

# PERSONNEL TRAINING SERIES

## DEVELOPING & USING RATIONALES

for

Working with Transition-Aged  
Youth and Young Adults



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
Florida Department of Education  
2007

## Your feedback will be valued:

In order for us to continue to improve the usefulness and effectiveness of the Personnel Training Module Series, we value your feedback and suggestions. Please send comments and suggestions to Hewitt B. “Rusty” Clark, Ph.D., at [clark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:clark@fmhi.usf.edu).

### Some relevant Web sites:

Transition to Independence Process (TIP) system – University of South Florida  
<http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>

National Center on Youth Transition – University of South Florida  
<http://ncyt.fmhi.usf.edu>

Transition Center – University of Florida  
<http://www.thetransitioncenter.org>

Florida Department of Education  
<http://www.fldoe.org>

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For more information regarding the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System and other transition issues, please visit our Web sites: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu> <http://ntacyt.fmhi.usf.edu> or contact Hewitt B. “Rusty” Clark, Ph.D., Nicole Deschênes, M.Ed., or Jordan Knab, Ed.S., Department of Child and Family Studies, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, Tampa FL 33612. Email: [clark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:clark@fmhi.usf.edu), [deschenes@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:deschenes@fmhi.usf.edu), [jknab@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:jknab@fmhi.usf.edu).

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# Introduction





# General Introduction to Personnel Training Modules

**T**he transition period for youth and young adults struggling with emotional/behavioral difficulties (EBD) involves unique barriers that put this particular population at significantly greater risk for school failure, involvement with correctional authorities, and/or dependency on social services. These youth have the highest rate of dropout from secondary school among all disability groups (Marder & D’Amico, 1992). They also experience the poorest outcomes in employment and independent living and have higher rates of arrests and incarceration (Davis & Vander Stoep, 1996; Marder & D’Amico, 1992; Vander Stoep, Davis, & Collins, 2000). The youth who have or are at risk of EBD range from the adolescent girl who is suffering from severe depression due to previous sexual abuse to the adolescent boy who lives in a “war zone” type neighborhood and has been arrested recently for auto theft. Neither of these youths create a “poster child image” around which to rally support.

Given the needs of these transition-aged youth and young adults, it is important that transition facilitators, and others working with and on behalf of these young people, have the skills and tools to help youth as they navigate transition to adulthood.



# Personnel Training Modules

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The *Personnel Training Modules* have been developed to enhance the competencies of those who work with transition-aged youth and young adults. The modules make frequent reference to the transition facilitator and his or her role in assisting youth with EBD and utilizing the philosophy, values, skills, and processes in the modules. Although the primary audience for the materials is transition facilitators, the material also will be useful to anyone committed to working with youth and young adults in transition (e.g., teachers, mental health specialists, employment specialists, guidance counselors, parents, foster parents, vocational rehabilitation counselors, juvenile justice personnel).

## Modules in the Series

*Personnel Training Modules:*

Module 1. Developing & Using Rationales

Module 2. Strength Discovery Assessment Process


Module 3. Career Transition

Problem solving and decision-making processes:

Module 4. The SCOCS Framework

Module 5. The SODAS Framework

*Please visit our Web site (<http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>) for additional modules.*



For outcome measurements for youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties, please visit the reports section of

our Web site.

<http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>



## Issues of Cultural Diversity

It is important to acknowledge that the cultural orientation of young people and families intersects with the acceptability and applicability of processes and orientations to problem solving and conflict resolution. The skills and procedures in the modules have not been evaluated for use with diverse cultures. Therefore, it is very important for the transition facilitator to consider the youth and family culture when choosing an approach. It may be necessary to modify the language used and the processes so that they are acceptable and helpful to persons in diverse cultures. Some general recommendations for improving the cultural fit of these modules with the culture of the youth and family are to:

- Play an active role in examining your own beliefs and assumptions about different cultures and races
- Be aware that language barriers can play a significant role in exacerbating conflict
- Remain open to learning from each youth and family
- Ask permission of family members before involving them in a problem solving or decision making process (Briefly explain the process and ask them if this fits for them and would be helpful or feel okay to them. Then be sure to honor their decision.)
- Ask youth and/or parents (caregivers) who should be involved
- Educate yourself about the cultural orientation of the family, youth, or others involved in a negotiated decision making process like SCOCS. Some cultural orientations are more collectively oriented than individually oriented and you may need to modify your approach based on the cultural orientation of those involved.

Below are some resources and readings that will help you adapt your approach.

### Web Sites and Contact Details

Transition to Independence  
Process System  
<http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>

National Center on Youth  
Transition  
<http://ncyt.fmhi.usf.edu>

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### *Selected Readings & Resources*

- Collier, M. J. (2003). Understanding cultural identities in intercultural communication: A ten-step inventory. In L.A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (pp. 412-429). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Hernandez, M., & Isaacs, T. (1998). *Promoting Cultural Competencies in Children's Mental Health Services*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Stewart, E. C., & Bennet, M. J. (1991). *American cultural patterns: A cross-cultural perspective*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1994). Managing intercultural conflicts effectively. In L. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: a reader* (7th ed., pp. 360–372). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Yoshida, T. (1994). Interpersonal versus non-interpersonal realities. In R.W. Brislin & T. Yoshida (Eds.). *Improving intercultural interactions: modules for cross-cultural training programs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## TIP Operations Manual

It is extremely important for a reader to review the Transition to Independence Process: TIP System Development & Operations Manual prior to studying the *Personnel Training Modules*. The TIP Operations Manual provides a conceptual framework and specific principles that should guide one's work with youth and young adults with EBD. Our Web site addresses are provided at the end of this introduction for the reader's access to each of the *Personnel Training Modules*.



## Modules Format

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The modules are designed to build from one to the next and, therefore, should be presented and learned in the order listed above. Skills and processes learned in earlier modules (e.g., strength discovery process and rationales) are incorporated into the subsequent modules (e.g., problem solving and negotiated decision making).

Common formats are used across the *Personnel Training Modules*. Each module begins with an introduction, a connection to the TIP System and TIP Guidelines, a statement of the learning objectives, and a narrative description of the values, skills, and procedures related to the process being taught. The description includes a definition of the process, guidelines for its use, common challenges in utilizing the process, and examples of the process as it may be used by a transition facilitator or other personnel working with a transition-aged youth or young adult.

Appendices, which follow the narrative section of the module, contain forms that will be useful in implementing the processes and include helpful quick references and worksheets to use with young people and that they can have for their personal use. The appendices also contain the pre/post tests that each reader can utilize for a self-assessment of knowledge acquisition or that can be utilized by supervisors or trainers as they assess the quality of the training they provide on these modules.

### Competency-Based Training Available

*Behavior Rehearsal Manuals* have been developed to accompany the *Personnel Training Modules* to ensure that adequate practice and feedback is provided to meet the standards for competency-based training. Members of the ***TIP Program Development and Evaluation Team*** can provide competency-based training utilizing the *Personnel Training Modules* and the Behavior Rehearsal Manuals and assist an organization in building its capacity for training current and future personnel designated to work with youth and young adults with challenges.

# Introduction to Modules on Developing & Using Rationales

*The mission of the Transition to Independence Process of (TIP) system is to assist young people with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties (EBD) in making a successful transition to adulthood with all young persons achieving, within their potential, their goals in the transition domains of education, employment, living situation, and community life.*

The mission of the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) system is to assist young people with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties (EBD) in making a successful transition into adulthood, with all young persons achieving, within their potential, their goals in the transition domains of employment, education, living situation, and community life. The TIP system is driven by seven guidelines at the practice level – and strengthened by the extent to which the program and community system levels are aligned to support these guidelines and the related collaboration required. The third TIP System Guideline that specifically ties into this module is to develop personal choice and social responsibility with young people. An essential element of this guideline is “encourage problem-solving methods, decision-making, and evaluation of impact on self and others” (Clark, 2004 Revised). (*The TIP System Development and Operations Manual* and other articles and documents related to transition issues, program development, research, and evaluation are available through the TIP system Web site: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>.)

This training module was designed to teach those who work with transition-aged youth and young adults to guide youth in understanding the connection between the youth’s behavior and the associated outcomes.

As mentioned in the general introduction, this module makes frequent reference to the transition facilitator as the main person who works with the young person. Although the material is written for transition facilitators, it is also highly relevant for others who work with youth in transition (e.g., teachers, mental health specialists, employment specialists, guidance counselors, parents, foster parents, vocational rehabilitation counselors, juvenile justice personnel).



# Module Learning Objectives

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After completing this module, you should be able to:

- Explain what a rationale is
- Explain the function of using rationales and the benefits of using them
- Identify which type of rationale should be used most frequently
- Explain the three guidelines for developing an effective rationale
- Give an example of a rationale and a nonrationale
- Role-play giving a rationale



# Developing & Using Rationales



# Introduction to Using Rationales

## Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties

- Have the highest rate of dropout from secondary school among all disability groups
- Experience the poorest outcomes in employment and independent living
- Have the highest rates of arrests and incarceration

Rationales explain why or how a behavior may lead to positive or negative outcomes. Rationales have several functions. They help a youth make rational, logical decisions by helping them understand the likely connections between their behavior and what happens to them. Rationales also help youth understand why behavior change is important (i.e., they justify behavior change and requests that others may make of the youth). Rationales also help youth learn consideration for others as well as to think before they act.

## Types of Rationales

There are four types of rationales that will be addressed in this module. Although different types of rationales are used for different situations, the transition facilitator should always try to keep the information used in the rationale strength-based and personally meaningful to the youth. The transition facilitator should draw from the strengths and resources that were identified during the Strength Discovery process, trying to focus on positive outcomes that may occur as a result of the youth choosing to engage in appropriate behavior.

- 1** The first type of rationale describes to the youth the benefits of engaging in a specific appropriate behavior.
- 2** The second type connects negative outcomes with the failure to engage in a specific appropriate behavior.
- 3** The third type involves describing negative outcomes of engaging in a specific inappropriate behavior.
- 4** The fourth type delineates the benefits of not engaging in a specific inappropriate behavior.

Table 1 illustrates the connection of behavior with positive and negative outcomes.

Each of these types of rationales may be focused on the likely consequences for the youth. However, each type of rationale also may be “other-oriented,” describing the impact of the youth’s behavior on other people or explaining why other people may be likely to react in particular ways in response to the youth’s choices and behaviors.

**Table 1: Types of Rationales**

	Appropriate Behavior	Inappropriate Behavior
Engaging in Behavior	<i>Positive Outcomes</i>	<i>Negative Outcomes</i>
Avoidance or Absence Of Behavior (i.e., not engaging in behavior)	<i>Negative Outcomes</i>	<i>Positive Outcomes</i>

## In Brief

### Rationales help youth...

- Make rational, logical decisions
- Understand why behavior change is important
- Learn consideration for others

*A rationale is:*

- A statement of the **benefits** the young person may encounter by engaging in the appropriate behavior, using new skills or avoiding inappropriate behavior
- A statement of the **problems or negative consequences** a student could encounter for engaging in inappropriate behavior or failing to engage in the appropriate behavior
- A statement that teaches **concern for others** by describing the **effects of the student’s behavior on others**

## Benefits of Using Rationales

It is important that youth begin learning that their choices about their behavior lead to different outcomes. When youth do not understand the relationship between their behavior and the events that follow, they tend to take a victim role, blaming others for negative outcomes and neglecting any responsibility for the outcome. Rationales help youth learn the important relationship between their behavior and the various consequences or outcomes that may result.

When youth can describe the relationship between their behavior and the outcomes that follow their behavior, they can learn that they often have control of their outcomes and are not a victim of fate. In other words, they perceive the locus of control, or the source of control, to be internal. Young people with an internal locus of control believe they have control of their own destiny to a large extent, identifying that their own skill, ability, and efforts determine the quality of their life experiences.

In contrast, youth with an external locus of control believe that their life experiences are determined mainly by sources they have no control over, such as fate, chance, luck, or powerful others (Gershaw, 1989). Using rationales can help the youth strengthen their internal locus of control and foster accepting responsibility and an understanding that the decisions the youth makes are linked to outcomes. Youth with a strong external locus of control tend to remain in a victim role and blame others or circumstances for the results that follow their behavior.

In addition to youth understanding and generating rationales to improve the quality of decisions and internal locus of control, caregivers also can benefit from using rationales with youth. Research shows that young people prefer parents whose disciplinary requests are accompanied by “rational” explanations (Pikas, 1961)—for example, “I want you to do this because....” Another study by Elder (1963) shows that youth are more likely to comply with their parents’ requests when the parents provide explanations for their rules and requests. When caregivers use rationales, youth seem to better understand that there is a reason for their request or decision instead of the request or decision seeming arbitrary or self-serving.



# Guidelines for Effective Rationales

Transition facilitators have a wonderful opportunity to use youth-centered and futures-oriented rationales with each young person in order to help youth connect their behavior with probable outcomes and to improve their decision making. The following guidelines assist transition facilitators in providing effective rationales for transition-age adolescents.

## *Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.*

- It is best to focus on a new or alternative skill or behavior rather than focusing on the inappropriate behavior.
- Usually rationales focus on the skill that needs to be acquired (e.g., “accepting no for an answer”) rather than a specific behavior (e.g., “eye contact”). However, if a specific behavior persists as a problem (e.g., no acknowledgement), then rationales and teaching may focus on that behavior.
- Transition facilitators need to make decisions about which skills or behaviors to focus on because a youth may need assistance on many fronts. In order to be specific, it is important to target the skill that needs the most attention at the time by focusing on the main skill/alternative behavior. For example, if the youth is asked by his/her boss to finish a task and he or she does not comply, the teaching and rationales should focus on the instruction-following skill, not finishing the task because the more general skill of being able and willing to follow an employer’s instructions is likely to have a broader impact on the youth’s employability.
- Rationales should be as short as possible and given without a lecture. Because rationales should be used often, it helps if they are varied so that it doesn’t become too routine or boring.

## *State benefit or natural (+ or -) consequences for youth.*

- Emphasize the benefits of appropriate, alternative behavior, taking a strength-based approach instead of a deficit-based approach. It is important that the young person learn these new behaviors, so be sure to point out the many advantages of these new appropriate behaviors.
- Transition facilitators need to point out specific natural consequences, explicitly stating the material, social, physical, and emotional consequences that are most likely to occur as a result of the youth’s behavior.
- Emphasize short-term goals and consequences. Make it convincing and believable (short-term). Point out benefits and harms that will affect their lives in the immediate and near future.



**Examples of Positive Outcomes that May Be Associated with Positive Behavior**

- Doing fun things with friends this weekend
- Being liked by girlfriend or boyfriend
- Getting better grades in school this week
- Keeping a job or getting a raise
- Getting a diploma or GED, which may lead to better job options

***Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.***

- Make rationales personal to each young person. The information gathered from the strength discovery process can be very helpful in making rationales personal to each young person. Keep in mind the future focus for the young person, bringing in his/her goals and dreams. Knowing each young person’s likes, dislikes, and ambitions will assist in developing rationales that point out realistic outcomes he or she desires as well as outcomes he or she hopes to avoid.
- Have rationales fit the context of the behavior. Know when, where, with whom the youth will engage (or has engaged) in the target behavior and include those specifics into the description of the rationale. What environments? What natural consequences are likely?
- Ensure that the rationale you are giving the young person fits what he/she wants or does not want to happen—and not what you, the facilitator, want or do not want to happen. It may be helpful to ask the young person what he or she wants to happen in a particular situation before you develop a rationale so that the rationale is in line with the young person’s interests.
- Express concern for the young person and others. By expressing concern the transition facilitator lets the young person know that he/she cares about what will happen to the young person in the future.
- When possible, incorporate into rationales a consideration about life, property, responsibilities, and feelings for others in order to teach the young person to care for and respect those who may benefit or be harmed by his or her actions. Remember, this is a higher level and developing perspective for young people.

***Remain open to the young person through the quality of your interactions.***

- Maintain a pleasant and steady voice tone
- Express enthusiasm where appropriate
- Maintain facial expressions/eye contact/body language to match
- Be brief (avoid lecturing)
- Solicit youth's input throughout interactions
- Acknowledge youth's input (e.g., head nods)
- Remain nonjudgmental
- Set limits and expectations, as necessary
- Express concern, care, and encouragement



## Role of Rationales

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It is important to understand that rationales do not in and of themselves change behavior. They explain why or how a behavior may result in positive or negative outcomes. It is through teaching, positive reinforcement (e.g., descriptive praise, positive outcomes), and experiencing negative outcomes that behavior is changed. Rationales can be used to help teach the young person about the possible outcomes of a new or weak behavior, but over time they can be faded out as appropriate behavior is acquired and the youth begins to generate his or her own meaningful rationales.

Rationales can help build relationships. The literature shows that caregivers who use rationales are better liked and seen as more fair. Rationales help facilitate building positive relationships by helping the youth understand and appreciate the impact of his or her behavior on others. This understanding can help the youth develop concern for others by considering the consequences of his or her behaviors on others.

Rationales also help strengthen choice and self-determination of a young person. Rationales facilitate decision making based on a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of various options. This process of considering the positive and negative options is a central component of true choice and self-determination.

Transition facilitators can use rationales as they counsel the young person and help them make important decisions. Discussions that consider different options can help the young person learn to think in different ways and to see the possibilities that could lead to positive outcomes. So, although rationales do not teach behavior or develop relationships themselves, they definitely can assist in teaching and developing relationships.



# Examples of Using Rationales

Rationales highlight the connections between the youth’s behavior and likely natural consequences for the youth. Here are some examples and nonexamples of rationales. Use the following evaluation tool in making your determination.

## Determining if the Example Is a Rationale

- Type:
  - » Using appropriate behavior —————> Likely benefit for youth
  - » Avoiding inappropriate behavior —————> (same)
  - » Using inappropriate behavior —————> Likely negative consequence
  - » Not using appropriate behavior —————> (same)
- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

## Statements We Make That Are Not Rationales

*“Maybe he will give you a raise.”*

*“You will be suspended from school.”*

*“You will probably be arrested and may have to serve prison time.”*

*“I wouldn’t do that because you could get hurt.”*

Each of the above statements may include information, benefits, or negative consequences, but none of them are rationales because they do not include the behavior associated with the benefit or negative consequence. In other words, these nonexamples do not explain why or how a behavior can lead to positive or negative outcomes. These above statements do not help the youth learn the connection between their behavior and what happens to them; therefore, they do not encourage behavior change.

*“Maybe he will give you a raise.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“Try to be nicer next time.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

## Rationale or Not?—Self-Evaluate Each Statement

*“If you learn to greet people appropriately, you can use this skill on your job interview and it will be more likely that you’ll get the job.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“You should have worked harder.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“You’re fired.” (Donald Trump style)*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“When you cheat in class, you’re likely to get caught and may lose your place on the wrestling team.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“You will probably be arrested and may have to serve prison time. You know your grandmother will be so upset with you!”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“When you let your mother know where you are, she doesn’t worry about you so much.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“When you let your mother know where you are so she doesn’t worry about you, she will be more likely to trust you and let you do more things on your own.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“If you let me know where you are, I’ll be more likely to let you go other places on your own.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“If you get out of bed by 7:00, you’ll make it to school on time to complete your math assignment in class so you’re likely to get your afternoon privileges and not have to go to mandatory study hall.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“When you listen for a break in a conversation before you jump in, you’re more likely to get the other person’s full attention and get what you want.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“If you learn that some people are very offended by the use of swear words, you’re more likely to be able to keep this next job that you’re wanting.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“You really handled that situation well. By controlling your anger, you were able to avoid the likelihood of your supervisor reprimanding or firing you. You should be proud of yourself in managing this situation so well.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“If you learn to follow instructions, you’re more likely to keep this next job and get that raise at three months. This would give you more money for your CD collection and going to the movies you like.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“If you can continue to demonstrate that you can leave your classroom and do what you said, it is more likely that your teacher will trust you and allow you to do more things you request.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“If you learn to say what you want in a clear but pleasant way, you’re more likely to get what you want.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

*“Job supervisors give lots of instructions. If you do what’s being asked of you, you’re more likely to be in line for a raise.”*

- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill
- State benefit or natural consequence for youth
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person



## Practice Improves the Effectiveness of Your Interactions with Young People

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Think again about the kinds of appropriate and/or inappropriate behaviors that your young people are engaging in. On the following sheets, develop possible rationales that you could use to strengthen your effectiveness with the young people. Remember that your use of rationales makes it more likely that young people will want to be around you and will do as you suggest. Rationales also benefit the young people by helping them understand the possible links between their behaviors/choices and benefits or risks for them. Thus, over time they are more likely to engage in behaviors and make choices that benefit their short-term and/or long-term futures.



# Creating Rationales Worksheets



# Create Rationales for the Youth and Young Adults with Whom You Work

Write out some simple rationales that relate to skills or behaviors that your young people present. Practice using some of these with some of your co-workers, and then begin using these with the young people with whom you work.

The appendix includes some additional forms that are helpful in formulating, practicing, and evaluating the use of rationales.

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
- State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

2

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
- State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
- State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
  - State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
  - Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

5

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
  - State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
  - Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

6

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
  - State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
  - Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

7

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
  - State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
  - Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

## Building Relationships and Strengthening Rationales

### ***Care Statements Can Be Used with Rationales: They Help Build Relationships and Strengthen Rationales***

*“You’re really doing well in managing your anger here in your group home. I know that this skill will make it more likely that you’ll be able to get back on the junior basketball league. I really care about you and want you to succeed in all your goals.”*

*“I care about you achieving whatever you strive for. That’s why I continue to encourage you to finish high school. As you know, it’s your ticket to that internship in carpentry that you want.”*

*“As you learn to present your concerns and needs with your boyfriend in a less threatening way, it’s more likely that he’ll be more responsive to your needs. I care that you’re experiencing positive relationships so that the two of you can be mutually supportive.”*

### ***Descriptive Praise Statements Can Be Used with Rationales: They Too Help Build Relationships and Strengthen Rationales***

*“I’m so proud of all the progress you’ve made in getting along with your teachers over the past three months. Your improved grades from this and your studying should make it likely that you’ll get into that nursing program you want.”*

*“As you learn to present your concerns and needs with your boyfriend in a less threatening way, it’s more likely that he’ll be more responsive to your needs. You should feel very proud of how you’re doing in learning to be more assertive, rather than expressing everything in rage. Clearly this has paid off in your workplace as shown by your recent raise!”*

### ***Practice Improves the Effectiveness of Your Interactions with Young People***

Now go back to your previous worksheet in which you wrote out some rationales that are relevant to the young people with whom you work.

Add a care statement to one of these rationales and add a descriptive praise statement to another of these. Practice these with your associates and then begin using these with your young people.

## Strengthening the Personal Features of a Rationale

Rationales can be particularly personal and meaningful when they evolve from your interactions with the young person. In this way, the young person may reveal more about what he/she thinks are the benefits or risks to him/her. For example:

TF: “I know you want to finish up your AA college degree and are concerned your grades are slipping. You mentioned that you’re having a tough time staying awake in your classes. What do you think is causing this?”

“Well, the instructors are really boring!”

TF: “Might anything else be contributing to this problem?”

“Well, I guess I am staying up late watching all those cable shows.”

TF: “There’s little you can do about ‘boring’ instructors. What do you think you might be able to do so you can stay awake in class and make sure you complete your degree this next semester?”

“I guess I should get in to a regular study and sleep schedule like I used to do.”

TF: “Your schooling and your energy really seemed to be doing well when you lived that schedule. What do you think would assist you in getting back into a schedule that will give you enough study time and sleep time?”

The transition facilitator and young person continue to figure out what supports, if any, the young person might need to accomplish his/her goal.

Here is an example of a brief statement of the above rationale:

*“If you don’t get your sleep at night, you’re more likely to doze off or daydream in class and not get the passing grades you need to complete your AA degree this next semester.”*

Another example of a lead into the personalizing of a rationale follows:

*“Because of your history of lies, it seems your group home staff don’t trust you. How might you go about changing your reputation so that staff will let you do more things on your own in the community?”*

This may lead to the following type of rationale.

*“You can build trust with others by being honest with them. As your reputation improves, the adults around you are more likely to let you do more things on your own.”*

## Practice Makes for More Effective Interactions

Now it is your turn to choose a partner (or a youth) to practice how you can work with the young person in learning what he/she would find beneficial (maximize benefit or minimize risk) for him/her. This information will help you in being more effective in your interactions with young people, because you will be able to personalize rationales with him/her.



# Examples of Functional Rationales for Teaching Social Skills

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## Following Instructions

- Helps people teach young person the skills he/she needs and the skills he/she says that he/she wants
- Helps the young person get along better with people

### *Examples:*

*“If you follow your employer’s (teacher’s, parent’s, etc.) instructions, you will soon learn how to do each job she expects of you. This will make it easier for you to get your work done and get promoted or get a raise.”*

*“I know it’s hard to do as your parents ask, but if you follow their instruction, they may learn to trust you more, and they may be more willing to let you have more freedom and maybe even stay out later.”*

## Accepting Routine Criticism

- Helps the young person get along better with people, resulting in more people who are “on their side” and who will help them
- Helps the young person improve their chances of learning things by encouraging (not discouraging) constructive, corrective feedback
- Helps the young person avoid arguments, being seen as uncooperative or belligerent, and driving people away

### *Examples:*

*“When you accept criticism well, you show people that you respect their views and that you are willing to listen and to change. This will encourage them to talk to you about things you do rather than talk to your teacher (boss, parent, etc.) and maybe help you get out of trouble.”*

## Accepting “No” for an Answer

- Helps the young person get along better with people
- Helps develop cooperation and trust and increases freedom
- Helps avoid arguments and being seen as uncooperative or belligerent

### *Examples:*

*“Accepting ‘no’ for an answer is awfully important when dealing with adults or people in authority. It does not mean that you agree with them, but it does show that you are willing to go along with what they say. Your manager at work (teacher at school, mom or dad, judge, policeman, social worker, etc.) won’t always have time to explain things or listen to your point of view when you ask for something. If you accept ‘no’ right then, they will be more likely to listen to your views later on and you will have a better chance of getting what you want.”*

## Rational Problem Solving

- Helps the young person see there are several options for solving the problem
- Helps the young person see disadvantages and advantages of the different options
- Helps the young person to make a decision that will lead to a desired long-term outcome
- Helps the young person understand the relation between his/her behavior and the outcome
- Helps the young person look forward to the possible positive outcome and be ready to deal with possible negative outcome

### *Examples:*

*“When you use problem solving to come up with different options for the problem and weigh the disadvantages and advantages, you can make a decision that can lead to the outcome you want. For instance, you told me you don’t want to get in any more fights this year in school. You could think of different options to handle the problem of someone confronting you and wanting to fight. Then you could think of the advantages and disadvantages to the options you listed and determine which one will best work for you and keep you out of a fight. If you think rationally, you can avoid trouble with the law and stay in the community where you can see your friends.”*

## Planning

- Helps the young person prepare for what lies ahead (employment, independent living, college or vocational school, parenthood, etc.)
- Helps the young person to deal with the challenges that may come with situations when he/she anticipates some of what he/she may have to face
- Can give young person confidence in his/her self that he/she can do well because he/she has an understanding of what to expect
- Gives people around the young person confidence in the young person because they see he/she is preparing and taking responsibility for his/her future

### *Examples:*

*“Planning for what lies ahead can help you prepare for the future so that you know better how to deal with the situations you may encounter. By planning, you show people you are responsible and are preparing for the future ahead of time, which may lead to people trusting you more and being more interested in giving you the help you need to succeed with your plan.”*

## Asking for Help (from Support People)

- Allows others to help young person in times of need
- Opens the door for other perspectives besides the young person’s
- Allows the young person to acquire the resources he/she may need
- Helps support people know that young person may need extra support in a given area

### *Examples:*

*“It can be difficult to ask for help when you need it. Sometimes we think we can handle everything on our own or that it is a sign of weakness if we ask for help. However, we all need help sometimes. It can be very beneficial to you to ask for help. When your support people know you may need extra help, they will probably be more understanding and try to help you handle your problem the best they can.”*

## Being Dependable (i.e., Doing What You Say You Will Do)

- Helps others to see young person is responsible
- Helps others know the young person will follow through with what he/she says he/she will do
- Increases likelihood of people trusting the young person, which can lead to greater freedom
- Can lead to promotion and/or raises

### *Examples:*

*“Being dependable is a very valuable quality. When people know that you will do what you say you will do, they trust you much more. When you consistently do what you say you will do, people know they can depend on you so they will often allow you to have more freedom and give you more responsibility. Also, people who are dependable are seen as valuable to a company, and they often receive promotions and raises.”*



## Creating Future-Oriented, Personalized Rationales: An Example

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Developing rationales that are meaningful to transition-age youth requires the transition facilitator to have an understanding and appreciation of the youth's hopes, dreams, and strengths. One effective and engaging way of using rationales is to “paint a picture” for the youth that shows the youth engaged in his future, role-playing the thoughts of others who will be part of providing or withholding benefits from the youth.

Consider the example above related to the benefits of “accepting no for an answer” in the context of a youth who has a future dream of playing basketball in the NBA. A rationale that is future-oriented, personalized, and “paints a picture” might sound something like this:

*“Let’s say you have been drafted by the Lakers, and it’s a tense game. The Lakers only have a two-point lead at the half, and you have been sitting on the bench. You are feeling really frustrated and know you can play better than the guy playing point guard. On the way to the locker room at half-time you say, ‘Coach am I gonna get in the game the second half?’ He frowns at you and says, ‘No.’ If you accept no you might say, ‘Okay, coach, I just want you to know I’m ready.’ Or if you choose not to accept no, you might say, ‘Why not, you are not being fair! I can play as good as the other guys, so you need to let me in the game.’ What do you think is going to happen if you accept ‘no?’ If you cannot accept no and argue with the coach, what do you think will happen?”*

Notice that a future-oriented, personalized rationale that “paints a picture” has the following characteristics:

- The context is a future that is important to the youth.
- The transition facilitator “paints a picture” by using dialogue and details of the scene to make the situation come alive for the youth.
- The transition facilitator invites the youth to examine the consequences of different responses to the situation.



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# Appendix



# Developing and Using Rationales

## Rationale Worksheet: Practice Makes Perfect

Situation:

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Skill to be taught (behavior to avoid, alternative behavior) that will lead to a desired outcome for the young person:

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Young person's likes, dislikes, interests, dreams, and goals:

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Specific natural consequences for displaying the skill or alternative behavior (focus on the benefits to the youth):

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Write a Functional Rationale:

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# Developing and Using Rationales

## Checklist on Components of Rationales

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Role Players: \_\_\_\_\_  
Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Were all of the components of the rationale present?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
- Best to focus on a new or alternative skill or behavior
  - May have to state inappropriate behavior or the absence of an appropriate behavior
- \_\_\_\_\_ State benefit or natural (+ or -) consequence for youth
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person

### Was the quality of the interaction appropriate for the situation?

- Maintain a pleasant and steady voice tone
- Express enthusiasm where appropriate
- Use facial expressions/eye contact/body language to match
- Be brief (avoid lecturing)
- Solicit youth’s input throughout interactions
- Acknowledge youth’s input (e.g., head nods)
- Remain nonjudgmental
- Set limits and expectations, as necessary
- Express concern, care, and encouragement

### What type of rationale was used?

- |  |       |                             |
|--|-------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using appropriate behavior      | ————> | Likely benefit for youth    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding inappropriate behavior | ————> | (same)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using inappropriate behavior    | ————> | Likely negative consequence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not using appropriate behavior  | ————> | (same)                      |

# Developing and Using Rationales

## Rationales Worksheet

Write out some simple rationales that relate to skills or behaviors that your young people present. Practice using some of these with some of your co-workers, and then begin using these with the young people with whom you work.

The Appendix includes some additional forms that are helpful in formulating, practicing, and evaluating the use of rationales.

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
- State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

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- State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

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- Be behaviorally specific by focusing on a new or alternative skill.
- State the benefit or natural consequence for youth.
- Ensure that consequences are “personal” to the young person.

# Developing and Using Rationales

## Pretest–Posttest Rationales/SCOCS/SODAS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Rationales**

1. Explain what a rationale is.
2. Explain the function of using rationales and the benefits of using them.
3. Identify which type of rationale should be used most frequently.
4. Explain the three guidelines of developing an effective rationale.
5. Give an example of a rationale and a non rationale.

### **SODAS**

1. Explain what SODAS is.
2. Give the definition for each letter of the framework.
3. Identify the population or types of situations for which SODAS would be used.

### **SCOCS**

1. Explain what SCOCS is.
2. Give the definition for each letter of the framework.
3. Identify the population or types of situations for which SCOCS would be used.