



Response Ability Pathways™

Psychology or Special Education 359/559

Undergraduate or Graduate, **1 or 3 hrs of credit**

Instructor of Record: Dr. Steve Van Bockern

Response Ability Pathways™ – or simply RAP – is an experiential course providing skills for working effectively with young persons and supporting them on pathways toward responsibility. RAP builds positive connections with and among youth and creates climates of mutual respect.

Overview

In modern society, the bonds between generations have been tattered. Children who are not attached to adults fail to learn the values of respect for self and others. Hungry for attention, they become prisoners of peer approval. Unattached to others and unmotivated in school, they fail to develop their potentials. Struggling for power, they challenge authority. Many youth mask their spiritual emptiness by reckless pursuit of pleasure. Their disruptive behaviors are signals of distress. Beneath their defiance, indifference, or reckless bravado, many of our youth are swimming in rivers of pain. But when their behavior bothers others, they are likely to be dealt more pain by punishment or exclusion.

RAP is grounded in the value-based belief that all youth, even those presenting difficult behavior, have positive potential, and there are no disposable kids. Problems of children and youth are not unique to impoverished communities but are found in city, suburban, and rural settings. Family instability, substance abuse, delinquency, school problems, racism, and alienated youth are all symptoms of broken communities. RAP addresses such problems by restoring relationships and building positive peer climates.

To succeed in the face of risk and challenge, children need concerned adults and peers who respond to their needs rather than react to problem behavior. RAP provides these “response-abilities” to all who deal directly with young persons experiencing conflict in school, family, peer group, and community. This training can include key adult stakeholders as well as youth who exercise positive influence among their peers.

Learning Goals

RAP is a system for communicating with youth and providing positive behavior support. RAP uses a clear-cut problem-solving format: *Connect* ► *Clarify* ► *Restore*. This is the normal process for resilient coping found in all cultures. Thus, RAP taps the strengths and natural capacity kids already have to *connect* with others for support, *clarify* challenging problems, and *restore* respect. Each of these goals is described below:

1. *Connect with challenging children and youth.* A mentor’s first challenge is to create positive social bonds. While “building relationships” with reluctant youth may appear to be a daunting task, many meaningful connections can be made in a short period of time, both with individuals and with groups. Positive connections are built upon small acts of respect and kindness. Once youth connect, they are able to use that person for positive support.

2. *Clarify challenges facing a young person.* By helping a youth understand “here-and-now” problem situations, mentors support the development of resilient coping strengths. This involves communicating with youth who may be guarded and adult-wary in order to understand the private logic beneath their problem behavior. Youth learn to use strengths and to overcome limitations to meet important life goals. Young persons need to learn to think clearly about their behavior in order to creatively solve problems, master difficult challenges, and meet their needs.
3. *Restore inner and interpersonal harmony.* This involves respect for self and others. A restorative plan mobilizes inner strengths and external supports to meet growth needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. Though complicated problems may not be resolved immediately, a young person can take steps on the pathway toward responsibility.

RAP starts with problems but searches for strengths and solutions. RAP provides whatever support the “teaching moment” allows, whether literally a moment or an hour. Sometimes a few short RAP interventions distributed over time have more lasting impact than a long session. RAP training grew from the Circle of Courage® model based on Native American philosophies of child rearing as described in *Reclaiming Youth At Risk* by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern. RAP is also grounded in research on resilience and brain science.

RAP training has been rated as highly useful by staff in education, treatment, juvenile justice, youth care, foster care, family support, law enforcement, and community and faith-based organizations. RAP enables youth to join in an alliance with adults to solve problems and cultivate respectful environments.

Topical Outline

- I. Children and Youth in Pain**
 - Pain-Based Behavior
 - Fighting Pain with Pain
 - Circle of Courage® and Resilience Science
- II. Connecting**
 - Disconnected Kids
 - Brain Science on Connecting
 - Strategies for Connecting
- III. Clarifying**
 - Private Logic and Thinking Errors
 - Brain Science on CLEAR Problem Solving
 - Strategies for Clarifying Challenges
- IV. Restoring**
 - Cultivating Responsibility
 - Building Strengths and Support
 - Strategies for Restoring Respect

Course Organization

RAP training follows principles of “universal design.” It is intuitive, jargon-free, and relevant across diverse cultural settings. Training is interactive and experiential and provides practical strategies for professional and lay

persons as well as youth who are peer leaders. A RAP course is delivered over two days of intensive learning activities. Outside readings support the formal training.

RAP trainers use brief lectures, audio-visual resources, discussion, and extensive role-playing of problem-solving scenarios. This is a very interactive course and participation in role-playing is organized to be as non-threatening as possible. The skills for these interventions are developed in sequence, first concentrating on Connecting, later adding Clarifying, and by the last day putting together Connecting, Clarifying, and Restoring. Participants in RAP training receive the text *Response Ability Pathways [RAP]* co-authored by Larry Brendtro, PhD and Lesley du Toit. Participants also receive a RAP workbook and a copy of the journal *Reclaiming Children and Youth*[®].

Participants in RAP can register to receive undergraduate or graduate credit. Those who register for credit must complete additional assignments outside the two day course. For those seeking approval of transfer credit, you may wish to download *The Response Ability Pathways Curriculum: Biography of Research Foundations* and/or *The Circle of Courage*[®] and *RAP Training: The Evidence Base* by Larry Brendtro. Both supplements can be found at www.reclaiming.com under “college credit”.

Course Credit Requirements (options)

Undergraduate 1 semester hour

1. **Class participation:** fully participate in all sessions.

Undergraduate 3 semester hours

1. **Class participation:** fully participate in all sessions.
2. **Examination:** complete a multiple choice exam on key concepts and competencies (down load at www.reclaiming.com under “college credit”).
3. **Practicum project:** conduct a “RAP” with a youth. The 3-5 page write-up should include:
 - **Background information:** describe the youth, the incident, and the circumstances that led to the RAP.
 - **Connecting:** identify specific techniques used to attempt to *connect* to the youth.
 - **Clarifying:** chronicle the “conversation” in either a dialogue or a narrative format.
 - **Restore:** identify the Circle of Courage[®] need and the specific *restorative* plan.
 - **Outcome:** what was the effect for the youth? What did you learn from this RAP?
4. **Literature review:** Write evaluative essays on two articles from the journal, *Reclaiming Children and Youth* or other scholarly publications on youth development. The summaries should be a minimum of two pages each.

Graduate 1 semester hour

1. **Class participation:** fully participate in all sessions.
2. **Examination:** complete a multiple choice exam on key concepts and competencies (down load at www.reclaiming.com under “college credit”).

Graduate 3 semester hours

1. **Class participation:** fully participate in all sessions
2. **Exam:** complete a multiple choice exam on key concepts and competencies.
3. **Practicum project:** conduct a “RAP” with a youth. The 5-8 page write-up should include:
 - a. **Background information:** describe the youth, the incident, and the circumstances that led to the RAP.

- b. **Connecting:** identify specific techniques used to attempt to *connect* to the youth.
 - c. **Clarifying:** chronicle the “conversation” in either a dialogue or a narrative format.
 - d. **Restore:** identify the Circle of Courage® need and the specific *restorative* plan.
 - e. **Outcome:** what was the effect for the youth? What did you learn from this RAP?
4. **Literature review:** Write evaluative essays on five articles from the journal, *Reclaiming Children and Youth*® or other scholarly publications on youth development. The summaries should be a minimum of two pages each.

Please see www.reclaiming.com under “college credit” for example practicum project and literature reviews.

Grading

Participants who successfully complete these requirements earn one (1) **or** three (3) semester hours of undergraduate or graduate workshop credit, graded with an A-F letter grade. Students may choose to be graded satisfactory or unsatisfactory but must request this in writing. The criteria for S/U grades are as follows: graduate students must earn a grade of B- or better to receive an S; undergraduate students must earn a C- or better to receive an S.

All requirements are to be submitted within 30 days of the last day of the course to your instructor. Your instructor will let you know if they prefer a hard copy or an electronic copy. **Requesting a grading extension:** If additional time is needed to complete the work, a one-time extension may be requested. Contact your instructor to get permission for an extension. Work will be due no later than the middle of the next semester (March 15, July 15 or October 15). If the work is not submitted by the due date, a grade of F is automatically given.

Registration

Registration happens at the time of the course. Students will complete a registration form indicating a desire for graduate or undergraduate credit; one or three hours of credit and whether the course will be taken for psychology or special education credit. Payment is due at the time of registration.

Cost

Payment is due at the time of registration. One hour of credit, either graduate or undergraduate is \$150.00 (US dollars). Three hours of credit, graduate or undergraduate is \$300.00 (US dollars).

Cash is not accepted. Checks, money orders and credit cards are accepted (except American Express) payable to **Reclaiming Youth International**.

Transcripts

After final grades are submitted, the students receive a grade report from Augustana. If a student wishes an official transcripts please request in writing and send the request to Augustana College, Office of the Registrar, 2001 S. Summit Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57197, or Fax to 605-274-4450.

For questions or concerns about registration, cost or transcripts please contact Reclaiming Youth International at bookstore@reclaiming.com or call 605-647-2532.
