

The paper for  
professionals who work  
with troubled youth



# STARR POINTS

STARR COMMONWEALTH VOLUME 7 / NO. 3 2009

## Starr Institute for Training: Preparing A New Generation Of Childcare Leaders

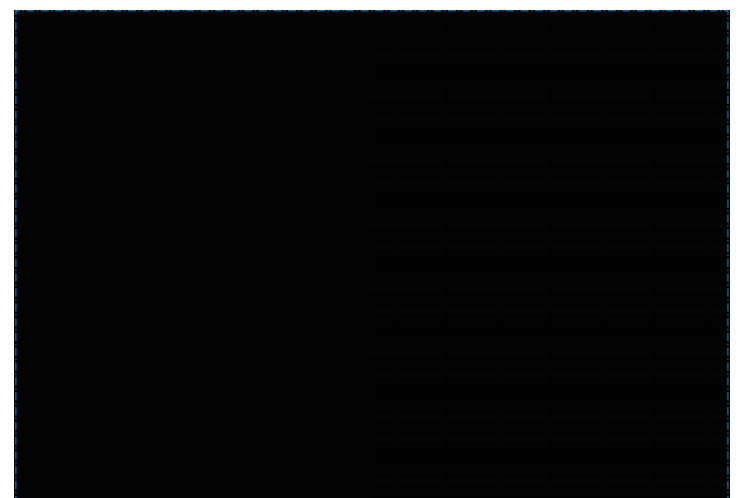
How do you help young people override deep patterns of behavior caused by childhood trauma and abuse? How do you help a teenager who has been labeled a “trouble maker” all of his life see himself differently? How do you change a toxic youth culture in a large suburban school?

For hundreds of parents, clinicians, educators and childcare professionals nationwide, the Starr Institute for Training is not only answering questions like these but has brought together for the first time, two national, evidence-based childcare empowerment models to help do it.

Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC) is a ground-breaking series of intervention programs and services focusing on children and families in trauma. Now under the umbrella of the Starr Institute, TLC was founded in 1990 by noted authority William R. Steele. Currently, there are more than 6,000 certified TLC specialists in the United States and over 40,000 professionals have attended TLC trainings nationwide. Steele estimates that some 3,000 schools and agencies across North America are using TLC intervention programs.

Steele, who was named Senior Vice President of the Starr Institute for Training this year, expects the number of TLC-certified specialists to double under Starr Commonwealth. “When you think of how many children and families each of those specialists will touch, the numbers are just astounding,” says Steele, who has written and lectured widely on the issue of trauma, particularly in young children. “Our training programs offer proven techniques and tools to help bring trauma-informed care and relief to children who are suffering,” he says, adding that children who have undergone trauma experience not fear but terror which manifests itself in ways that are beyond the reach of traditional cognitive therapies. “There are times and situations where you just can’t ‘think’ your way out of a situation,” says Steele. “It really is a deep brain issue.”

And that’s where Larry Brendtro, Dean of the Starr Institute of Training, comes in. The celebrated author, educator and childcare advocate is one of the nation’s leading experts on deep brain learning and resilience studies. His recently published book, (co-authors Martin L. Mitchell and Herman J. McCall)



William Steele

Larry Brendtro

*Deep Brain Learning, Pathways to Potential with Challenging Youth*, offers powerful evidence that the adolescent brain can “re-wire” itself in response to a positive, affirming environment and the presence of caring adults.

Brendtro is a familiar name in the world of childcare. The former president of Starr Commonwealth helped develop Circle of Courage, an innovative model of youth empowerment that integrates the best of Western educational thought with the wisdom of emerging research on positive youth development. Starr Institute’s Circle of Courage training programs, with their focus on early intervention and prevention, are supported by contemporary research, the heritage of early youth work pioneers and Native American philosophies of childcare.



For professionals working with troubled and at-risk youth, Starr Institute training programs offer the right blend of clinical theory, practical application and, most of all, results. “Starr Commonwealth has a very long and impressive history of success,” says Steele.



“We’ve built a powerful training program here that combines the best of trauma-informed care with strength-based practices to create what may well be the most comprehensive training program of its kind in the country. These are exciting times.” – William Steele

### STARR TRAINING

**Starr Training** – Starr Institute for Training offers programs, classes and seminars that are built around the proven success of Starr Commonwealth’s promise to “bring out the best in every child.” Starr’s turn-key programs can be customized for your group and conducted on-site at your school, business, healthcare facility or any location you choose, anywhere in the country. For more information, visit [starrtraining.org](http://starrtraining.org).

**Circle of Courage** – Developed by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steven Van Bockern, Circle of Courage is a childcare model that helps identify the source of behavioral problems in young adults while guiding childcare professionals in rehabilitation or “reclaiming” efforts. The model has its roots in early Native American child-rearing practice, with its emphasis on youth education and development, and integrates the best of Western educational thought with the wisdom of emerging research on positive youth development. For more information, visit [reclaiming.com](http://reclaiming.com).

**TLC** – The Trauma Specialist Certification Program prepares participants to use the full range of TLC’s outcome-driven, evidence-based intervention programs for children and adolescents 3–18 years of age as well as adults. All courses are approved by Continuing Education providers, including Online Courses that reduce the number of training days participants must attend. Structured intervention manuals and workbooks help ensure that what is learned during training is easily transferred and available in practical application.

**NDK** – No Disposable Kids® is a bold initiative to help teachers and administrators learn to recognize the signs and better manage the crises that too often lead to violence in schools. Typical sessions address issues like conflict in the classroom, adult responses to crises and how to work productively with resistant youth. Most sessions are one-day units and are offered in a number of formats to accommodate a school’s need to provide quality professional development programs in an efficient, time-sensitive manner.

**Glasswing**™ – Over the past 10 years, thousands of people from organizations like Eaton Corporation, Kellogg Company and Michigan State and Purdue Universities have participated in Glasswing Healing of Racism seminars. The 2-day facilitated process will guide up to 35 participants through a transformation of their hearts and minds about racism and how we relate to one another as members of the human family.

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### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I never thought I’d be the one reaching out for help. I never realized how real peer pressure was until an incident happened in my family. It was hard. I was so angry. But Starr was there. The staff was kind and worked with me as a parent to improve the areas that I needed to improve while helping my son feel good about himself. They rehabilitated him and, in areas where I was weak as a parent, they helped me too.”

– Parent of teen in a Starr Commonwealth program

## THE LONG VIEW

Dr. James Longhurst is a licensed psychologist for Starr Commonwealth. In addition to his role as Director for Montcalm Schools, Jim is involved in all case planning and clinical services for the organization. He is a member of the American Psychological Association and is a charter member of the International Positive Psychology Association. Jim is a certified lead facilitator and trainer for Starr's Healing of Racism and Glasswing<sup>SM</sup> facilitator training initiative.



## Healing the Hurt

I recently read the book, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, by Ishmael Beah. This gripping autobiography recounts the horrifying life experiences of Ishmael and hundreds of children like him along the western coast of Africa who are stolen from their families by rebels and forced to become "child soldiers." When he was 12-years-old, Ishmael's village was attacked by rebels and he had no choice but to run for his life to avoid capture and from being forced to join them.

Later, Ishmael finds himself under the control of the national army, where he directs his rage against those rebels who had hurt his family. For two years, he is involved in continuous raids and battles and, fueled by the continuous supply of marijuana and cocaine, he engages in the same killing, torture and brutality he was fighting against.

Eventually, Ishmael is taken to a rehabilitation center serving other teenagers who have been rescued from the militia. There he works through the effects of drugs and violence to which he has become addicted. It is also there that he meets a nurse whose compassion and understanding of how he has been traumatized ("Ishmael, it is not your fault! It's not your fault!") helps him to melt away the hate and to gradually reconnect with the Ishmael before all the craziness.

This nurse could very well be called a "trauma-informed" practitioner. She knew that children reflect the world in which they develop. She knew that children raised in a safe, respectable and predictable environment more likely will grow to become caring, thoughtful and productive. She knew that Ishmael's life had been filled with brutality or horror and that he had responded with hate, aggression and violence.

She implicitly understood that a child traumatized by maltreatment will not respond to point systems or other behavior modification programs but instead must be provided with the most powerful reward system – a deep and nurturing relationship with a caring adult. This relationship may not be able to erase the trauma experiences, but can make possible for a child to create new experiences enabling them to think about and see themselves, others and their world in a healthy way.

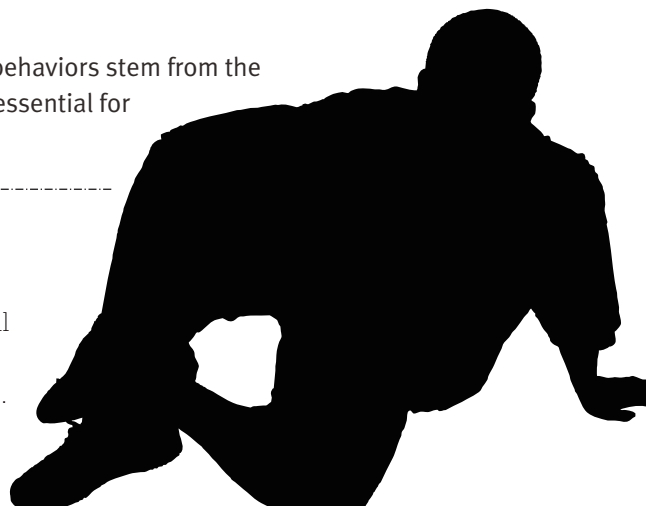
She also understood that his ability to become who he had once been – a caring, thoughtful young person – rested solely on her ability to provide a consistent sense of safety for him. All therapeutic change starts with the experience of a safe and predictable environment. She, along with all skilled trauma clinicians, understands that it takes what Dr. Bruce Perry, Senior Fellow of the Child Trauma Academy in Houston, Texas emphasizes as "Repetition, repetition, repetition!" of relationally enriched sensory input. This mandates a high level of patience. Children not only need opportunities to get better but also must be given opportunities to fail safely too!

We then can help traumatized children understand that their feelings and behaviors stem from the maltreatment they have experienced. Consistent with Starr's mission, it is essential for us to create for them "positive environments where children can flourish."

### (continued from front) Deep Brain Learning

Emerging research in brain science points to the power of relationship in unlocking the strength and resilience inherent in all youth. This powerful series offers practical tools for assessing strengths and illustrates how to help students make positive connections with others, including themselves. The book, *Deep Brain Learning*, can be purchased at [starr.org](http://starr.org).

Information on trainings offered through the Starr Institute for Training can be found at [starrtraining.org/register](http://starrtraining.org/register). Register online now for our Comprehensive Risk Assessment Training Seminar being held October 28 & 29 or Deep Brain Learning presented by TLC on November 5.



*Starr Points* is a quarterly newsletter published by Starr Commonwealth, an internationally recognized leader in transformational programs for children, families, schools and communities. Founded in 1913, Starr's treatment philosophy is rooted in seeing something good in every child, which serves as the guiding principle in its strength-based approach. Starr offers a full spectrum of community-based early intervention and prevention services along with specialized residential programs. Through the Starr Institute of Training, parents, clinicians, educators and childcare professionals now have access to Starr's highly successful and innovative techniques aimed at bringing out the best in every child. For more information, visit [www.starr.org](http://www.starr.org).

### Starr Commonwealth Programs

#### Albion, Michigan

Juvenile Justice (residential)  
Sexually Reactive Youth (residential)  
Abuse/Neglect (residential)  
Alternatives (substance abuse, residential)  
Montcalm School for Boys

#### Battle Creek, Michigan

Day Treatment  
Intensive In-Home  
Starr Life Skills  
(supervised independent living)  
Foster Care

#### Columbus, Ohio

Sexually Reactive Youth (residential)  
Transitions (supervised transitional living)  
MyPlace Independent Living  
Ohio Families First  
Treatment Foster Care  
Community-Based Treatment Center

#### Detroit, Michigan

Alternatives  
(substance abuse, community-based)  
New Boundaries (residential transition and reintegration support)  
Starr Life Skills  
(supervised independent living)  
Transitions (supervised transitional living)  
Foster Care

#### Van Wert, Ohio

Traditional Delinquent for Boys  
Traditional Residential for Girls  
Montcalm School for Girls

For Michigan referrals, please call toll-free 800-837-5591 or e-mail [michintake@starr.org](mailto:michintake@starr.org)

For Ohio referrals, please call toll-free 866-289-9201 or e-mail [ohiointake@starr.org](mailto:ohiointake@starr.org)

[www.starr.org](http://www.starr.org)

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