

A close-up portrait of a man with a serious expression, wearing a military-style cap and a blue jacket. The background features a stylized American flag. The man's face is the central focus, with strong lighting from the left.

# The Case of the Conditioned Mind

A New Curriculum for Questioning Minds: Ages 9 -14

by  
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based on the  
Education for Peace Series books  
by Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

“Eliminate the impossible,  
and whatever remains,  
however improbable, must be the case.”

— Sherlock Holmes

## A Note to Teachers

It is important that your children read **Fighting the Invisible Enemy** as you progress through the lessons in this curriculum. You may read certain segments to them, then ask questions based on what you have read. The appropriate ages for understanding conditioning are most likely 10-14, although younger children can understand some basic concepts.

**Fighting the Invisible Enemy** can appeal to teenagers and young adults as much as it can to younger children, in that it is a basic introduction to conditioning. While the illustrations may appeal to younger children, the content is mature enough for older ones.

Before starting with the lesson plans, explain generally to students about conditioning (from reading the book first). Tell them they will:

- Embark on an "adventure" into understanding the roots of conflict.
- Need to deduce, from clues given to them, answers to the mystery of conditioning, like the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

Try to impart an air of mystery and excitement to evoke their sense of adventure. Even though the implications of conditioned thinking can be dangerous and have created tremendous suffering, one should approach the subject with young people in a way that is intriguing and thought-provoking.

# **THE CASE OF THE CONDITIONED MIND**

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## A WORD ABOUT OUR FORMAT . . .

Today, more than ever, young people need to understand that how they act depends on how they think. And that the way they think may be the source of their conflicts.

### **The Greatest Gift**

Every human being has a mind that has been conditioned in many ways. Once we have the ability to *see* our thinking and *understand how* we think, we have the option to *change* our thinking. Once we change our thinking, we are no longer acting from conditioned thinking. Helping our students achieve awareness of this option is one of the finest gifts we can give them.

Every lesson in this curriculum is devoted to helping students understand how a conditioned mind can create conflict. When we can recognize conflict inside us, we're better able to see how we create conflict outside us and in the world. By giving our students this kind of awareness, we provide them with the greatest gift of all — the ability to stop conflict *before* it starts.

### **The Truth Inside Us**

While exploring human thinking is exciting in and of itself, we wanted to make certain your students have the best time while absorbing new information. We've included activities, games, role-plays and stories, all meant to expand upon material provided in each lesson.

Finally, we've chosen to follow the tenets of Sherlock Holmes. \* Detective Holmes solves his mysteries by employing the principles of deduction — making direct observations and drawing conclusions by eliminating everything that could not possibly be the truth. So, the cause of our conditioned thinking will be a mystery which we will "deduce" by gathering information via our powers of observation — dynamic powers we must never underestimate.

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\**Sherlock Holmes is a character vividly created by mystery novelist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a distant relative to Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle, author of a variety of Atrium Society publications.*

Each of the following twenty lessons is divided into three categories:

- Challenge** As the first part of every lesson, the challenge is an invitation to the mystery of thinking something new. It dares us to face what lies before us in the lesson to come and entices us to participate in a new adventure.
- Discovery** The challenge gives us a place to spark new thinking. Once new and different thoughts fill our minds, we begin to make discoveries — sometimes very surprising ones — that come simply from looking closely at the world around us.
- Question** Our discoveries will lead us to newly attained awareness — things we've not thought about before. Our sharpened minds will fill with questions. They're likely to be questions that have no immediate answers. Some of the most exciting questions are not always answerable, because they give us the opportunity to think them through and decide on answers for ourselves.

We've had a wonderful time putting this adventure together for you. We hope, as you take this journey with us, that you'll take it upon yourselves to make sure that we've left no stone unturned and no clue uninvestigated.

## A WORD ABOUT ROLE-PLAY

### Why Use It?

Young people have many of the same problems as adults, and have to deal with conflict situations just as trying as ours, but they are not as verbal or intellectual as adults. Just as we adults better understand concepts when we see examples, young people need examples even more. When they "play out" examples, they get the information more easily. When very young children are playing house, with mommy, daddy and dolls, it is not idle play. They are learning what it is like to *be* a mother or father; they are acting out roles — role-playing parents.

Role-play is understood from age 6 up. The main objectives of role-play are:

- To create a safe, controlled and supportive atmosphere, where a young person can act out a threatening situation. This relieves the pressure and anxiety of conflict the young person has experienced.
- To give a young person the chance to create alternatives to their conflict encounters, creating a sense of power and mastery in similar threatening situations.
- To give the young person a chance to not only play out the role of the victim but also to play out the role of the aggressor. This gives the student the opportunity to step into the other person's shoes, so they can begin to understand why that person would want to be a bully. This helps relieve fear and promotes a more subjective, empathetic understanding of another person's plight.
- By creating, recreating or re-enacting a disruptive event, the young person may become more aware of his or her *own* contribution to the problem.
- To give the young person an opportunity to see how he or she could have prevented the situation from happening in the first place.

### How Do I Do It?

Much has been written, especially in Humanistic Psychology, about role-playing. You can find books in your local bookstores or library on role-playing and psychodrama that will help you. Role-playing and psychodrama can be very effective in helping people work out their fears. These are powerful tools and should be practiced carefully. Training from qualified teachers is recommended, and can be gotten from colleges, universities and other organizations.

Since our basic interest here is "kids fighting," the following are simple pointers to enable you to help them create alternatives to conflict situations.

There are two ways to do role-playing:

1. **Made Up Or Mock Situations.** The advantage here is that you are less likely to get too deeply into emotional problems behind their conflict. The disadvantage is that it is only play-acting. There is no real feeling behind it, and so learning is more at the surface level.

2. **Real Life Situations.** You might uncover emotional trauma a young person has beneath the surface situation. If you sense that a person is "emotionally disturbed," you may want to use mock situations with this person. You may want to let the parents know if you see any behavior that might warrant more professional help.

The advantage here is that real life situations are more real, and the student will have strong emotions around it. This usually helps motivate a person in understanding and wanting to do something about the problem.

## **The Process**

Most role-plays have a "bad guy" and a "good guy" — the Bully and the Victim. Neither is truly solely good or bad, but when we start with a black and white situation, it helps us learn about the grays.

It's good to ask for volunteers. Kids usually love to ham it up. I tell them what the role-play is about and sometimes hand out sheets that have role-plays already written out for them to read. Some include portions they read as if they were talking out loud to themselves, and some include only dialogue between two or more characters. To avoid confusion, it's advisable to give them an example of what you want, or to read a portion of the dialogue yourself to illustrate the kind of role-playing you are looking for. Get a good role-player by modeling one.

You may want to act as facilitator of each role-play situation or participate yourself. There will always be an audience for every role-play and, as such, they give valuable feedback to the volunteer role-players. They can also boo or cheer, which adds to the dramatic effect and include everyone in the role-play.

The role-plays offered in the Lesson Plans are for your convenience, to help students learn the lesson being taught. You are welcome, however, to create any role-play situation you think might help. For example, you might divide the students into two groups: The Bully Group and the Victim Group. Then, ask one volunteer to act or play out the role of a Bully or Antagonist. He or she comes up to the Victim and starts picking on him or her. The Bully goads the Victim on by pushing, shoving, grabbing (ask students to not get too physical). Try to keep the participants from moving too far away from the center of the group. At this point, the Victim can try out his or her way to walk away with confidence (12 ways to walk away with confidence will be found in Addendum #11). Tell the Bully ahead of time, on the side, not to give up too easily, or to not give up at all. There must be enough time to let the situation be real enough so that the Victim has to work at his/her role. This will create a more realistic situation. As the Victim ("good guy") is trying out a way to walk away with confidence, ask the Bully Group which one the Victim is using. This gets them involved in both sides of the situation.

When using real life situations, you will want more sensitivity. You don't want booing and yelling. It should be more thoughtful and serious. Ask for volunteers to raise their hands.

Listen to several stories and pick the easiest or safest first. Potential problem situations are best referred to a professional.

In real life situations, ask for a volunteer to be the Antagonist. It is sometimes best to let the volunteer victim pick his or her antagonist, but not always. Be sensitive to this process. You may have to do it for them. In real life situations, it is advisable that you stay in control of the game — be the "authority," gently supporting and guiding the process. Allow them to freely explore their feelings and situations independently, but also, and at the same time, be there for them if they need you.

On the following page are more techniques in role-playing that you can use. Some are already used in the Lesson Plans, and some are not.

## Additional Role-play Techniques

- o **Soliloquy.** The Victim speaks aloud about feelings he or she had before, during and after the conflict situation. This helps the student to identify his/her feelings as valid, ones that everyone at one time or another feels. It is helpful if YOU are HONEST about your own feelings — your fears, humiliations, and sadness. I usually tell the group about my personal experiences with conflict I had at their age — not as a lecturer, but as someone sharing with them that I know, from the inside, what they are going through.
- o **Mirroring.** One person imitates a Victim's behavior. This is an effective way to give feedback and understanding to the Victim as to how others see and react to him or her. It can give the Victim a new viewpoint on the situation. Be very careful that this is done with sensitivity — as a gift rather than a putdown. You might begin this technique by playing the role first yourself.
- o **Alter Ego.** The Alter Ego is the Victim's own invisible, unexpressed self. The main purpose is to help the Victim express emotions. Another is to provide support, give empathy and dramatize unexpressed feelings. It can help interpret the Victim's resistances and defenses. For example, if you get behind the Victim while he or she is playing out his or her role and say, "I feel scared. I just want to run and hide and cry" — this can help the Victim identify his or her own feelings. Again, care and sensitivity are very important.
- o **Role Reversal.** The Victim literally takes the place of the Bully — actively places him or herself in the other person's shoes, taking on *their* emotions, attitudes. The helps decrease anxiety and allows for greater empathy and understanding of the Bully.
- o **Imaging.** One good imaging process asks students to imagine themselves as animals — they pick one special animal they really like. Ask them to do some research on this animal: What are its habits? Where does it come from? How does it live? This works well for very young students. They imagine themselves as this animal — move like it, feel what it's like to be this animal, from the inside. This fantasy gives them the chance to develop psychological power, a "spirit" that can give them strength. They can talk about their animals as an ongoing process.

There are many more techniques — too many to include here. I recommend you read *The Centering Book — Awareness Activities For Children, Parents and Teachers* by Gay Hendricks and Russell Wills, for excellent exercises to do with your students to help them resolve conflict. They are easily adapted to your own or your students' situations.

## A Word About Levels of Conflict

The intention of this program is to help young people understand conflict — at the primary level — *before* it becomes conflict, so they can avoid it.

Most attention given to conflict is at the Tertiary Level — that is, when we must *manage* conflict that has become a physical confrontation — whether on the playground or, in the extreme, war.

Little attention is given to the Secondary Level — that is, when we can *resolve conflict* before it escalates to the physical (Tertiary) level.

Even more rarely is attention given to the Primary Level — the point at which young people can understand and therefore *prevent* conflict. That is what this curriculum and this program are about — to bring attention to understanding and avoiding conflict — that is, preventing it *before* it gets to the physical level.

The intent is to demonstrate that the root cause of conflict is “conditioning,” that habitualized state of mind that is imprisoned in dogmatic, antiquated, established belief systems — be they racial, religious, or nationalistic. Perhaps one of the best books written about conditioning is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. The book *1984* also demonstrates the dark side of the power of conditioning in George Orwell's Stalinesque depiction of a society ruled by fear and misinformation.

When we study history we can see the terrible effects of conditioning in the horrible wars created by fragmentary thinking and action. Religious wars have been fought for thousands of years, each sect or group declaring that God is on their side, therefore justifying the terrors they inflict on each other. All war seems to be rationalized in a higher belief in some good. National, religious and racial ideals have been the causes of endless holocausts. What is the root of all this human suffering? Is it true that the human brain has been conditioned, “brainwashed” to create and defend against the enemy, that “outsider” who is different from one's own particular tribal, ethnocentric group?

This curriculum begins by inquiring into the basic structure of conditioned thinking and moves through a Sherlock Holmes “mystery” of clues to find out how conditioning affects the lives of young people each day, and how it affects the world around them in the adult realm. Our most desired goal is to evoke a questioning nature in young people, so that they do not immediately and unquestioningly accept established patterns of thinking in society — outmoded patterns handed down for millennia. The result of this questioning is to produce intelligence — not I.Q., but awareness of relationship, awareness of how peace is prevented by the way we think and believe. It is this active intelligence that has the capacity to understand and avoid conflict produced by fragmentary conditioned thinking and action.

**Please note: New evidence shows how gene-linked behavior is the source of human conflict.**

*“Most honest combat vets will tell you, in their own way, the same thing – essentially that combat is in our human DNA. The question is, can we humans evolve peacefully, or will we succumb to instincts that we can’t transcend?”*

– Quote from a former Marine Corp helicopter pilot in Vietnam

A new University of British Columbia study done by the Centre for Infant Cognition suggests nap-time may be the new frontier in the war on bullying. Bullied children may bring exclusion on themselves with gene-linked behavior, the study says. The episodes of bullying that mar early grade school years for hundreds of children may be a result of the victim’s DNA, the new study suggested. The behaviors that most often lead to exclusion and victimization in the classroom or schoolyard have their roots in a student’s genes, the study said, arguing that children’s genetic makeup has a direct impact on the quality of the interactions they enjoy with their peers. *The findings were published on the website of the journal Child Development.*

Hence the main objective in teaching this curriculum is to bring awareness to the role that biological, hence psychological conditioning, emanating from its genetic source plays in creating conflict. In other words in order to understand what creates conflict and what prevents peace, we have to look at the origins of conflict at the primary prevention level in the way we have been conditioned to think and act and how this creates war — from the playground to the battlefield.

In the curriculum to come, we focus mainly on psychological conditioning originally emanating from the primitive biological brain. It’s at this level in conditioned thinking that conflict is best recognized and more readily dealt with.