

Reducing seclusion and restraint

In an effort to reduce seclusion and restraint in mental health facilities, it is incumbent upon us, as the mental health professionals, to abandon old-school philosophies of hands-on discipline and move towards an eclectic, non-threatening approach.

Main ideas to keep in mind:

- 1) Staff can contribute to an unsafe situation by making a student feel more powerless.
 - Most adolescents already have low self-esteem and feel powerless, which is why they have to have perception of control/power. I call this the *misperception of control*. This makes them prone to power struggles, so the appropriate approach is crucial.
- 2) Empathy is an extremely effective strategy for deescalating crisis.
- 3) Instilling self-esteem is one of the most important things we can do. This will help rehabilitate empathy and decrease anger.

** See handouts on self-esteem and the anger formula

Prevention and management of aggressive behaviors

RICA strives to become a model of a physical-intervention-free environment.

The outcome is in the adults' hands, with one exception to the rule. Only when a student poses an imminent physical danger to self or others can physical intervention be implemented.

Safety is always first.

Second, the adult has to be in a healthy place, or at least recognize the place they are in, (self-esteem), and put this aside. It is never personal. No projecting or counter-transference. The adult cannot have to win, or need control. Remember, it is always about safety first and modeling the correct behavior.

Third, you have to believe in and want to implement the philosophy. We are modeling the pro-social behavior that we deal with conflict in a verbal, non-aggressive and rational way. Later, I will discuss anger.

Lastly, you have to be trained in the skills of crisis intervention, counseling and conflict resolution.

For many reasons, our students are prone to many anti-social behaviors, such as violence, fighting and assaultive behavior. As a result of distorted perceptions, despite post resolutions, most of these students misinterpret the use of physical interventions. This

strategy can compound and exacerbate past experience and poor modeling. This is why modeling the implementation of the above philosophy is imperative.