

APPENDIX B: Key Concepts and Definitions

Baseline Behaviour

An individual's characteristic level of functioning from which one can assess changes in his or her behaviour or mood, as well as the impacts of contextual factors.

Responsive Plan

A student-specific plan that outlines the supports and interventions in place for a student with needs in the behavioural and/or social-emotional domains. It includes, but is not limited to, proactive and reactive supports such as: behaviour goals/skills, daily plan, academic supports required, targeted skill development, replacement behaviours, reinforcers and consequences and progress monitoring.

Cry for Help

The first hypothesis in VTRA is that the high-risk, threat-making or threat-related behaviour is a cry for help.

Child/Youth

All children and youth under the age of 18.

Dehumanization

Dehumanization is the process that allows a person to emotionally, psychologically and cognitively distance themselves from the nature of a violent act toward another person or a group of people.

Empty Vessel

Metaphor to describe the dramatic lack of connection that has existed between most perpetrators of serious violence and a healthy mature adult and their lack of clear identity, place and purpose. Their parental and other adult relationships have often been marked by extremes on a continuum from neglect to over-involvement – some experiencing both extremes at different times and other experiencing predominantly one or the other. This concept invites us to ask “what are they filling themselves with”?

Fluidity

Changing back and forth between suicide ideation and homicidal ideation, and often with increasing rapidity as one becomes closer to a violent act.

APPENDIX B (continued): Key Concepts and Definitions

High-Risk Behaviours

Defined as behaviours that express intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. High-risk behaviours include, but are not limited to: interest in violent content, unusual interest in fire and fire setting, escalation of physical aggression, significant change in anti-social behaviour, unusual interest in or possession of a weapon or replica of a weapon, bomb threat, online/social media threat to kill or injure self or others. Some of these behaviours can be seen as *rehearsal behaviours*.

There is no profile or checklist for the high-risk children/youth. Some children/youth who actually pose a threat display few traits of the traditional high-risk person.

Imitators versus Innovators

Most threat-makers are imitators not innovators. They learn about (and sometimes idolize) and then imitate other violent offenders.

Justification Process

The process by which an individual rationalizes (justifies) the purpose and intent of violence. The process itself is highly subjective and tracking the process is highly dependent on the context and individual factors. VTRA team members should be aware of language and/or behaviours that indicate a person is becoming increasingly justified in carrying out a violent act.

Language of Commitment

Commitment is the degree of resolve an individual has to carry out a violent act. When assessing a threat, it's important to pay attention to the language that is used. Specific language suggests a greater degree of commitment. For example: date, time and location the violence is to occur. Words such as "soon" or "might" are examples of language lacking commitment.

Plausibility

Plausibility is defined as seeming likely to be true. For example, an individual threatening to call down a Martian UFO to vaporize the school is not a plausible threat. An elementary student threatening to drive a Sherman tank through the school may be clear and direct, but not plausible. A student threatening another student to beat their brains with a lead pipe is plausible.

Risk Assessment

The process to determine if a person may pose a risk at some point in the future. Also refers to the process in any threat assessment whereby the team identifies risk enhancing factors that may constitute targets for intervention to reduce the likelihood of future risk to self and/or others.

APPENDIX B (continued): Key Concepts and Definitions

Serious Violence is an Evolutionary Process

Developing the ability to commit serious violence is an evolutionary process. Prior to committing serious violence is a process. Prior to committing an act of serious violence, a person must have conceived of some aspect of the act. Planning, preparing and rehearsing are often part of the process. Contextual and relational influences have an impact on a person's evolution.

The pathway to serious violence is not a straight line. As an individual moves along the pathway to violence, they are influenced by a large number of factors. The person's motivation will fluctuate, as will their emotional state. It is vital the VTRA team be aware of these fluctuations and assess the behaviour over time.

Threat

Defined as any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, posted online, or made by gesture only. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

Direct: A threat that identifies a specific act against a specific target and is delivered in a straightforward, clear and explicit manner. "I am going to stab Jason in the cafeteria at lunch."

Indirect: A threat that tends to be vague, unclear and ambiguous. "I could kill you; I could kill everyone in this school."

Veiled: A threat that strongly implies, but does not explicitly threaten violence. "My life would be better if you weren't around anymore."

Conditional: A threat that warns that a violent act will happen unless certain demands or terms are met. "If you don't give me the iPad back, I am going to shoot you."

Threat Assessment

The process of determining if a threat-maker actually poses a risk to the target(s) being threatened.

Threat-Making Behaviours

Any action that an individual, who in any manner knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat.

Worrisome Behaviour

Behaviours that cause concern and may indicate a child/youth is moving towards a greater risk of violent behaviour. Worrisome behaviours include, but are not limited to: drawing pictures that contain violence, stories and journal writings that contain violence and making vague or generalized statements about violence towards others that do not constitute a threat. Worrisome behaviours may be an early warning sign of the development of more serious high-risk behaviours. All worrisome behaviours should be addressed.