MORAL REASONING TRAINING
What is moral development?

- Moral development involves thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding standards of right and wrong.
- Moral development consists of intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions.
- What are some of these intrapersonal codes of conduct? Interpersonal?
Moral Identity

• A person's use of moral principles to define the self.

• Moral identity determines not merely what the person considers to be the right course of action but also why he or she would decide: “I myself must take this course.”
How does a young person acquire, or not acquire, a moral identity?

It is an incremental process that includes:

- Feedback from others.
- Observations of actions of others that either inspire or appall.
- Reflections on one’s own experience.
- Cultural influences such as family, school, religious institutions and the mass media.
Why is Mature Moral Judgment important?

"As you THINK, you ACT."
Mental Models

The tool that allows us to reflect, clarify, and improve our internal pictures of the world, and to see how they shape our actions.

Timothy R. Lucas and Associates, Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook; lucasRPS@aol.com, 201-236-8696
Mental Models

Take two minutes and build a story that could explain how these footprints were made.

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Mental Models

Realize that we see screen events and data based on our mental models.

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In the research on human cognition...

Information relayed from the outside through the eyes accounts for **only 20%** of what we use to create a perception. We each create our own worlds by what we **choose to notice**...to enact our particular version of reality.

*Margaret Wheatly*

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The Ladder of Inference

Observable “data” and experience (as a video recorder might capture it)
The reflective loop of our beliefs affect what data we select next time.

I select: “data”
(from what I observe)

I add: meanings
(cultural and personal)

I make: assumptions
(based on the meanings/added)

I draw: conclusions

I adopt beliefs
(about the world)

I take: actions
(based on my beliefs)
KOHLBERG’S THEORY of MORAL DEVELOPMENT
Sociomoral Development and Delay

(Kohlberg, 1984)

• The development of more mature moral cognition through experiences of taking the perspectives of others.

• Thinking or cognition refers to basic patterns or “structures” of mature or immature thought.
Theory of Moral Development

• Discrete levels of moral development with two stages in each level.

• “Moral reasoning” is defined as judgments about right and wrong.

• The studies of moral reasoning are based on the use of moral dilemmas, or hypothetical situations in which people must make a difficult decision.
Stage 1: Power

“Might makes right”

- Morality is whatever big or powerful people say that you have to do.

- The Stage 1 individual doesn’t understand the moral reasons for rules, has trouble with reciprocity if it requires taking more than one perspective at a time, and is best at taking the perspective of someone physically powerful.
Stage 2: Deals

“You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”

• Morality is an exchange of favors. (“I did this for you, so you’d better do that for me.”)

• Stage 2 individuals have trouble understanding the ideal of mutuality in a relationship. They also tend to be self-centered.
Stage 3: Mutuality
“Treat others as you hope they would treat you.”

- In mutual morality, the relationship itself becomes a value. “Trust” and “mutual caring,” although intangible, are real and important.

- Stage 3 thinking can entail caring about the preciousness of human life. Care more about what others think of them.
Stage 4:  
“Are you contributing to society?”

- This morality involves interdependence and cooperation for the sake of society: Society can’t make it if people don’t respect the rights of others and follow through on their responsibilities.

- Stage 4 thinking is more of a supplement to stage 3.
• HEINZ dilemma
Gender bias research

• These gender claims have not held up – multiple studies have been unable to detect differences between boys and girls ideals.

• Even for adults, when educational or occupational levels are controlled, the differences disappear.

Damon, 2006
Beyond Kohlberg

Moral Reasoning and Character Education as part of Aggression Replacement Training
Kohlberg’s Stage Theory

- Promotes the idea that moral reasoning proceeds through an invariant sequence of stages toward an understanding of what is just and fair.
• Research shows a well-established relationship between moral reasoning and delinquency.
Stams et al, 2006

- Did a nine year longitudinal study that confirmed the reciprocal relationship and delinquency – the higher the moral reasoning score, the lower the rate of delinquency.
Samuelson, 2007

- Demonstrated that a discussion-based curriculum (like what is used in Aggression Replacement Training) produced a statistically significant improvement in higher stage moral reasoning.
Snarry and Samuelson, 2008

Their meta-analysis of moral reasoning studies suggest:

1. Dilemma discussion is a useful method for moral development.

2. Real life dilemmas are more efficacious for moral development than are hypothetical dilemmas.
3. There is a zone of proximal development (+1) in which dilemma discussions advance moral development maximally.

4. Peers are the best teachers during dilemma discussion groups.
Paul Bloom (2013) posits that few contemporary psychologists would endorse Kohlberg. He cites extensive research that says Kohlberg underestimated the moral sophistication of children and overestimated the moral sophistication of adults.
Study of What Babies Think About Reward and Punishment

• Five month old and eight month old babies were shown scenarios using puppets.
• One puppet helped open a box and one puppet slammed it shut.
• Then one puppet rolled a ball to two puppets, one rolled it back (nice), one ran away with it (mean).
• Five month old babies preferred nice puppets overall.
• Eight month old babies were more sophisticated: they preferred the puppet who was mean to the bad guy over the one who was nice to it. This showed that at some time after five months, babies begin to prefer punishers when the punishment is just.
Fairness Instinct

• What we see at all ages is an overall bias toward equality.

• Children expect equality, prefer those who divide resources equally, and are strongly biased to divide resources equally themselves.
• We are born with some sort of fairness instinct.
Babies are moral animals, equipped by evolution with empathy and compassion, the capacity to judge the actions of others and even some rudimentary understanding of fairness and justice.
All children are born with a running start on the path to moral development. A number of inborn responses predispose them to act in ethical ways. For example, empathy – the capacity to experience another person’s pleasure or pain – is part of our native endowment as humans.

Damon, 2006
The Moral Development of Children.
Moral Development

• This capacity for empathy stagnates or even diminishes for many people if it is not reinforced, continuously learned and refined through social experience.

• Other moral emotions that make an early appearance include shame, guilt, and indignation.
“A magisterial survey of scientific knowledge about children's moral development.”—Howard Gardner, Harvard University

The Moral Child
NURTURING CHILDREN’S
NATURAL MORAL GROWTH

WILLIAM DAMON
Fundamental to many approaches to moral and character education, and a criticism of Kohlberg is a reliance on "right thinking" as leading to "right behavior".
Lickona and Davidson, 2005

• Their research distinguished between moral character and performance character. Youth can be taught character traits which must be mastered well to be used for good.
What is Character?

• For most of us, character refers to something innate and unchanging – it is the core set of attributes that define one’s very essence.
• Define character much differently. It is a set of abilities or strengths that are very much changeable and entirely malleable.
• They are skills that you can learn.
• They are skills that you can practice.
• They are skills that you can teach.
Character Strengths that predict life satisfaction and high achievement (Peterson)

- Grit
- Self-Control
- Zest
- Social Intelligence
- Gratitude
- Optimism
- Curiosity
If-Then Thinking= Mental Contrasting

• Three Strategies are utilized when setting goals. (Duckworth and Oettingen).

• Two don’t work very well.
• Optimists favor indulging, which means imagining the future they would like to achieve. Indulging feels really good when you are doing it but it does not correlate at all with actually achieving your goal.
Pessimists use a strategy called dwelling, which involves thinking about all the things that will get in the way of their accomplishing a goal.
• Mental Contrasting combines the two methods: concentrating on a positive outcome and simultaneously concentrating on the obstacles in their way.
• Doing both at the same time creates a strong association between the future and reality that signals the need to overcome the obstacles in order to attain the desired future.
Implementation Intentions

• Specific plans in the form of if/then statements that link the obstacles with ways to overcome them.
Positive fantasizing

• “Dream it and you can achieve it”.
• To achieve long term goals you must have;
• MOTIVATION and
• VOLITION
Your History is not Your Destiny

• Past performance is not always an indication of your future results.
Edlund, Clingman and Fowler

• The effects of primary reward on I.Q.
Children given an I.Q. test and divided into three groups based on their test scores:

- High-IQ group had an average score of 119
- Medium-IQ group had an average score of 101
- Low-IQ group had an average score of 79
• Several months later they were given a second test.
• Half of the children in each group given an M&M for each right answer.
• The medium and high-IQ children did not improve their scores.
• The low-IQ children, who were given candy, raised their IQ scores to 97!
Segal, 2006

• “Working when no one is watching: Motivation, Test Scores, and Economic Success”
His experiment suggests that it is the first score of 79 that is more relevant to their future prospects.

They may not have been low in IQ, but they were low in motivation to do well without any obvious incentive.
Walter Mischell: “From good intentions to Willpower”

• An ingenious study to test the willpower.
The Marshmallow Test

- A child was brought into a small room and sat at a desk with a bell on it.
- The child was given a marshmallow.
- The experimenter announced that she was going to leave the room. The child was told that if they wanted to eat the treat they only needed to ring the bell. If they waited until the experimenter returned on her own, he would get two treats.
Mischel checked up on the children more than a decade later. There was a striking correlation between the child’s wait times and their later academic success. On average, children who had waited 15 minutes for their treat scored, on average, 210 points higher on the SAT.
Why IS ALL THIS IMPORTANT?

• In Skillstreaming and Anger Control we are giving youth strengths and skills that will be reinforced through character education and moral reasoning.

• Character matters!
Moral Reasoning Training

Dilemma discussion groups designed to teach children how to:

1. Think about moral issues.
2. Deal with moral situations that do not have clear-cut solutions.
3. Use principles of fairness and justice in their interactions with others.
Moral Reasoning Goals

• Increase the moral reasoning stage of the trainees.

• Help the trainees use newly learned and more advanced reasoning skills in the real world.
Delay in thought and behavior

- Antisocial youth show prolonged immaturity in the stage of moral judgment.

- They also demonstrate persistent and pronounced egocentric bias.
Ask...Don’t Tell

• The leader should remember that his or her primary role is to cultivate the group: to guide or stimulate, not to inject statements or instructions.

• Follow-up questions are to challenge thinking errors and provide clarification.
“Benign Confrontation”

• Initial questioning strategy that allows the facilitator to confront initial participant responses that may be contradictory.

• Benign confrontation is a sophisticated skill that encourages a student to examine his or her behavior without “boiling over” or moving away.
Effective “Benign Confrontation” depends on 3 conditions.

1. Healthy Staff/Youth Relationship
2. Youth must have a basic level of trust in the Staff.
3. The Staff must have the skill to say what they mean, to mean what they say, and to not say it in a mean way.
Mark’s Problem Situation, cont.

5. Let’s change the situation a bit. What if Mark and Maria have been living together for several years and have two small children? Then should Mark still break up with Maria?
   - [ ] yes, should break up  
   - [ ] no, shouldn’t break up  
   - [ ] can’t decide (check one)

6. Let’s go back to the original situation. This is what happens: Mark does break up with Maria—he lets her know how he feels and starts dating another girl. Maria feels hurt and jealous and thinks about getting even somehow. Should Maria get even?
   - [ ] yes, should get even  
   - [ ] no, shouldn’t get even  
   - [ ] can’t decide (check one)

7. What if the tables were turned and Maria did that to Mark?
   - [ ] yes, should get even  
   - [ ] no, shouldn’t get even  
   - [ ] can’t decide (check one)
Mark’s Problem Situation

Moral Reasoning—Week 3: Mark’s Problem Situation

Name ________________________________ Date ______________________

Mark has been in a relationship with a girl named Maria for about two months. It used to be a lot of fun to be with her, but lately it’s been sort of a drag. There are some other girls Mark would like to go out with now. Mark sees Maria coming down the school hallway.

What should Mark say or do?

1. Should Mark avoid the subject with Maria so Maria’s feelings aren’t hurt?
   □ should avoid subject  □ should bring it up  □ can’t decide (check one)

2. Should Mark make up an excuse, like being too busy to see Maria, as a way of breaking up?
   □ excuse  □ no excuse  □ can’t decide (check one)

3. Should Mark simply start going out with other girls so that Maria will get the message?
   □ yes  □ no  □ can’t decide (check one)

4. How should Mark respond to Maria’s feelings?
1. Michael is walking along a side street with his friend James. Michael has just been released from a juvenile facility. James stops in front of a new car. He looks inside and says, “Hey! The keys are still in this thing. Let’s see what it can do! Come on let’s go!” What should Michael say or do? Should Michael try to persuade James not to steal this car?

- should persuade
- should let steal
- can’t decide (circle one)
2. What if James says to Michael that the keys were left in the car, that anyone that careless deserves to get ripped off. Then should Michael try to persuade James to not to steal the car?

- should persuade
- should let steal
- can’t decide (circle one)

3. What if James says to Michael that the car’s owner can probably get insurance money to cover most of the loss?

- should persuade
- should let steal
- can’t decide (circle one)
4. What if James tells Michael that stealing a car is no big deal - that plenty of people do it all the time.
   – should persuade
   – should let steal
   – can't decide (circle one)

5. What if Michael knows James has a girlfriend and a one year old baby, who will suffer if James gets caught, loses his job and goes to jail? Then should Michael try to persuade James not to steal the car?
   – should persuade
   – should let steal
   – can't decide (circle one)
6. Let’s say the car is your car. Michael is James’s friend, but Michael is also your friend. Michael knows it is your car. Should Michael try to persuade James not to steal the car?

- should persuade
- should let steal
- can’t decide (circle one)
7. Let’s say that Michael tries to persuade James not to take the car, but he goes ahead and takes it anyways. Michael knows that James has been partying and is extremely drunk and shouldn’t be driving?

What should Michael do?

8. In general, how important is it for people not to steal things that belong to you?

9. In general, how important is it for people not to take things that belong to others?
Anthony’s supposed to be baby sitting his little sister, Michelle. When he’s not looking, Michelle climbs a tree and falls out. The situation looks serious. Michelle is unconscious and she’s breathing heavily, and Anthony is really scared. He thinks she might be dying and there’s no telephone nearby to call for help. He picks her up in his arms and carries her off to the road. There’s nobody else around except for a man parking his car.

Anthony runs over to the man, carrying Michelle in his arms, and he asks the man to drive them to the hospital. The man says, “I’d like to help, but I’ll be late for work.” Anthony begs the man to let him borrow the car, but the man refuses. “How do I know I can trust you,” the man asks.
What should Anthony do or say?

- Anthony puts Michelle down, grabs the man by the coat, and beats him up. He then takes the man’s car and drives off to the hospital with Michelle.
MR: Anthony’s Problem Situation

Question:

1. Should Anthony have beaten the man up and taken Michelle to the hospital?

2. What if it is Michelle who’s bleeding, but she’s not bleeding a lot, should Anthony beat the man up?

3. What if it’s a neighborhood girl that Anthony’s baby-sitting, should Anthony beat the man up?
Sharon and her best friend, Jill are shopping in a clothing store. Sharon has driven them to the store. Jill picks up a blouse she really likes and takes it to the dressing room to try it on. When Jill comes out of the dressing room, Sharon sees that Jill is actually wearing the blouses and Jill walks out of the store wearing the blouse.

Moments later, the security guard and the store owner comes up to Sharon. The owner says to the officer, “That’s one of the girls who took the blouse.” They check Sharon’s purse and there’s no blouse. “Okay, you’re off the hook. But what’s the name of the girl who was with you?” the officer ask Sharon. “I’m almost broke because of shoplifting,” the owner says. “I can’t let her get away with it.”
What should Sharon say or do?

• Sharon keeps quiet and refuses to give the officer Jill’s name.