

Maggie's paper is intended to offer an introductory overview to schools seeking guidance on available approaches. Comments are drawn from those who have recently used the approaches. Because numbers are small, this is not intended as a comprehensive evaluation. References are listed in the preceding Bibliography, but contact addresses are given, where appropriate.

Coordinator

Anger Management Programmes – a Consumer's Guide

Maggie Garland

1. Cognitive Therapy Programmes

Cognitive Therapy is a problem-solving approach to emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has a wide application and is extensively used in the treatment of depression, psychosomatic illness and phobias, as well as in anger management. The cognitive therapy technique requires that the client accepts that his or her behaviour needs to change, in order to resolve the difficulties he or she is experiencing.

Anger Control Programme by Feindler and Ecton (1986)

This programme covers the following topics:

- The angry young person is likened to a firework .He is controlled by the person or situation that annoys him (i.e. he who lights the touch paper). To be empowered he must learn to control his anger.
- The child is taught to recognise the physical changes which take place in the body when he begins to feel angry.
- The importance of relaxation techniques, as a means of obtaining physical and mental control, is discussed and various methods of relaxation are practised.
- The child is encouraged to describe incidents from his everyday experience when he felt angry. These are analysed into *antecedents*, the *behaviour* and *consequences*. The child decides whether the consequences of these incidents were good or bad for him. When he rates the consequences as bad he is asked to brainstorm alternative behaviours which might have resulted in a more favourable outcome.
- The difference between assertive and aggressive behaviour is defined. The uses of various assertion techniques are discussed and the child is encouraged to put them into practice.

- It is suggested that the programme leaders use videotaped role- play to act out the incidents (referred to as “hassles”) The child records incidents on *Hassle Logs*.
- *Daily Behaviour Graphs* are used by the child to record his progress in handling hassles.

This programme is available in two forms, group and individual. It is divided into twelve sessions. The individual programme sessions take about an hour, while a group session would require about an hour and a half. It is advisable to have sessions no more than a week apart to promote learning.

As the programme was written for American adolescents some of the language requires modification for British children. It is suitable for twelve years upwards. Although the authors say it has been used effectively with young people of below average intelligence, the writer has found some of the material is difficult for those who find abstract concepts beyond their grasp and therefore feels the programme is more successful when used with children of at least average verbal ability.

‘Six Steps’ by Charlie Walker, West Lothian Psychological Service

This cognitive behavioural problem solving programme was adapted from *The Rochester Social Problem Solving Skills Program*. It has eight units which take from 1 to 1.5 hours to present. The programme is suitable for children between the ages of ten and fourteen years, but conceptually the material is easier for children to grasp than Feindler and Ecton’s *Anger Control* programme. Some older secondary school pupils however, may regard the style of the programme as too ‘young’ in tone and therefore unsuitable.

The themes of the units are as follows:

Unit One - Feelings

Children are taught how to recognise feelings in themselves and others.

Unit Two - Steps to Success

The six steps to the problem solving process are introduced.

Unit Three - Solutions

Children are encouraged to generate as many solutions as possible.

Unit Four – Think Ahead

The children learn to anticipate consequences and to evaluate likely results of behaviour.

Unit Five –Decisions, Decisions

Reinforcing that there may be more than one good solution to a problem and that they need to be tried out to see if they work.

Unit Six – Practice Makes Perfect

Pupils work co-operatively to produce a ‘problem-solving mural’ which serves as a concrete reinforcer.

Unit Seven – Mistakes Will Happen

This unit suggests why some apparently ‘good’ solutions fail and what can be done about this.

Unit Eight – Encore

The entire problem-solving program is reviewed and pupils are encouraged to go on using the techniques they have learnt. The group leader stresses that he/she uses these strategies and shares some appropriate problems with the students, asking for their help.

The pupils are thanked and rewarded for their attendance and commitment.

Further details on this approach and its sources can be obtained from Charlie Walker, West Lothian Psychological Services, Cedarbank Centre, Livingston EH54 6DR.

Using Cognitive Therapy Programmes: Observations

Setting up a Group Programme

- Children with extreme behavioural problems are less likely to benefit from a group programme but may respond to an individual programme.
- The age range of a group should not span more than two and a half years.
- It is very important to stress to parents that the programme is not a school discipline procedure or part of the normal curriculum and is in no way compulsory.
- Parents should be asked permission for the programme to be offered to their child and given a brief summary of the nature of the programme, its objectives and the amount of school-time it is likely to involve. It should be presented as an *opportunity*

that is being *offered* to the child to learn to deal with everyday problems more effectively.

- If, however the child does not wish to take part in the programme, parents should be advised that no pressure should be put on the child to do so, as the programme will be of no benefit to an unmotivated child.
- When parental permission is obtained to offer the child the programme, children should be interviewed individually by the group leader. The programme is then presented to the child as an opportunity to learn how to improve the quality of the choices the child makes on a daily basis, thus improving relationships with others and reducing conflict. The child is reassured that there will be no negative consequences should he or she decline to take part in the programme.

Running the Group

- It is preferable to have two adults running the group and sharing the presentation of each session equally. If one is more experienced than the other, this should not be apparent to the children.
- Group size: a maximum of eight members and not less than five members is suggested.
- Concrete reinforcers are usually useful to maintain motivation. They may be in the form of points (e.g. for attendance, timekeeping, handing in Hassle Sheets on time etc.) An outing at the end of the programme is always a popular reward and encourages regular attendance.
- Provided the main concepts are covered, there is no need to adhere strictly to the format of the programme. Each group is different and the group leaders need to meet after each session to discuss the progress of the group and decide on the work to be covered in the next session. The approach should be flexible to reflect the needs of a particular group.
- If a group member wishes to leave the group before the programme is completed, he or she should be allowed to do so.

Maintaining Positive Change

- In order to maintain, over time, the strategies and techniques learnt during the programme, it is necessary to provide children with reminders and reinforcement of these in school for some months after the completion of the programme. Reminders should be given as soon as the child begins to show poor control or judgement in handling situations and at the same time other situations, which have been managed

successfully, should be highlighted. For this reason it is invaluable if as many members of staff as possible can become familiar with the programme's content and concepts.

- It is also helpful to involve the children's parents. If possible, at the start of the programme, they should be invited to an informal meeting with the group leaders to discuss the nature and aims of the programme and be given examples of the techniques and strategies that will be discussed. They should be encouraged by the leaders to take note of any success their child has in managing a potentially difficult situation or hassle (however trivial) and to praise him or her for this achievement. When the child has *not* managed a situation successfully, it should be suggested to the parents that they encourage the child to think of alternative solutions that the child might have applied to the problem, which could have resulted in a more positive outcome.

2. Video Interaction Guidance in Schools (SPIN)

SPIN is a method of improving communication between adults and children. It was developed in Holland and is used to improve parents' contact with their children and to improve teachers' communication skills with their pupils in the classroom. There are several Scottish educational psychologists who use the approach with families and in schools.

The approach is based on the assumption that the quality of the child's social and cognitive development depends on the nature of the interactions between the child and his/her primary care givers.

The technique is used with parents, teachers and children and is focused on short clips of film which are studied for examples of positive interaction. The film is analysed with reference to the *contact principles*. These are categories of communication, including turn-taking, tone of voice, eye contact, the giving and receiving of initiatives and so forth. Higher order communication skills (such as problem solving, co-operation and leading) are incorporated as appropriate.

A contact person for the group of Scottish psychologists who have been exploring the use of SPIN with children and schools is Penny Forsyth, Educational Psychology Service, St Ninian's Primary, Dochart Terrace, Dundee DD2 4HB.

Key Strengths of the Approach

- Not based on advice giving
- Video input in context – home/nursery/school
- Based on ‘self-modelling’ and therefore generating a high level of personal interest
- Positive approach to enable ‘error-free’ learning
- Video-feedback can change perceptions of the situation
- Builds on the concept that the impetus for change has to come from within the individual.

Evaluation of Video Interaction Guidance in School Settings

Kaye, Forsyth and Simpson have studied the use of SPIN within school settings (in press). They found that in most teaching situations the outcome of the intervention both for teachers and pupils was to create a more positive and empowering effect. Teachers became more aware of children’s needs and of the factors which make interactions effective in their classrooms. The results suggest that, in terms of outcomes, SPIN may be a more effective approach than working simply with the structure and organisation of a school.

The same researchers have recently conducted a case study on the effect of SPIN on teacher and pupil communication and perceptions in a primary classroom where challenging pupil behaviour was regarded as an issue. The purpose was to conduct a detailed analysis of teacher-pupil communication.

Their study suggested that effective communicators do indeed use the contact principles outlined in the SPIN approach, and were shown to do more of the following than a control group of similarly experienced teachers:

- highly attuned interactions with their pupils
- authentic discussions
- active listening
- engaging pupils in shared tasks.

2. Assertive Discipline

This programme was developed in California by Lee Cantor, an education consultant, about twenty years ago. More recently it has been extensively revised. *Details of the*

approach can be obtained from Lee and Marlene Cantor, Behaviour Management Ltd, 21 Horse St, Chipping Sodbury, Bristol BS17 6DA.

Cantor studied what effective teachers do in the classroom and based the programme on these skills and research on classroom behaviour.

The essence of the approach is about increasing the amount of teaching time in class, while significantly reducing the time spent on discipline. Cantor and Cantor claim that research on the programme indicates that on-task behaviour rose from 61% to 89%.

The programme takes seven to eight hours. It is usually given in 1 to 1.5 hours sessions, but can be completed as a one day workshop with a follow-up session. It includes videotape presentation and accompanying exercises and discussion. By the end of the first two videotapes, each teacher will have devised their own classroom discipline plan that is unique to their classroom. In addition the school will be in a position to devise school-wide discipline plans and policy.

Cantor and Cantor's aim is to expose pupils to a constant environment that is fair and encourages them to develop self-control through choosing consequences for their actions. The programme provides opportunities for increased parent support. Parents become aware of what is expected of their children and receive consistent feedback on their child's behaviour.

Assertive Discipline is suitable for both primary and secondary schools. Staff training must be carried out by a qualified leader, such as an educational psychologist who has undergone leader training. It should be noted that in secondary schools *all* teachers, not just management staff, require to be involved in the training programme.

An Evaluation of Assertive Discipline by a Primary School in West Lothian

In 1996 the school was experiencing behaviour management problems with a number of children in the middle school. These children had been difficult to manage since school entry. There were also other pupils whose behaviour was proving difficult to manage. The school believed that a whole school discipline policy was required, which would provide consistency and structure for pupils throughout their time in primary school. Assertive Discipline was selected, as it appeared to meet these criteria.

As a result of this experience, the school's views on the strengths and possible drawbacks of the programme are as follows:

1. Strengths

- It teaches children that their behaviour is a result of the choices they make.
- It rests on clear and specific rules.
- It is structured.
- It is applied fairly.
- It takes the 'heat' out of discipline.
- It does not disrupt teaching and learning.

2. Possible drawbacks

- The school has to invest a lot of time and money in training.
- *All* staff have to be committed to the programme.
- Staff may need to alter their approach so that they focus on good behaviour. For some staff this can be difficult.
- New members of staff may have difficulty slotting into the programme.
- The programme takes some time to be taught to the children and has to be revised regularly.
- The programme is American and requires extensive adaptation for Scottish schools. It may take several attempts to get this right.

3. Evaluation using the programme's criteria of success

▪ **Final Consequence**

The final consequence for choosing not to follow rules is that a letter from the headteacher is sent home. In the session following training only a few letters were sent, and those pupils to whom the final consequence applied did not have letters sent home again.

▪ **Exclusions**

From the start of the programme to the point of the review there had been no exclusions (though for a time two pupils were on part-time education).

4. Limitations

- The programme has not worked so well in unstructured parts of the school such as the dining hall and playground.

- Ancillary staff and visiting teachers may find the programme difficult to handle and so care must be taken to ensure they are taught the language used and the *positive*, not punitive approach taken to discipline.

5. Conclusion

On the whole, the school emerged as very pleased with the reduction in difficult behaviour since the start of the programme. The headteacher reported that it was gratifying that at parents' evenings it was becoming common to find parents using *Assertive Discipline* terminology when discussing their children with the teachers.