

Gaining Confidence In Presenting Your Program

Mr. Hopkins gives suggestions to those just beginning their teaching experiences as a CPI instructor that will help them to be successful and gain additional expertise.

You've recently been trained as a Certified Instructor, and now it's time to begin training your fellow staff. You're nervous, anxious and scared. What do you do?

In this article, I'll share my experiences as a newly Certified Instructor and what I've learned from my mistakes and successes about structure, setting and myself in teaching Nonviolent Crisis Intervention. Let me start by providing some background for you, to determine how useful these suggestions might be.

I work in a large social service agency providing one location for a variety of human service needs. My function in the mental health center's consultation and education program includes providing in-service training to school teachers and staff.

Due to some prior incidents involving crisis situations, it was decided early this year that all staff in the various MH/MR programs would be trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention. Agency programs represented included outpatient, partial hospitalization, drug and alcohol, residential programs, adult therapeutic activities, early intervention, and day care, as well as clerical and support staff. Staff members are predominantly female, and ages range from early 20's through 60's. The following are techniques I found extremely helpful in setting up and conducting in-house CPI training:

Give Choices

My first task was to organize the sign-up process to make the training's mandatory nature palatable, and allow for staff decision-making. An erasable board was posted in my office, listing the days and dates of training. Staff could sign up on the first-come, first-serve basis until each group had twelve participants. Since the training was provided every week, staff could plan ahead which days they'd need to keep open. They could also increase their own comfort level by attending with people whom they knew.

Anticipate Productive Questions

I recalled the questions I had before being trained, and addressed them in a memo sent to each participant one week prior to their training

Allow Enough Space

Our agency has a strong community commitment, so our large conference rooms are often used for meetings of community groups, as well as internal meetings; booking is done up to a year in advance. I thought I could use a small conference room for Unit I. We wouldn't be doing control and restraint holds or transport techniques, so it would do – or so I thought.

Yes, there were eight feet between the rows during the proxemics play, but there wasn't enough personal space behind each person. (I managed to violate the cardinal rule of proxemics and increase the participant's anxiety by taking this shortcut of room space.)

Consider Alternative Settings

Once I'd convinced myself to follow the recommendation of 60-100 square feet per person, I began to look for suitable space outside of the immediate building structure. A friend tipped me off to an excellent alternative – gymnastics schools. There are two in our town (population 11,000), they're vacant during the day (when their students are in school), and they're perfectly designed for physical techniques. The school I chose had a spring floor on which gymnasts do floor exercises. It's more resilient than wrestling mats and carpeted, too. Another advantage of being out of the agency was eliminating distractions. By isolating the situation, interruptions were minimized, while staff could be reached in an actual emergency.

Alleviate Anxiety

In my introduction to the training, I emphasized the importance of safety. I reminded participants they could sit out during any aspect of the physical training if it exceeded their capabilities, and accentuated that the spring floor would cushion any accidental fall.

Word had leaked out that the C.P.I. training included a pre- and post-test. I acknowledged the fact that most of us hadn't taken a test in years, and pointed out no one needed to be anxious about the pre-test since its purpose was to emphasize how much we knew already. I also assured participants everything they needed to know for the post-test would be covered and reviewed during the two days of training.

To allay performance anxiety, I noted:

- Techniques would be performed only as a group
- If the demonstration didn't work as planned, it was my responsibility;
- Participants wouldn't (and couldn't) be expected to train others;
- Everything they'd be asked to do, I had also done during my certification training.

Use the Knowledge of the Group

At times it's easier for us to accept suggestions for change from each other than from a designated leader.

During Unit I, a woman with waist-length hair asked what she should do if grabbed in a hairpull from behind. I asked her what she thought might work and she proceeded to answer her own question,

"I could turn around, and handle it like a clothing grab from the front."

Before I even had a chance to suggest prevention techniques, three participants called out, "Put your hair up!"

Over time, I could see clerical and support staff accept the reality that they too might need to deal with an acting-out person. This awareness started from the discussion of "Have you ever needed to deal with an agitated individual?" and continued through the situational role play of a brand new client in the waiting room when one of the clerical staff stated to her co-worker.

"Really, Ann, you don't think this will ever happen to us, do you?"

"It sure could. Remember the time that guy came in to the reception area and blew up at Francine?"

Each time, the point was made without my saying a word.

Ensure Success

At the end of each day, I asked participants to refrain from practicing physical techniques on one another or loved ones, because of

- Possible injury;
- Lack of supervision ("How would you know what to correct if it didn't work?");
- Lack of realism ("I'm sure no one plans to walk up to a client, offer an arm and say, 'here, grab my wrist.'").

Since it's human nature to pay less attention to areas we think we know, I asked participants to be non-committal if co-workers asked them to explain the training.

Be Aware of New Roles

Because it's "hands-on" training, *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention* is unlike other in-service training your staff might receive. Participants relate to each other in new ways because they touch, assume roles as staff and clients regardless of job title, and they're encouraged at times to act out. Unless you regularly train staff in-house, as a C.P.I instructor you're also seen in a new light.

Training people you know can be more difficult than training strangers. With strangers, you're the acknowledged expert often fitting the definition of "someone with a briefcase

from out-of-town." By contrast, people you know may initially resist accepting you as qualified. I found it especially important to redirect any challenge questions early in the training:

"Has that ever happened to you?"

"Well, no? Our purpose today is to learn the C.P.I. approach and see how it may apply to situations in our jobs."

As the training progressed and staff became more comfortable seeing me in a new role, challenge questions disappeared.

Acknowledge Your Limits

I needed to acknowledge one of my limits (being new to teaching physical techniques) each time I came up against it.

While reviewing the one-hand grab release on the second morning, my volunteer in the demonstration still held onto my wrist as I tried to release, leaving me looking like a "bird with a broken wing." Luckily, my next comment was:

"Did anyone catch my mistake?"

"You forgot to step in."

"Right! (sighing relief) Now we can all see how important it is to use the physical law of leverage."

I also found it helpful to jot down suggestions to myself as they occurred during the training. I entered these in a journal in which I could continually review the strengths and areas of improvement of each session.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training entails the normal physical emotional demands of presenting a program. After the first training session ended, I went directly home and took a long nap! Since then, I make sure I feel fully prepared physically and emotionally before training. Give yourself positive feedback. I encouraged myself to believe this training would get easier as I became more familiar with content and practical with physical techniques, and it did.

Now I set aside time right after the program ends to review pre- and post-tests and savor positive evaluation comments. Comments such as "informative, fun and practical" tell me the group has reached the objective of feeling more capable, and more confident of their ability to handle a crisis. I also feel more confident as a Crisis Prevention Certified Instructor.

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