

## **Therapeutic Services Introduction**

The goal of the Therapeutic Services at the NTLC is to help the student address the difficulties that have been encountered in the school setting. These services take on a variety of forms, from school wide interventions to individualized work with each student. Some of the core elements of the NTLC intervention program include a milieu treatment approach, the use of cognitive-behavioral techniques, and principles based on the transtheoretical model of change. The following is meant as a brief orientation to some of the concepts that make up the intervention model at the NTLC.

The NTLC seeks to create an environment in which students can gain a better understanding of their patterns of thought and action. All behaviors occur within and provoke responses from the larger environment. If those in the surrounding environment are able to understand an individual's pattern of behaviors, they are in a position to assist the individual in learning how to make changes. Those in the environment need to be ready to interact with student's counter-productive or problematic dynamics in real time and a natural setting. The NTLC provides the student with a supportive backdrop in which to learn and practice skills that can be transferred beyond the NTLC. While social workers may take the lead in developing social-emotional interventions, all staff at the NTLC participate in the therapeutic interventions with students. Staff, student and family work to create a shared understanding of ineffective behaviors, their causes, and viable alternative response options. It is an ongoing collaborative process of gaining insight into problems and working towards change. The students as a group support each other in their individual attempts at change. These concepts are rooted in the milieu treatment approach and have been adapted by the NTLC to provide an active and responsive environment to assist a student in the process of growth and development.

Several other psychological schools of thought are also drawn heavily on by the NTLC treatment model. Motivational interviewing, behavioral techniques, and cognitive techniques all play a role within the NTLC treatment approach. Motivational interviewing and the trans-theoretical model of change are the basis for the Stages of Change model used at the NTLC and are explained more in that section. The fundamental components of these theories are that individual motivation for change is the key factor in creating lasting change. An individual's motivation needs to be as important a target for intervention as any concerning or problematic behaviors. Change occurs in an established pattern of stages, each of which requires interventions unique to that stage in order to sustain motivation and make social, emotional, or behavioral changes. At the NTLC, the Stages of Change model seeks to apply the concepts of individual motivation and the progression of change outlined in these models to a school setting.

These theories all share in common an emphasis on the role of individual motivation and self-reflection in the change process. The school of cognitive therapy also explores these concepts as vehicles of change. The school of cognitive therapy focuses on the manner in which an individual collects and interprets information from the environment and then uses that as the basis for determining how to respond. At the NTLC the process by which

a student assess and responds to the school environment and those in it is another target of intervention. Skills such as self-reflection, self-awareness, testing of assumptions, and use of interactive feedback are central to cognitive therapy as well a key component of the NTLC intervention package.

## **The Stages of Change Model**

The Stages of Change is a program wide intervention aimed at fostering student motivation and efforts at change. It is based on the concepts developed by the theory of motivational interviewing and the trans-theoretical model of change. The model seeks to help students understand the steps needed to create lasting change across any problem area (academic, emotional, behavioral, etc). The model places the student and individual internal motivation and effort at the center of the change process. Others working with the student can be a source of guidance, support, and feedback. But ultimately lasting change is created and maintained through the student's consistent awareness of and efforts toward change.

The NTLC staff work with each student to progress through the stages of change model in order to improve their functioning as a student and as a young adult. This work begins with a belief that change is possible and achievable. This is critical to fostering persistence in the face of the challenges and setbacks that have occurred in the past and will occur as the student moves towards change. As a team the student and staff work to create a shared vision of what changes are needed and methods would help to create such change. As a student progresses through the model the staff offer support for efforts at change and highlight opportunities for continued growth. The nature of the program also allows the NTLC staff to create an environment where internal motivation is fostered and opportunities to change occur more frequently.

### Description of the Stages

#### **Stage 1--Awareness**

The goal of the first stage of the model is to prompt the student to begin thinking about change. A person's assessment that they can successfully change has defining impact on if they will try and change. The NTLC staff seeks to cultivate the belief that change is possible.

At the same time there is also a focus on raising the student's awareness of their own behaviors and the impact these behaviors have on their own lives. Assessing the results of behavior can help a student realize the connection between the behavior and an unwanted outcome. The goal is to have the student consider if they are satisfied with the effects of their behaviors.

## Stage 2--Consideration

The task at this stage is to help the student examine the benefits and barriers to change and further support the belief that change is possible. At this stage a student should reflect on the possibility of alternative strategies for problem solving. The goal is to introduce the idea that different behaviors or response might produce more desirable results. The ambiguity of change is confronted at this stage as a student considers both the benefits of change but also the risks and what might be lost in the change process. With assistance, the objective is to help the student come to the conclusion that change offers the student a better outcome than his/her current pattern of functioning. Those around the student look for things that make being different seem more possible such as past successes and resources available to them. But it is the student's individual decision to direct effort at becoming different that marks the transition from the second stage to the third.

## Stage 3--Trying

The goal of this stage is to build a student's motivation to change and reinforce small attempts at change. The hallmark of this stage is experimentation with different approaches to ineffective patterns of thinking and behavior. It is at this stage that a student intentionally takes advantage of opportunities to perform differently on a consistent basis. The goal is for the student to be active in exploring options for change and to evaluate outcomes of this experimentation. Emphasis is on the motivation for change and active attempts to be different. At this stage, outcome or effectiveness is secondary to the realization that there are other behavioral, cognitive, or emotional alternatives

Those working to support the student focus on helping the student see opportunities, encourage them to take action, and evaluate the outcomes. Conversations introduce the concept of connecting cause and effect of behavior patterns to assist the student in establishing what patterns and responses produce favorable or productive results. They also continue to highlight benefits of change that are valued by the student.

## Stage 4--Doing/Implementing

At this stage the goal is for a student to take ownership and control of the change process. The emphasis is on behavioral change. The core feature of stage four is the student's consistent execution of a new pattern of behavior that results in improved outcomes. The student builds proficiency in new skills used to respond differently to the environment. The student is able to identify situations that previously would have led to counter-productive behaviors and outcomes and implement new response patterns. Guided

feedback and self-assessment of performance and outcomes lead to a continual process of adjustment.

### Stage 5--Maintenance

At the Maintenance stage a student becomes capable to independently managing response patterns and challenges on their own. The focus is on maintaining change, anticipating future situations and preparing for them. The new skills and behavior patterns have replaced previous, less productive patterns in a student's life. The student is proactive in managing the environment and potential obstacles. The student is able to rely on self assessment and reflection of their own behaviors and the resulting outcomes in order to sustain efforts at continual self-improvement.

## **Stage Movements**

During the weekly staff meetings stage changes will be addressed. This will be the opportunity for both advancement in stages as well as reductions. Any staff member who feels a level adjustment is warranted can add that student to the agenda. Students may request the opportunity to petition for a level adjustment. They will complete the appropriate petition form and submit it to the director. The director will make a determination as to the appropriateness of the petition for that student at that time. If the director approves the petition it will be added to the Stage agenda. If it is postponed the student and the director will have a conversation about what issues need to be addressed before the student petitions again.

Students impacted by Stage change decisions will be informed individually on Friday. If a student is not approved for a stage change or if there is a reduction in stage or privileges, this conversation will include the reasons for the reduction and ideas on how to make corrections. The goal is to help the student become aware of the present concerns and generate ideas on making improvements.

On Monday of the following week, new stages will be posted and the student's privileges will change.

Movements up or down should be limited to one stage in either direction, particularly for someone moving into a new stage. In situations where a student is repeating stages after a period of regression advancement may be more flexible or faster. However, in general it would be more appropriate and clinically accurate to see one week stops in quick succession rather than longer delays followed by multi-stage jumps.

### ON NOTICE STATUS

On Notice status is a tool to help students recognize regression at an early stage. This status should serve as a prompt for students to re-assess their functioning before a stage

movement down is made. Students would be placed On Notice after NTLC staff have observed a significant period of decreased level of functioning or effort directed at change. This would not be a result of one major incident but the end result of a continued pattern of regressive behaviors. Students would be notified of being placed or removed from On Notice status within the same time frame as other stage adjustments are made. Being placed On Notice is NOT a mandatory step in level adjustment.

### ON NOTICE/NO PRIVS

This status is the same as On Notice in all regards except one. When a student is On Notice/No Privs, they are not able to use any of the privileges for the length of time they remain on that status. This is a more intensive intervention used when NTLC staff feels that the student needs a stronger prompt to begin to re-engage in the change process.

### ON NOTICE—POSITIVE ADVANCEMENT

There may be times that students are close to making an advancement from one stage to the next, but are missing some critical pieces. In this situation, the student may be placed On Notice that they are on the verge on making significant gains. During this time the staff and student will work together intensely to make whatever changes will help the student take the final steps to complete the current stage of change. The length of this distinction and the details to be resolved will be highly individualized. As with other On Notice status placements this is NOT a required step in stage movement.

### INDIVIDUAL PRIVILEGES LOSS

Specific privileges can be lost without a loss of stage. This would be the result of the student abusing or misusing that privilege. Decisions about loss of privileges, length of loss, and benchmarks for the return of the privileges will be determined by the director with input from NTLC staff as well as the student involved. These adjustments can be made at any time, and will not follow the weekly cycle described above.

## **Stages Privileges Menu**

The use of all privileges is subject to the discretion of the NTLC staff. Clinical or academic considerations may dictate that specific privileges are not available at specific times. Interpretation of the application of these privileges and the uses of them fall under the authority of NTLC staff. The final decision for any matters rests with the NTLC Director. A student on any stage also has access to any privileges that are listed under any stages below their current stage. The same rules and limitations apply to these privileges as they do to all privileges.

### A note on contracts and tickets

Tickets can be used to "buy" a ONE TIME use of ONE privilege from ONE STAGE above a student's current stage. The cost for this is 5 tickets. Some privileges are premium privileges. This means that they are not "buyable" under any circumstances. These privileges are listed in *italics* below. Other uses for tickets will continue as previously. See the ticket redemption menu for more information.

At stages 3 and 4 the student has the privilege of attempting to contract with the school (via the director) to PERMANENTLY obtain ONE privilege from the ONE STAGE above their current stage. The details of the contract will be negotiated between the student and the director. The contract and the privilege earned will be honored as long as the student continues to actively fulfill their expectations. If the student fails to do so, the contract is void and the privilege is lost. The student may enter into only one contract per semester. Once the contract is initiated, the privilege is used and another use of a contract is not allowed until the following semester.

### **Stage 1 Awareness**

The goal of the Awareness stage is to gain an understanding of the things in your life that cause you the most problems. For anyone, before they can fix a problem they must first know what the problem is. You are beginning to learn about your struggles, how, when, and why they occur.

At this stage the student will follow the basic routine of the school day. The focus is on helping the student make an objective assessment of their academic and social/emotional functioning as well as the impact this is having on their day to day life. Students at this stage have access to the basic privileges of the Learning Center, such as use of tickets, morning bagels, use of the lounge and computer lab, and ordering lunch on Fridays.

They are eligible to purchase one time uses of privileges from the Stage 2 options.

### **Stage 2 Considering**

The goal of the Considering stage is to evaluate the possibilities for change. Your task is to consider what changes you might make and how you could make them. Time is spent assessing both the costs and benefits of how you are now and to making changes. At this stage you also look at which possibilities for change are most available to you and which ones you might be open to following further.

- Allowed to use headphones in the computer lab (with teacher approval)
- Choice of room for Comm. Skills class
- Eligible for non-class field trips (provided no other exclusionary criteria)
- Can request supervised time in computer lab
- Can excuse one period of points per week. (must make request prior to the end of Friday of the current week)
- Can excuse one lunch detention (per semester)

- *Can negotiate conditions of in schools (location, staff pattern, KW attendance, computer access, workload to complete, breaks)*

### **Stage 3 Trying**

The goal of the Trying stage is to be motivated to change and to begin to demonstrate this motivation thus action. It is the beginning steps of shifting the way you think and work to address problems and make them better. You have thought about how changes might look in your life and what skills you will need to make those changes, and you have begun to test these new approaches.

- Can request use of headphones (at teacher discretion, in inschool)
- Go to cafeteria with supervision to choose own lunch
- Can use breaks to go outside to designated areas with supervision
- Can use computer lab unsupervised during free time
- Can go with staff on lunch runs
- Can walk to van, shuttle, KW class on own
- *Able to negate one consequence per semester*
- Can erase one unexcused absence once per semester (regain eligibility for field trips, homework at full credit, able to hand in assignment once no longer acceptable)
- *Can contract to permanently gain one privilege from Stage 4 menu*

### **Stage 4 Doing**

The goal of the Doing stage is to improve your ability to generate change across all the areas in your life. The focus in the Doing stage is to develop your capacity to put change into action on a consistent and regular basis. You have moved beyond the experiential and occasional attempts at change that mark the Trying stage. You have established a goal for your change and are building a detailed and repeatable plan to create change and reach your goals.

- Can go to cafeteria to choose own lunch—unsupervised
- *Can use breaks to leave program area—no restrictions, no supervision*
- Can be in lounge without supervision
- Can request access to lounge, lab during class time to work independently (teacher approval)
- Can negotiate consequences with the director (dates, times)
- Able to negate two consequences per semester (if purchased at Stage 3 only one additional negation is granted)
- Can erase two unexcused absences once per semester (if purchased at Stage 3 only one additional negation is granted)
- *Can contract to permanently gain one privilege from Stage 5 menu*
- May negotiate to create an individualized privilege

- No longer on the point system

### **Stage 5 Maintenance**

The goal of the Maintenance stage is to solidify the changes you have made thus far. Efforts are directed at supporting and continuing changes in all aspects of your daily life as well as planning for future challenges and opportunities for change. You are an expert in implementing your techniques for change and actively seek to use them at every opportunity. You have experienced the benefits of the change process and are invested in sustaining these changes and continuing your future growth.

- Can schedule open lunches---pending staff availability
- *Can request access to outside during class time to work independently*
- Can arrange own transportation to and from school
- Can arrange for alternatives to Comm. skills time