Aggression Management

Training for Frontline Staff*

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*Based on the work of John Byrnes and the Center for Aggression Management
AGGRESSIVE VS ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR

- **Assertive Behavior** says,
  “I will win because I will be the best I can be.”

- **Aggressive Behavior** says,
  “I will win because I will take you out.”

- The difference between Aggressive and Assertive Behavior is…. **“intent.”**
EXAMPLES OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

- Bullying
- Verbal Abuse and/or Attack
- Shouting, Threatening and/or Demeaning Statements, Put-Downs
- Physical Attack
- Discrimination
- Harassment
DEFINING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

- **Aggression:** is a provoked or unprovoked attack, forceful attacking behavior, destructively hostile to others or one’s self.

- **Violence:** Abusive or injurious physical force or action, acting with or characterized by destructive force or physical attack.

- To prevent conflict and thereby, violence we must manage aggression.
Preventing Violence: Traditional Approaches

Typically Reactive

- Crisis Management
- Threat Assessment
- Conflict Resolution
- Emergency Responders

Not Reliably Predictive

- Mental Illness
- Profiling
Most people who are violent do not have a mental illness, and most people who have mental illness are not violent.

Assessment of Seung-Hui Cho:

Depressed and anxious, but not at risk of hurting himself or others
Profiling, does it work?

U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Dept. of Education
Safe School Initiative Study

“There is no accurate or useful profile of the school shooter
... or for assessing the risk that a particular student may pose
...”
WHAT ARE THE FACTS

US Department of Justice:

- Each year 2,000,000 assaults and threats of violence occur

Workplace Violence Research:

- Each day 723 workers are attacked; 16,400 threats are made; 43,800 workers are harassed.

OSHA:

- Each year 1,000 US workers are victims of homicide.
CAUSES AND ISSUES

Root Causes
- Religious Fervor
- Political Extremism
- Mental Illness
- Criminal Intent
- Workplace Issues
- Domestic Concerns
- Traumatic Experiences

Issues
- Violence
- Bullying
- Verbal Abuse
- Discrimination, Harassment & Terrorism in:
  - Campuses
  - Workplaces
  - Schools
  - Domestic Settings
  - Religious Places
TWO FORMS OF AGGRESSION

Primal Aggression
- Instinctual fight or flight response
- Fueled by adrenaline
- Aggressors who lose control and attack

Cognitive Aggression
- Conscious or non-conscious response
- Fueled by intent
  (Hostile/Malicious Intent)
- Victimizer, Predator
  (Criminal) or Terrorist
AGGRESSION CONTINUUM

- Trigger Phase
- Escalation Phase
- Crisis Phase
Calm, normal breathing

An activating event occurs

Begin to experience stress and anxiety

Circumstances are dynamic but everyone is coping

Offers a baseline

Begins escalating....
As anxiety mounts..

- Quality of judgment diminishes
- Swearing, arguing with others
- Arm and hand gestures vary
- Diminished creativity in thought
- Reduced thoughtful consideration
CRISIS PHASE 1
(HEART RATE 145-175)

- Hardens point of view
- Issues ultimatum
- Growling, baring teeth
- Direct, prolonged eye contact
- Moving in and out of your personal space
- Eyes targeting body parts to strike
CRISIS PHASE 2
(HEART RATE ABOVE 175)

- Loss of verbal control
- Loss of judgment
- Begins physical attack
MEASURING AGGRESSION

1. TRIGGER PHASE
   - STRESS AND ANXIETY STARTS

2. ESCALATION PHASE
   - MOUNTING ANXIETY

3. CRISIS PHASE
   - LOSING VERBAL CONTROL
     - LOSS OF PHYSICAL CONTROL
     - TOTAL LOSS OF JUDGEMENT

VIOLENCE
AGGRESSION CONTINUUM

CRISIS PHASE (Simplified)

STAGE 6
Issues an ultimatum. Proclaims the victim as evil.

STAGE 5
Deliberately damages the reputation of another by exposing them publicly as an enemy.

STAGE 4
Secretly creates distrust of their victim within their community. Sniper behavior.

STAGE 3
Abandons communication as a tool.

STAGE 2
Chooses a side and fixates on one point of view. Loses trust of others.

STAGE 1
Hardens points of view, begins deception, creates distance, lacks empathy.

ESCALATION PHASE

NORMAL BEHAVIOR BASELINE

TRIGGER PHASE

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WHICH IS MORE LETHAL?

TACTICAL

STAGE 9
Willing to do whatever it takes, including taking their own life to meet their objective: murder/suicide, terrorism.

STAGE 8
Plans to attack victim without self-sacrifice: murderer, combatant.

STAGE 7
Complicit and in conspiracy with Stage 8 & 9, becomes tactical in nature.

SPIRALING OUT OF CONTROL

STAGE 9
Panics or becomes enraged. Exhibits the body language of an attacker. Fight, flight or freeze phenomena.

STAGE 8
Complete loss of judgment. Actions and words usually fail to make sense.

STAGE 7
Loses verbal control and words generally do not make sense.

CRISIS PHASE (Simplified)

COGNITIVE AGGRESSION

PRIMAL AGGRESSION
Not all behavior you encounter will be overt aggression.
Most will be cognitive (intent-driven) aggression.
Many individuals develop frustrating behavior patterns that create chaos and disrupt a sense of community.
The Un-Magnificent Seven: common patterns of aggressive behavior.
Common Patterns of Aggressive Behavior

The Un-Magnificent Seven
The Sherman Tank

- Enjoys confrontation & always need to prove themselves right
- Argues about rules in your class & syllabus
- Pushes past quieter personalities
- Seeks to dominate
- Challenges your authority
The Un-Magnificent Seven

The Bulldozer

- Overwhelms others with facts & figures.
- Only values their own opinion and has little regard for knowledge or viewpoints of others.
The Un-Magnificent Seven

The Sniper

- Criticizes you behind your back
- Gossips and creates chaos when you’re not around
- Blends into surroundings when threatened or challenged, uses jokes or sarcasm to cover motives
The Exploder

- Has wide mood swings. Is a “loud mouth” and makes insulting and cutting remarks.
- Wants everyone silent who disagrees with them and is happiest when others are passive.
The Complainer

- Whines and complains about their situations or rules.
- Never seems happy or optimistic about any improvement; wears down and drains others.
- Feels unappreciated and powerless.
The Negativist

- Is never happy and desires others to be just as gloomy
- Rarely sees the bright side
- Says “no” to everything
- Brings a very low energy to the environment
The Clam

- Disengaged, silent and unresponsive
- May be upset or frustrated, but never communicates it
Question 1: Did you recognize any of the Un-Magnificent Seven in the previous scene?

Question 2: Which one or more of the Un-Magnificent Seven triggers you?

Question 3: Which one or more of the Un-Magnificent Seven do you become when you’re triggered?
AGGRESSION MANAGEMENT’S
- UNIVERSAL APPROACH -

The Judicious Interview (6-Step approach)

① Begin Cycle Breathing
② Start with getting the aggressor away from the crowd.
③ Begin your interaction with a positive statement not a negative one (constructive, not punitive).
4. Explain to them the documented issues in a neutral and reflective way (without sarcasm).

5. Explain that their present behavior is not in their best interest.

6. Ask how we can work together to become more productive.
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR DOCUMENTATION

Document the behavior you observe in an incident report if necessary:

✓ Are there witness statements I should gather?
✓ Is there evidence I should save?
✓ Are my notes clear and legible?
✓ Will my statement withstand a cross-examination?
✓ Did I create my statement immediately after event?
Training Results - Quantitative

Participants:
26 attended
14 completed the Pre/Post test
19 completed Surveys

Role in Organization:
2 Social Work Student Interns
4 Supervisors
13 Frontline Staff

Pre-Test and Post-Test Administered
- 14 completed both test questions
- 7 participants increased in correct answers
- 4 stayed the same – missing the same questions
- 3 decreased scores (mixed pre for post?)
# Training Results - Qualitative

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<tr>
<td>The training met my expectations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>I will be able to apply the knowledge learned</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>The training objectives for each topic were identified and followed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>The content was organization and easy to follow</td>
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<td>The materials distributed were pertinent and useful</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>The trainers were knowledgeable</td>
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<td>The quality of instruction was good</td>
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<tr>
<td>The trainer met the training objectives</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Class participation and interaction were encouraged</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequate time was provided for questions and discussion</td>
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<td>7</td>
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REFERENCES

Brian Van Brunt, Ed.D, Certified Senior Trainer
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