

Problem-Solving Discourse

Assisting Angry Youth to Become Better Problem-Solvers

Adapted from:

Meichenbaum, D. (2001). *Treatment of Individuals with Anger Control Problems and Aggressive Behaviors: A Clinical Handbook*. Clearwater, FL: Institute Press

And...

TeachSafeSchools.org

<http://www.teachsafeschools.org/>

A Website of the **Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment** located at <http://www.melissainstitute.org>

How Educators Can Help Older Distressed and Angry Students Become Better Problem-Solvers

School pupil services personnel are often confronted with students who are angry and markedly distressed. How can school staff help “defuse” the students’ anger and help the students transform their distress into a “problem-to-be-solved.” The following “Phase-oriented Approach” models what school staff might say to distressed and angry students in order to help. The three phases include:

PHASE I - PREPARATION

The objectives of this initial phase are to 1) establish a collaborative alliance or mentorship with the student(s) and 2) help them “defuse” their emotions and (3) obtain a time-line of what happened, including the student’s feelings and thoughts that preceded, accompanied and followed the incident. This phase lays the groundwork for the Skills Training and Implementation Phases.

PHASE II - PROBLEM-SOLVING PHASE

The objective of this Phase is to help students consider and develop more prosocial alternatives and assume more responsibility for their behavior.

PHASE III - IMPLEMENTATION

The objective of this Phase is to help students practice, master and apply (transfer) what they are learning to their everyday experiences.

How can school staff reclaim their objectives by conducting these three phases? The following guidelines offer examples of the Problem-Solving (Social) Discourse. The variety of suggested questions and statements should not be memorized, but rather school personnel should familiarize themselves with this form of discussing students’ distress and then experiment in its application.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING PROBLEM-SOLVING DISCOURSE (PSD)**DO'S**

Look for “right” time and place to conduct PSD.

Remove the youth from the group to do PSD.

Listen attentively (Use nonverbal signs to convey interest).

Follow the youth’s lead (Look for “openings” and use the youth’s words – reflect).

Be brief. Use simple sentences and “What” and “How” Questions. (Use discovery learning and model a style of thinking.)

Give choices.

Be supportive, collaborative and convey hope.

Highlight “strengths” and coping efforts.

Keep trying. (If one strategy doesn’t work, try another.)

Conduct PSD on multiple occasions.

DON'TS

Insist that the youth talk NOW.

Embarrass and shame the youth in front of others.

Convey disinterest and a sense of being in a hurry.

Put words in the youth’s mouth. Tell youth what to do. (Be a “Surrogate Frontal Lobe”).

Lecture. Be judgmental. Use “should” and “should have” statements.

Engage in “power” struggles. Force your explanations and impose your solutions.

Use put downs, threats and directives.

Be negative, critical.

Give up. Blame the youth.

Try and do too much at one time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Phase I – PREPARATION PHASE

Page 5

Preparing the Youth to Talk

Addressing the Youth Who Remains Silent

Focusing On the Presenting Incident (Explore "What, Where, When, Who Present" and Obtain A TimeLine)

Demonstrating Empathy

Reviewing the "Story"

Nurturing Collaboration

Phase II – PROBLEM-SOLVING PHASE

Page 13

Helping the Youth to Take the Perspective of Others

Generating Causal Explanations

Generating Alternative Solutions

Noticing Warning Signs

Fostering Responsibility ("Ownership")

Phase III – IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Page 20

Conveying a "Challenge" and Bolstering Confidence

Generating an Action Plan

Anticipating Consequences

Anticipating Possible Barriers to Change

Reinforcing Effort

Putting the Youth in a Consultative Role (Share, Teach, and Take Credit for Changes)

Phase I**PREPARATION PHASE**

The goals of the PREPARATION PHASE are to:

- i. in a supportive way, acknowledge, affirm and validate feelings that are appropriate under the circumstances.
 - ii. help de-escalate (“drain off”) intense feelings.
 - iii. engage the youth in problem-solving discourse.
 - iv. understand the youth’s perspective by developing a timeline.
 - v. nurture a collaborative and positive working relationship.
- PREPARING THE YOUTH TO TALK
 - ADDRESSING THE YOUTH WHO REMAINS SILENT
 - FOCUSING ON THE PRESENTING INCIDENT (EXPLORE “WHAT, WHERE WHEN, WHO PRESENT” – OBTAIN A TIMELINE)
 - DEMONSTRATING EMPATHY
 - REVIEWING THE “STORY”
 - NURTURING COLLABORATION

PREPARING THE YOUTH TO TALK

(Diffuse the situation. De-escalate intense feelings. Support the youth and give choices.)

I can see that you are very angry. Take some time to calm yourself down so we can talk about what happened.

Your actions (how you look) are telling me that something is bothering you. Do you want to talk about it?

It often helps if you can talk about what you are feeling.

I hear you are really angry. I’m here to understand what happened and see if I can be of help.

Why don't you take a moment and then we can try to work it out together.

I want to understand what happened so we can work on it together.

It is helpful to think about what happened before you talk.

Let's talk about what happened. I would like to hear more about ...

This situation is not going to go away, so let's talk about what happened and what you can do about it.

I know it is difficult to talk about what happened, but I need to hear what happened from your viewpoint.

It sounds like something has upset you; can we talk about it?

We wouldn't be here if something didn't happen. Let's talk.

Do you want to talk about it now or later?

ADDRESSING THE YOUTH WHO REMAINS SILENT

(Acknowledge feelings. Convey empathy and a desire to explore the youth's point of view.)

I have the feeling that our talking about what happened is upsetting you. It is okay for you to tell me that you don't want to talk. Maybe you can tell me the reasons you don't want to talk.

Some students don't talk because they don't trust teachers (adults) and they don't expect them to understand or help.

I see it is difficult to continue. I wonder if your silence is connected to something I said or did?

If this isn't a good time to talk, we can find a time later when we can talk?

Sometimes being silent provides an opportunity to think quietly to oneself about what happened and what can be done to improve things.

I need to be able to understand what has been happening in your class (residence, home). What has been going on?

It sounds like this is an ongoing problem, but let's discuss what happened today.

This sounds like a serious situation. It calls for some serious thinking about what to do.

I can see that you are figuring out how to handle things. Let me know if at any time I can be of help.

I can see how upset you are, but your behavior doesn't tell me what is making you so upset.

When someone is upset, it is often difficult to remember what happened, but let's give it a try. Okay?

I can tell you're almost ready to work on this. We can go at your pace.

FOCUSING ON THE PRESENTING INCIDENT

(Explore "what, where, when, who present" and obtain a timeline or "mental videotape" of the event)

(Ascertain the location of the anger provoking event, characteristics of the provoking person, details of any conversation that occurred, what happened, in terms of duration, intensity, frequency, what thoughts and feelings preceded, accompanied and followed anger-aggression, what, if anything, he did to control or manage his anger, what was the outcome for self and others. Begin at the point when the stressful event occurred and move forward in time. Conduct a behavioral chain analysis that connects feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Underscore the choices the individual made and options for the future.)

Let's talk about what happened step-by-step. Tell me what happened. What were you doing?

What was the first thing that happened? Can you remember how the problem got started?

Tell me when the trouble began.

How long did it go on?

What happened before that?

What happened after that?

And then what happened?

Who was there? Who else was there? Were others involved?

Where did this happen?

When did this happen?

When you did ... what happened then?

Where were you when he said (did) that?

What was going on?

Did this happen before or after you ...?

Tell me what you said, and how you said it.

So what did you do then?

Then what happened to make her say (do) that?

What did he do/say?

Who made the first move?

What did you do/say?

What did he do after you did/said that?

How did you feel when that happened to you?

How did that make you feel?

What went through your mind at that point?

You must have had some thoughts about that. What were you saying to yourself at that point? Were there any self-statements that led you to choose X?

What were they?

What thoughts go through your head when he says/does ...?

Are you saying you thought ...?

How did you feel when that happened to you?

How did you show that feeling in your behavior?

On a scale from 1 to 10, how (hard did you hit, .. loud did you yell, .. etc.)?

How did others (offer names) react? ... Then what happened?

How often does this happen? (Look for patterns.)

Do you have any ideas about what set you off in these situations?

What do these situations mean to you?

Did your reactions (feelings, thoughts) help manage the problem or did they make things worse? What did you (feel, think, do)? Did this increase your anger?

How did you come to choose (decide) to do ...?

What happened to you as a result of your choosing to do ...? What happened after you made the choice to ...?

Help me understand what you mean when you say ...

Think about what you told me a few minutes ago. Where does this fit in?

Let's review. Let's see if we can get the facts of what happened organized. First, everyone was supposed to ..., then ... Let's see if we can paint a picture of what happened.

Is that an accurate description of what happened?

What were you told to do? What was the rule you were supposed to follow and then what happened?

I hear that you think it wasn't fair so you ... Is that correct?

Now that you have a clearer picture of what happened between you and X, how do you feel about it?

What do you think should happen next?

As best as you can describe, what went wrong?

DEMONSTRATING EMPATHY

(Acknowledge and validate feelings that were appropriate under the circumstances and consider the impact of what "lingers.")

You seem pretty upset. When he did X that must have made you feel even more upset.

I can see how upset you are. Why don't we talk about it and see if we can work it out.

I can see you are angry. Can you solve the problem in a way that turns out to be best for both of you?

How tough was it?

How did that make you feel?

On a scale from 1 to 10, how angry .. sad .. embarrassed .. afraid etc. were you?

I can understand why you would feel ...

What I see is someone who is really upset. If we talk about it, it will help you feel better.

When you do X, it tells me you feel upset about Y. There is a way to make it better.

This just hasn't been a good day, has it? But it doesn't have to keep on being that way.

What is most important in our talking is you. What happens to you is most important and that will depend on what you do. I can see how upset you are, but I want you to know there are ways to solve this problem.

I am sorry you got involved with X, just when you were learning to behave differently (see things differently). Your new behavior was just beginning to pay off for you.

You lost control, when everything ...

It seems like ... (you are frustrated, annoyed, angry).

It sounds like ... (it made you angry when they didn't ...).

What did you do when you were feeling .. (so upset)?

What did you do with the feeling of ... ?

How did you show your feelings?

Do you think you were ...

Was he the great big guy who ...?

Some people can really get under the skin of someone else.

When friends (family members) do X, it is natural to want to get back at them (not back down, run away).

When you do something for someone and they don't reciprocate, you feel betrayed. Understandably that makes you angry.

Some problems seem so big that it seems as if no one can do anything about them.

Sometimes things seem terrible, but there are always ways to make them better.

You said that you were "dumb" (an idiot, had no hope), but what I hear between the lines is a message that maybe with some help things could get better.

When he said X and you got mad and went on a rampage, it was like a little kid in you took over.

It's okay to feel like this. It will get better.

Other students who have had this same thing happen to them have often had the same feelings.

Sometimes when people feel like X, they think ... (nothing good can ever happen; they might as well give up). But there is a way to work it out.

Let me see if I understand. You did X because you wanted to ... because in your mind you were trying to Is that what you are saying?

It must have been difficult to do X when you were worrying about ...

Are you feeling disappointed about ... ?

It is often hard to hear new things about yourself when you are feeling so badly.

REVIEWING THE "STORY"

(Check out your understanding of the "story." Summarize the youth's view of the situation. In retelling, highlight "strengths" and coping skills. Ask clarifying questions.)

Let me see if I got this right (if I understand this correctly).

Let me see if I understand. From your point of view you were trying to ... and then he reacted by ...

Correct me if I am wrong, but it sounds like ...

It sounds like you think ...

So, what I hear you saying is ... Have I retold your story correctly?

So, in other words ...

It seems that ...

Is that a fair description (interpretation) of what happened?

This is what I hear you saying. Correct me if I missed anything.

You have described the situation clearly. Let's review what you have said.

Could you tell me again about the part that X played? I'm not sure I fully understand what happened. Please tell me once again so I don't miss anything.

Let me summarize what I have heard you say and you can correct anything I didn't get right.

Let me say it back to make sure I understand and see if that is the way you remember it.

You were upset and you made a decisions to ... Is that correct?

NURTURING COLLABORATION

(Help youth begin to see a way out. Nurture hopefulness.)

We are going to work this out together.

Every problem has a solution waiting to be found.

Let's see if we can make sense of what happened to you.

It is important for me to understand why you are so mad (angry, frustrated, sad).

This is a difficult situation, but we can work it out together.

This has not been a good day for you, but we know what's wrong so we can do something about it.

We know what the problem is, but we have to figure out what we can do about it.

When we talk together like this, we can work out ways to handle the problem.

It sounds to me that you have a good understanding about yourself and what gets you into trouble. It also sounds to me that you were trying to make X mad (get him into trouble, get back at him). Am I correct? If you do that, what happens? Is that what you want to have happen? What can you do about it? I am ready to help.

I am pleased that you felt comfortable (safe enough, had the courage) to tell me (show me) how you felt about this problem. Sharing that is an important first step in our working together.

Phase II**PROBLEM-SOLVING PHASE**

The goals of the PROBLEM-SOLVING PHASE are to:

1. help the youth perceive the events from others' point of view and recognize how he contributed, perhaps inadvertently, unwittingly, and unknowingly to the problem (behavior).
 2. recognize a possible behavioral pattern, if such behaviors have happened in the past.
 3. engage the youth in the problem-solving steps.
 4. foster a sense of responsibility.
- HELPING THE YOUTH TAKE THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS
 - GENERATING CAUSAL EXPLANATIONS
 - GENERATING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS
 - NOTICING WARNING SIGNS
 - FOSTERING RESPONSIBILITY ("OWNERSHIP")

HELPING THE YOUTH TAKE THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS

What do you think prompted him to say (or do) X?

Do you suppose that she ...

Do you think she was ...

Did she think you were ...

So what do you think he meant when he said ...

Do you think he knew about ... ? If he didn't know what was really bothering you then what does that mean? (Does that help explain his behavior?)

How do you think X (teacher, friends, parents) would describe what happened?
Different people have different views of the same event. How does your account fit with that?

Could she be thinking that you were ...?

Is there a rule about this? What is the rule? So when you didn't do that (follow the rule), what did you think she would do? What were her options?
Why do you think he was calling you ... ?

What sort of reaction would you have (how would you respond), if someone did that to you?

Do you think it could be possible that ... ?

So, it wasn't just you that she was upset with?

Can you think of a time when someone got angry with you? How did you feel when you were treated that way? Did you want to be his friend? Did you want to cooperate with him? How do you think people respond to you when you behave in that way?

If X did not stop you when you were really angry, what might have happened? So by stopping you, she protected you from doing something that would have caused you even more problems. Sometimes teachers have to control you until you can control yourself.

How do you think she feels about what happened?

Who decides what consequences will happen? What options did he/she have?

GENERATING CAUSAL EXPLANATIONS

(Help the youth appreciate that behavior has multiple causes)

Do you think what you said (or did) had anything to do with the way he responded?

Why do you think he got so mad about that?

Are you sure that X wanted to ... ?

Are there any other possible explanations? Are there any other ways of looking at it?

Could there have been something that set her off?

But what do you think made it all fall apart today?

If he calls you a name and gets you into trouble, then who is really in charge? It sounds like he really knows how to get to you. Do you think you were set up by him?

It seems that sometimes your so-called buddies set you up. They are puppeteers and you are the puppet. (They are fishing and you take the bait. They throw the switch and you light up.)

Is a friend someone who helps you get out of trouble or someone who gets you into trouble?

Do you think they are laughing with you or laughing at you?

It sounds like you were trying to teach him a lesson (get back at him), hoping he would react to you. But look at what really happened.

I think what we are talking about is at the heart of the problem. Do you agree?

What was your goal in the situation? What did you want to have happen? How did your getting angry (losing control) help you get what you wanted?

Did your anger help you achieve your goal? Is your anger getting you all you want?

I can understand why you became angry and why it was so important to you at that time. I wonder if there are other things happening to you that could add to your anger. Sometimes what happens outside of school, like at home, can affect how you react in school.

Sometimes people become angry because they are feeling afraid or sad or humiliated.

For example, ... Has anything like that ever happened to you?

Sometimes people become angry because they have had bad things happened to them in the past. They have been hurt and no one listened (understood), so they get angry. Has anything like that happened to you?

It sounds like you have something else on your mind today that makes school seem pretty unimportant. What's bothering you?

Has something like this happened in the past? How is this like what happened in the past? What is common about these situations?

Is fairness (following rules, accepting feedback, receiving criticism, getting respect) an issue for you? In what ways?

It sounds like the problem that got you sent here isn't the whole story. What else is bothering you?

Who are you really mad at?

What did you do, if anything, to make the situation worse? What do you need to do to make it better?

What is really important to you in all of this? What are the main issues you are struggling with?

We have talked a lot. Some of this is really important. Let's list the most important points.

What I hear in all of this is ... Correct me if I am wrong.

It sounds like you have been carrying around a lot of feelings like ...

Think about what you just said. What is the major issue?

It sounds like you have two different things to handle here. They are ... and ... Am I correct?

I'm glad you value fairness. Fairness means going by the rules. That sounds like a guideline to live by.

You are clearly a person who values your reputation. And when you feel you have been dishonored ("dissed") you get angry. Is that the way you see it?

So talking about things can help. So does understanding what is really behind what you did.

GENERATING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

(Help the youth identify as many solutions as possible. Nurture a GOAL, PLAN, DO, CHECK approach)

What are all the things you can do when/in ... ?

It sounds like there are a lot of ways to go about solving this problem. Let's figure out how many different ways you can think of to solve this problem (handle this situation).

So getting angry (hitting others) is one way to try and solve a problem. What other ways are there to try to solve the problem?

What choices did you have?

How did what you said to yourself influence the choices you made?

What happened after you made that choice?

What did others (be specific) do?

Can your self-statements help you make choices that lead to good consequences?

What else could you have done?

What would happen if ... ?

That's one way, can you think of another way?

Sure, throwing an object (punching, cursing, throwing a temper tantrum) is one way to say you don't want ..., but are there any better ways to get your message across?

Can you think of a different way so X wouldn't happen?

If you choose to do X, what do you think will happen? What do you think will happen next?

Sometimes just plain calm talk can communicate ideas.

Understanding one's problem is the first step in developing a solution. What could be your next step?

This situation is beginning to make sense. When a person understands a problem, it is easier to solve it.

I believe that in your own way you were trying to tell (say, show) X. Is there another way you could have done that? What else could you have done?

Maybe there is a way for you to say the same thing without getting into trouble (without hurting others or hurting yourself).

What could you say (do) differently?

What is your goal in the situation? What are the different ways to achieve your goal?

Is there anything else you could have done to handle the situation (what could you have done instead of ...)?

How can you find out?

What advice would you have for a good friend who has this same problem?

That sounds like a solution (strategy) worth trying.

What is a general rule that would help you with ... ?

It sounds like you have a new plan for this situation.
Do you think it would help if ... ?

That is one solution to keep in mind. How will you remind yourself to do X?

How can you remember to use what we talked about today out there on the playground?

Remember, some of the solutions you have chosen have "backfired" in the past. What will you have to be on the lookout for so this solution does not backfire? What will you have to tell yourself to get through that situation?

It seems clear that you have considered a number of choices. Which one do you think will work out the best for you?

It sounds like you have thought through this carefully. Let's review your options and how they will work.

What is your first step? Then what?

NOTICING WARNING SIGNS

(Help the youth become aware of both internal and external – interpersonal – cues or warning signs. Help the youth identify body signs, feelings and thoughts that he/she is “too hot” to act.)

When you are getting angry where do you feel it in your body?

How can you (others) tell when you are first getting upset?

Do you know when you are getting out of control or does it just happen?

Are you telling me that you go from being angry to going suddenly out of control?

Can you remember anything you said or did between the time you got mad and the time you lost control (had to be restrained)?

Is there any way you can learn to "notice," "catch," "interrupt," "stop yourself early on?" (Use only one of these verbs at the time.)

So when you feel upset, what is the first thing to do? Then what?

What would be a warning sign that this is a high risk situation?

What would be a warning sign that you are getting angry?

Highlight that getting angry and aggressive usually involves the help of others. Who is the “accomplice?” What should you watch out for (warning signs) in others?

What would be a warning sign that X is getting angry? When you notice that he is getting angry, what do you usually do at that point? Do you really want to spend time with people who are willing to put you at risk (in danger, get you into trouble)? Can you tell ahead of time that this might occur? How?

What would be a warning sign that you have been set up .. taking the bait .. getting caught in a trap ... sucked in? (Choose one)

I have a thought I want to share, if that is okay. Do you think it is possible that X gets you to act out and gets you into trouble?

It sounds like you're a pretty good detective. You can pick up on subtle cues and read the situation ahead of time. You are “street smart.”

What are you saying to yourself at that time?

Let's write down any ‘hot talk’ you think or say to yourself in that situation. How do these “hot thoughts” cause you to feel/ behave?

FOSTERING RESPONSIBILITY ("OWNERSHIP")

You have given a very detailed and thoughtful description of your problem and some of the possible solutions you can follow.

It sounds like you convinced yourself to ...

Let's review your choices. Of these options, which one do you think you will choose first?

Do you want me to speak to her on your behalf or do you want to do it on your own?

You are right! You now understand that you are responsible for keeping out of trouble.

You have made good choices in the past. How have you gone about that? What are your choices now?

Of all the things you could have done, how did you choose that way of responding?

Are there less angry ways to achieve your goals and still feel okay?

This shows us that you are beginning to take on more and more responsibility. Does that mean you want to ...?

It is too bad that you have given up your freedom. If someone else can make a few gestures (or say something) and you go off and lose control, then do you give your control to them?

Being free is about being in control of one's own mind, reactions, feelings and not putting yourself under the control of someone else.

I want to see if you can be your own person with your own thoughts. Show yourself that you are in charge by not blaming your actions on someone else.

It sounds like you can trick yourself into thinking that it is okay to hurt someone. When did you first have the idea that it was okay to ...? Do you want to keep on tricking yourself or do you want to take charge and begin to ...?

Has anything like this happened before? In what ways are they alike? Is there a pattern here that we can learn from?

How did you get so good at (intimidating, scaring others, upsetting adults, avoiding ...)?

If you had to teach someone to do this, how would you go about it?

What do they have to watch out for? What if they did not want to get into trouble, what advice would you have for them?

Phase III**IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**

The goals of the IMPLEMENTATION PHASE are to:

1. “challenge” the youth to use problem-solving strategies; generate a step-by-step action plan that includes likely consequences and possible barriers and role play (rehearse) new skills;
2. reinforce effort;
3. ask the youth to describe/explain what he will do and why (put individual in a “consultative” role) and acknowledge what he has learned today;
4. ensure that the youth sees the connections between his/her efforts and the resultant consequences and “takes credit” for changes and plans for ways to address any lapses;
5. prepare the youth to rejoin ongoing activities.

CONVEYING A “CHALLENGE” AND BOLSTERING CONFIDENCE
 GENERATING AN ACTION PLAN
 ANTICIPATING CONSEQUENCES
 ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO CHANGE
 REINFORCING EFFORT
 PUTTING THE YOUTH IN A “CONSULTATIVE” ROLE
 (SHARE, TEACH, AND TAKE CREDIT FOR CHANGES)

CONVEYING A "CHALLENGE" AND BOLSTERING CONFIDENCE

(Convey the sense that it will be hard to make changes and that no one expects him/her to be “perfect.”)

It won't be easy to do what we have been talking about.

It won't be easy to do "X," especially when "Y" won't be interested (or when "Y" continues to tease you).

Maybe it is too early to ask you to try doing ...

You have a difficult situation, but it sounds like you have the right idea (that you are on the right track).

This is going to take a lot of courage on your part. How will you begin?

When he does X, that will give you an opportunity for you to practice Y.

That sounds like it might work. What do you think?

This is your chance to show the others what you have learned.

You know what to expect when you go back into the class. It is going to be tough. How will you be able to handle that? What will you be on the lookout for?

Like you said, this won't be easy.

Sometimes, it is hard for people to ...

It will be interesting to see how you choose from your many options. I am interested in seeing what will work for you.

This has been a tough talk, but it's going to pay off for you.

I know it will be tough to handle that, but I have confidence that you can spot (notice) when trouble is coming; you can catch yourself; you can notice when you are getting worked up; you can use your game plan and interrupt the cycle.

You can take charge of your life so no one can get you into trouble, if you don't want them to.

Do you think you can do this next time? All I can ask is that you give it a try.

Do you think you can try this out?

I have seen you handle problems like this before and you did them well. Is there anything you did in handling those problems that you can use here?

Remember how calm you were when you told me about how you handled (anticipated) X?

Do you think you can handle this one the same way?

Successfully reaching your goal will take time. It won't be easy or come quickly.

It won't be easy to not allow them to get you into trouble, but I believe you can do it.

I believe you are mature enough to face this and stay out of trouble.

Do you think you can ignore such set-ups? It won't be easy. Are you saying that you think you could avoid falling into the "trap"... "taking the bait?"

How confident are you (on a 0% to 100% scale) that you can do X?

If you need help, I'll be right beside you. (You can check in with me.)

I am available to talk to you whenever you need me.

We will talk again.

GENERATING AN ACTION PLAN

(Help the youth select a solution to try and see that he has opportunities to try out new ways of behaving.)

That sounds like a good idea that might work.

You have a good idea. What will you say to him (do) when you leave here?

What do you think you can do to calm down? Do you think you can X?

Is it difficult to just let your anger go and let bygones be bygones?

Do you think about taking a time out ... about compromising .. about negotiating?

What can you do to prevent yourself from becoming angry? (from getting into trouble)?

What has worked for you in the past?

Can you remember a time when you were really angry and you did not take it out on someone? How did you feel about that?

What advice would you have for a friend who has this same problem so he/she can handle the situation better?

How will you remember (remind yourself) to ... ?

What will you have to watch out for?

What will you have to tell yourself in order to ... ?

What will happen when you go home? How can you prepare for that?

When you go back in, what do you think she will say? What will you say if they ask you what we talked about?

Is there anything else you could say that might change her mind (change her behavior)?

If you handled it that way, what would he do/say?

Now tell me one more time; how you are going to handle (anticipate) any trouble?

It is clear that you have a good game plan. When you go back in the classroom, she will be expecting an apology. What will you say to her?

To be prepared is the best advice. Let's practice this. Imagine that I am "X," what would you say? (Use behavioral rehearsal.) Now that we practiced it, do you think you can try it on your own?

Let's practice together some of the other skills you have learned such as planned ignoring, use of "I" messages, time out procedures, relaxation exercises, etc.

So if X occurs, then you will be able to Y.

So whenever you notice, you will be prepared to do X.

Who can you talk to when you have problems with ... ?

What do you think X will do when you see him next time? How will you deal with that? That will not be easy to do. I guess you have a choice.

Have you gone through your "conflict cycle" before? What happened? What are the different ways you can break this cycle?

It is easier to learn coping skills than to change your attitude. Let's discuss this.

It sounds to me that you have the right idea, but the wrong behavior.

Let's practice what you can do to handle the situation. (Role play the new skills.)

This afternoon you will have a chance to practice what we worked on this morning. (Prepare the youth to join ongoing activity and plan to use new skills.)

ANTICIPATING CONSEQUENCES

If you do ..., then what do you think is likely to occur?

If you make the changes you plan, what do you think the consequences will be?

If you can do X, what do you think people will say (do)?

When you start to do X, who do you think will first notice the changes? What will they see and hear?

When you start to use your coping skills, how will that make you feel?

Do you know the penalty for not X?

What happens as a result of your getting angry in that way?

How do you think things would turn out if you did X instead of Y?

If this trouble starts again when you go back to your classroom, remember that you decided to...

The next time he starts to X, what are you going to do differently so you won't get into trouble (so you can stay in charge of yourself, be in control, not allow someone else to get you into trouble, disappoint them so they can't set you up)?

Let's write out the decisions you can make and the list of benefits you will receive.

How might you avoid this type of conflict in the future? If you did that, what would be some of the consequences?

ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO CHANGE

What will you do if ...?

What if he doesn't listen ...?

What if she tells you ..?.

What will be different this time as compared to times in the past when you had to deal with ... ?

Do you think they will (trust you, give you another chance)?

It will be hard to say "no" to a friend when he tries to X. What will you do differently this time?

The next time they tell you to do Y, you may feel just as angry. What will happen then?

Do you think that you can pull it off when (even if) ... ?

And when things don't go the way you expect and it upsets you, what will you do then?

Let's suppose that ...

Do you think he will be X? And what if ... ?

How can you remind yourself to ... ?

When you go back into the classroom (ward), you can remember just how well you did it here practicing with me.

Each time that trouble comes up again, remember that you now know how to handle your anger, like you did when we were working together.
Are you ready to ...?

I have noticed you are really good at making some people afraid of you. When did you learn this? Is there a particular person that you learned this from? How does this learned anger get in the way of you doing Y?

Now that you know this, how can you use this information to control your anger?

Which of the skills we talked about will you be able to use in your real life situation (in your everyday experience)?

REINFORCING EFFORT

I am impressed with the way you can describe what happened and why it happened. You were able to tell it clearly and without getting angry.

That is a calm way to let someone know you understand the rules.

You are showing maturity when you can deal with X. (...when you can make “smart” decisions.)

That is a productive way to handle problems. When you can talk to people about what is on your mind, feelings don't get out of control. Everybody wins!

That is a sign of maturity to face up to the consequences of your behavior.

I see so much self-control in your approach. You have learned so much that you can now teach it to others.

That sounds like an idea that is worth trying.

Good idea. Boys/Girls who are angry usually can't stop and think and plan (or hear what others have to say).

Good job! Today you (specify behavior – told yourself to ..., took a time out, walked away, ignored, asserted yourself, etc.). This is a big step.

Well done, you handled your disappointment without getting upset!

Even though you were upset, you managed to ... instead of ...

You have shown that you have matured. Instead of fighting, you did X. You told yourself that it just wasn't worth it.

You are showing that you understand a better way to handle things.

You have made a lot of progress. When you go back to your classroom, what will you have to tell others about what we did here together?

Remember everybody has problems, but not everyone knows how to fix them.

It isn't easy to accept consequences when you thought you were right (when you thought you were acting in a responsible fashion).

I noticed how you were able to control yourself even when others were losing it.

I'm very impressed with you when you ...

I appreciate the way you ...

I give you a lot of credit for ...

I'm really proud of you for thinking more clearly about ...

Well done! You are now beginning to think more clearly about your options.

That's an excellent insight!

I am impressed that you figured this out on your own. Most students your age don't know that their feelings at home can cause problems at school, and vice versa. How did you figure this out? **(Usually, I don't get to this part of the discussion until much later.)**

When you are out of control like this, it tells me something is really bothering you. But when you use your words to tell me how you feel (what is bothering you), then your mature self is coming out.

There is a part of you that X, and another part that is able to take charge.

This shows that you had more self-control than you realized you did.

You have a real ability to read people, stay cool under pressure ... be "street smart."
You are a good psychologist. You are able to figure things out.

How did you get others to trust you (follow your leadership) at such a young age?

You have learned a lot today!

**PUTTING THE YOUTH IN A "CONSULTATIVE" ROLE
(SHARE, TEACH, AND TAKE CREDIT FOR CHANGES)**

(It is not enough to change. The youth needs to be able to describe how change came about and see connections between own actions and outcomes. Encourage the youth to explain how he/she will benefit from using new behaviors.)

Let's review what you did that was helpful.

Tell me in your own words what you need to do if there is a problem.

Tell me the steps that you can use to stay out of trouble and what you can do to practice your coping skills.

How can you make these techniques your own?

How did you get so good at ...?

Why is it important for you to stay out of trouble?

With whom else can you share what you have learned?

Are you saying you want to do X? What are the skills you will need to ...?

Do you think you can teach what you have learned to someone else? Who?

What will you tell others about how you worked on your problems?

What have you learned that is important that you can share with others?

Are you saying that in spite of X, you can do Y?

We can fix problems, if we talk about them. Words are better than fists to solve a problem.

We can figure out a way to fix things so you will feel better.

When you go back to your classroom, what will the other students be able to learn from you? What will you tell them you learned?

The reason for this rule is ... Does that make sense? How can you follow the rule, even if you don't like it?

How is what you are feeling here apply to other situations?

How did you come to the decision to do X instead of Y?

So all this meant ... Is that correct?

Do you ever notice that in your everyday activities that you tend to ask yourself on your own, the kind of questions that we ask each other when we chat? ... I guess you are becoming your "coach," your own therapist and putting me "out of business."