

“I’m Going to Kick Your Candy Ass”: New Tools Salesmanship Reclaiming Intervention

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Background

Billy is an 8-year-old second grader who is immature for his age. In addition, Billy is impulsive and has earned the title of class clown. Last night he was watching his favorite hero, The Rock, on TV. At the beginning of the wrestling segment, The Rock announced to his opponent, “I am going to kick your candy ass.” As he said this, the crowd cheered and applauded. Of course, The Rock won the wrestling match, and Billy was very excited by The Rock’s victory. Billy talked about The Rock all the way to school on the bus.

Incident

During the morning meeting, Billy squirmed around with an excited look about him. As the meeting concluded, his teacher, Mr. Valore, asked if any of the students wanted to share some news. With a big grin on his face, Billy raised his hand and shouted out, “I do.” The teacher asked Billy to come to the front of the room. As Billy got to the front of the room, he turned to Mr. Valore with a smile on his face and exclaimed, “Guess what? I am going to kick your candy ass!” There was a brief silence throughout the class. Some students giggled while others whispered to each other, “I can’t believe that he said that.” Other students told him to shut up and called him stupid. Mr. Valore was surprised by the comment and thought it would be best if Billy were out of the classroom. He sent Billy to the principal, who in turn

sent Billy to me (Ms. Goshdigian), because I am the BD (behavioral disorders) teacher and trained in Life Space Crisis Intervention.

Drain Off

Billy arrived at my classroom looking sad and anxious. He was wringing his hands and would not look at me. When I asked him how he was feeling, he replied that he was fine. I told Billy the principal said something happened this morning during the classroom meeting, and I would be interested in hearing what happened from his point of view. Billy’s eyes filled up with tears, and I told him that it is not always easy to talk about a problem. I waited a few minutes and then Billy blurted out, “I don’t know why I am here.” I affirmed he was upset, but that together we could figure out why he was sent out of class. Billy sat up and looked at me, so I thought he was ready to develop a time line.

Time Line

T: Billy, why don’t you begin by telling me a little bit about the morning meeting?

B: Well, it is really cool. The whole class gets together, and we talk about our day. After that, Mr. Valore lets three students share anything that they want.

T: That sounds like a pretty good way to start the day. Did you want to share something?

B: Yes, I wanted to share about this cool wrestling match that I saw last night.

T: Who was wrestling?

B: It was my favorite wrestler, The Rock. Last night it was a really good fight. It was The Rock vs. the Bulldog. The Rock is my favorite wrestler. He can do anything! He is the best. He dances around the ring, and when he is ready, he drops an elbow on Bulldog's chest and wins.

T: The Rock is really good. So did you talk about the wrestling match with the class?

B: No, I didn't get a chance because Mr. Valore threw me out of the class.

T: Let's go back a minute. You wanted to talk about the wrestling match with the class because The Rock beat Bulldog?

B: Yes, I wanted to but I didn't get a chance. I thought I would start out by saying what The Rock said at the beginning of his match. So I said, "Guess what, Mr. Valore, I am going to kick your candy ass." The only difference was that no one cheered like they do on Smackdown. Then Mr. Valore told me to go to the principal's office.

T: Billy, you said no one cheered. What did the students do?

B: Some of them laughed, some called me stupid, and some of them pointed their fingers at me and said they could not believe what I said.

T: It sounds like they were surprised by what you said.

B: I think they are stupid if they did not know I was talking like The Rock.

T: Do you think Mr. Valore knew you were acting like The Rock?

B: I guess not, because he told me to leave the classroom.

T: How did those comments make you feel?

B: I felt bad, because I thought they would cheer for me like they do for The Rock.

T: So you wanted to do something that would impress your classmates and teacher. Is that right?

B: Yes, I thought it would be clever, and they would laugh.

T: Instead, they made fun of you and your teacher sent you out of the classroom.

B: Yes.

Central Issues and Insight Stages

As I listened to Billy, it appeared he wanted to be accepted by his classmates. He thought Mr. Valore would figure out he was talking like The Rock. Instead, he was rejected by his peers and Mr. Valore. It seemed Billy had the right attitude. He wanted to have friends, but he lacked the appropriate social skills to accomplish his goal. With this pattern, I decided Billy would profit from a New Tools Salesmanship Reclaiming Intervention.

T: As I understand it, you want to be as popular as The Rock. When he speaks, people listen and like him. When he said to Bulldog, "I am going to kick your candy ass," do you think he was threatening Bulldog?

B: I guess so.

T: When you said that to Mr. Valore, were you trying to threaten him?

B: No, I was pretending to be The Rock.

T: Okay, I understand what you were trying to say, but it sounds like Mr. Valore thought you were threatening him.

B: I did not mean to.

T: I know you did not mean to, because you were thinking this would be a good way of having your classmates notice you. Billy, please look at me. You had the correct idea but the wrong behavior. You want to have friends. So what went wrong?

B: Mr. Valore thought I was threatening him.

T: Anything else?

B: Maybe I should not have said "candy ass."

T: Billy, do you think that anything you hear on the streets or on TV is appropriate to say in the classroom?

B: No.

T: Okay, so there are words you hear on the streets that you don't repeat at home or school. So it is okay for The Rock to talk that way in the gym to scare Bulldog, but it is not a good way of making friends with your classmates and teacher.

B: I guess I really messed up. Now no one will like me.

T: Billy, I have some good news for you. It is very hard to help a student who has the wrong intentions, but in your case, you have the right intentions but the wrong behavior. It is easy to teach a student who has the right intentions.

New Skills

T: Billy, do you have a bicycle?

B: Yes.

T: What would you do if one of your tires is flat?

B: I would fix it.

T: I'm sure you would, because you want to ride it. Now for a difficult question. What do you think you have to fix in school today?

B: Ahhhh, Mr. Valore.

T: That's right, so how are you going to fix it?

B: Maybe I should apologize.

T: Tell me what you would say to him. I will pretend that I am Mr. Valore.

B: I am sorry that I called you a candy ass; I didn't mean it.

T: Billy, that was a good start, but this time let's drop the words "candy ass."

B: Okay, Mr. Valore, I am sorry for what I said. I was trying to act like The Rock.

T: That was much better. (We role-played Billy's apology several more times until he was comfortable with it.) Billy, you have a good plan to repair your relationship with Mr. Valore. Now you need to repair your relationship with your classmates.

B: What can I do?

T: Perhaps Mr. Valore will let you tell about The Rock during class meeting time. (At this time we role-played what he would say, i.e., I like The Rock because he is strong and fair. Sometimes he says things that you should not say at school, but he is a good wrestler. How many of you ever watched him wrestle? Thank you.)

Returning to the Classroom

I talked with Mr. Valore and explained the situation. He was very understanding and agreed to support the plan and to talk with Billy.

T: Billy, I talked with Mr. Valore, and he is willing to talk with you during lunch time.

B: Maybe you could come with me, because I might forget what we talked about.

T: Yes, I could do that, but before you return to your class, tell me what you learned from this problem.

B: I learned that I should not use bad words that would make my teacher and friends mad. I want to make friends, but I made everyone mad at me. I had the right idea, but not the right behavior.

T: Billy, I am proud of you, and in a few minutes, we will meet with Mr. Valore.

Discussion

Billy is an excellent example of many students who are blind to their social environments. Although they have the right intentions, they do not have the appropriate skills to be accepted. As a result, they end up being rejected by the ones they want to impress. This rejection comes as a surprise to them. They cannot figure out what happened, so they respond by being more defiant or silly until the Conflict Cycle is in full swing. By this time, the good intentions are lost in the confusion, and they walk away feeling angry and isolated from their peers. The challenging part of this Reclaiming Intervention is to turn this crisis into a learning opportunity for the students. In this LSCI with Billy, Ms. Goshdigan was able to identify Billy's self-defeating pattern of behavior in Stages 2 and 3 and to respond by using a New Tools Reclaiming Intervention. The results were positive for Billy and gave him a new opportunity to establish more appropriate relationships with his peers and teacher.

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