

THE COMPATIBILITY OF LSCI AND THE VIRTUES PROJECT™

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I am very pleased and very grateful to the organising committee for giving me the opportunity to tell you something about the Virtues Project™ and the compatibility of it with LSCI.

First of all I will guide you, in a quick overview, through the Virtues Project™ and then I will point out the value of it throughout the interventions of LSCI.

The Virtues Project™ was founded in 1991 by three Canadian people who were concerned about the increase of violence among families and youth. They found inspiration for the project in ancient cultures and religions, which makes it a truly human and universal project.

The basic purpose of the Virtues Project™ is to inspire parents, teachers, educators and other significant adults to raise children to become human beings of strong moral character. It helps families, schools and also in communities to build a climate of safety, caring and peace. The focus is about education because then we need just one generation to change moral development

The basic foundation of the Virtues Project™ is a list with virtues and the application of those virtues in 5 strategies.

This shortlist of virtues was selected from a collection of more than 360 common virtues that are found in the most important beliefs and cultures.

The founders of the project selected 52 virtues for the shortlist, one for each week of the year. People who are familiar with the Virtues Project™ also use an extended list of 100 virtues.

You can find the list of virtues in the conference binder.

All of those virtues are applied in 5 strategies:

1. Speak the language of the virtues

Language shapes character. The way we speak and the words we use have great power to discourage or to inspire children. Speaking the language of the virtues helps us to replace shaming and blaming with gifts of character. It is a framework for bringing out the best in children. Speaking the language of the virtues refers children to the beautiful parts of their character and it helps them to stand in their power.

When a child is doing his task in class, we can say: “Way to go!” or “good job!”, but it is so much stronger and touches a child in the core of his being when we say: “I see how purposeful you are since you’ve been working on your task for at least half an hour.

Speaking the language of the virtues means that we are specific about the child’s behavior and connect behavior with the virtues. This builds self-confidence and it builds strong characters because a child recognizes its virtues which are already strongly developed and its virtues still in development.

Connecting behaviour and virtues helps us not to judge the behaviour. On the other hand it gives us a way to see and name the beautiful parts of one’s character, no matter what behaviour.

2. recognize teachable moments

Mistakes are the best steppingstones for learning. When a child acts in a way that it disturbs his environment, the first strategy stays very important: it helps a child to stand in his power and it will be more likely to change. At that very moment we can look for a forgotten virtue, or a virtue that is not strong yet.

When a child tackles another child in order to get the ball, we should see and name his enthusiasm and his diligence. Once the child is put in his power, we can ask for kindness or courtesy...

3. set clear boundaries

Virtues-based boundaries focus on respect and restorative justice to create a climate of peace and safety. We formulate boundaries in a positive way: We ask children to be peaceful instead of forbidden them to fight.

If they cross boundaries, we don't punish; we look for natural consequences of the behaviour. Cooperation and creativity will be important virtues in the application of this strategy.

4. honour the spirit

This strategy begins with respect for the dignity of each person and encourages us to make time for reflection, reverence, beauty and joy. It is expressing what is meaningful in our lives by participating in the arts, honoring special life events, and sharing our stories. Creating Vision Statements increases unity and morale in our homes, schools and workplaces.

5. offer spiritual companionship

This fifth strategy is a strong counseling approach that empowers others to define teachable moments and to reflect on their virtues. We are deeply present and listen with compassion and detachment.

It supports moral choice, intimacy in relationships, and peaceful conflict resolution.

About the compatibility with LSCI:

I have experienced several times that especially the first two strategies gave more depth to Life Space Crisis Intervention. I also noticed that the relationship between a child in crisis and me is very strong and very meaningful because of the power of LSCI and the power of speaking the language of the virtues.

Let's look at the several LSCI-stages in detail:

1. Drain off

The most important part of our role in this stage is to setting the tone for the relationship by conveying support and understanding. Speaking the language of the virtues can facilitate this stage: we can name the child's determination to act his anger out, his purposefulness or his assertiveness.

The second strategy of the Virtues Project™ can support us in drain off the intense feelings: we can strive for relationship with the troubled child by looking for cooperation, or by showing and stating our commitment to work out this crisis.

2. Timeline

In this stage we get a lot of information about the behavior of the protagonists of the crisis. It is very powerful to use strategie 1 by connecting behavior with virtues. The interviewer is really getting on the same wavelength of the child and connecting behavior with feelings and with virtues is very supportive and affirmative for the child. The fact that strategy 1 helps us not to judge behaviour, helps us to stay out of the Conflict Cycle.

3. Central Issue

Also in this stage the language of the virtues can be used in order to summarize the two former stages. The same virtues of the first two stages will be used here. Strategie 1 to use affirmations and to show understanding for the behavior of the child; strategie 2 to motivate the child to get along with the intervention by further cooperation and purposefulness.

4. Insight

In this stage we can combine the two strategies: what virtue did the child expose in his behavior? Where did this lead to? What other virtue(s) could he have used? Where can this lead to.

5. New Skills

Once we discovered which virtue(s) the child lacked, we can transpose that virtue in more appropriate behavior. In that way the New Skills are founded and supported by gifts of character: the virtues. Creativity will be an important virtue in this stage.

6. Transfer of Learning

Affirmations are again very important in this stage. We can be affirmative by using the language of the virtues again: courage, confidence, , but most important we can point out our side of the relationship with the child: our commitment, our thankfulness for the child's cooperation, our loyalty to the new skills, ...

I experienced that the Virtues Project is supportive to give more meaning and depth to the interventions I do. In order to prepare this session I re-read the LSCI-book and I noticed that the ultimate goal of LSCI to establish value-based behavior in our children is in fact Virtue-based behavior: respect, courage, self-discipline, trust, caring, confidence, reliability, justice, are only a few of the virtues I discovered in the book. In my opinion: the two approaches support each other in a very special way. One and one is much more than just two, in this case.

In the next few minutes I invite you to discuss in small groups of 4 or 5 people to search for virtues needed with the different reclaiming interventions; i.e. which virtue(s) is (are) probably needed in case of a Red Flag Reclaiming Intervention; Reality Rub Reclaiming Intervention, ...