

# The Response Ability Pathways Curriculum

## Bibliography of Research Foundations

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## Organization of RAP Training

*Response Ability Pathways* – or simply RAP – is a training program providing skills for working effectively with children and youth, supporting them on pathways toward responsibility. RAP training is highly practical and can be provided both to mentors and mature youth. RAP builds positive connections among youth and with their elders and creates climates of mutual respect.

### **Problems as Opportunities**

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 “responsibilities” 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.

RAP is a system for communicating with youth and providing positive 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. Problems become positive learning opportunities.

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 resilience model described in *Reclaiming Youth At Risk* by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern (2002). The goal is to create opportunities for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. RAP is also grounded in research on resilience science, neuroscience, and positive youth development. It follows the prescription for evidence based practice established by the American Psychological Association: interventions are grounded in research, practice expertise, and adapted to the nature and needs of the individual. RAP translates this knowledge into practical strategies for connecting with youth at risk, creatively solving problems, and fostering pro-social behavior.

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

### **Course Content of RAP Training**

- I. RAP Foundations**
  - Foundational Concepts
  - Circle of Courage and Resilience Science
  - Rivers of Pain
  - Fighting Pain with Pain
  
- II. Connecting**
  - RAP Introduction

Disconnected Kids  
Brain Science on Connecting  
Strategies for Connecting

**III. Clarifying**  
Coping With Challenges  
Private Logic: The Inside Kid  
Thinking Errors  
CLEAR Thinking

**IV. Restoring**  
Instilling Responsibility  
Cultivating Respect  
Restoring Social Bonds  
Choosing New Pathways

### **A Universal Design Training**

RAP training follows principles of “universal design.” It is intuitive, jargon-free, and relevant to work with children and youth from a range of backgrounds and cultures who present diverse patterns of problems. 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 the equivalent of three days by certified RAP trainers. Participants in RAP workshops can register to receive undergraduate or graduate credit.

Skills for the RAP process are developed in sequence, first concentrating on Connecting, later adding Clarifying, and by the last day putting together Connecting, Clarifying, and Restoring. Videos and role plays capture real-life challenges and provide essential skills for success with challenging children and youth. The RAP text (Brendtro & du Toit, 2005) and a Guidebook support formal training activities.

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