The Effects of a Small Group Counseling Intervention on Anger Management for Elementary Boys

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Previous Research:
Anger Management in School Settings
What do we already know about anger management?

- It is critical to impose interventions at the elementary school level, because the implications only get more serious as students grow older (Besley, 1999; Fryxell & Smith, 2000)
- As anger levels increase, educational accomplishments decrease (Burt, Patel & Lewis, 2012; Fryxell & Smith, 2000)
- There is a significant inverse relationship between levels of anger and the number of friends students report having at school (Fryxell & Smith, 2000)
- Successful anger management interventions can ultimately improve the overall school environment (Burt et al., 2012)
What interventions have worked before?

- Interventions that provide strategies to transfer anger management skills to the classroom setting seem to be the most effective:
  - Besley (1999) conducted a study where students received a counseling intervention, and then the counselor offered in-class coaching when students exhibited angry behaviors.
    - Result: Students used anger management techniques in the classroom on their own after the intervention; disciplinary referrals decreased.
  - In a study conducted by Anderson, Fisher, Marchant, Young & Smith (2006), students were provided with counseling outside of the classroom and then were given a Cool Card to use in class (which essentially offered a technique to transfer the skills they learned to the classroom setting).
    - Result: Students continued to apply the strategies they learned, even after the counseling intervention was removed.
What are the major limitations of previous research?

- Most of the research involves very small sample sizes. This makes it very hard to generalize to a larger population.

- Although utilizing transfer techniques seems to be effective, the ones suggested in research (Besley, 1999; Anderson et al., 2006) seem to be very time-consuming and individualized; they would be difficult to replicate on a larger scale.
What are the implications for school counselors?

- Consider the importance of teaching anger management skills early on. Research shows clear connections to academics and peer relationships. The earlier you address these issues, the sooner these students can develop the skills they need to deal with their anger in appropriate ways.

- When designing an intervention, consider the importance of transferring skills from a counseling setting to a classroom setting.
Developing an Action Research Project
Proposed Study

- Single-subject design
- Use the anger management small group curriculum in Diane Senn’s *Small Group Counseling for Children: Grades 2-5* workbook (2003)
- Participants:
  - 6 participants
  - 3rd, 4th & 5th grade boys
  - Based on disciplinary referrals & teacher recommendations
- 11 sessions (2 times a week for 5 weeks; once during 6th week); 45 minutes each
Research Questions

• Does participation in an anger management small group result in a measurable increase of anger management skills in upper elementary school boys (as defined by demonstrating self-control when dealing with challenging scenarios)?

• Does participation in an anger management small group result in a decline in disciplinary referrals for upper elementary school boys?
Measurements

- **Baseline (A):**
  - Student Pre-Evaluation
  - Teacher Pre-Evaluation
  - # of Disciplinary Referrals (previous 4 weeks before intervention)

- **Intervention (B):**
  - Student Post-Evaluation
  - Teacher Post-Evaluation
  - # of Disciplinary Referrals (during intervention)

- **Withdrawal (A):**
  - Student Post-Evaluation (4 weeks after end of intervention)
  - Teacher Post-Evaluation (4 weeks after end of intervention)
  - # of Disciplinary Referrals (4 weeks after end of intervention)
Intervention

- Session 1: Initial Group Session (Pre-Evaluation)
- Session 2: Self Control (Activity A1.1: In Control)
- Session 3: Handling Disagreements (Activity A2.1: Unlocking Friendship Problems)
- Session 4: Handling Teasing (Activity A3.1: Teasing...Why?)
- Session 5: Being Left Out (Activity A4.1: Not Included)
- Session 6: Self-Esteem (Activity A5.1: Trouble Learning Something New)
- Session 7: Handling Corrections (Activity A6.1: In Trouble)
- Session 8: When You Think Things are Unfair (Activity A7.1: That’s Not Fair!)
- Session 9: Bothered by Other Problems (Activity A8.1: Weighted Down with Problems)
- Session 10: Influences (Activity A9.1: TV Influences)
- Session 11: Closing Group Session (Activity A10: Anger Solutions & Post-Evaluation)

NOTE: All sessions are from Diane Senn’s Small Group Counseling for Children: Grades 2-5 (2003)
Conclusion

- Ideally, implementing this single-subject design will prove the hypothesis correct by demonstrating an increase in anger management skills and a decrease in disciplinary referrals.

- Limitations:
  - Perception data is used; self-reporting isn’t always accurate (although in this case both students and teachers evaluate the student; disciplinary referrals will be reviewed as well)
  - Only 6 participants—hard to generalize to a larger population

- Areas for further research:
  - Replicate this design with diverse groups of students
References


