“The culture has transformed from pessimism to optimism, from stuck and decaying to flowing peacefully, from resistance to acceptance, and from no hope to a renewed feeling of power and new ideas.”

-Lyndsay Morris, School Counselor, Washington
What is WhyTry?

The WhyTry Program was created to provide simple, hands-on solutions for dropout prevention, violence prevention, truancy reduction, and increased academic success.

The idea is straightforward: Teach social and emotional principles to youth in a way they can understand and remember. WhyTry is based on sound empirical principles, including solution-focused brief therapy, social and emotional intelligence, and multi-sensory learning.

The WhyTry curriculum utilizes a series of ten visual analogies that teach important life skills (e.g., decisions have consequences; dealing with peer pressure; obeying laws and rules; plugging in to support systems).

The visual analogies are reinforced through creative use of music, hands-on activities, and multimedia. WhyTry curriculum engages all major learning styles (visual, auditory, and body-kinesthetic).

WhyTry programs are generally grant-funded through local community grants and federal funds like Title 1, Title 4, and Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. WhyTry is often used for RTI and PBiS.

Our Mission:

To help people achieve opportunity, freedom, and self-respect using education and interventions that motivate and create positive change. We offer hope and an answer to the question “Why Try in life?”

To achieve its mission, WhyTry counts on the support of professionals who share our commitment to helping youth reach their potential. The key to the WhyTry program’s success in changing lives is the power in the relationship between someone who cares and a youth who needs help.

Who uses WhyTry?

WhyTry is currently at work in over 16,000 organizations in all 50 of the United States, as well as Canada, the UK, and Australia. WhyTry is used one-on-one and in groups at K–12 schools, alternative education programs, mental health organizations, and correctional facilities.

WhyTry programs are led by thousands of professionals around the world:

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Special ed instructors
- School counselors
- School psychologists
- Social workers
- Mental health professionals
- Probation officers
- Corrections staff
- After-school workers
10 Strategies Proven to Inspire Every Student

With visual learners in mind, the WhyTry Program uses pictures to teach important life principles to youth. These ten “visual analogies” are explained below:

1. Show them that decisions have consequences.
“The Reality Ride” uses a picture of a roller coaster to demonstrate that each decision we make has a consequence. The decisions we make today directly affect the future.

2. Help them tear off their labels.
“Tearing Off Your Label” teaches that negative labels can hurt your future, and positive labels can help you achieve your goals and attain better opportunities. Ultimately, the label you wear depends on you: you can change your negative labels by changing your actions and showing others your positive traits.
3. Teach them how to control their defense mechanisms.
“Defense Mechanisms” teaches that pressure situations are best handled by maintaining control of our emotions and selecting positive defense mechanisms (those that don’t hurt yourself or others).

4. Show them how to use their challenges as positive fuel.
“The Motivation Formula” uses a picture of a river running through dams to show how you can take your challenges and channel them into positive motivation: first to better yourself, then to turn outward and help others.

5. Compare peer pressure to crabs in a pot.
“Climbing Out” teaches that when you put the tools from the visual metaphors into action, and when you develop an awareness of the positive and negative ways that others can influence you, you will be prepared to avoid negative behaviors and their consequences.

6. Tell them, “You only lose if you give up!”
“Jumping Your Hurdles” teaches that while everyone experiences setbacks, successful people “jump back up” and keep trying. They know that there are certain steps they can use to help them overcome their challenges and achieve success.
7. Teach them that hard work goes further than natural talent.
“Desire, Time, and Effort” teaches that anything worthwhile in life requires desire, time, and effort. There are no shortcuts to achieving success. You will get much further in life by working hard than by simply relying on your talents or abilities.

8. Explain the long-term benefits of keeping laws and rules.
“Lift the Weight” teaches that living by laws and rules and developing self-discipline will make you stronger, opening the doors of opportunity for the future.

9. Show them where to find support systems.
“Get Plugged In” teaches that getting help is not a weakness, it is a strength! Challenges become easier when you have a positive support system to help you overcome them. YOU have the power to create a support system if you don’t have one. YOU have the power to strengthen that support system if yours is weak.

10. Help them “See the big picture.”
“The Wall” is a summary of the entire WhyTry Program. It teaches that when you have a clear vision of your future, you have hope for something better, and life’s challenges become nothing but temporary obstacles. When you have a limited perspective, however, it is hard to see beyond the day-to-day challenges. Each step to the top of the wall represents one of the principles taught in WhyTry Program.
WhyTry Research

WhyTry has proven to be a successful intervention tool in a variety of settings, populations, and age groups. It has changed the lives of 6-year-olds and 18-year-olds, rural and inner city youth, males and females, and youth from a variety of races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds.

Across multiple third party studies, researchers have seen significant positive changes using WhyTry. Below are highlights of a few of the studies. Further statistical details are also available online at www.whytry.org.

**Effects of the WhyTry Social Skills Program on Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders at an Alternative Campus** (Wilhite, S., Bullock, L. “Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties” (2012))

**Group:** Alternative high school campus, North Texas  
**Results:**  
• Students receiving WhyTry had significantly less disciplinary referrals, reduced fighting/aggressive behavior and harassment/bullying behavior.  
• Students emotionally showed more internal control and less social stress and anxiety.  
• Students had a greater ability to initiate and sustain action toward goals and an increased capacity to find a means to carry out goals.

**Making the Invisible Visible: School Counselors Empowering Students with Disabilities Through Self-Advocacy Training** (Hatch, T., Shelton, T., Monk, G. Journal of School Counseling, 7(14) (2009))

**Group:** Students with high-incidence disabilities in diverse, urban high school in San Diego, CA  
**Results:**  
• Students increased attendance at IEP meetings by more than 30%  
• At IEP meetings, students gave more input, and reported feeling more comfortable asking questions.

**PRIDE: 28-day Summer Program for At-Risk Students** (Mortensen, B. Ph.D. and Rush, K. Ph.D. Research Committee at Towson University (2007))

**Group:** Elementary Summer Program  
**Results:**  
• Teachers reported significantly improved positive social behavior and overall improved emotional health as reported on the BASC.

**Examining Effectiveness of WhyTry Program for Children Receiving Residually Based Services and Attending a Non-Public School** (Baker. Doctoral Dissertation, University of California (2008))

**Group:** Residential setting for foster care youth with mental health diagnoses, ages 12-18  
**Results:**  
• Youth, teachers, and caregivers reported improved emotional functioning, and youth perceived themselves as being more capable of learning and accomplishing tasks or actions.  
• Teachers and youth reported fewer emotional problems, depression symptoms, attention problems, rule-breaking behaviors, and aggressive behaviors.
Introducing the
WhyTry
Counselor Toolkit

10 Tools Every Counselor Needs

Get instant access to flexible tools that will engage and build resilience in any student -- whether you have five minutes, ten minutes, or an hour. WhyTry’s new Counselor Toolkit is an SEL resource designed specifically for use in one-on-one and small group settings.

WhyTry’s ten units, available in one convenient, online location, can help you address behavioral issues, increase motivation, and build positive relationships with the students you work with.

Your Subscription Includes:

- A complete lesson manual with the 10 WhyTry units
- Visual analogies that illustrate the principles of each unit
- Journal activities, or “reflection questions”
- Engaging music videos
- Additional video resources
- Activities for a one-on-one or small group setting
- A comprehensive PowerPoint deck for each lesson

As a bonus, we’ve included a guide to Surrendering The One-up In The One-on-one Setting - a set of strategies to help you achieve the “X Factor” of every great counselor.

Subscribe today by visiting www.whytryprogram.org/counselor

Hosting a WhyTry Training or Staff Development

We are looking for people interested in hosting a WhyTry Training or staff development event at their school of facility. Hosting an event is a good way to get your staff trained when you are on a tight budget -- you may receive several discounts and benefits for hosting a training session.

To learn more about hosting an event, please email info@whytry.org or call us (toll free) at 866.949.8791.

To find an event in your area, visit
www.whytry.org/training

“I’ve attended tons of training seminars and often feel the ulterior motive is to “sell stuff.” This was different. I felt this had a higher purpose...I got some answers to my own “Why Try?” issues.”

Carol Lark, K-6 Counselor
The "Reality" Ride

1. Things that get you in trouble . . .
2. Goal:
3. Your challenges . . .
   - Home:
   - School:
   - Peers:
4. Easy - Fast
5. Harder but worth it
6. What will your reality be when you ride here?
   - At Home:
   - At School:
   - With Peers:
   - In Future:
7. What would motivate you to ride here?
8. What problems do you keep having over and over?
   - Frustrated
   - Confused
   - Angry
   - Scared
   - You keep getting the same results
9. "Reality" - Consequences of the crash
   - Crash!
   - Will these things give you lasting:
     - Opportunity?
     - Freedom?
     - Self-respect?
10. More Options
11. Who can support you?
"Hit the wall"