

Contagion?



# The Timeline

## *WHAT HAPPENED?*

Where? When? Target? Duration? Frequency? Intensity? Contagion?

## *WHAT THOUGHTS WENT THROUGH YOUR MIND?*

What were you saying to yourself?

## *HOW DID YOU FEEL?*

How strong were your feelings on a scale of 1 – 10?

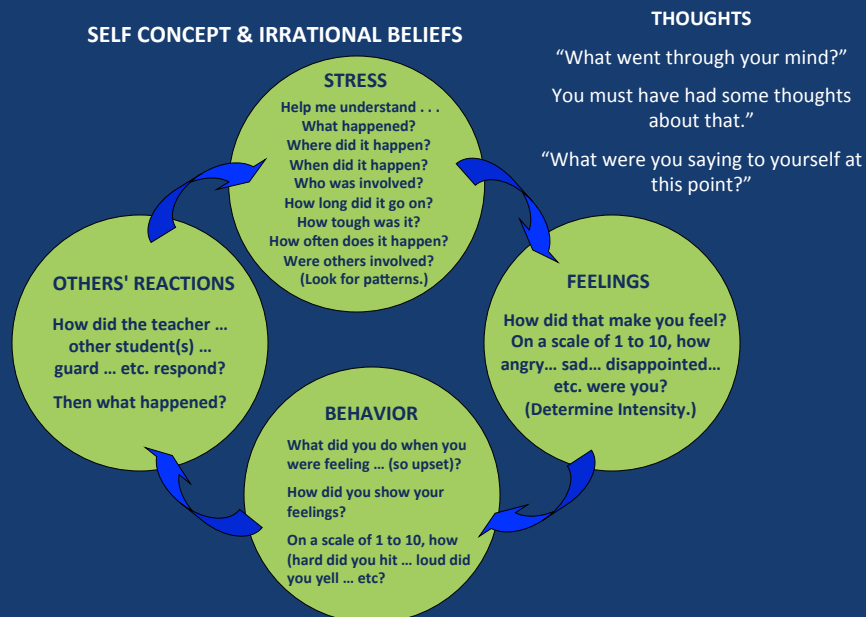
## *WHAT DID YOU DO?*

How did you show your feelings?

## *HOW DID OTHERS REACT?*

Did the end result of this situation make things better or worse for you?

## Questions to Ask to Obtain a Good Timeline





Most troubled students want to tell their story but lack the necessary skills and trust.

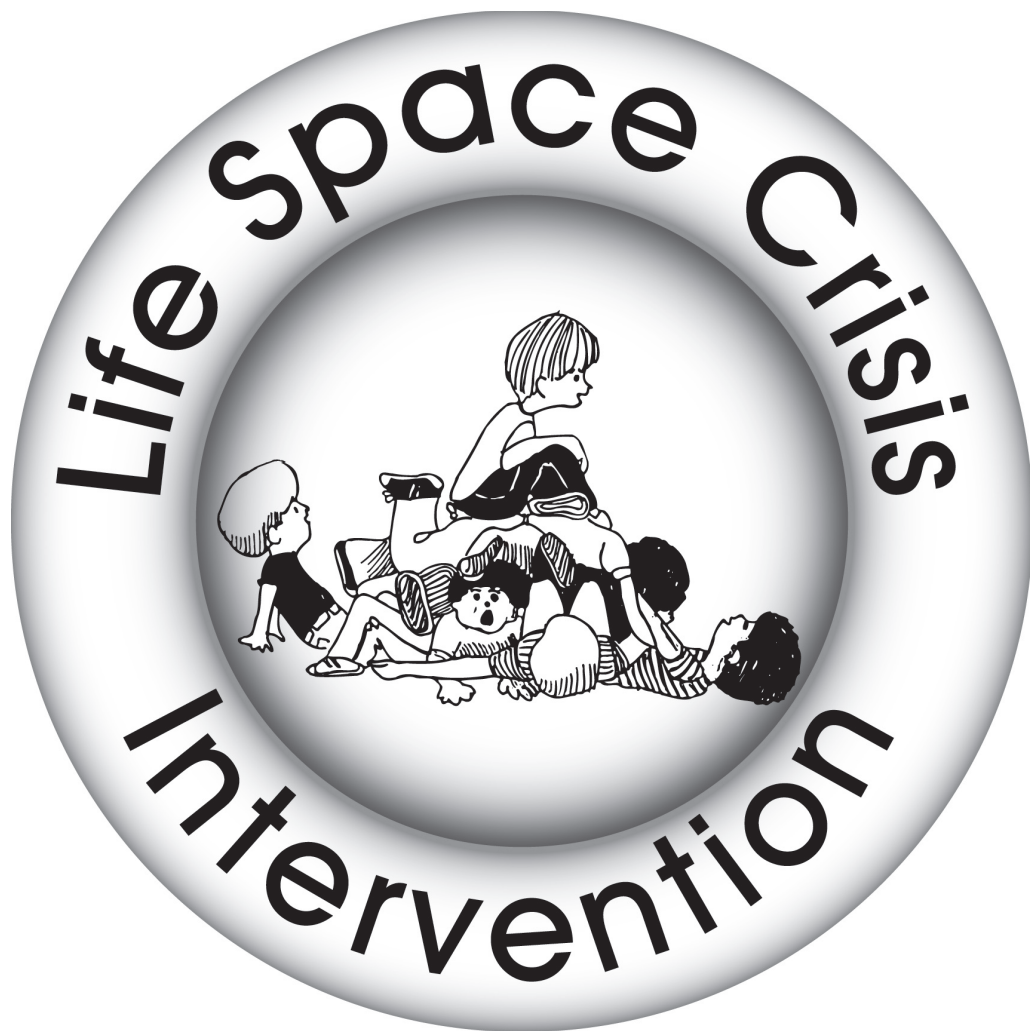
LSCI helps the student and staff build a relationship based on trust which leads to changes in perceptions, feelings, and behavior



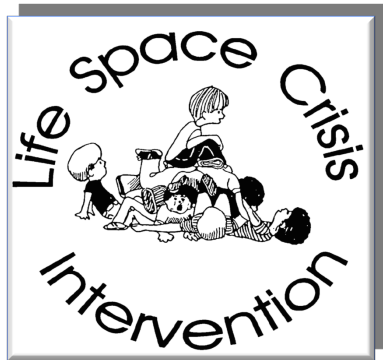
## Summary

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 Six Stages of LSCI & The Double Struggle***



## LEVEL 2 Certification ONLINE REFRESHER TRAINING



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

[www.lsci.org](http://www.lsci.org)

### Stage One: Drain Off

- The Crisis Stage
- Behavior that is significant enough that it creates obstacles to learning or relationships.

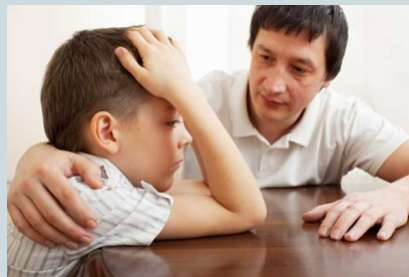
## Variable Presentation



- Escalation
- Withdrawal

## Stage One: Drain Off

Requires a  
self-  
regulated  
adult



## Nothing Comes From Nothing

Something in the setting,  
combined with  
something in the young person,  
triggers or intensifies stress  
and causes a  
crisis reaction.

## Looking beyond behavior

We must be aware of  
and understand the significance of  
what is happening  
**inside**  
of the child.



## Keep in mind...

The problems kids cause  
are not the causes of  
their problems.

--Nicholas Long

## Sources of Crisis

- Patterns of self-defeating behavior that are maladaptive responses

AND/OR

- The impact and effects of complex trauma

## Goal of Stage 1

- **Through co-regulation, help the young person prepare to engage in the cognitive-verbal process of LSCI.**

Co-regulation is, in effect, sharing our brain with the young person to guide him/her in safely - like an air traffic controller.



## Three Part Message

1. Recognize and acknowledge the young person's emotional state.
2. Express a need to know more.
3. Commit to try to understand

## Three Part Message

1. "I can see that you are very upset right now. Something very important must be going on."
2. "I don't know what is causing that to happen to you."
3. "I'd really like to understand."

## Assess Readiness

**Is the young person ready to engage in the next stages of the LSCI process?**

- Gross motor movement
- Voice volume
- Tone
- Language
- Breathing
- Eye-contact
- Fine motor movement



## Bottom Up Processing

Our brains process all information from the bottom up; the survival brain filters for safety first.



**Only when the young person senses safety will they be prepared to engage in the relational and cognitive stages that follow.**

## GUIDELINE #1

### **Avoid...**

Pointing out mistakes the child may have made in the situation.

### ***Instead...***

*Listen to what the child is saying and validate any underlying emotions that are evident.*

## GUIDELINE #2

### **Avoid...**

Giving advice.

### ***Instead...***

*Listen intently to everything the child is saying and validate the emotions the child is sharing with you.*

## GUIDELINE #3

### **Avoid...**

Teaching new skills or concepts.

### ***Instead...***

*Continue to listen and observe so that you can fully understand the child's perspective and validate any emotions that are coming up as the child tells her story.*

## Pearls of Wisdom

**Timing is everything.**

**Offering your pearls of wisdom too early in the process may:**

- Escalate the child's emotions
- Cause the child to shut down
- Make the child feel unheard

## Stage Two: Timeline

- The Relationship-building Stage
- *Young people need to think that we care before they care what we think.*

## During Stage 2...

- Be quicker to listen and slower to speak.
- Remind yourself that this is a thoughtful and purposeful process.

The word  
LISTEN  
contains  
the same letters  
as the word  
SILENT.

— Alfred Brendel

## During the Timeline Stage...

- Students replay in their mind a “videotape” of the event
- Adults should use storytelling questions (Who? What? Where? When? How?) to help the child clarify & re-organize the videotape.
- Use visual imagery to help the young person put language to emotion
- Seek to gain a deeper understanding



# Attending Skills



- Remain emotionally attuned and present
- Continuously observe the young person
- Maintain awareness of the verbal and non-verbal messages you send the child
- Listen for signal flares; tuck them away as appropriate

# Responding Skills

- **Reflection**
  - It didn't seem fair to you
  - You didn't mean to make her mad
- **Acknowledgement**
  - I see
  - Oh my
- **Support**
  - It's been a rough morning
- **Summarizing**
  - Thank you so much for this information
  - Let me make sure that I understand what you have told me so far...

# Decoding Skills

## Decoding:

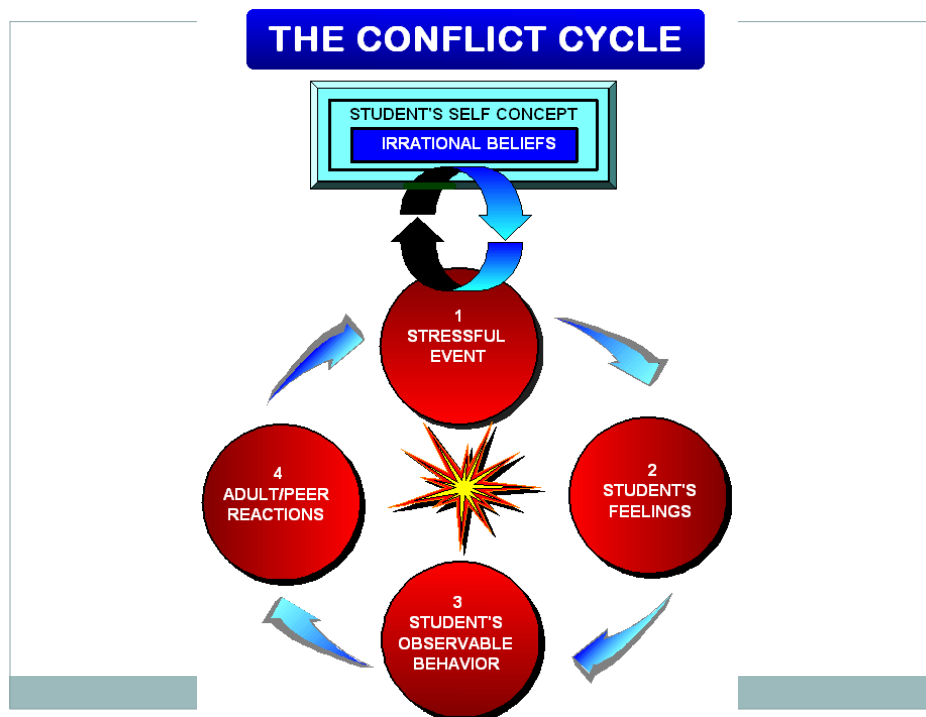
Making a statement or a hypothesis about what might be going underneath the surface behavior

*"I wonder if you were feeling overwhelmed and frustrated already, even before you got to the program."*

## Validating:

Making a statement that affirms the child's feelings

*"You have a right to feel angry about what just happened."*



Children  
don't just  
have feelings;  
they are had  
by their  
feelings.



## Goals of Stage 2

- The goal of the Timeline is not to make the child “admit” that he did something wrong.
- **Rather, primary goals are:**
  - To make the child feel heard and understood
  - To begin the process of putting language to emotions.

# The Six Reclaiming Interventions

## Red Flag:

Imported Problem

## Reality Rub:

Errors in Perception

## New Tools:

Poor Social Skills

## Symptom Estrangement:

Justifying Harmful Behavior

## Massaging Numb Values:

Behavior Driven by Guilt

## Manipulation of Body Boundaries:

Exploitation of Peers



## 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

## Manipulation of Body Boundaries

*Youth entangled in destructive peer relationships are vulnerable to manipulation*



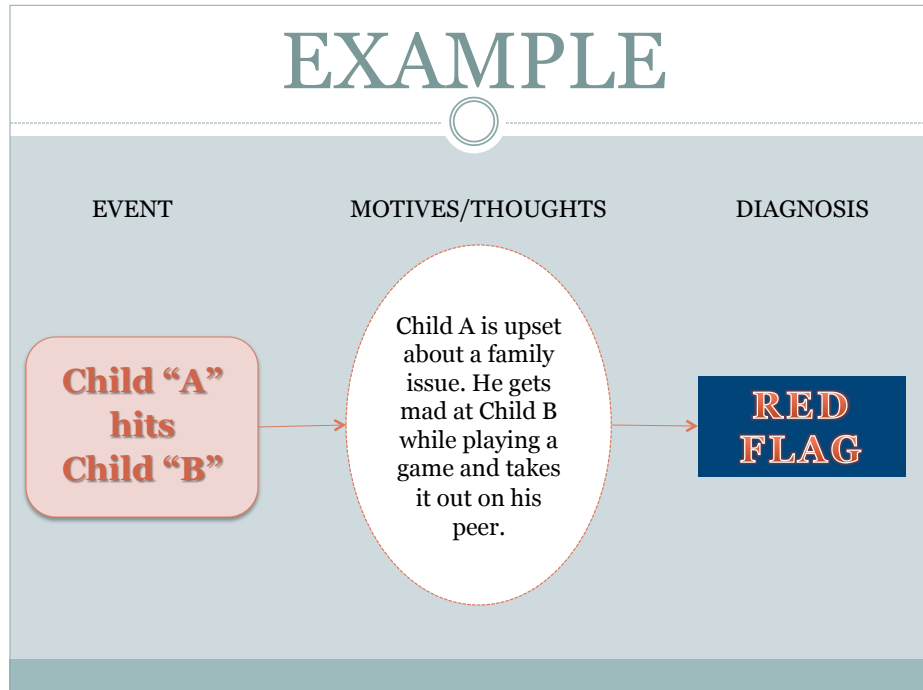
1. A naïve student has been *set up* by a false friend or a manipulating peer and doesn't see it
2. A neglected, isolated, or loner student develops a self-defeating & *false friendship* with an exploitive classmate
3. A manipulative student takes pleasure in taking advantage of vulnerable peers.

## Differential Diagnosis

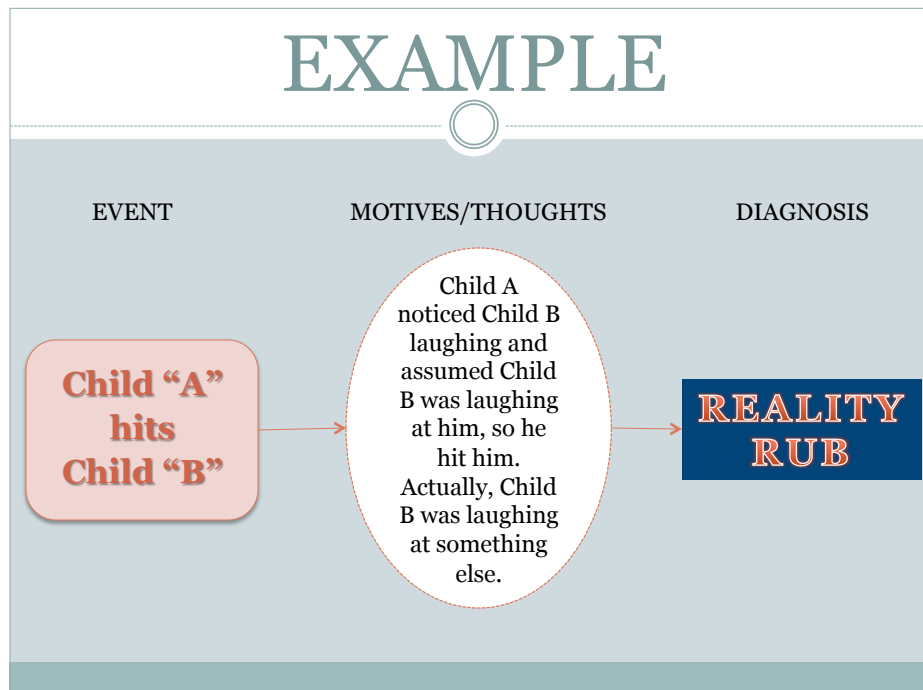
*The event itself  
**IS NOT ENOUGH**  
to diagnose the pattern.*



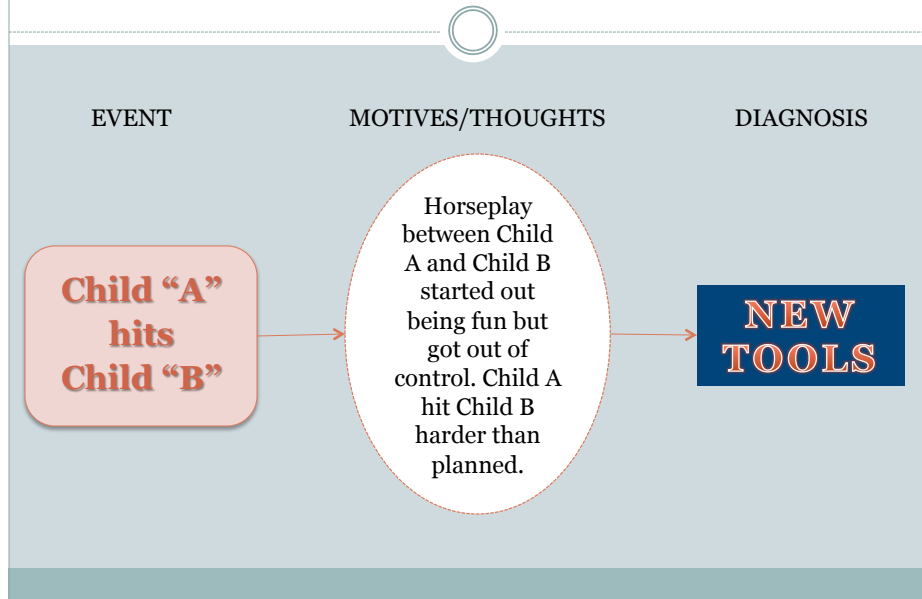
# EXAMPLE



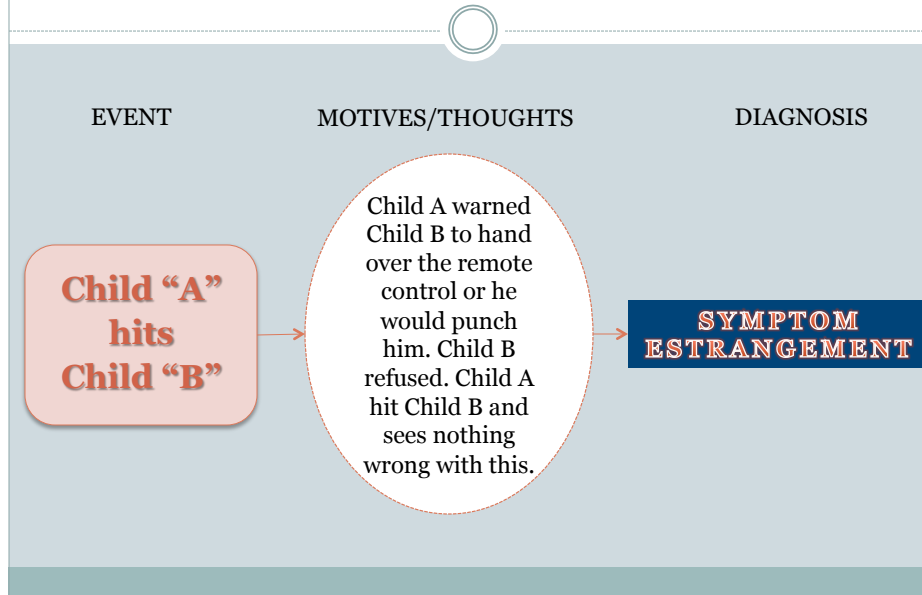
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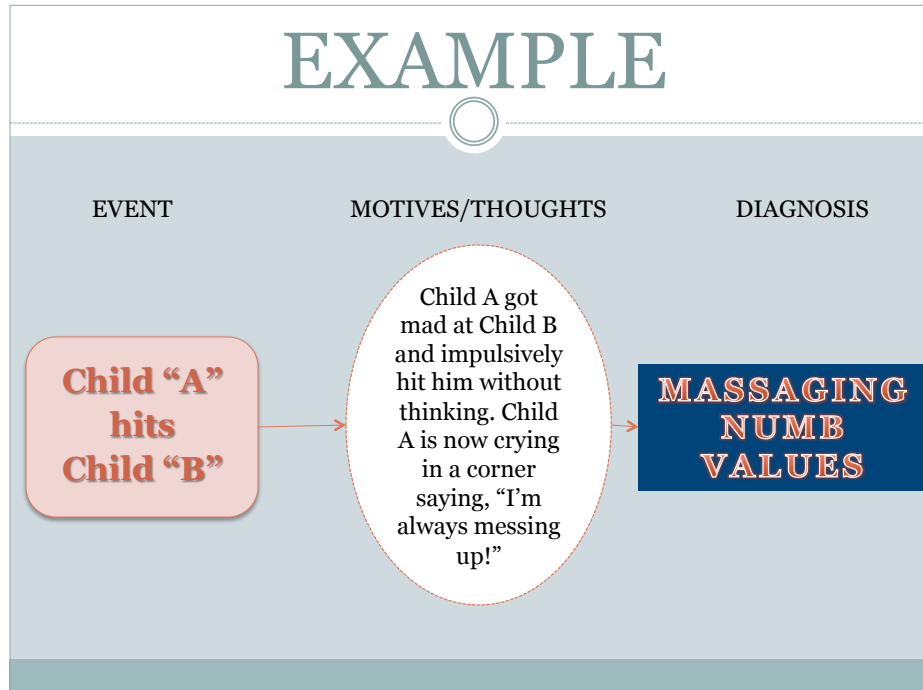
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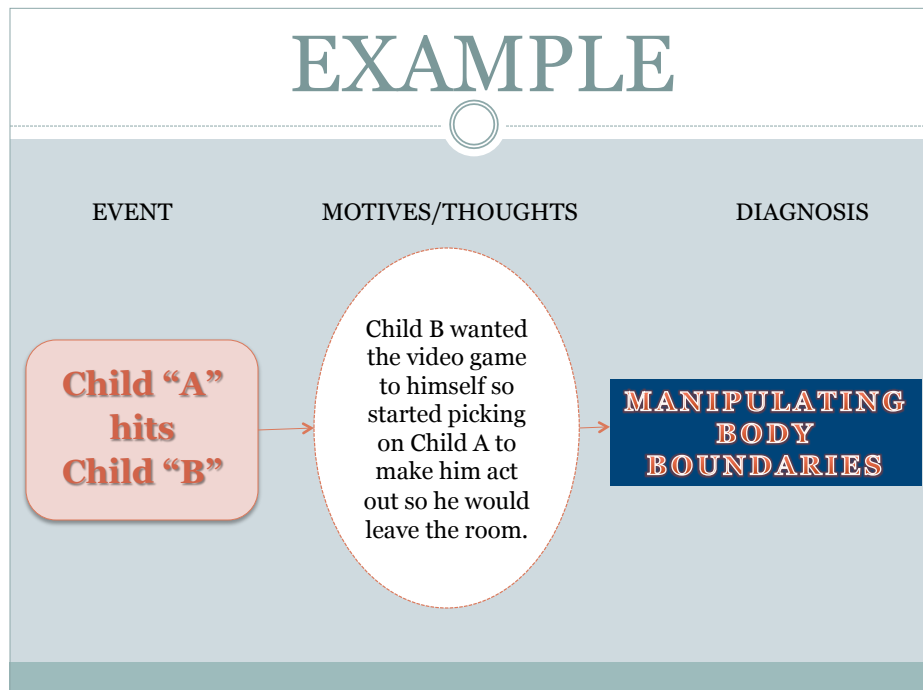
# EXAMPLE



# EXAMPLE



# EXAMPLE



## Stage 3: The Central Issue

- The practitioner is assessing and preparing for Stage 3 from the beginning of the intervention.
- It is a pivotal stage that transitions from the Diagnostic portion of the intervention to the Reclaiming portion.

## The 3 Decisions of Stage 3

1. Is this a reclaiming opportunity?
2. Is the child motivated to change?
3. Which self-defeating pattern is evident?

## Decision #1: Is this a reclaiming opportunity?



### EXAMPLE 1: Two children fighting over a toy

- There have been no prior problems between the children.
- There have been no known issues leading up to this problem.
- The emotional reactions of both children are in proportion to what might be expected in this situation.
- No one has been hurt or is in danger of being hurt.

*This situation may be better handled using surface management.*

## Decision #1: Is this a reclaiming opportunity?



### EXAMPLE 2: Two children fighting over a toy

- There is a pattern of behavior recurring between the children
- One or both of the children are having an extreme / out of proportion emotional reaction to the incident
- One or both of the children have had this problem with other children

*This situation may be a good opportunity for LSCI.*

## Decision #2 – Is the child motivated to change?



The key to answering this question is in the thoughts and expectations of the child.

Use the Timeline to uncover the true motivations.

- Would you like help with this problem?
- Would you like to know other ways to handle this?
- Do you think it would help you to work on this?

## Decision #3 – Which pattern is evident?



Differential diagnosis can be difficult even for experienced and trained practitioners.

Some of the reasons for these challenges may be:

1. Practitioner anxiety
2. There is more than one pattern evident

### Decision #3 – Which pattern is evident?



#### 1. Practitioner anxiety

**SOLUTION:** The child may not be sufficiently drained off.

- Go back, slow down.
- Use your body language and tone of voice to slow down the pace of the conversation. The child will hopefully model your demeanor.
- Review the timeline until things are more clear to you.

### Decision #3 – Which pattern is evident?



#### 2. There is more than one pattern evident

**SOLUTION:** Determine which of the patterns is most important to the child or which of them is causing the most pain and/or suffering for the child.



# The Central Issue Statement

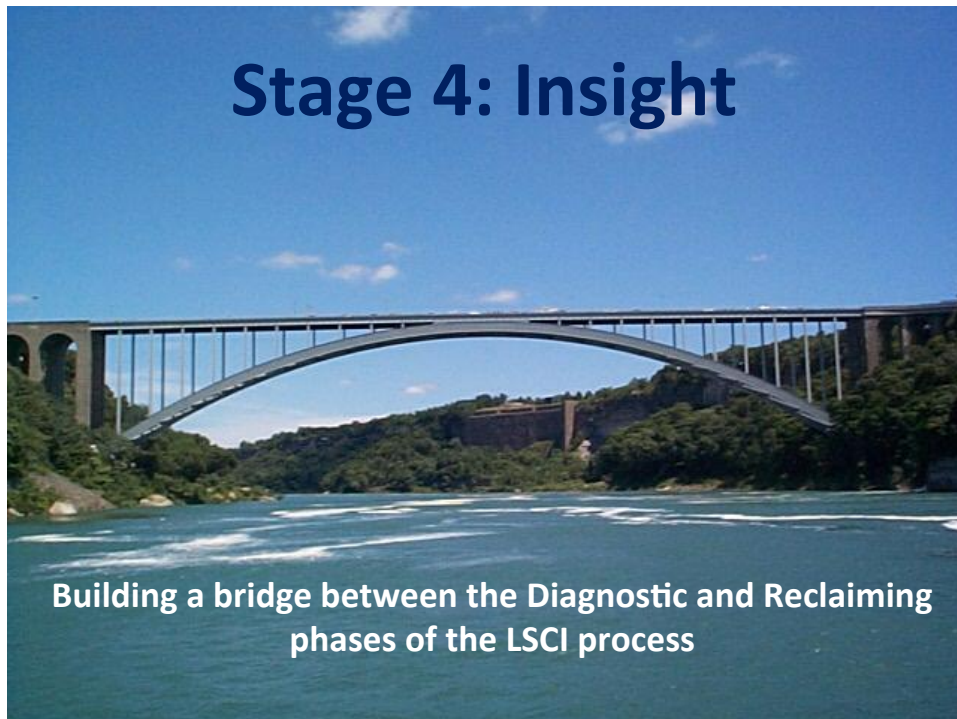


Distill the problem into one concise statement that will be easy for the child to understand.

*"I think I understand what is happening here...you are very upset about what's happening with your family. What happened in the classroom this morning was just too much and your anger boiled over and now you are here."*

The Central Issue is a way of packaging the problem in a way that makes sense for both you and the child.

## Stage 4: Insight



**Building a bridge between the Diagnostic and Reclaiming phases of the LSCI process**

## What if we stop after Stage 3?



### **Possible Short-Term Benefits of using Stages 1-3 only:**

- Enhance the child's relationship with the helping adult
- Demonstrate that a personal crisis does not have to lead to punishment, alienation, and rejection
- Verify to the child that he can be accepted at his worst and still be treated with respect
- Provide building blocks of self-awareness and behavioral change
- Encourage the student to return to normal school activities ASAP
- Encourage new social skills during stressful times

## Goals of Stage 4



- Help young people acknowledge self-defeating patterns and accept responsibility for behavior.
- Help kids recognize that there are aspects of these problem patterns over which they have control
- Help kids realize their power to take charge of their lives in these problem areas

## Better to Give Than to Receive?

- The most important goal of this stage is to guide the young person to gain his/her own insight.
- Among the challenges for adults in this stage is to guide young people through the use of questioning rather than providing insight directly.

## Examples of Insight Questions

- Are you happy (or satisfied) with the way this worked out?
- Did you expect something different to happen?
- What did you expect would happen?
- Can you think of another way you could have handled this?



## Insights for Adults



- One well-executed LSCI is highly unlikely to result in lasting change.
- Recognize that self-defeating patterns develop over time and will not be easily reversed or remediated.
- LSCI is a process that takes place over time to gradually and clearly improve self-regulation, patterns of thinking, and patterns of behavior in troubled and troubling young people.

## Long Range Outcomes



- The Insight gained during the LSCI process gives the young person confidence by achieving a sense of responsibility, control & power.
- This preparation allows the young person to begin the New Skills stage with clarity of purpose and the belief that progress is possible.

## Stage 5: New Skills



- The teaching stage.
- For many educators, the approach to teaching academics is systematic, logical and specific.
- It is helpful to teach New Skills to young people from the same approach.

## New Skills

Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I remember.  
Involve me and I learn.

--Benjamin Franklin

## Red Flag

### NEW SKILLS MAY INCLUDE:

- Talking about emotions with a trustworthy adult before a crisis occurs
- Channeling emotions through sports
- Journaling
- Creating art
- Learning relaxation skills
- Practicing meditation



## Reality Rub

### NEW SKILLS MAY INCLUDE:

- Stop, Think, Act
- Recognize there may be more to a situation than meets the eye
- Ask a clarifying question
- Take a break to think about what happened



## New Tools

### NEW SKILLS MAY INCLUDE:

- How to make a new friend
- How to join a group
- When to joke
- How to be successful academically
- How to enter a conversation



## Symptom Estrangement

*In this pattern, the young person is often quite socially skilled and typically shows good control over emotions and behaviors.*

New Skill Instruction is often replaced by:

- The strategic use of silence to urge the child to reflect
- The creation of a manageable level of anxiety, in which the child begins to doubt his rationalizations and justifications for his behavior



## Massaging Numb Values

### NEW SKILLS MAY INCLUDE:

- Stop, Think, Act
- Positive self-talk
- Impulse control
- Journaling about positive things that have happened
- Acknowledging success
- Learning how to receive and respond to compliments



## Manipulation of Body Boundaries

### NEW SKILLS MAY INCLUDE:

- Assertiveness skills
- I-Messages
- Choosing positive friendships
- How to say “no”
- Talking to trustworthy adults
- Managing emotions
- Taking a time out





## Stage 6: Transfer of Training

- Transfer of learning stage
- Brings the LSCI intervention to a close
- Facilitates the process of moving ahead with a new understanding and a new plan.

## Stage 6:

Expectations of other staff reveal something about the program:

- Do colleagues expect the young person to be punished?
- Are they resentful of the child's return?
- Do they expect to be part of the process of re-integrating the young person into the group?

## Three Keys

- Willingness and preparedness of the **young person** to return to the class or group.
- Preparing **other youth** to help the young person return.
- Preparation of **other adults** to support the return of the young person and engage in the plan and follow through of learning.

## Differential Diagnosis

In this incident, Carla has more than one issue occurring simultaneously.

- **Red Flag Carry Over** involving Mr. Boomer
- **Massaging Numb Values** involving Mrs. Thompson

The challenge for the practitioner is to differentially diagnose the central issue and to determine the **MOST IMPORTANT** issue in the moment.

- Her relationship with Mrs. Thompson is Carla's most vital issue

## Stage 6: Carla

The Transfer of Training stage involves the process of re-connecting the young person. In this situation, Carla must be helped to re-connect with:

### **Mrs. Thompson**

- Understands the process
- Accepts some responsibility

### **Mr. Boomer**

- Interested in punishment
- Like Carla, he needs support: The Double Struggle



## Symptom Estrangement

- Ryan was annoyed with a classmate who had been “looking at him wrong.”
- Ryan gave the classmate a warning about what would happen if the classmate didn’t stop looking at him.
- Ryan justified his aggressive behavior, using minimization and rationalization.
- Dr. Long uses the process of Benign Confrontation to carry out the Symptom Estrangement intervention.

## Counteraggression

Symptom Estrangement problems often elicit counteraggressive feelings and responses from adults.

Strong responses from adults may be based on:

- Fear
- Anger
- Judgment
- Counteraggression can complicate the Stage 6 process

## Goals of the Symptom Estrangement

Goals of the Symptom Estrangement intervention include:

- To drop a pebble of a new idea into the young person's static pool of thought--creating manageable anxiety
- To challenge the young person's way of thinking
- To expose the self-deception while maintaining a caring relationship

In this situation, we want to help Ryan conform to the expectations of the program WHILE allowing him to keep his pride intact.

# Closure and Beyond

**Stage 6 provides a great opportunity for the adult to:**

- Affirm the young person's participation in the LSCI process.
- Highlight the young person's willingness and ability to overcome his difficult emotional start
- Validate the child's patience in telling his story
- Discuss and practice the transition back to the group, anticipating interaction with other group members and adults.



## The Battleship vs. The Lighthouse



The captain had all the strength, knowledge and power but ended up being completely powerless against the lighthouse.

He was forced to change direction.

An adult who becomes caught in a Conflict Cycle with a child is very much like the captain in the story.

## Compassion



It may be difficult to deal with a staff member who has lost her cool with a child. You may even feel angry with that adult.

### **BUT REMEMBER...**

This could happen to anyone, at any time. Even you. We are all vulnerable to having a bad day or having our buttons pushed at the wrong time.

## Double Struggle – The Process

### DRAIN OFF

- Recognize the adult is caught in the conflict cycle
- Preserve the dignity of the adult in front of the child and other adults
- Excuse the adult but make sure to help her save face



## Double Struggle – The Process

### TIMELINE

- Review the adult's perspective
- Emphasize the good intentions of the adult

### CENTRAL ISSUE

- Help the adult understand how she was drawn into the conflict cycle

## Double Struggle – The Process



### INSIGHT

- Help the adult understand why this is a problem
- Explain the risks of feeding into a conflict cycle with a child, how it reinforces the irrational beliefs of the child

### NEW SKILLS & TRANSFER OF TRAINING

- Ways to break the conflict cycle if this ever happens again
- Mending the stressed relationship between child and adult

## Double Struggle



### Use the Double Struggle:

1. To build relationships with colleagues and teammates.
2. To build a culture wherein it is safe to talk about situations that did not go as planned.
3. So that everyone can learn and become more sophisticated in their skills.