

Today's Key Points

Key Point 1



People from poverty often develop a "survival mindset," focusing only on what is needed to make it from one day to the next. This mindset helps them survive the emotional and physical challenges of poverty, but may keep them trapped in it as well.

Key Point 2



Many troubled people fall into patterns of irrational beliefs and behaviors. Aggression, passive aggression, avoidance, and dependency are examples of these irrational patterns. While ultimately self-defeating, these patterns often give them a sense of control over their fates. For many, predictable failure is better than unpredictable success.

Key Point 3



People in poverty are often poor problems solvers. Many make the same mistakes over and over again, then look for someone to blame rather than seeking out solutions. Skillful caseworkers can help with careful listening, insightful questions, and logical solutions that address real problems.

In Survival Mode



Problem Solving
with Hardest-to-Serve Customers

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Hard-to-serve customers present a unique challenge to caseworkers and employers. Proud, defensive, secretive, and ultimately self-defeating, many would rather be unemployed than admit to making mistakes. This activity-based workshop offers insights into the self-defeating beliefs of many customers from poverty. It then teaches a 4-step interpersonal problem solving process based on principles of cognitive restructuring. Participants will master skills needed to better understand and communicate with their most challenging customers.

Today's Topics

1. What self-defeating attitudes and beliefs are common to people in long term poverty?
2. How can we more effectively resolve problem issues with people from poverty?
3. What strategies guide successful interventions with people from poverty?

Worst Case Scenario

Sure, you've got "street survival skills." But would you know what to do in a bull stampede?!!



1. How to SURVIVE A BULL STAMPEDE:
 - (a) Lay down and curl into a ball.
 - (b) Run alongside the bulls.
 - (c) Kneel in the street and pray for Divine Intervention!
2. How to SIGNAL RESCUERS WHEN LOST:
 - (a) Light three fires in a triangle shape during the day.
 - (b) Wait until nightfall and light one large fire.
 - (c) Bang out "SOS" in Morse code using pots & pans
3. How to TAKE A PUNCH TO THE HEAD:
 - (a) Turn at the last minute and take it on the jaw.
 - (b) Move into the blow, take it on the forehead.
 - (c) Push your best friend in front of you and let him or her "take one for the team!"

3. IDENTIFY GOAL

Rules of Goal Statements

- Be Specific & Positive
- Be Self-Focused

"I want _____ (but not _____)."
positive outcome *negative*



Example: "I want to find a safe and clean child care place without spending over \$35/day."



1. Jonathan agrees that his main problem right now is that he is worried about what will happen if the guy calls his supervisor.

When asked about his goal, he says:

"I just want to go home and forget all about it. Whatever happens, happens."

Better: _____

2. Albert agrees that his main problem is that he feels confused about why people make such a big deal over his dishes. When asked about his goal, he says:

"It would be great if people could stop overreacting to petty stuff like this."

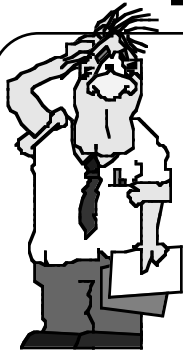
Better: _____



4. FIND SOLUTIONS

Together, identify various strategies which might reach the goal, and select the best solution.

2. IDENTIFY PROBLEM



Rules of Problem Statements

- Start with "I" and avoid "you"
- Explain how you FEEL and WHY

"I feel _____ because / about _____."
emotion *factual situation*

Example: "I am so frustrated because I can't find affordable childcare anywhere."



1. Jonathan works at a call center. He is talking to you about a caller who yelled at him today. He says:

"I'm sick and tired of these rude people! I TRY to help them as much as I can, but today I just lost my temper. This guy had a problem with his washer, but he was being so nasty to me that I started being nasty back. He said he was going to call my supervisor, but at this point I just don't care."

Write a simple problem statement for Jonathan:

"I am _____ because /about _____"

2. Albert works at your office, and frequently leaves dirty dishes in the sink. Today, one of your co-workers actually put his dishes in a plastic bag and left them on his desk. Albert sounds confused about the situation as he says:

"What's the big deal? A dirty plate or coffee cup once in a while and people gotta be like this? It's not like I don't do LOTS of extra stuff around here to help out. You'd think people would have better things to do with their time than worry about MY occasional dish in the sink!"



Write a simple problem statement for Albert:

"I am _____ because /about _____"

Self-Defeating Patterns

Many troubled people fall into patterns of irrational beliefs and behaviors. While ultimately self-defeating, these patterns often give them a sense of control over their fates.

Pattern	Core Belief	Feelings & Behaviors
A _____		
P _____ A _____		
A _____		
D _____		

_____ 1. After an uncomfortable silence, Pete snipes:
 "Well, I suppose someone as polished as you are has never @#\$\$% 'ed up, huh? What's it like being perfect?"

_____ 2. With barely a pause, Debbie whines:
 "Can you give me a hint? I really need this job, and if I don't get it, they're going to kick me out of my apartment. Maybe just a little hint? Please?"

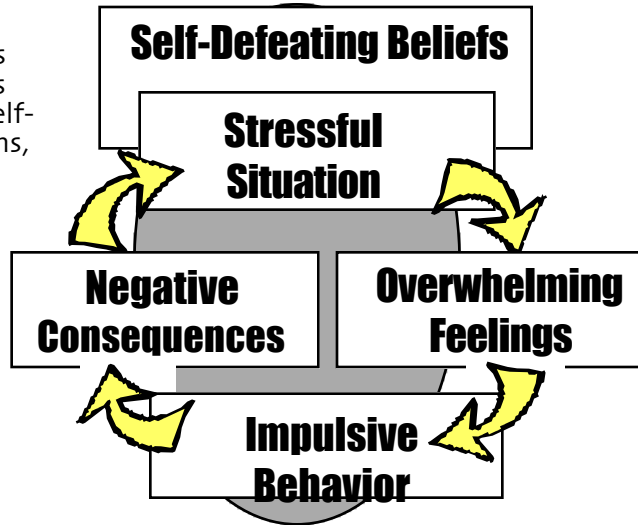
_____ 3. Allison stares back at the interviewer and growls:
 "People like you, I tell you what. I'm @#\$\$% sick of it. One of these days, I'm gonna SMACK one of you..."

_____ 4. Amy seems to give it deep thought, then asks:
 "Can we take a quick break? I had a lot of coffee this morning and just need to use the restroom. Be right back!"

Conflict Cycle

Dr. Nicholas Long's Conflict Cycle suggests that emotional crisis is often driven by low self-esteem, misperceptions, or unusual stress.

Customers can become overwhelmed by their emotions and act impulsively, leading others to engage them in power struggles.



Self-Defeating Crises

Situation	Feelings	Behavior & Consequ
Avoidant Amy forgot to bring in her completed application form. She is frantically looking through her bag 2 minutes before her appointment.	Amy's feeling:	As a result, she might: Consequences?
Aggressive Allison made a mistake on the credit card machine and billed a customer \$100 too much. When the manager noticed it, he called Allison into the office.	Allison's feeling:	As a result, she might: Consequences?
Passive Aggressive Pete is a recovering addict who's just putting his life together again. He's waiting to interview with someone half his own age.	Pete's feeling:	As a result, he might: Consequences?

EMPATHETIC PROBLEM SOLVING

Hard-to-serve individuals often overreact emotionally to their problem. They can benefit greatly from a skillful listener and problem solve. Focus on finding solutions, not assigning blame!

STEP 1. LISTEN CAREFULLY

"What's happening?"

Listen carefully, using encouraging verbal and nonverbal communication techniques.

STEP 2. IDENTIFY SOLVABLE PROBLEM

"What is really wrong?"

Help the individual describe the immediate problem, as s/he sees it.

STEP 3. IDENTIFY REASONABLE GOAL

"What would be better?"

Help the individual describe a positive outcome to the problem, temporarily avoiding strategies to attain it.

STEP 4. FIND WORKABLE SOLUTION

"What can you do?"

Together, identify various strategies which might reach the goal, and select the best solution.

1. LISTEN CAREFULLY

- ___ Interrupting constantly
- ___ Making eye contact
- ___ Nodding at the right times
- ___ Looking at your watch
- ___ Getting distracted by people walking past
- ___ "Tell me more about what happened..."
- ___ "That's nothing! Wait till you hear what I did..."
- ___ "That must have been upsetting..."
- ___ "Let me tell you what you SHOULD have done..."

