



Module 22

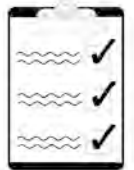
Control-seeking Pupils

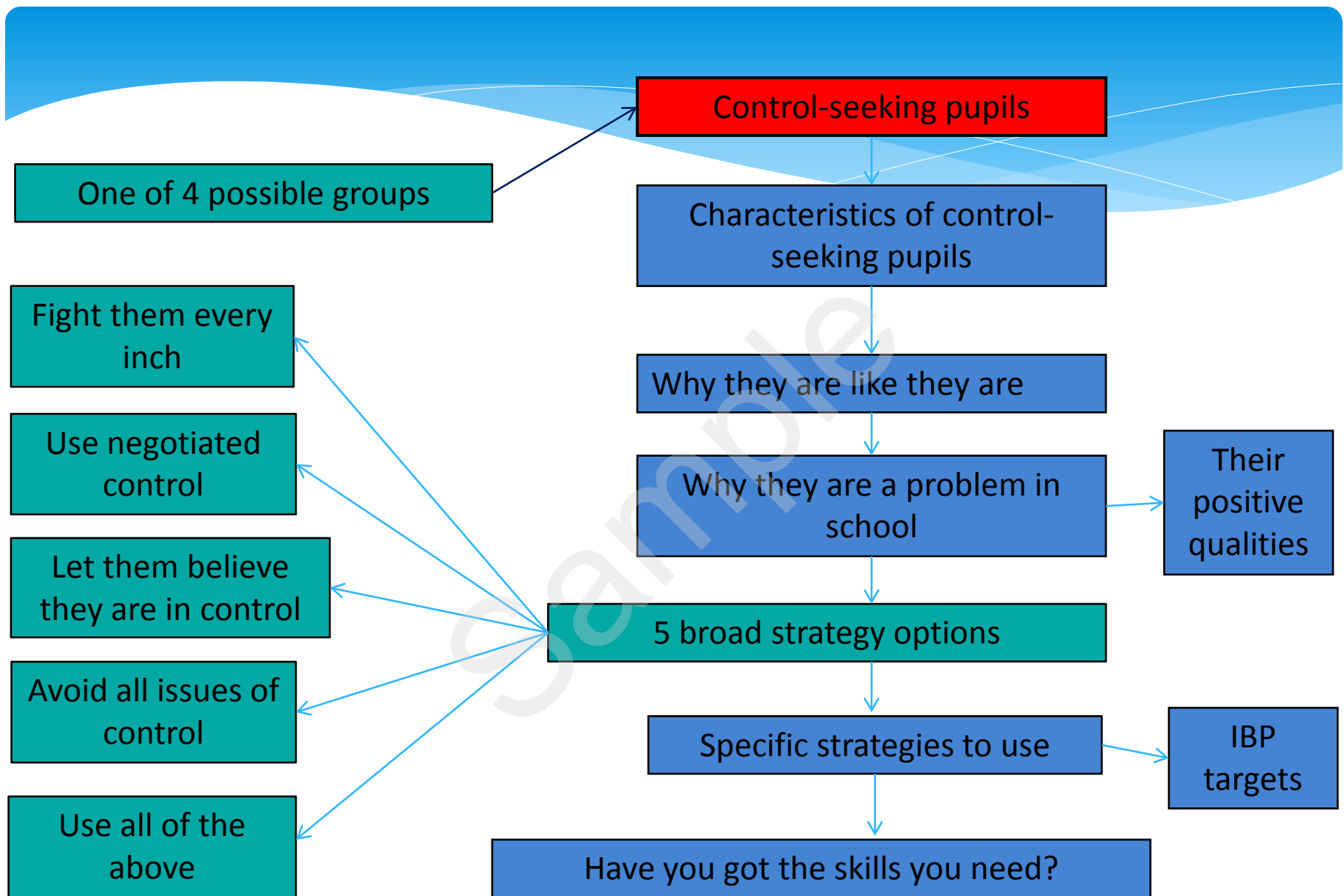
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Sample

Aims

- * To explain why control-seeking pupils have this need
- * To describe the characteristics of this group of pupils and why they are a particular problem in schools
- * To consider broad approaches to this group
- * To consider specific strategies for this group
- * To consider how appropriate targets can be set for this group
- * To give the opportunity of identifying those skills adults need to work effectively with this group of pupils





Four goals of misbehaviour

- * Attention
- * Control
- * Revenge
- * Avoidance

What they are like 1

Pupils who have a need for control are:

- * Bright enough to realise that life is unfair
- * Articulate, quick with a reply
- * Street-wise
- * Negatively influential with their peer group
- * Sometimes they mix control and attention – the further they are towards ‘attention’ the better

What they are like 2

- * Children who have a need for attention are relatively easy to manage, all they want is your attention (or the class's – slightly more difficult)
- * Roughly 10% against 90% of attention seeking of pupils with behaviour problems
- * Of the four groups they are the most difficult to manage!

Is your child in the control – seeking category?

- * Rate: 10 = very much like, 1 not at all like
- * Intelligent
- * Verbally articulate
- * Cheeky, quick with a comeback
- * Streetwise
- * Leaders for better or worse
- * Don't like to be told 'no'
- * Argumentative
- * Better with children or adults who do not 'pose a threat'
- * Competitive for better or for worse
- * Will refuse to engage in an activity they can't be best at

Why they are like they are

- * They have learned that misbehaviour is a highly effective way of controlling an environment that they believe would otherwise control them to their detriment
- * Because self-esteem can be an issue, it makes them feel better to be in control
- * It can be a locus of control issue – extremely internal rather than external.

Why they are a problem

- * Schools generally don't cope well with pupils who want control – that is supposed to be the adults' job
- * The direct conflict between the two parties is high level
- * It is important to both parties, there is usually very little win–win thinking

NB. Not all adults place great importance on being in control!

They are a problem because they...

- * Hard to discipline
- * Like a nice argument! Beware, they are good at it
- * Try to break the link between cause and effect – between behaviour (theirs) and consequence
- * (i.e.) to break your control over them

Paradox

- * Pupils who have need for power/control usually want to be controlled although they may not know it and/or accept it!
- * By somebody they respect or even want to respect although at the same time (here is the paradox) they are trying to 'destroy' that person – prove they are just like everybody they have met who has been rotten
- * For them to feel they cannot be controlled is not mentally healthy for them!
- * No wonder they are confused and confuse us!!
- * But we need to keep trying

Five approaches

- * We will fight them every inch of the way – we are the adults and you are the child!
- * We will allow you to have control in certain negotiated areas
- * We will let you think you are in control
- * Avoid all instances of control/distract when a control issue arises but do not confront!
- * Combine all the above but work out which bits come in which category

A sense of being in control comes from

- * A sense of certainty
- * Completion of tasks
- * Understanding how things work
- * Being able to predict what will happen
- * Believing that people and things are consistent

They like

- * Brief, efficient interactions
- * Language that says 'I'm listening to you, you're the man'
'What I hear you saying/I hear what you're saying...'
- * Rituals which give them a feeling of being in control
- * A degree of unemotional choice
- * Familiarity of tasks but not people
- * People with status (like head teachers)
- * Adults with whom there is no question that the adult is in control
- * Adults for whom control is not an issue

Do...

- * Expect praise to have a negative effect on their behaviour – rip up the work/do something immediately naughty
- * Replace this urge with curiosity ('How did you get that to happen?') and stupidity ('Gee, I don't get it, I thought you would have...')

Do...

- * Keep calm and repetitive – don't get pulled out of shape
- * Keep moving – change the system before they can work it out and start messing with it:
 - * If you have been low key, suddenly go ballistic (this is of course contrary to common practice)
- * Continually look for signs that they will accept praise/rewards

Do...

- * Instead of praising a good piece of work or behaviour, express mild interest, perhaps no more than a raised eyebrow, say 'Hmm, not bad'
- * Ask them what they think of what they have done; show mild interest in their reply
- * Don't reach out too far in your enthusiasm to help: they will suck you in and spit you out! Let them come to you
- * Make them work for your approval
- * They are attracted to people who don't seem to care, who aren't interested in them

Do...

- * Control-seeking pupils like to be competitive
- * Set targets and say 'I bet you can't do 15 sums in ten minutes'
Do not over-react whether they do or don't
- * They like challenges they think they can be successful at –
to prove you wrong!
- * Get them to set their own targets and compete against themselves
- * Choose a pupil they admire/want to be like and say 'I bet you can't do more than...'
- * Let them organize the test or quiz or competitions

The positive view

- * They are nature's born leaders – for good or bad
- * Make it for good:
 - * give them leadership roles – train them if necessary
 - * give them posts of responsibility
- * Give them a positive role – instil this role in their heads using the 'drip, drip' approach

Remember

- * Even though they are very difficult to be around
- * Look for times when they are at their best or at least less terrible and ask...
- * In what way is their need for control being met now? Why aren't they fighting you for control at this point?
- * How can we use this knowledge to help them and ourselves?
- * Set your IBP targets and use this knowledge to underpin your strategic approach

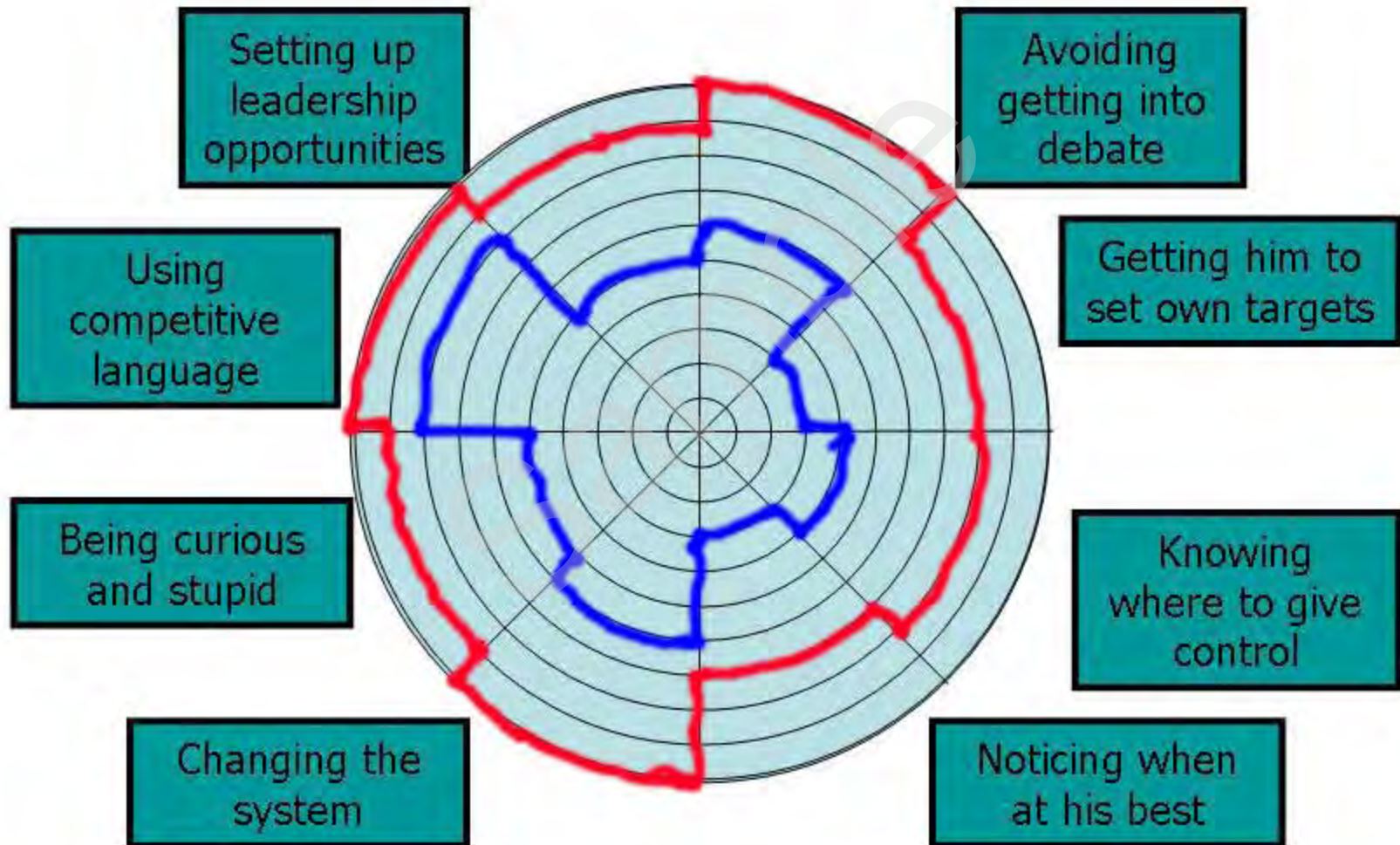
IBP targets 1

- * It may not be advisable to set up an official IBP because it gives the pupil something to kick against like having a rule to break
- * Target setting may not work with these pupils but if you have them they should be set in a 'I bet you can't' or 'let's prove somebody wrong' kind of way

IBP targets 2

- * Be thoughtful about targets – covert rather than overt
- * Avoid targets that are about compliance
- * Use targets that have some advantage (as they see it) for the pupil – having more of a say in their future
- * But again beware that they don't feel they are being manipulated. Make them feel they are leading the target-setting process

Skills circle



Summary

- * Control-seeking pupils are difficult to work with
- * They are generally distrusting of adults
- * You want to build a relationship of trust between you
- * The way in which you do this is contrary to much of what we think is generally good practice
- * Telling them you bet they can't do something (for example) would not seem like a great way of building trust but for 'pure' control-seekers perhaps it is
- * Try it for a while and see; no great harm done if it doesn't work?