

Tough Kids, Cool Counseling

John Sommers-Flanagan, Ph.D.
University of Montana

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Email: John.sf@mso.umt.edu
Blog: johnsommersflanagan.com

Workshop Overview

- This workshop is rated “R”
- It’s a blend of theory, clinical experience, and evidence-based material (relational and technical)
- Caveats and excuses
- Working with youth is not a perfectly linear process – and neither is this workshop

Participation Guidelines

- Input is welcome, not mandatory (TIMING)
- Try to make connections with your work
- Be open to new and old ideas
- Communicate respectfully
- It’s okay to critique what you see
- Have as much fun as you can while learning

Learner Objectives

1. Identify and describe four key principles underlying effective work with challenging students
2. Use evidence-informed assessment and engagement techniques when working with challenging students
3. Apply culturally sensitive cognitive, emotional, and constructive change strategies
4. Apply brief suicide assessment and intervention strategies

Working with Adolescents

- 1990 – Discovery – My input not appreciated
- 1997 – Clever Title: Tough Kids, Cool Counseling
- But who are the “Tough Kids”
- Imagery activity
- 30 Minutes of Profanity

Deconstructing Resistance

- Freud: Nearly anything in opposition to the analyst’s goals – The problem is the client
- de Shazer: Didn’t believe in resistance, so he held a funeral and buried it in his back yard – The problem is the therapist
- Both-And: Resistance (or ambivalence or reluctance) is a function of the client AND the therapist

No More Tough Kids

- Only so-called tough kids
- Only kids in tough situations
- And therapy is one of those
- The invisible antenna
- It's not useful to think that way

Four Evidence-Based Principles

1. Use radical acceptance, radical respect, and radical interest (reframe tough kids)
2. Be transparent (genuine) and non-threatening
3. Use counter-conditioning mojo (stimuli)
4. Offer collaboration

Time for Techniques

- The principles are woven into the techniques
- The WHOLE point of using techniques is to:
 - Build relationship (and teach)
- The WHOLE point of building relationship is to:
 - Have a positive influence (and teach)

The Top Techniques

- And now . . .
- We review many techniques based on empirical research and clinical wisdom
- Each technique has a purpose and likely outcome

Engagement Techs [see handout supplement]

1. **Acknowledging Reality** [AKA: Congruence or Transparency = ES = .43; Kolden et al, 2011]
2. **Sharing Referral Information**

Principle: Students need to know what you know about them

Clinician Behavioral Examples:

- Share referral information
- Educate referral sources
- Describe other realities?

Clip: Claire

- **0:28 – 8:00**
- Introducing confidentiality, while acknowledging parental rights
- Wishes and goals
- Watch for:
 - Me being explicit about confidentiality
 - What Claire's wishes might mean

The Top Techniques

3. The Authentic Purpose Statement

Principle: Students need to hear your reason for being in the room. Make this statement brief and clear; tweak for each client (Person-centered; congruence)

Clinician Behavioral Examples:

- "My goals are your goals. . ." from Meagan video
- "I'd love to. . ." from TJ video
- "I want to help you get along with your parents"
- Think about and practice what YOU want to say

The Top Techniques

4. Wishes and Goals

Principle: Collaborative goal-setting has strong empirical support. But goal-setting with students can be tricky. Wishes and goals can help you launch an individualized and collaborative goal-setting process.

Clinician Behavioral Examples:

- Three wishes
- Goal-setting (and limiting) with parents/caregivers
- SFBT opening: If we have a great session . . .
- Miracle question

The Top Techniques

5. The Affect Bridge and Early Memories

Principle: You can follow affect like a river to the past to learn more about emotional triggers (Adlerian; Hypnoanalytic, Watkins, 1971; CBT application)

Clinician Behavioral Examples:

- Earliest recollections
- Take me to a memory of when you felt anger like that
- Hypnotic induction or not

Clip: Meagan

- She says she's got a terrible temper
- Watch for:
 - Your reaction to her as a client
 - Authentic purpose statement
 - Specific opening techniques
 - The affect bridge and emotional discussion

3 Minute Reflection

- Turn to your neighbor and briefly discuss:
 - What you saw/heard
 - What you liked/disliked
 - Your reactions to Megan

The Top Techniques

6. Reflection of Emotions and Emotional Education

Principle: Emotional states and reactions are complex – students need help understanding their emotions

Clinician Behavioral Examples:

- Reflection of feeling: "You felt embarrassed, then mad, then embarrassed again"
- Interpretive reflection of feeling: "You looked sad when you said that"
- Feeling validation: "That's a perfectly natural emotion"

Engagement Techniques

7. Radical Acceptance as Attitude (from DBT)

"I completely accept you as you are and am fully committed to helping you change for the better"

- We use this attitude especially when young people or parents say something extreme

Practicing Radical Acceptance

- Let's practice the skill of radical acceptance – while keeping concession, empathy, and validation in mind. Here's a parent example:
- **Example:** "I don't need no stupid-ass shrink telling me how to live my life. I can take care of myself. This counseling shit is worthless. It's for pansy-ass wimps like you who need to sit around and talk rather than doing any real work."

Practicing Radical Acceptance

- **Possible RA Response:** "Wow. Thanks for being so honest about what you're thinking. Lots of people really hate counseling but they just sit here and pretend to cooperate. So I really appreciate you telling me exactly what you're thinking."
- You must believe in what you're saying.

Practicing Radical Acceptance

- Step One: Thank you or "I appreciate"
- Option One: Validate/universalize
- Option Two: Show empathy
- Option Three: Concede to the underlying truth of the message (or identify a common underlying goal)

Practicing Radical Acceptance

- Group participation
- Student Example: "I'm not talking to you and you can't make me"
- Thank you . . . concede, validate, universalize

Radical Acceptance – Again😊

- **Dealing with Initial Provocations:**
Adolescents are known for pushing emotional buttons. For example:
Counselor: Welcome to counseling. I hope we can work together in ways you find helpful.
Client: You talk just like a shrink. I punched my last counselor (client glares and awaits a response). (From Sommers-Flanagan and Bequette, 2013)

Radical Acceptance as Skill

Dealing with Initial Provocations:

- **Sample Response:** "Thanks for telling me that. I would never want to be the sort of counselor who would say something that makes you want to punch me. How about if I ever do say anything that makes you mad, you tell me, and then I'll try my best not to do it again?"

Radical Acceptance: Table Practice

Example: 14 year-old speaking to a School Psychologist

- "I just don't think Fags have a right to even be on the planet."
- Two Minute Discussion (what can you say back in this situation that is respectful and accepting?)

The Top Techniques

8. Coping with Countertransference
9. Exploring Attributions and Core Beliefs and Constructing Alternative, Strength-Based Theories

Principle: Instead of immediately reacting to client issues with our own issues, we should help adolescents explore their own personal theories and then move toward more constructive beliefs and theories about themselves.

Clip: Larry

- He wants to understand why his mother abandoned him [Note: This clip is not from the beginning of the session]
- Watch for
 - Your countertransference impulses
 - How Rita avoids acting on her impulses
 - Rita's exploration and questioning of Lee's internal beliefs or narrative

3 Minute Reflection

- Turn to your neighbor and briefly discuss:
 - What you saw/heard
 - What you liked/disliked
 - Your reactions to Lee

The Top Techniques

10. What's Good About You?

Principle: Reflecting on strengths, although difficult, can be emotionally soothing and reduce attachment anxiety—it also provides informal assessment data

Choices – Watch video example or practice with each other?

Clip: Kristen

- Refers to self as a “Bitch”
- Reports self-esteem and mood management problems
- Watch for:
 - Content and process
 - Her reaction to positive feedback

Group Reflection

- Did you notice?
 - Kristen’s main theme or content?
 - What MI or SFBT rules John broke?
 - Asking permission? [Which principle?]
 - The comment on the smile? [Which principle?]
 - How and why you might use that with your students?

The Top Techniques

11. Asset Flooding

Principle: Addressing attachment insecurity requires support, not criticism; criticism can cause dysregulation (Narrative/SFBT; Adlerian; Attachment, Hughes, 2006; CBT application)

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- Use several psychologists/counselors/educators
- Check in and debrief: “How does it feel to focus on your strengths?”
- Get to work when you can!

The Top Techniques

12. Generating Behavioral Alternatives

Principle: Problem-solving can help adolescents reduce their cognitive rigidity and emotional agitation while increasing mental flexibility (Nezu, Nezu, & D’Zurilla, 2013). Generating behavioral alternatives is the brainstorming stage of problem-solving.

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- Okay. Let’s just make a list of your options.

Clip: Pete

- Pete is angry at a boy who tried to rape his girlfriend
- Watch for:
 - How brainstorming proceeds
 - Pete’s affective changes
 - John’s risky suggestion

3 Minute Reflection

- Turn to your neighbor and briefly discuss:
 - Which of the four principles you saw/heard
 - John staying neutral (or trying to)
 - Pete’s emotional reactions
 - Pete’s reaction to hearing the list
 - “That’s a good one”

The Top Techniques

13. Using Riddles and Games

Principle: Play and playful interaction is a part of many different evidence-based treatments (see Drewes, 2009). We need to engage young people when making therapeutic points

- Volunteer demonstrations – Hand-pushing; Tic Tac Toe; soda bottles; riddles; dollar

The Techniques

14. Food and Mood

Principle: Look around the room. Use COUNTERCONDITIONING (Jones, 1924)! Never do counseling with hungry children

- Case example
- Healthy snacks
- Hot drinks
- Sharing
- What do you use?

The Top Techniques

15. Addressing Culture

16. Noticing Process and Making Corrections (Rupture and Repair)

Principles: We can ask culturally diverse students about their experiences – but not completely rely on them for cultural information.

We need to acknowledge and take back our inaccurate reflections

Clip: Michael

- Referred for PTSD symptoms and gang affiliation behavior
- Watch for:
 - Your reaction/response to Michael
 - Michael's response to paraphrases
 - Your reaction to counselor spontaneity and self-disclosure

Michael – Group Discussion

- I'm not getting it
- Making a recipe??
- Incorrect gang affiliation
- **How and when do we bring up cultural differences?**
- What do you think of the spontaneous disclosure?
- Sometimes we can push our clients too hard to accept our reality (RAD example)

The Top Techniques

17. Be Playful and Spontaneous

Principle: Spontaneity is a part of genuineness/congruence . . . but, paradoxically, you should plan for it (Friedberg, Tabbarah, & Poggesi, 2013).

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- Do you know what I like about anger?
- I'm talking too much. I'm going to be quiet and listen to you more

The Top Techniques

18. Four Forms of Relaxation

Principle: Relaxation is evidence-based, but it can be tough selling it to adolescents (Long, 1992). Let's call it self-control (Gaines & Barry, 2008).

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- Demonstrations
- Let's talk about how Steph Curry relaxes

The Top Techniques

19. Cognitive Storytelling

Principle: Students need a rationale to understand cognitive therapy; stories are memorable and can help (Friedberg & Wilt, 2010).

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- My Stories – Gardner's Mutual Storytelling
- Your Stories
- Their Stories

The Top Techniques

20. Empowered Storytelling

- **Principle:** Students need to tell their stories. Expressive methods helps them gain distance (e.g., narrative externalization), deconstruct the problem, and re-construct more adaptive meaning.

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- How about we develop two stories about this?
- Case example

The Case of Latisha

- Slide show
- As we read Latisha's stories together, consider the creative process and what the stories mean to her.

The Top Techniques

21. Early Interpretations

Principle: If it's clear we like and respect our clients and are committed to their development, we can take risks and offer early surface interpretations to work on important issues more quickly (Adlerian)

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- You might have some perfectionistic thoughts
- Sometimes you think like you're depressed

Clip: Sean

- Reported self as "angry all the time."
- Watch for:
 - Early interpretation
 - What are the pros and cons of the early interpretation?
 - What's the BIG issue John misses and WHY?

The Top Techniques

22. The Satanic Golden Rule

Principle: Feindler (1986) developed the fool in the ring technique. The concept of the Satanic Golden Rule can help students see that it's better to lead than being controlled by others

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- I heard you can be nasty to adults, but you're being nice to me. Why's that?
- Demonstration

Suicide Interventions

23. Alternatives to Suicide

24. Neodissociation

25. Safety Planning

Principle: AtS is an Edwin Sheidman technique. It reduces mental constriction and stimulates problem-solving. We also should collaborate (especially with the client's healthy ego state) on exploring options to self-destructive behavior

Free Suicide Resources: johnsommersflanagan.com

Bonus Technique

26. Three-step emotional change trick

Principle: It's better for students to learn to be the captain of their own emotional ship.

Clinician Behavioral Examples

- Have you ever been in a bad mood?

Termination

Termination with students may be sudden, unpredictable, or repeated.

Termination Tasks

- Identify goals
- Reflect on progress
- Reminisce as appropriate
- Ask for feedback
- Write a note – give a final consolidation gift?
- Hope for the future
- Adjust the door

Clip: Claire and Closing

- 0:22-2:40: Be sure to ask what your student will remember or wants to remember
- You can offer homework, but not call it homework

Review: Principles and Techniques

- What are the four principles?
- What techniques do you want to remember and try out?

Conclusions

1. Questions
 2. The WHOLE purpose of techniques
 3. Engage and have interest
 4. Closing comments
- For more information:
johnsommersflanagan.com