Teaching Students
Responsible Behavior

Sample Lesson

Study Teams and Group Activities

If you register as an individual, ask a colleague or spouse to participate with you in discussion assignments. If that is not possible, use group activities for your own personal reflection.

Application Assignments and Access to a Classroom

If you are an administrator, counselor, or do not currently have access to a classroom, instead of reporting on implementation of application assignments describe how you plan to use the course concepts in your environment.

Study Session #1
Using Control Theory to Teach Students
Responsible Behavior

SESSION GOAL:

To have participants understand how knowing and using Control Theory in the classroom helps students learn to behave responsibly and to improve their success in school.

PREPARATION:

Read and discuss the Overview and Expectations for this Session #1. Then meet with your study team to discuss the following questions:

• What do you believe is the difference between "maintaining classroom discipline" and "teaching students responsible behavior?" Discuss.

• Which of the following do you believe to be more or less influential on the behavior of your own students: 1) peer pressure, 2) teacher control, 3) students' own internal motivation.

 • Discuss the relative merits of "teaching teachers how to control students" and "teaching students to control themselves." From the students' point of view, which do you believe is the more desirable approach? Why?

OVERVIEW:

This first session is an overview of a problem found in many classrooms in our country: teachers and students are at odds as to what constitutes an appropriate learning environment. The video portion of the lesson reinforces what you as educators already suspect -- the methods used "yesterday" for managing student behavior do not work with "today's" students. Even though schools are places where young people live to learn, the living (interacting with peers) often becomes more important to many of them than the learning. You and your team members begin the course by identifying the causes of significant conflicts that occur between teachers and students. You then will discuss the traditional approaches used by teachers to resolve such classroom conflicts and how you as teachers deal with students who do not finish assignments. The video presentation, Control Theory: Successfully Educating Today's Students, provides a rationale and suggestions for improving student success. It also introduces the psychological needs that underlie all behavior, students and teachers alike. Through Control Theory, Dr. Glasser explains how people attempt to stay in control of their lives by satisfying their basic needs.

You will learn that students in quest of their own power and freedom needs are often at odds with teachers as to what is appropriate behavior in a learning environment. You and your team will be asked to compare the "at risk" behaviors in the video with what you are observing in your own classroom. This session closes with an assignment that will direct you to test the theories presented in the video in your own classroom.

EXPECTATIONS:

By the end of this session**, participants** will:

• Compare and contrast Stimulus-Response and Control Theory explanations of human behavior.

• Understand why it is not possible to coerce students to behave or learn.

• Consider Control Theory concepts as they apply to their own classroom situations and helping their students.

• Understand that cooperative learning strategies can help students to satisfy their basic psychological needs as they work to learn.

• Test the theories presented in this section in their own classroom with their own students.

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Preparation for Video Viewing

As a team, before viewing the video, discuss each of the issues/questions and re-spond as directed.

What causes significant conflict between teachers and students? Using the space below, list five such causes. After you have listed the factors, rank them from 1 to 5; 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest of importance.

Rank   Factor

What are some traditional approaches used by teachers to resolve conflicts? Which of these do you believe to be most successful? Why?

a. What do you do when your students are disruptive or fail to complete their assignments?

b. What do you and your team members believe to be the ingredients of "School Spirit?" How does student success in school relate to "School Spirit?"

VIEWING ACTIVITY:

As a team, view the video for Session One, "Control Theory: Successfully Educating Today's Students." This tape addresses the main problem in today's schools: many students are not learning. It provides a rationale for better understanding that knowing and using Control Theory concepts empowers both teachers and students to improve their work in the classroom.

As you view the video, make notes of the ideas and activities that you will want to discuss with your study team.

VIDEO DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

After viewing the video, discuss the content presented with your study team. (You may want to view the video a second time stopping it as necessary to discuss the content.) Suggested discussion questions are given below:

• Discuss differences between the Stimulus-Response (external control) and Con-trol Theory (internal control) explanations of human behavior. Discuss these approaches in terms of student responsibility.

• Discuss ways that having genetically implanted basic needs influence the be-havior of students in the video; e.g. the boy who kicked the ball, the girls walking arm-in-arm, etc.

• Consider the statement in the video that students perceive school as more important than they are. Relate this statement to basic needs. How can the need for power help to raise students' self-worth?

• Consider this statement from the video "student's basic needs are not being met by the goals of the teacher." Assuming this statement is correct, how do you believe that knowing Control Theory can help change the situation?

• How do you believe understanding Control Theory may help you to reach students who have been identified as "at risk"?

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

Worksheet

Consider which of the student behaviors portrayed in the video are characteristic of your at-risk students. Which of them have you heard about, even though you may not have observed them?

Now consider strategies suggested in the video to help at-risk students. List below four strategies presented in the video.

What strategies are you currently using to reach at-risk students at your school? (If no strategies are currently in place, which ones would you like to see used?)

In the video, the staff and students in-teracted differently when problems were handled with traditional practices (Stimulus-Response) and with the Control Theory approach. In your opinion, what is the most similar aspect of these approaches?

What do you see as the most dissimilar aspect of traditional approaches as opposed to the Control Theory approach?

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Share the above worksheet with your study team.

Discuss those answers that were common to members of the group? Why do you believe this is the case?

In "traditional" approaches to dealing with conflict in the classroom, who takes charge? Is it the teacher? Is it the student? Discuss the significance of your answer in terms of the Control Theory approach.

What have you learned in this activity that you believe will help you design more effective lessons in the future? Please record any significant ideas in the spaces provided below.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

Please read the following paragraph taken from the April 27, 1989, edition of the *Los Angeles Times:*

> 'A group of seniors at Torrance's academically rigorous West High School intentionally flunked the latest California Assessment Program test in an attempt to send a message to administrators who they believe place too much emphasis on the exam . . . At the school Wednesday, student body President Kelle Price, who said that she did not intentionally fail the test, said some seniors became disgruntled when some teachers interrupted classes to prepare them for the . . . state tests. She said students also believed administrators – who visited classes to stress the importance of doing well – were too concerned with maintaining the school's image . . . At West High, there was much debate Wednesday about who – if anyone – places too much emphasis on the tests. Bawden (the principal) blamed the state Department of Education and the press, which does not publish other indicators of school performance . . .

> Bill Franchini, who heads the Torrance Teachers Association . . . blamed it on a trickle-down effect, saying the pressure starts with the state Department . . . and works its way down through local school districts, principals, teachers and eventually students. 'I think (students) are feeling like pawns in a game that is much bigger than they are,' he said.'

Now, with your study team, consider Dr. Glasser's comments on the above article. 'Everyone is correct. It is the push from the top to do well on low-quality tests that the intelligent students who want high-quality education are rebelling against. Coercion begets coercion; anyone who knows history knows this is true.'

Also, consider the article and the statement from the video that 'students perceive school as more important than they are.'

Record your comments about the article, focusing on implications for your own classroom.

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Share your reactions to the article with your study team. With your team discuss to consensus how an understanding of Control Theory can help students meet their needs while at the same time fostering quality education.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

Review the following summary of the key points before proceeding to the Classroom Application Assignment. As you review the key points, check (3) those that seem to be most important for your students.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

• Children's values have been modified by the forces of a changing society and today many view school as an obstacle to be overcome.

• Students often perceive school as an institution more important than they are as individuals.

• Most classroom misbehavior is not the result of a student's desire for conflict, rather it is the result of that student's needs not being met through traditional instruction.

• School should be a place where students are provided opportunities to learn, have fun, develop life skills, and work together effectively. Students need to perceive school as being supportive and contribute to their lives rather than a challenge to be overcome.

• Control Theory presents a personal approach to education enabling children to take responsibility for their own choices and assisting them in developing the ability to make good decisions that positively affect their schooling.

• Control Theory was developed from three decades of extensive research and describes a workable and understandable description of human behavior.

• Control Theory states:

   - All behavior is need/goal driven.

   - All people have genetically inherited basic needs that give shape to their lives.

   -All behavior, whether good or bad, is an attempt to satisfy those needs.

   - All people possess four basic psychological needs: 1) to belong, 2) to gain power, 3) to have fun and, 4) to be free.

   - Productive relationships are the essential ingredient in any teaching and learning activity, whether its with students or parents.

• An outgrowth of Control Theory is Responsibility Training, an approach where students learn why they make the decisions they do. At the same time, they learn to develop the skills to make better choices.

• Control Theory teaches students the relationship between responsibility and freedom, and helps them set and reach goals in a systematic and effective way through G-PAR; Goal-Plan, Action, Results.

CLASSROOM APPLICATION AS-SIGNMENT

Depending on the age of your students, select one of the following Classroom Application Assignments.

1. Select a lesson you will be teaching soon. Without altering the content to be learned, adjust your plan so that the lesson addresses either student's need to have fun or to belong. (For instance, for "fun" you could arrange a math or history lesson in the form of a game or contest; for "belonging" you could have students work in pairs or small groups.)

2. Take the *Los Angeles Times* article to class. Read it to your students and then have an open-ended (non judgmental) discussion about the article and what they believe it says about our educational system.

LEARNING REPORT: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

Please turn to the Learning Report for Session #1 and record your answers as directed.

Please Note:

Learning Reports constitute 50% of your final grade. They must be:

1. Written as an individual report.

2   Written legibly and clearly to ensure that evaluators can read and understand them. (Making a copy of the Learning Report and typing in your responses, or replicating the Learning Report information on a word processor and completing the work it calls for are excellent methods for ensuring readability and understanding.)

Session Notes: