

Creating an Emotionally Safe Environment

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Work Shop Agenda

- ▶ Define Emotional Safety
- ▶ Importance of Emotional Safety
- ▶ Proactive Strategies
- ▶ Reactive Strategies

REFLECT • PLAN • SHARE

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health definition:

"Emotional safety means feeling accepted; it is the sense that one is safe from emotional attack or harm" (Creating Trauma-Informed Services, 2011).

What does an emotionally safe environment look like?

What does an environment that is not emotionally safe look like?

Importance of Emotional Safety

Using Incidents to Gage Emotional Safety

- ▶ Review of Incident Reports and Early Departure Forms
- ▶ Follow-Up Conversations
- ▶ Removing blame from the participant; taking a comprehensive approach to analyzing incidents

Impact of Emotional Safety on Learning and Program Outcomes

- ▶ “Recently, the U.S. Department of Education, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Institute for Educational Sciences, a growing number of State Departments of Education, foreign educational ministries, and UNICEF have focused on school climate reform as an evidence-based school improvement strategy that supports students, parents/guardians, and school personnel learning and working together to create ever safer, more supportive and engaging K-12 schools” (Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins-D’Alessandro, A., 2013).
- ▶ In a study of the relationship between school climate and academic outcomes, The schools with higher student achievement consistently exhibited healthier school climates. (Macneil, Pratter, Busch, 2009).
- ▶ “Students in emotionally supportive classrooms environments also tend to choose more complex cognitive activities (Howes & Smith, 1995) and perform better academically, as evidenced through both grades (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007; Wentzel, 1998) and standardized test scores (LaRocque & Mvududu, 2008)” (Reyes, M. R., Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., White, M., & Salovey, P., 2012).
- ▶ In a meta-analysis by Wang, et. al (1997) that looked at the influence of 28 factors on learning, school climate and culture were among the most influential. Demographics and policies were among the least influential.

Your Brain on Stress and Anxiety

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmwiJ6ghLIM>
- ▶ Emotion and learning
 - ▶ Thinking and feeling are intricately linked
 - ▶ Positive emotions can increase motivation and stimulate learning
 - ▶ Negative emotions essentially cause the limbic system to shut off access to memory and higher level processing
 - ▶ Comfort Zones

Impact of Emotional Safety on the Individual and Organization

- ▶ Bullying is related to physical health problems, emotional and psychological problems, and reduced academic achievement (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013)
- ▶ Risks to the organization
 - ▶ Liability
 - ▶ Negative impact on brand
- ▶ Risks to the individual who experiences an emotionally unsafe environment
 - ▶ Negative program experience and negative association for similar future experiences
 - ▶ Loss of learning
 - ▶ Physical risks due to lack of skill acquisition
 - ▶ Reinforce or develop negative self-concept
 - ▶ Experience shame

So what exactly is shame...and why does it matter?

- ▶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdllwCXDyTA>
- ▶ Guilt - I did something bad
- ▶ Shame - I am bad
- ▶ Shame is highly correlated with addiction, depression, eating disorders, violence, bullying and aggression.
- ▶ Guilt is inversely correlated with addiction, depression, eating disorders, violence, bullying and aggression.

Shame in Schools

- ▶ "85% of the men and women we interviewed remember something so shaming from their school experience that it changed how they think of themselves as learners. Were those experiences always about teachers?"
- ▶ NO. There were certainly stories about being shamed by teachers, but it was also about students, administrators, parents, school social workers, and/or a system....
- ▶ Teachers have tremendous power in our lives. That can also be seen here:
- ▶ Over 90% of participants remember a specific teacher, coach, or clergy person who helped them believe in their worth and the value of their contribution."

Retrieved from: (

<http://brenebrown.com/2013/09/29/teachers-shame-worthiness-lesson-learned/>)

With great power comes great responsibility...

So what can we do about shame?

- ▶ Avoid using language that is shame-inducing (i.e. separate the person from the behavior).
- ▶ Empathy is shame's worst enemy
 - ▶ *“If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive” (Brown, 2012).*
- ▶ And what's the difference between sympathy and empathy?
 - ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

With great power comes great responsibility

Reflection

- ▶ How do you see emotional safety, or lack there of, playing a role in your organization?
- ▶ What emotional safety concerns do you see relating to your program?
- ▶ How will addressing emotional safety impact your programs?

Proactive Strategies

▶ Pre-Course Paperwork

- ▶ Non-Negotiable Rules (exclusive relationships, physical and emotional safety)
- ▶ Written and verbal
- ▶ Reiterated day one of course

▶ Policies and Procedures

- ▶ Zero tolerance bullying and harassment policies
- ▶ Physical safety policies support emotional safety (tone setting/debriefing)
- ▶ Guidelines for behavior management tools (defining what is acceptable for staff)

Choice Theory

- ▶ Provides a framework for staff to understand student behavior and take it less personally
- ▶ Help staff separate student and behavior
- ▶ Helps staff avoid shame-inducing language (“you are bad”)
- ▶ Gives staff a framework for conversations with students about their behavior
- ▶ Encourages the teaching of new skills and facilitation of value-forming experiences

The Ten Axioms of Choice Theory

Retrieved from: <http://glasserschoicetheory.blogspot.com/2009/01/blog-post.html>

The Ten Axioms of Choice Theory

1. The only person whose behavior we can control is our own.
2. All we can give another person is information.
3. All long-lasting psychological problems are relationship problems.
4. The problem relationship is always part of our present life.
5. What happened in the past has everything to do with what we are today, but we can only satisfy our basic needs right now and plan to continue satisfying them in the future.
6. We can only satisfy our needs by satisfying the pictures in our Quality World.
7. All we do is behave.
8. All behavior is Total Behavior and is made up of four components: acting, thinking, feeling and physiology.
9. All Total Behavior is chosen, but we only have direct control over the acting and thinking components. We can only control our feeling and physiology indirectly through how we choose to act and think.
10. All Total Behavior is designated by verbs and named by the part that is the most recognizable.

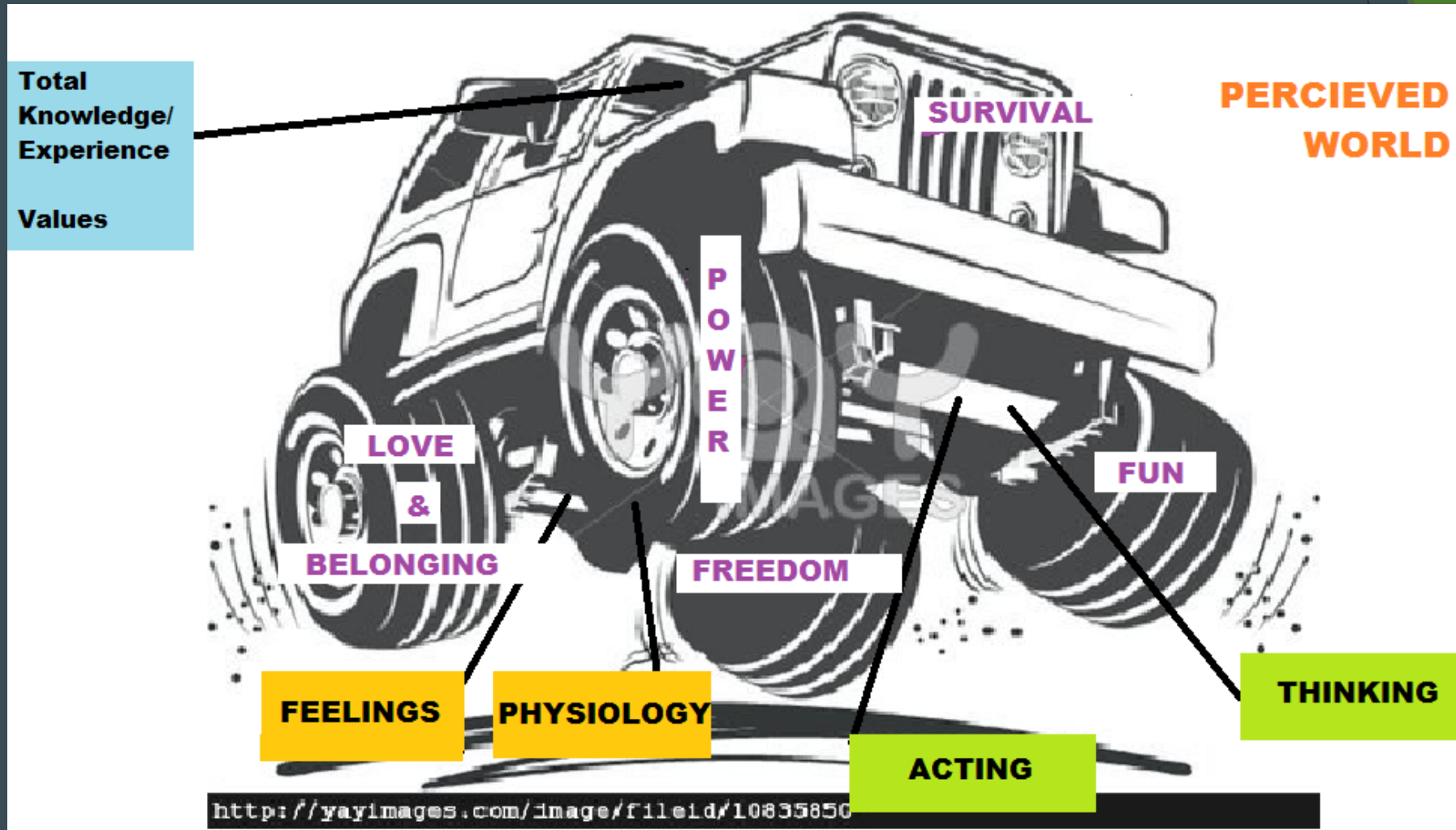
Dr William Glasser's *Basic Needs*

				
Love & Belonging	Power	FUN	Survival	Freedom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ belonging ✓ being loved ✓ being respected ✓ friendship ✓ sharing ✓ cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ recognition ✓ success ✓ importance ✓ achievement ✓ skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ enjoyment ✓ laughter ✓ learning ✓ change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ health ✓ relaxation ✓ sexual activity ✓ food ✓ warmth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ choices ✓ independence ✓ freedom from ✓ freedom to

The Five Basic Needs

Retrieved from: <http://awwsnapnews.blogspot.com/>

Taking a Drive.... Destination: Quality World



WDEP

- ▶ W: What do you *want*?
- ▶ D: What are you *doing* to get what you want?
- ▶ E: Is what you are doing getting you what you want? **Evaluate**
- ▶ P: What is your *plan*?

Source:

Wubbolding, R. E. (2000). *Reality therapy for the 21st century*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

PROCESS OF REALITY THERAPY

Retrieved from: <http://shrdocs.com/presentations/14093/index.html>

How do you feel when....

- ▶ You're playing a game and someone changes the rules without telling you?
- ▶ You plan a travel itinerary with a friend or family member and once you're on your trip they keep changing plans without telling you?
- ▶ Someone comes down on you for not doing something but you didn't know it was your responsibility?
- ▶ You've made a plan to split chores with your partner/roommate/friend and they don't do their part?
- ▶ You're at an event where food is supposed to be provided and you're hungry, but you don't know when the meal is coming?
- ▶ Have you ever communicated in a hurtful manner or added to the conflict in response to a situation like this?
- ▶ People (yes, even adults!) tend to function best when:

**RULES, ROUTINE, AND RESPONSIBILITIES
ARE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT**

Importance of Structure

- ▶ In a nationally representative study of 254 secondary schools, "Schools in which students perceived greater fairness and clarity of rules had less delinquent behavior and less student victimization" (Gottfredson, G. D., Gottfredson, D. C., Payne, A. A., & Gottfredson, N. C., 2005).
- ▶ Fairness and clarity of rules are part of using STRUCTURE
- ▶ In wilderness programs, the physical environment and stress of group living often provides enough challenge for students to meet the "yellow" zone. Structure can keep them from moving to the "red" zone.
- ▶ Structure is especially important for people who have experienced trauma
 - ▶ The brain's stress response can be triggered and processing does not move to "thinking"
 - ▶ Structure = safety in the present moment
 - ▶ Regardless of your student population, you are working with people who have experienced trauma
 - ▶ In one year, 39% of children between the ages of 12 and 17 reported witnessing violence, 17% reported being a victim of physical assault and 8% reported being the victim of sexual assault (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2012).
 - ▶ 60% of adults report experiencing abuse or other difficult family circumstances during childhood (Kilpatrick DG, Saunders BE., 1997).

Staff Preparations Prior to Expedition or Activity

- ▶ Consistency
- ▶ Parameters around some of the following:
 - ▶ Acceptable and unacceptable communication.
 - ▶ How will conflicts within group be addressed?
 - ▶ What activities will be permitted when?
 - ▶ Roles and responsibilities of staff and students.
- ▶ Tailor your consistencies to meet the specific needs of the group.
- ▶ What happens if you encounter a behavior that you did not prepare for?

Tone Setting

- ▶ A conversation
- ▶ Some things to include in a tone set are:
 - ▶ Trigger words - facilitate a conversation about what words that could have a negative impact on the group
 - ▶ No exclusive relationships
 - ▶ Asks for a verbal/written commitment to abide by these rules
- ▶ At the start of the expedition
- ▶ Before an emotionally charged activity

Reflection

- ▶ How do your organization's current policies and paperwork support an emotionally safe environment? What additions or revisions are needed?
- ▶ Are rules, routine, and responsibilities generally clear and consistent for your staff and participants? How can your organization improve in this area?
- ▶ How can you utilize staff training to better equip your staff to create emotionally safe environments?

Conflicts

- ▶ They happen
- ▶ Don't ignore them
- ▶ If not addressed conflicts can turn into issues of physical safety

Conflict Resolution Tools

- ▶ PAA
- ▶ CFR - an assertive communication tool that can help a participant express an idea or emotion
 - ▶ Concern
 - ▶ Feeling
 - ▶ Request
- ▶ VOMP - tool that can be used to resolve a conflict between two group members
 - ▶ Voice
 - ▶ Ownership
 - ▶ Miles (empathy)
 - ▶ Plan

Responding to Emotionally Unsafe Group Dynamics

- ▶ Identify it
 - ▶ What does it look like?
 - ▶ What does it sound like?
 - ▶ What does it feel like?
- ▶ Address it
- ▶ Provide curriculum to expand participants knowledge or provide value forming experiences

Bullying

Defining Bullying

- ▶ Bullying is systematic abuse of power and refers to repeated aggression against another person that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1994).
- ▶ The repeated aggression can be either direct (e.g., name calling, beating) or relational, that is, with the intent to damage relationships (e.g., spreading rumors; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000)
- ▶ Conflict involves antagonism among two or more people. Whereas any two people can have conflicts (or a disagreement or a fight), bullying only occurs where there is a power imbalance—where one individual has a hard time defending himself or herself.

Gender Differences in Bullying

- ▶ Boys tend to bully with direct physical or verbal aggression.
- ▶ Girls tend to bully with indirect or covert means of harassment such as social isolation, spreading rumors, or manipulating the friendship relations within the class.
- ▶ Boys who bully tend to be older than their victims (whether the victims are boys or girls).
- ▶ Girl bullies tend to target other girls who are the same age.
- ▶ Girls are more likely to be bullied by a group, which is emotionally devastating.
- ▶ Girls are more likely to involve both boys and girls in their bullying pursuits against a victim.
- ▶ Boys identify their aggressive behaviors against victims as "bullying" more often than girls.

Profile of a Bully

- ▶ Impulsive, hot headed, dominant
- ▶ Easily frustrated
- ▶ Lack empathy
- ▶ Difficulty following rules
- ▶ View violence in a positive way
- ▶ Not socially isolated, easily makes friends
- ▶ Have average to above average self esteem
- ▶ Often strong and healthy
- ▶ Competent in emotion recognition and social understanding
- ▶ Effective in manipulating others
- ▶ Come from disturbed families

Victim

- ▶ Different in appearance or behavior
- ▶ Withdrawn
- ▶ Physically weak
- ▶ Prone to show a reaction
- ▶ Poor social understanding
- ▶ Few or no friends
- ▶ Low self-esteem
- ▶ Believe that they "deserve" to be bullied

Bully Victim

- ▶ Impulsive/easily provoked
- ▶ Unpopular with peers
- ▶ Dysfunctional families
- ▶ Pre-existing behavioral or emotional problems

Working with Bullies

The Do's

- ▶ Create clear and consistent rules w/ consequences.
- ▶ Immediately stop bullying and impose consequences, do not leave this up to peer intervention.
- ▶ Praise/ reinforce positive behavior
- ▶ Help them learn to take ownership and understand the consequences of their actions
- ▶ Help them to develop empathy
- ▶ Work on restorative justice
- ▶ Help them find socially acceptable means to meet their power need.

The Don'ts

- ▶ Requiring the students to meet and “work things out.”
- ▶ Requiring students to apologize.
- ▶ Allowing the bully to vent or displace blame.
- ▶ Use group treatment for bullies.

Working with Victims

The Do's

- ▶ Allow student to save face when you intervene.
- ▶ Follow-up with student in private. Ask them what they need to feel safe.
- ▶ Praise the student for their courage to speak.
- ▶ Give them permission and support to tell what has happened to them.
- ▶ Provide protection from future bullying through heightened supervision.
- ▶ Help them build strong positive relationships with peers and adults.
- ▶ Explore unearned self-blame and help the young person see that the child who bullied him or her is responsible for the bullying.

The Don'ts

- ▶ Encouraging children who have been bullied to “work things out” with the young person who has bullied them (especially alone or through peer mediation).
- ▶ Supporting them too much in public.
- ▶ Avoid advice that will not work or that children and youth have already found ineffective.
- ▶ Do not place any blame on the victim or their behaviors

Empowering Bystanders: Creating Upstanders

- ▶ Bystanders are important because:
 - ▶ Bullying most often takes place in front of peers.
 - ▶ It almost never happens when adults are watching.
 - ▶ Most bystanders want to do something to stop the bully.
 - ▶ Bullies like an audience. If the audience shows disapproval, bullies are discouraged from continuing.
- ▶ How to Educate Bystanders:
 - ▶ Empower students to act
 - ▶ Teach skills bystanders can use to intervene
 - ▶ Hold bystanders accountable
 - ▶ Encourage bystanders to develop positive relationships with victims

Reflection

- ▶ Currently what tools do your staff use to help participants resolve conflict? Are there tools presented today that could be beneficial to train your staff to use?
- ▶ How can you better equip your staff to respond to unhealthy group dynamics?
- ▶ What are your greatest takeaways from the information presented on bullying? How might you change your organizations practices to incorporate this information?

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Take Home Points

- ▶ Review your organization's incidents to identify emotional safety needs.
- ▶ Review and revise your organization's pre-program paperwork, policies, tools and structures to support an emotionally safe environment.
- ▶ Create a plan to train staff in creating an emotionally safe environment.