Episode 29 - RTI Series – Managing Problem Behaviors

This podcast episode presents a system for managing behavior problems, utilizing a variety of interconnected tools and techniques.

The concept of contagion is introduced, explaining how behaviors, feelings, and thoughts can spread among individuals. The importance of interrupting behavioral patterns is highlighted, particularly using a technique known as "pattern interrupts." These interrupts aim to prevent escalation and promote a return to baseline functioning. A detailed example of a structural pattern interrupt is provided, involving a campaign to reduce swearing among middle-school boys in a residential cottage.

The podcast suggests the use of three types of time-outs: Structured Centering Break, Independent Centering Break, and Resets. Each type serves as a therapeutic consequence for a lack of self-control, allowing individuals to practice coping activities and centering exercises. The importance of tailoring interventions to individual needs, avoiding shaming, and promoting consistency is emphasized.

Additionally, the establishment of a clear Code of Conduct based on values is recommended, with examples provided. The distinction between major and minor violations of the Code is discussed, along with a range of staff responses to minor violations. The goal is to intervene effectively while minimizing disruption to the group and the activity.

The podcast underscores the developmental importance of allowing individuals to progress from Structured Centering Breaks to Independent Centering Breaks and Resets. The ultimate aim is to empower clients to independently manage their behaviors and develop self-control, contributing to their growth and success outside the treatment program.

Structured Centering Breaks, which are used for all instances where major violations of the Code of Conduct have occurred, include a processing of the incident that focuses on taking responsibility for one's actions and feelings, followed by a discussion on relationship repair, restitution, fines, group explanations, and executive skills development as ways to achieve higher responsibility levels.

This episode also takes a look at the use of restrictions, differentiating between those related to safety concerns and those as direct consequences of problem behaviors. The goal is to frame restrictions in a way that aligns with program goals beyond punishment, connecting them to therapeutic and treatment-driven objectives.