

The *Making Choices* Program: Social Problem-Solving Skills for Children

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The development of the *Making Choices* program was funded, in part, by grants and contracts from the North Carolina State Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Injury Prevention Research Center of the UNC at Chapel Hill, the Governor's Crime Commission, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse

What Is Aggressive Behavior?

A persistent pattern of behavior that causes or threatens harm to other people.

- »»»» Violates the basic rights of others;
- »»»» Violates major age-appropriate societal norms or rules; or
- »»»» Causes impairment in social or academic functioning.

Elements of Aggressive Behavior

- Verbal – taunts, threats
- Physical – tantrums, throwing, fights
- Instrumental – goal directed
- Reactive – unplanned retaliation
- Proactive – bullying, provocation
- Overt – externalized
- Covert – lying, stealing, cheating, drug use
- Indirect or Relational – social manipulation

Why Focus on Aggressive Behavior?

Aggressive behavior in childhood:

- Often has lasting effects on social development;
- Is relatively stable for children who become aggressive at an early age;
- Is relatively stable across generations;
- Consumes a disproportionate share of resources; and
- (If untreated,) Has a poor prognosis. It is a major precursor of violent behavior.

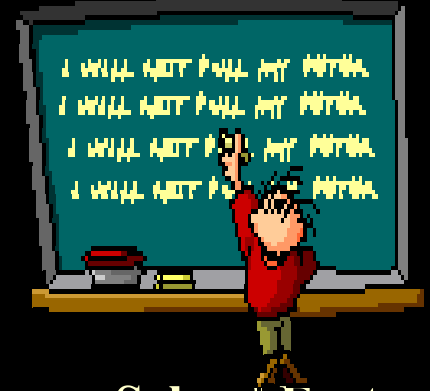
Where to Start? Ecological Perspective



Peer Factors



Individual Factors



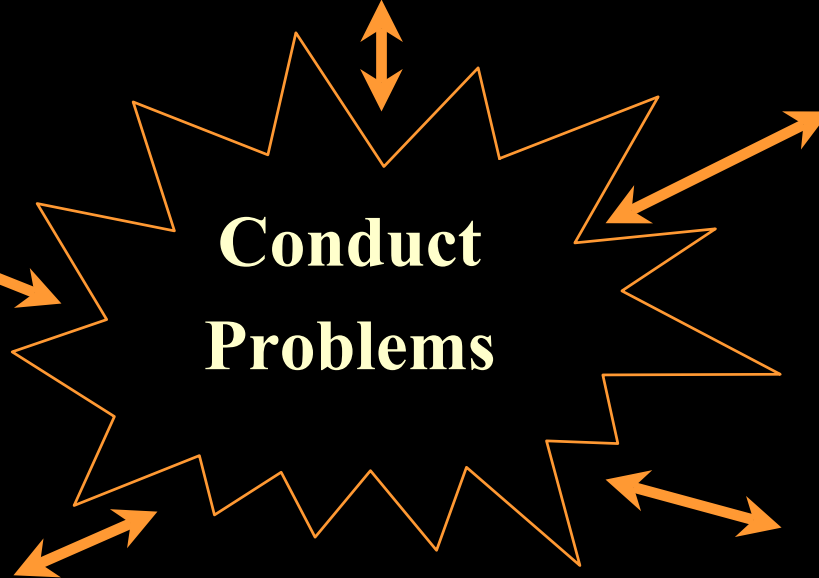
School Factors



Family Factors



Neighborhood and Societal Factors



Conduct Problems

Cascades of Risk: No Single Pathway

Pre-School

Biological Risks
Parenting
Family-School
Pre-School Climate
Neighborhood

School
Entry

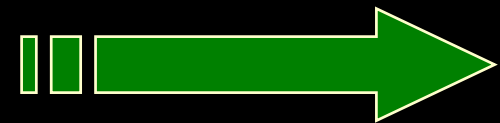
School Readiness
Processing Skills
Parenting
Family-School
School Climate
Neighborhood

Elementary
School

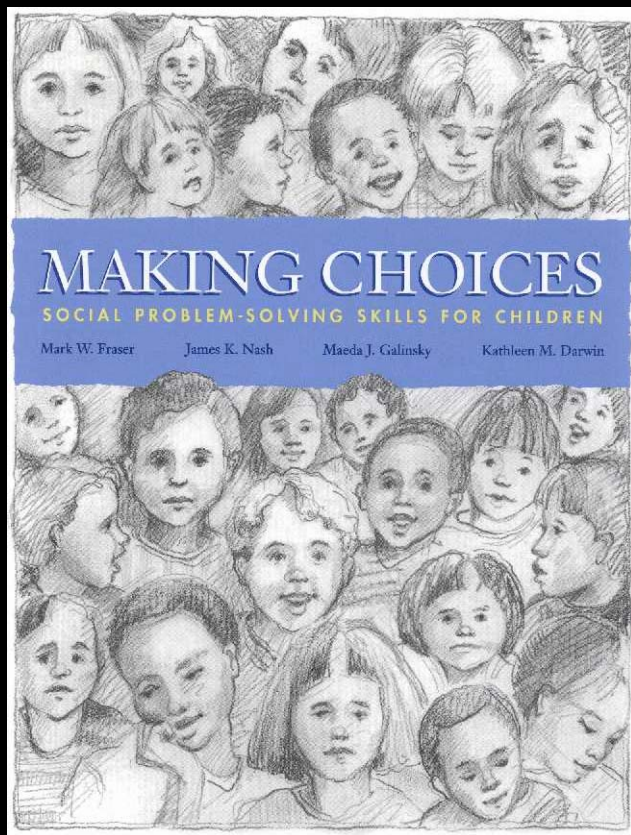
Peer Rejection
Academic Failure
Parenting
Family-School
School Climate
Neighborhood



Increasingly Broad Repertoire of
Potentially Damaging and
Aggressive Behaviors



Intervention Model for Working with Conduct Problems in Childhood



“The guide is reader friendly...[and]... use of contemporary references-- including entertainers, sports figures, video games--helps this text achieve its basic purpose: to get kids to stop and think before acting”

Social Work Today, February 18, 2002

Fraser, M., Nash, J., Galinsky, M., Darwin, K. (2001). *Making choices: Social problem-solving skills for children*. Washington, D.C.: NASW Press.

Making Choices: A Social Development Program

Developing culturally relevant resources for practitioners, teachers, and others

- Focus on **proximal** outcomes as indicators of distal outcomes
- Constant re-invention and refinement
- Fidelity-focused delivery
 - ➔ Community involvement
 - ➔ Research-based, highly specified manuals
 - ➔ Clinical support

Focus on Relational Factors: Interrupt Early Start Risk Process

- Rejection by prosocial peers
- Poor relationships with teachers
- Few opportunities for prosocial involvement
- Association with rejected peers

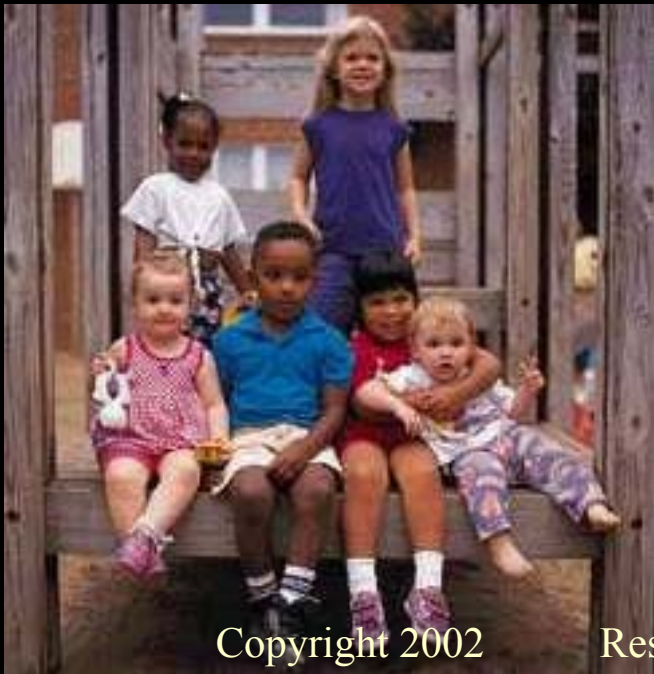


With teachers....



How to Strengthen Prosocial Relationships?

With peers...



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It wasn't me...

The Relational Risk Chain

- { Coupled – perhaps – with high biological risk (e.g. low social conditionability and low behavioral inhibition), child has early exposure to violence, abuse, neglect, and coercion
- } Child imitates aversive behavior and earns attention with aversive behavior
- Stressed, busy parents (or parents impaired by drug use) acquiesce and the child's aversive behaviors are rewarded/accelerated
- Peers and teachers begin to reject child

The Relational Risk Chain (cont.)

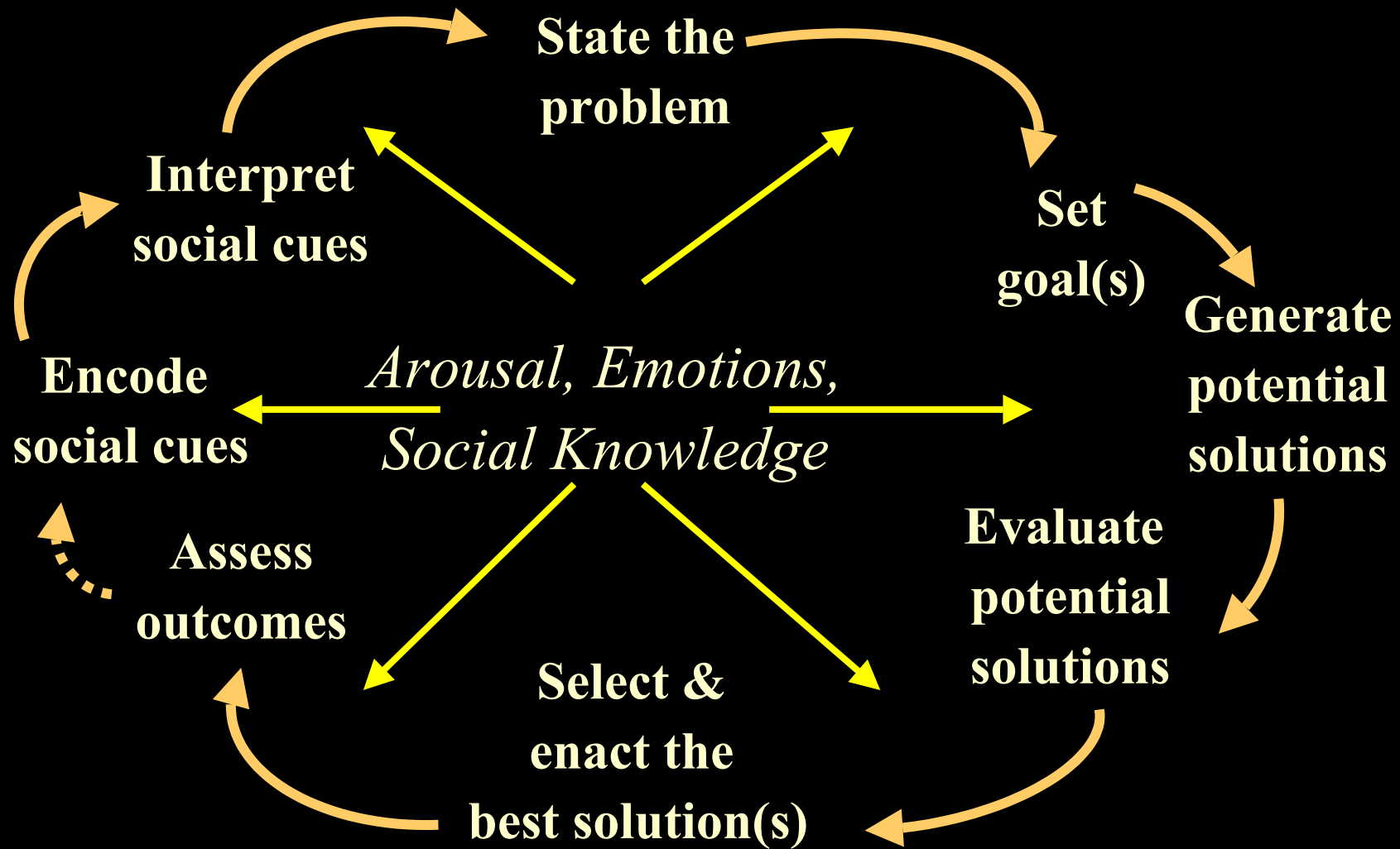
- Child outcomes include: lower cooperative participation, school liking, and achievement; higher inattention, hostile attribution, and misconduct
- Rejection and withdrawal lead to limited prosocial opportunities; increased opportunities for drug use, exposure to alternative values and beliefs



Making Choices: Solving Social Problems

- Social information processing skills
- Emotion regulation (understanding feelings, arousal; self-talk and other techniques to control impulsive behavior)
- Opportunities for involvement with prosocial peers

The Problem-Solving Sequence: Integrating SIP with Emotion Regulation



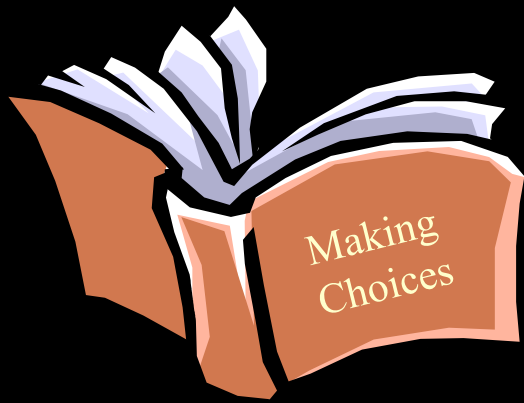
Making Choices Program

Skills for Solving Social Problems



Making Choices

- Learning with and from peers -- FUN
- Having students generate examples and ideas for role play activities
- Learning entire sequence of skills
- Reviewing material and practicing skills from earlier lessons
- Tailoring content



Making Choices Program: Basic Elements

- **Mixed** group or classroom format
- Guided group or classroom process
- Social learning model
 - Teaching skills
 - Supervised practice
 - In vivo replication
- 7 Units, 29 lessons (approx.. 1 hr/week for academic year)



Unit 3: *INTERPRETATION*

Lesson 1: Recognizing Others' Intentions

Lesson 2: Distinguishing Friendly versus Hostile Intentions

Lesson 3: Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

Lesson 4: Situations, Meanings, and Problems

Sample Lesson 3: Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

- **13th lesson of series**
- **Content already covered includes**
 - recognizing and identifying emotions and feelings
 - managing feelings
 - self talk
 - identifying social cues
 - distinguishing friendly vs hostile intentions

Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

- **Goals: improve ability to use situational cues to distinguish intentional from unintentional behavior, and improve ability to encode a larger number of situational cues**
- **First step: review and remind of content covered in prior lessons, with emphasis on ways to distinguish friendly from hostile intention**

Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

- **Activities: 1. Discussion**
 - “Why is it important to be able to identify intentional or unintentional behavior?”
 - **Ensure that students discuss**
 - helps one understand the situation better
 - helps one decide what to do next
 - **Emphasize that unintentional actions are usually not hostile**

Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

- **Activities: 2. Detective Game**
 - **Purpose:** to help students learn how to pay attention to all the clues in a situation and consider them before making a decision
 - **Tasks:**
 - **Leader reads a simple story where character has unclear motivation(e.g. John is standing next to Tom's broken bike)**

Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

- **Tasks (continued)**
 - **Leader reads follow up facts one by one (e.g. John's bike is on the ground, broken; John has a scraped knee and elbow). Facts can be relevant or irrelevant.**
 - **Students each place a card face down that says "By Accident", "On Purpose to be Mean", "On Purpose to be Friendly", or "Can't Tell" when they have made a decision.**
 - **Students cannot change their card once they have made their decision.**

Distinguishing Intentional versus Unintentional Behavior

- **Activities: 3. Discussion**
 - **After game is over, points to emphasize include**
 - **it's important to pay attention to lots/all the clues**
 - **some clues are more important than others**
 - **there are different kinds of clues**
 - **deciding too quickly can lead to mistakes**
 - **figuring out others intentions can help us decide what to do next**

Final Activity

- **Using the theory and principles behind *Making Choices*, develop another lesson activity to teach the skill of distinguishing intentional versus unintentional behavior.**
- **How might you need to vary this for children of different ages or with cultural differences?**
- **Demonstrate/role play the lesson**
- **Feedback**

Selected References

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