

Protective Behaviours

– what's that?

Protective Behaviours (PBs) is an internal process where each person applies the ideas to their own unique experience. This paper looks at what Protective Behaviours is and some of its uses. It is intended as an information paper with the hope the reader will see its relevance to their specific interests and will then attend training.

The PBs process is presented here as separate sections. In practice, all interact and support each other - to take one section out leaves the others incomplete.

Unwritten rules of society

We see how certain rules of society have a powerful influence on our choices of behaviour. Whilst these rules can be positive and help guide our interactions, many of them tell us we should, ought, or must behave in a particular way. For instance, children should do as adults tell them; professionals should always have the answer; men should not show their feelings and women should behave in a ladylike manner. These rules are not written down, are often contradictory and may not fit with our own experience. During training we look at their function, how they develop, their effects and why we may choose to follow them or not.

Feelings, Thoughts and Behaviours

During this session we look at the interaction between our feelings, thoughts and behaviour. We see that feelings are feelings, neither right nor wrong, good nor bad, positive nor negative. Some people seem to mask one feeling with another or use behaviour as a way of avoiding or covering feelings. We look at how behaviour is a choice with an effect. These effects may involve others as well as ourselves. Sometimes we do not know what our choices are or they may be limited by factors we cannot change. Once we are in touch with our feelings it helps free us to use our thinking. Our thinking can influence both our feelings and behaviour.

Theme 1 **‘We all have the right to feel safe all the time’**

We explore this theme in detail, carefully looking at the connection between rights and responsibilities. We also take the concepts of blame and punishment out of commonly held ideas associated with responsibilities. Instead we focus on the ‘ability to respond’ contained within the meaning of the word. The difference between having responsibility **for** ourselves and **to** others is also examined. Next we discover for ourselves the difference between feeling safe, fun to feel scared (adventurous), risking on purpose (which may not feel like fun but we want the goal at the end) and feeling unsafe. These differences are recognised by what we call our ‘Early Warning Signs’ (EWS), the specific bodily responses which tell us when we do not feel safe. These universal body signs mean Protective Behaviours is accessible to all people, irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, nationality, ability or belief system.

Theme 2 **‘We can talk with someone about anything, even if it feels awful or small’**

This theme is also explored in detail. In particular we focus on the ideas and effects of ‘talking’, and what might happen if we do not believe this theme. We encourage everyone to develop their personal networks of support; those people they could turn to if in need. Desired qualities of network people are identified and we examine how we would know if someone has these qualities. Types of networks and ways of letting people know we need to talk with them are also explored.

The seven strategies

During training we examine how these strategies can be used to effectively implement the 2 themes at the core of the process. The strategies include **Theme Reinforcement** - reinforcing the two themes verbally, visually and especially by example. **Network Review** - constantly checking to ensure our networks are available and still fit our needs. **One Step Removed** - using a 'third person' approach for problem solving, to seek assistance or to check out someone's likely response before making a disclosure. This might include role play, videos or asking for help from another person. **Protective Interrupting** - any action we take to interrupt or halt any potential or actual unsafe situation, for instance, saying 'no' when someone is trying to make us do something we feel is wrong. **Persistence** - persisting in seeking help until we feel safe again and our EWS have gone. This includes seeking further help if our EWS return. **Risking on Purpose (ROP)** - deliberately choosing to take a risk when the outcome may be what we want or need, for example, going for a job interview. It also includes remembering other people have a right to feel safe. **The Language of Safety** - this is the glue which holds all the Protective Behaviours elements together. It includes re-framing our language into an empowering, non-victimising and non-violent format consistent with the PBs process. We demonstrate the difference between 'political correctness' when we may not believe in what we are saying and PBs language of safety where we know, for example, racist words are never acceptable because someone is likely to feel unsafe if we use such language. Using racist language would mean we were not observing our responsibility to other peoples' right to feel safe.

Uses of PBs training

To date the PBs framework is used in many places and by a variety of people. It is being used by schools, residential care services, domestic abuse services, mediation practitioners, police, counselling agencies, probation workers, youth workers, social services, disability service workers. The process is used in many ways including abuse prevention, crisis intervention, bullying prevention; policy development, managing challenging behaviour, crime prevention, counselling, assertiveness training, staff development, parent support work, Restorative Justice, mediation, conferencing and conflict resolution, to name a few. Because of the universal 'we all' in PBs it can be, and is, used by anyone irrespective of their ability, belief system, colour, gender, sexual orientation, profession, age, physical or mental abilities.

Protective Behaviours training

There are several types of training. One day Introduction to the PBs Process and two day Foundation Level courses are available to introduce the ideas to individuals who can then use them for themselves and the people with whom they work. It is preferable for the two days to be spaced at least a week apart. Specialist Practitioner (Process into Practice/ Intermediate Level) courses last four days during which all the ideas are analysed in greater detail enabling people to further develop their skills as PBs Practitioners. This course is a pre-requisite for people who want to become PBTP (Protective Behaviours Training Partnership) Trainers. Trainer Training involves practice presentations, written work and apprenticeship to an endorsed trainer. This can be a lengthy process according to the needs of the individual.

Resources

There are a variety of resources available to support those wishing to embed the Protective Behaviours process at home and within settings. The Dot Com Values journals, teacher guides and website have been designed to be consistent with the process and thereby complement settings already using PBs. They can also be used in settings to introduce Protective Behaviours.

For further information about Protective Behaviours, why not take a look at the Protective Behaviours Community web pages at www.pbpeople.org where is a forum area and you can ask questions, share ideas and find local trainers.

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