Life Space Crisis Intervention (LSCI): Integrating Key Evidence-Based Practices To Improve Outcomes For Students With, Or At-Risk Of Developing EBD

WAREA Conference
July 2013
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www.lsci.org

Life Space Crisis Intervention
Three Possible Outcomes of a Crisis

If managed well, crisis can become an opportunity for positive change.
LSCI can help an adult take a bad situation and make something good of it.
LSCI can help the student and the staff build a relationship based on trust which leads to changes in perceptions, feelings, and behaviors.

The skills of Life Space Crisis Intervention are important because the acts of violence by children and youth are not by appointments.

A therapeutic skill that enables us to make the best out of a stressful student incident when we get the worst of it.

Cognitive Map of the Six Stages of LSCI & EBP

Stage 1: Drain Off (Brain Research, TIC) De-escalating skills to drain off the student’s intense feelings while controlling one’s counter-aggressive reactions

Stage 2: Timeline (Brain Research, Cognitive Theory, TIC) Relationship and listening skills to obtain and validate the student’s perception of the crisis events

Stage 3: Central Issue (Cognitive Theory, Behavior Modification) Diagnosing to determine if the crisis represents one of the six LSCI patterns of self-defeating behavior

Stage 4: Insight (Brain Research, Cognitive Theory) Pursuing and exploring the student’s specific pattern of self-defeating behavior for personal insight and accountability

Stage 5: New Skills (Prosocial Skills Training, Behavior Modification) Empowering skills to teach the student new social skills to overcome the pattern of self-defeating behavior

Stage 6: Transfer of Training (Behavior Modification, Prosocial Skills) Consultation and contracting skills to help the student re-enter the classroom and to reinforce and generalize new social skills.
Universal Applications of Life Space Crisis Intervention within a PBIS Framework
Walker & Muscott (2009; 2011)

TIER III: TERTIARY INTENSIVE PREVENTION
LSIC as De-escalation Support
Insight Interviews Inform FBA and BIP Planning

TIER II: SECONDARY TARGETED PREVENTION
Inform Function-based Perspective and Prosocial skills Training (Replacement)
Address in Prosocial Skill Groups
Teach Conflict Cycle to Students

TIER I: PRIMARY UNIVERSAL PREVENTION
Surface Management, Response to Problem Behavior, Stress Management
Act of Listening for Brain Off
Counter-aggression for Staff
LSIC Short Term Intervention for De-escalation
De-escalation Response Teams

The Brain: Stress, Memory, and Trauma

- Abstract thought
- Concrete thought
- Affiliation
- “Attachment”
- Sexual behavior
- Emotional Reactivity
- Motor regulation
- “Arousal”
- Appetite/Satiety
- Sleep
- Blood pressure
- Heart rate
- Body temperature

Brain:
- Cortex
- Limbic
- Diencephalon
- Brainstem

Plasticity

EXPERIENCE = USABILITY/ANALYTIC + DESIGN/CREATIVE

Left-Brain Functions
- Analyze
- Logic
- Language
- Science and math

Right-Brain Functions
- Holistic thought
- Intuition
- Creativity
- Art and music
Trauma Theory

Mental Images: (Personal Meaning)

Everyday Events
- Reading aloud
- Running a mile
- Doing a math problem
- Socializing during lunch
- Handling disagreements
- Accepting correction

Perceptual Set – Your Reality

Subconscious Mind Memories

Filter of personal experiences and cultural meanings

Cortical flow is top down and bottom up.
**THE BRAIN’S FIRST JOB IS TO KEEP THE BODY ALIVE**

When confronted with a perceived threat the brain responds:

Hyperarousal (fight or flight)

If you cannot flee, you fight.

Dissociation (freeze)

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**Possible causes of early trauma**

- Abuse or neglect
- Immature or ill-prepared caregivers
- Drug addicted mothers
- Loss of parent/primary caretaker
- Extended early hospitalizations, surgeries, illnesses
- Living with or witnessing violence
- Frequent moves or placements

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**Garbarino’s 3 Dark Secrets**

- Snowdon’s Secret
- Dantrell’s Secret
- Milgram’s Secret

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**Observeable signs of potential trauma**

**Hyper-vigilance / Alertness**

- Wary and guarded facial affect
- Issues around “fairness” (perceived unfair criticism)
- Distrustful and suspicious, questions adult motives.
- Argumentative
- Uncomfortable in crowds or large groups
  - May refuse to join a large group situation. (E.g. class is on the floor in a group—child sits in chair behind group)
  - May refuse to walk in line.
  - In large group situation, hits, pushes, touches, or grabs others (hit first)

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**Irrational Belief if Not Resolved**

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

- Clingy or dependent
- May be unusually friendly with strangers (esp. younger students)
- Accuses adult of insufficient care or support
- Tendency to try and control adults in life, or cause them to reject him/her

**Self-Protection and Control**

- May feel helpless due to past victimization
  - Learned helplessness and control of adults through dependence.
- Refuses or only partially follows directions
- Justifies harmful behaviors
- Passive-aggressive behavior
- Need to save face/appear strong or smart
- Will refuse to do work he perceives as too difficult

**Hyper-arousal**

- Easily angered (fight or flight response) by:
  - Perceived threatening affect such as staring.
  - Demands.
  - Perceived difficult work assignment.
  - Anger in others.

**In more seriously involved children**

- Lying
- Stealing
- Fire-setting
- Cruelty to animals
- Apparent lack of conscience

**VIDEO: PLEASE OPEN THE BOOK**
Traditional Responses to Oppositional Behavior

- Repeating direction more firmly
- Threats
- Lectures
- Punishment or loss of privileges
- Exclusion (sent out of room, suspended from school)

Conflict Cycle

- Stressful Event
- Thought: Higher self fulfillment prophecy
- Thoughts: Lower brain
- Behavior: Fight/Flight/Freeze
- Staff response: Emotional and/or thought (lower or upper brain)

Conflict Cycle of Traumatized Children

- Conflict Cycle & Irrational Beliefs
  - When adults act in conflict, can hurt, lead children to internalize the conflict, what the damage is others.
  - Expression of emotion (fight or flight)
    - Puts the brain in equilibrium by ridding the body of the adrenaline.
    - Therefore, it feels good, so we continue to erupt.
    - We need to find alternative ways to regulate the brain.

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.
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.

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.

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

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Remember, during crisis act like a thermostat, not like a thermometer!

Unbroken, The Conflict Cycle Spirals Into Crisis

Good Will Hunting

Calm the amygdala and connect with the right cortex
Organize the narrative
Identify the pattern
Integrate the narrative – bring it to understanding
Build new neural pathways in the left cortex
Strengthen the pathways
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
- Being fully present with the student
- Attending to verbal and non-verbal communication
- Managing counter-aggression

Responding
- 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.”

Decoding

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

Listening Skills

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.”

Listening Skills Davon

Video Example
Responding Skills

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

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

Decoding Skills

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

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

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 the room 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.

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

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.

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.
So this is the central issue of my crisis!

**Stage 1: The Drain Off**

- **Youth Stage**: Crisis Stage
  - *I'm upset and out of control!*
- **Staff Stage**: De-Escalation Stage
  - *I need to drain off the youth's intense feelings and help him control his inappropriate behavior*
- **Staff Skills**
  - Understanding the dynamics of the Conflict Cycle
  - Listening
  - Attending
  - Affirming
  - Responding
  - Decoding

**Stage 2: The Timeline**

- **Youth Stage**: Timeline Stage
  - *This is what happened to me as I remember it.*
- **Staff Stage**: Relationship Stage
  - *I need to encourage the youth to tell his story; to feel heard and understood. I need to validate the youth's perceptions, thoughts and feelings about the crisis.*
- **Staff Skills**
  - Understanding the dynamics of the Conflict Cycle
  - Empathy
  - Listening
  - Attending
  - Affirming
  - Responding
  - Decoding

**Stage 3: The Central Issue**

- **Youth Stage**: Central Issue Stage
  - *So this is the central issue of my crisis!*
- **Staff Stage**: Diagnostic Stage
  - *I need to determine:*
  - 1. Is this crisis characteristic of how this youth perceives, thinks, feels, and behaves during a crisis?
  - 2. Is this crisis best managed by a short-term intervention, in order to get the youth back into the program?
  - 3. Is this crisis best managed by a Center of Excellence (CCE)?
- **Staff Skills**
  - Understanding the youth's history and current stressors
  - Knowing the six LSCI's and selecting the right one
  - Stating the central issue in developmentally-appropriate language

**Cognitive Map of the Six Stages of LSCI**

- **Stage 1: Drain Off**
  - Staff de-escalating skills to drain off the student's intense feelings while controlling one's counter-aggressive reactions
- **Stage 2: Timeline**
  - Staff relationship skills to obtain and validate the student's perception of the crisis
- **Stage 3: Central Issue**
  - Staff diagnostic skills to determine if the crisis represents one of the six LSCI patterns of self-defeating behavior
- **Stage 4: Insight**
  - Staff clinical skills to pursue the student's specific pattern of self-defeating behavior for personal insight and accountability
- **Stage 5: New Skills**
  - Staff empowering skills to teach the student new social skills to overcome his pattern of self-defeating behavior
- **Stage 6: Transfer of Training**
  - Staff consultation and contracting skills to help the student re-enter the classroom and to reinforce and generalize new social skills

**The Six Reclaiming Interventions**

- **Reality Rub**
  - Errors in Perception
- **Symptom Estrangement**
  - Justifying Harmful Behavior
- **Red Flag**
  - Imported Problems
  - Behavior Driven by Guilt
- **New Tools**
  - Poor Social Skills
  - Manipulation of Body Boundaries
  - Exploitation of Peers

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

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

**Stage 1: The Drain Off**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Stage</th>
<th>Staff Stage</th>
<th>Staff Skills</th>
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<td>Crisis Stage</td>
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**Stage 2: The Timeline**

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<td>Timeline Stage</td>
<td>Relationship Stage</td>
<td>Interviewing Skills</td>
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**Stage 3: The Central Issue**

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<th>Youth Stage</th>
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<td>Central Issue Stage</td>
<td>Diagnostic Stage</td>
<td>Diagnostic Skills</td>
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**7/28/13**
### Summary of the Six Stages of a Successful LSCI

**Stage 4: The Insight**

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<tbody>
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<td>Insight Stage</td>
<td>Clinical Stage</td>
<td>Counseling Skills</td>
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I need to facilitate the youth's insight into his pattern of self-defeating behavior.

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

**Stage 5: New Skills**

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<td>New Skills Stage</td>
<td>Empowering Stage</td>
<td>Cognitive &amp; Behavior Modification Skills</td>
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These are the social skills I need to improve my interpersonal relationships.

### 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.

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### 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

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### 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.

**Timeline: The 7 Essential Questions**

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

**The Timeline**

**WHAT HAPPENED?**

**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**

**SELF CONCEPT & IRRATIONAL BELIEFS**

**FEELINGS**
How did that make you feel? (On a scale of 1 to 10, how angry, sad, disappointed, etc. were you?)

**OTHERS’ REACTIONS**
How did the teacher… other student(s)… good… etc. respond? Then what happened?

**BEHAVIOR**
What did you do when you were feeling… the upset? How did you show your feelings? On a scale of 1 to 10, how upset did you feel… how did you act…?
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.

Life Space Crisis Intervention

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

www.lsci.org