

Overcoming Challenges with the Life Space Interview

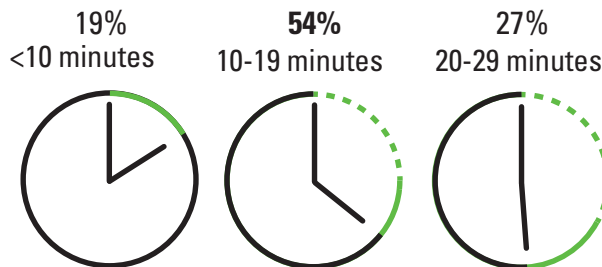
Implementation of the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) System includes use of the Life Space Interview (LSI) after a young person experiences a crisis. In the LSI, staff follow a series of seven steps to help young people process and learn from the experience. This QuickTRIP shares: 1) TCI trainer reported challenges and successes when implementing the LSI in residential or school settings; and 2) solutions for addressing these challenges.

Research Shows

During TCI recertification training in 2015, 626 trainers from the US, UK, Ireland, and Australia completed a survey about LSI use at their organizations in residential settings and schools. As duration of LSI's could be a factor in many of the challenges with the LSI, we asked how long the typical LSI takes to conduct after a young person experiences a crisis. The majority of trainers (54%) reported LSI's lasting 10-19 minutes. More than one quarter (27%), however, say they spend an average of 20 minutes or more conducting an LSI, and just under 20% say it takes less than 10 minutes.

As part of the survey, TCI trainers also responded to the following open-ended questions: "What is the biggest challenge to using the LSI with young people in your program?" and "What makes the LSI successful with young people in your program?" Responses were analyzed using Dedoose* to identify common themes and are shared in the table to the right, in italics.

How long does it take you to conduct a typical LSI?



What Do Trainers Say? Staff Quotes:

LSI CHALLENGES

Time and Space

- Time and space to conduct LSI's without intrusions/interruptions.
- Finding enough time and staff coverage to isolate the conversation while trying to maintain safe ratios with other students.
- Staff often feel rushed and perceive that it takes too long.

Willing and Able Staff

- The biggest challenge is having adequate staff to allow the time that it takes to conduct a quality LSI on 1:1 basis.
- Staff believe they know how to do it, but they have "drifted" (skip steps, blend steps).

LSI SOLUTIONS

Keep the LSI Short

- Doesn't take long, one on one away from others.
- [Make it] short and to the point.

Repeat the LSI

- The first LSI for a client is the hardest. The subsequent LSI with the same client is better and faster and begins to have some effect on the child's behavior.

Keep the LSI Informal

- Having alternative space to talk to young people, not making it a formal meeting.
- Making them very informal.

Have Well Trained Staff

- [Offer] lots of training opportunities for staff to practice using the language.
- People who are skilled, really use all steps and use good active listening.

Have Enough Staff To Support One-On-One Conversations

- Staffing levels high enough to be effective.

Support Staff Who Prioritize the LSI

- [The LSI is successful] when staff create the time or have an opportunity to do it.
- Staff who make it a priority and make sure they are given the time to do it (will ask for coverage, stay later).

Tips for Trainers

1. Many of the LSI implementation challenges stem from concerns about having enough time and staff coverage to conduct the LSI. In training, remind participants that the LSI is a conversation that is shaped by an adult making conscious use of the steps to lead their interactions and interventions. It should feel like natural conversation and take advantage of the many opportunities to talk with young people during the day. It doesn't need to be a long process, although spending 20 minutes or more after a crisis is appropriate. LSI's can be done within activities and normal conversations (e.g. while walking together to an activity, working on a project together, off to the side of the field while a game is going on, etc).

2. Use refreshers to practice challenging aspects such as strategies to use when a young person just wants to "get through it." Brainstorm creative strategies to make the LSI engaging and responsive to young people's needs. Address pitfalls that we can have as adults that can push young people away (e.g. lecturing, picking solutions for them.)

3. Train staff in shortened LSI and Advocate LSI as appropriate so they can make necessary adjustments in language, timing, and/or visual supports.



LSI CHALLENGES

Population Served

- Our program serves many students who are non-verbal and/or have cognitive deficits that make the LSI challenging.
- The children I work with are under age 8 and often have limited language skills.

Re-Escalation

- Staff are afraid to revisit the incident due to potential re-escalation and do not always see the value in it or don't want to take the time when the incident appears to be over.
- Staff may fear re-escalating children in LSI and often avoid it.

Resistance from Young People

- Having youth who give "right answers" just to be done with LSI—not truly buying into making changes.
- The youth are sometimes resistant or refuse to participate.

LSI SOLUTIONS

Use the Shortened LSI

- I have one young person who has limited coping skills and a cognitive disability. He loves the LSI and is enthusiastic about learning new ways to cope.
- We have had a lot of luck with shortened LSI with our very young children.

Use the Advocate LSI

- Majority of people we support are non-verbal so the advocate LSI is used.

Give Young People Time and Space

- Waiting for them to get back to baseline.
- Not to rush it. Go at their pace.

Use the LSI To Repair the Relationship

- It rebuilds your relationship with them, lets them know you still care.
- Taking time to talk about incidents using active listening...shows clients that you care and are willing to help.

Give Young People a Voice/Ownership

- The LSI creates teaching moments with a collaborative, team, co-regulation approach. Reinforces for many students that they have a voice, they matter, their feelings matter and empowers them to begin to take control of their lives.
- [The LSI] helps them explore feelings and behaviors, connecting them and exploring alternatives. The youth coming up with these ideas makes them more motivated to try them.

Make the LSI Appear Less Formal

- The less formal the LSI appears, keeps the youth engaged in the conversation.
- Making it fun for the child; fast and new skills encourage new behaviors.

Source / Further Information

*Dedoose Version 8.0.35, web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed method research data (2019). Los Angeles, CA: SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC www.dedoose.com.

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