Romancing the Brain: Conflict Resolution & Recovery

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A NIDA SBIR Product

- Funding by NIDA with an Expert Review Panel
- A multi-component, multi-media tool for use by addiction and other helping professionals to assist adults and youth improve their life traumas and conflict through knowledge, attitudes and skills.
- Romancing the Brain skills are an intensive set of psycho-emotional-social-spiritual Cogitative Behavioral Therapy (CBT) treatments that, if followed, will result in brain and lifestyle change.
- Some treatment sessions are based in brain research and CBT treatments
- Other techniques are employed that unify the principles of social learning and emotional intelligence theory
- This program affects behavioral learning with emotional development and maturity that results in long-term changes in the brain and behavior.
- This training includes trauma reduction concepts and tools
A NIDA SBIR Product

- Modularized and can be broken into individual, group, family or IOP/OP presentations
- Instructor Manual with lecture notes and instructions for use
- Client/Participant Workbook for brain building, self-reflection and brain change reinforcement
- CD Rom with almost 400 power points that can be modularized or separated for custom use
- Training for Counselor’s to facilitate and TOT
Your brain governs specific functions. * sensory (blue) * visual (yellow) * reward pathway (orange), * cerebellum (hot pink) for coordination and the hippocampus (green) for memory, thalamus (magenta) which receives information about pain coming from the body (magenta line within the spinal cord), and passes the information up to the cortex. Nerve cells or neurons connect one area to another via pathways to send and integrate information. The distances that neurons extend can be short or long. This pathway is activated when a person receives positive reinforcement for certain behaviors ("reward"). + NIDA 2016
Understanding the Limbic System

- Your Limbic system is located approximately in the center of your brain.
- It is the oldest system of your brain – the mammalian brain.
- It pre-historic time, it was the largest mass area of your brain.
- It is the part of the brain that most people use most often in conflict and trauma.
Recovery Starts in the Brain...or doesn’t

BUT!! LIMBIC

you better!

Absolutes

NO

! EVER EVER

If you ever...

Never Fight

Always

Could

DON’T YOU EVER!

YOU

WONT

How??

Should
How Did Your Brain React?

- How did your brain react in these scenario's?
- Did the sense of “fight or flight” trigger in your brain?
- What internal response did you want to give that you filtered out in this room?
- How would you typically react if you were “on the street” in your every day life?
Understanding the Cortex

- It is located in the front part of the brain.
- It functions are decision making, problem solving, creativity, discovery.
- It can be trained to be mindful and the mannerisms in which it is said.
- It reacts positively to options.
- It is like your inside computer.
- It helps you to sort, process and store information.
Wellness & Recovery Grows Here...

Let Us Find Another...

Cortex

I believe...

Will you

I wonder

Stand Still

Let's Discover

Back-up the Train

YES! Often

Consider

I would like

Is it possible

Please

Thank you
The Cortex - Discovery

- We learn impulse control
- Maturity and imagination develops
- Decision making – judgment – reasoning
- Creativity and discovery
- Problem solving
- Personal Empowerment
- Conflict & trauma resolution
- Romance develops into maturity and commitment
One helpful skill to learn is the ability to stand still in the moment. In standing still in the moment, you learn to stop or slow down your thoughts and conflict process by asking yourself three questions:

- Is about what I am going to say (words and phrases) and the way I am going to say it (tone, inflection, and gestures) going to build the relationship up?
- Is it going to keep the relationship level?
- Is it going to tear the relationship down?
Phrases like “Thank you,” “Please,” “I am sorry,” and “I did not intend to …” give people more power in their lives or diminishes their power?

Words or phrases like the following add what to a conversation?
- I believe
- I wonder
- Let’s discover
- I would like
- Consider
- Often

Consider how this change could effect what you would expect to see in other people (for example; work colleagues, family, and friends).
Phrases that “Romance” the Brain

- Is it possible
- Have you had an opportunity to
- I wonder what would happen if
- Help me understand
- I’m confused, I thought
- Is this ok with you
- I’m curious about
- Please explain to me
Phrases that “Romance” the Brain

- I am sorry
- Is there another way I could (say this, do this, explain this, etc).
- Let us discover, consider, believe
- Often, this is a misunderstood (action, behavior, word, etc.)
Romancing the Brain into Wellness

- My pleasure to
- Please
- Thank you
- May I have permission
- Please tell me what you mean by this
- When you have a minute, would you please
Romancing the Brain into Wellness

- Will you agree to this
- I would like to find a solution, together
- Would you consider
- I would like to assist you
- Your thoughts
- Your Ideas
Training the Brain

- Hear It
- See It
- Say It
- Write It
- Read It
- Repeat It
Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

Answer each question as if “push comes to shove”

Answer each question the closest to your response – what you most likely do – “A” or “B” response

30 Questions total – add your responses
Five Styles of Communication

- Five Styles:
  1) Competing
  2) Avoiding
  3) Compromising
  4) Accommodating
  5) Collaborating
Conflict Resolution in Recovery
The attitude is “I’m going to win; you’re going to lose.”

There are only two possible outcomes from conflict: winning and losing.

Winning is associated with status and competence.

Losing is associated with loss of status, incompetence and weakness.

Prime importance on personal goals to the virtual exclusion of any concern for the relationship.

Protection of personal goals is taken as an index of successful combat.

It’s a dog-eat-dog world.

Nice guys finish last.

Method of control: RESENTMENT
Conflict Resolution in Recovery

Avoid
Avoiding Style

- We are both going to lose, so I’ll leave.
- There is a feeling of hopelessness.
- Avoiding protects the person from the useless and punishing experience of endless struggles that cannot be won.
- Rather than suffer, I will leave physically or psychologically.
- An Avoider might adopt the role of a detached observer.
- Roll with the punches and live to fight again another day.
- Getting angry means losing control.
- It is unfair to lose control, so leave.
- Method of control: WITHDRAWAL
Conflict Resolution in Recovery

Compromise
You get half the cookie, and I get half the cookie. We both lose a little and compromise. It’s better to get something than nothing.

A secret variation of losing/winning.

Soften the effects of losing by limiting gains of the other person.

Arrive at compromise by somebody playing the “judge.”

Ringing oratory invoking everything from “the democratic process” to “the rules.”

Nobody wins, and nobody loses.

Evokes the attitude that “war is hell.”

Method of control: RULES
Conflict Resolution in Recovery

Accommodate
Accommodating Style

- The primary concern for the effect of conflict is on the well-being and durability of relationships.
- The assumption is that human relationships are fragile, that they cannot endure the trauma of working through differences.
- There is a fear of losing the relationship.
- Appease others by ignoring or denying their behavior and avoid conflict by ignoring or denying how you feel about their behavior.
- Personal objectives are set aside, and the relationship lends itself to one-sided domination.
- There is an attitude of forced, cheerful compliance.
- Eventually, the “Mt. St. Helens” effect will play out (“Tic, Tic, Boom!”) or it is like a time bomb (“TIC TOC, TIC TOC … BOOM!”).
- Method of control: GUILT
Conflict Resolution in Recovery

Collaborate
Collaborating Style

- This has an altogether different attitude that results in a different behavior.
- We can both win.
- Importance is attached to the well-being of the members of the relationship and to the relationship simultaneously. The two sets of goals are not seen as mutually exclusive as with other styles.
- Conflict is inevitable because we are different from one another. This leads to differences in opinion. The most common reasons for differences are incomplete understanding and commitment to inequality.
- A collaborator has a tolerance and acceptance of differences.
- You have the right to feel, and so does the other person in the conflict.
Let’s differentiate (and get out of our feelings) and then integrate (and create more closeness … let’s be solution focused).

The real paradox of control is to not control! The real power comes into play when you both allow each other to get out your feelings and then think of the other’s perspective to the point of creating more closeness through the understanding and then, through that, you come to a place to problem solve that takes the feelings, points of view, background and perspectives of both parties into play. This is true integration of both parties.

The paradox of control: REAL POWER
Avoiders have minimal concern for personal goals as well as minimal concern for the relationship (1,1).

Competers have maximum concern for personal goals and minimal concern for the relationship (9, 1).

Accommodators have minimal concern for personal goals and maximum concern for the relationship (1,9).

Compromisers fall into the middle of the quadrants. They want to preserve personal goals and the relationship and are willing to give up some of each to do so.

Collaborators have maximum concern for personal goals as well as maximum concern for the relationships. They want everyone to win (9,9).
Study the 5 styles of communication.
Create a “Styles of Communication” wheel for their family of origin using the example provided – use the “Family Circle” handout as your worksheet.
Add lines as needed for family members.
Then answer the questions for yourself:
- Consider from whom you first learned your primary style of communication in conflict. How has it served you?
- Consider from whom you first learned your secondary style of communication in conflict. How has it served you?
- Is there anything you would choose to change?
Five (5) Stages of Relationships

- Honeymoon
- Disillusion
- Misery
- Awakening
- Peace/Calm
Honeymoon Stage

* Please take a Trip down Memory Lane with me
* Were you, at one time, looking for that prince or princess?
* Think back to the beginning of that time, the beginning of the relationship, what did you feel and what did you do?

- Exciting
- Scary
- Fun
- Lots of communication
- New feelings
- Hopes
- Dreams
- Careful
- Thoughtful
- Sex was great
- I got cards and notes
- Special nights out
Disillusionment Stage

- What happens after some time in the Honeymoon stage?
- Disillusionment sets in…
- This is sometimes referred to as the Familiarization or Adjusting to Reality stage.
- Your endorphins cannot keep producing at the same level as before. You become more relaxed in the relationship, as does your partner.
- You and your partner are human and your flaws are beginning to show. There’s generally enough goodwill left over from the honeymoon stage that you can overlook most flaws.
This is also called the Power Struggle, Disappointment, or Distress stage.

You become more aware of the differences between you and your partner. Depending on your style of communication, you find yourself avoiding, accommodating, judging, competing, and fighting in the conflict. Conflict continues to grow.

Deep resentments can begin to build in this stage. You see your partner as uncaring, self-centered, or untrustworthy.

People really know they are in the Misery stage when they ask themselves:

- “Why did I ever get involved with this person in the first place?”
- “What was I thinking?”
- “If only I never got involved in the first place!”
- “Will this ever change?”
- “Is there no way out?”
Awakening Stage

- This is also called the Stability, Friendship, or Reconciliation stage.
- Couples who make it this far express feelings of stronger commitment, connection, trust, and love.
- You know neither one of you is perfect, but this concept is no longer threatening.
- You are confident in your ability to resolve most of your issues.
- You begin to reestablish your own outside interests (unlike the Honeymoon stage, where you only had eyes for each other).
- There is some danger of boredom with your partner, so you have to work to maintain the connection you made in the Honeymoon stage.
- Most couples are comfortable and content at this stage.
- To help a couple move to this stage, it is vital that they learn how to listen and communicate with each other.
Other names for this stage are Commitment, Acceptance, Transformation, or Real Love.

It is estimated that less than 5 percent of couples make it to this stage.

You are with your partner because you have chosen him or her, faults and all, not because you need him or her.

You and your partner are a team and look out for each other’s best interests.

At this stage, your relationship becomes a true partnership.
Getting to Peace & Calm
Four (4) Types of Agreement

- Financial
- Physical/Spatial
- Emotional/Social
- Spiritual
Tip 1 – Stand Still in the Moment

- Reverse of flight or fight (Limbic)
- Take your time
- Delay a reaction and consider your actions (is about what I am going to say and do…)
- Indecision can be your best friend in order to get to mutual problem solving
- Third reaction …. Stand still in the moment
Tip 2 - Do Not Assume Intent

- Another version of the “Blame Game”
- People within sticking distance
- Let go of presumptions or premeditated attacks
- Misunderstandings and accidental collisions
- Accountability as a “WE” issue – change is the responsibility of both parties
Tip 3 - Dig Deeper into Conflict and Anger

- Digger deeper into conflict and anger is like being an archaeologist.
- There is reasonable expectation that there is some type of treasure below.
- Our treasure is our "fabric" of our life.
- "Fabric" is our: culture, race, religion, values, creativity, ideas, past experiences, family’s past experiences, unresolved grief, layers of happiness and love and go on.
- Other examples of the "fabric" of your life?
The more you back up the train – oops, did not mean to say it that way, in that manner with those assumptions and dig deeper… The more likely you are to get beyond the surface and get to the issues … that now can be identified and resolved!

Work not to bring shame/blame/pain back!
Tip 4 - Cultivate Confusion

- A powerful tool for resolving problems and conflicts
- Withhold judgment, guessing and blame
- Most likely your first impression in a conflict has a more neutral second impression – if you can just get there!
Tip 5 – The Paradox of Control

- A paradox is a seemingly contradictory statement that may be true.
- The paradox of control means the more and harder I try to control you, the less and less of you I am in control of you.
- The common denominator of being human = control junkie
- We become less of who we are in the process
- Emotional manipulations to control others
People, in general, think they know THE TRUTH with a capital “T”.

If things do not go their way, they feel compelled to interrupt or point out an error in your reasoning

See the world in black or white – no grays or rainbows

In interpersonal communications…there is always – all ways – more than one truth!
A blameless relationship with ourselves begins with peeling the layers of onion.

At our outer layer of exploration we discover that we have to peel further to get to the true meaning.

Examining our self-talk helps us to see directly into our relationship with ourselves.

Recording these conversations may help us see the effects of being raised in our families of origin.

We can learn to cut the invisible apron strings that bind us to old patterns and behaviors.
Tip 8 – Avoiding Premature Forgiveness

- The first response of a peacemaker is to shut down in a conflict or disagreement.
- Or work quickly to smooth it over.
- Major problem in close or intimate relationships.
- Act as if the most important thing is to re-establish harmony.
- Happens at their and the others personal expense.
- Tick - Tick - Tick - Boom!!!
Tip 9 – Put Down Your Dukes

- Getting angry, taking the offensive and attacking someone verbally is offensive and hurtful.
- Competers are in your face with an over-reactive style.
- Accommodators and Avoiders have an ultimate same result: Tick–Tick-Tick- Boom.
- The best offense is a good defense.
What is the Life Script you are living?
Listen to your words and pick it out.
Change the inner dialogue to the positive outcomes you want in your life!
Not to go limbic with yourself.
How could this be played out differently using the tips?
Courageous People

- Courageous people make big efforts to be transparent
- Put their dukes down
- Create meaningful conversations
- Risk their ego for the possibility of creating a new life change – intimacy
- Intimacy is broken down to four interconnecting words:
  
  In – To – Me - See
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