



rippleeffects
how change happens



**Children and Adolescent
Mental & Behavioral
Health Interventions**

The following is an excerpt of this manual for preview purposes. The full manual is made available upon purchase.

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide information about how to use Ripple Effects programs to provide social emotional skill building, behavioral training and motivational counseling to address the most frequently occurring mental-social-emotional disorders in children and adolescents.

This manual shows how Ripple Effects addresses youths' problematic interior realities, including internal reactions to external situations or events; from hurricanes, to community violence, to bullying, to family trauma. It also provides a broad view of common mental health diagnoses and how the program dovetails with these diagnoses and treatment goals to improve the functioning of youth struggling with mental health disorders.

Neither Ripple Effects programs nor this manual:

- are to be used for diagnostic purposes or "prescribed" treatments. Rather, the resources compiled in this manual were developed to illustrate overlaps of Ripple Effects with diagnoses and treatment approaches.
- are intended to replace the services of professional therapists and mental health service providers. Nor does it take the place of medications prescribed by licensed psychiatrists and physicians.

When licensed mental health professionals and medical doctors make mental health diagnoses, ideally, youth will receive a comprehensive assessment that results in a treatment plan and treatment goals tailored to the unique needs of the individual. This plan can include family therapy; parent training; school-based, clinic, or partial hospitalization; inpatient services; community outreach; tele-therapy consultation and treatment; individual therapy/ counseling; group therapy and psychosocial skills groups; medication; diet, and more. Ripple Effects interventions can supplement and support any and all of these.

Ripple Effects: Evidence Proven Practices

Ripple Effects software for students in grades 2-11 uses proven cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social skill training methods, as well as personal guidance and motivational interview approaches. The expert *Whole Spectrum Learning System (WSLS)* expands capacity to match individuals with the best approach for them.

To review efficacy research using Ripple Effects interventions, go to rippleeffects.com/impacts/

Research has shown exposure to Ripple Effects adaptive interventions can have a positive impact on grades, behavior, and resiliency assets. Documentation of those outcomes has been carefully reviewed by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the National Institutes of Health, resulting in Ripple Effects being ***listed on the National Registry of Evidence Proven Practices (NREPP) as an evidence-based mental health and substance abuse preventive intervention at all three levels of use: universal promotion, targeted intervention, and indicated intervention for both children and adolescents.***



Children's Mental Health

Incidence

According to a Mental Health America (MHA) 2017 report, youth mental health is worsening, while simultaneously the mental health workforce is facing a serious shortage. The statistics are staggering, with 1 in 5 young people now believed to be suffering from a mental illness (Mental Health America, 2017; Teen Health, 2017).

Mental health issues are entwined with school success or failure and pro-social behavior or delinquency. Youth with mental health issues have social, emotional and academic achievement gaps that can put them on a trajectory of later life outcomes such as school failure, lack of success on the job, lack of successful marital and parenting relationships, and involvement with the criminal justice system.

The co-occurrence of mental health problems with both behavior problems and academic failure is so common that it is often difficult to tease them apart. Antisocial behavior, school failure, and adolescent health and mental health problems, such as substance abuse, PTSD, ADHD and depression, are interdependent variables that can be linked to each other, as well as to common external risk factors, such as family discipline patterns, parental mental health, poverty, and community violence.

Mental Health Diagnosis and Treatment

In 2015, a revised version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders: DSM 5 (DSM 5) shifted the approach of treatment for mental health disorders from diagnosis to symptoms; acknowledging that there are symptoms that are common between diagnoses; and that most disorders occur with a range of severity.

A core principal of DSM 5 is that because diagnoses and symptoms overlap and occur on a spectrum, an effective approach to treatment is to focus on what symptoms need to be addressed, and what functional impairment can be improved through asset and skill building. Ripple Effects programs are uniquely designed intervention tools that can help to improve functioning.

Children and adolescents with mental health issues often have serious deficits in core social-emotional competences. Psychosocial components can play a critical role in a comprehensive intervention program, and are probably necessary if treatment is viewed in the context of the youth's overall level of functioning, quality of life, and compliance with prescribed treatment goals.

Few mental health settings or schools can provide a personalized response to each youth's mental health challenges on the scale needed today. Some mental health problems are responsive to a known set of intervention strategies, but lack of personnel, cultural gaps, and/or lack of precise domain expertise prevent delivering the best matched proven strategies for every young person's unique needs.

The prevalence of mental health disorders, the impact of these disorders, and the shortage of mental health service providers creates a formidable challenge that calls out for technology. When technology is at its best it can serve to make treatment more effective, efficient, and equitable.

Almost universally, across settings, treatment plans will include psychosocial goals that include social and emotional behavior and problem-solving skills to improve functioning. Ripple Effects WSLs supplements and enhances treatment in the following ways:

- Provides an effective method for personalizing a comprehensive treatment plan.
- Puts youth directly in charge of identifying and participating in setting treatment goals and problem solving those areas most concerning to them without blame or shame; sometimes trauma related.
- Increases the intensity and individualized depth of training for individuals participating in group skill-building sessions and individual therapy sessions.
- Reduces the training burden for mental health service providers.
- Automates the process of monitoring and documenting compliance and tracking dosage of treatment.

Effective Skill Building

Skill building and performance improve through repeated practice and opportunities to apply new skills to varied situations. The goal of treatment is to help youth develop and internalize skills to a level where new behavior can be accessed in real life situations. The more opportunities for developing these skills through practice and exposure, the better.

Ripple Effects provides generalized training in core competencies, and is not intended as a primary prescribed treatment. The core SEL training tutorials are not contextualized to specific mental health disorders, nor specific treatment approaches. Rather, they can increase skill development in areas specified within a treatment plan. Ripple Effects can increase exposure and practice of new skills, increasing the probability that youth will receive a depth of training needed for meaningful change.

Personal Choice, Contextual Salience and Privacy

It is important to keep in mind that transfer and generalization of new skills to real life will often occur in emotional and complex situations. Therefore, encouraging youth to use the culturally relevant, trauma-informed intervention to privately explore and problem-solve the areas in their lives that cause them the most challenge makes sense. This helps to develop contextual self-efficacy.

Ripple Effects protects client confidentiality by password protecting each user's input into the program, encrypting journal entries, providing a "privacy screen" that can be accessed at a tap or click of a mouse, and by recommending headphones for individual use.

Leveraging Outcomes: Expanding Counseling and Treatment Capacity

Whether youth are receiving mental health supports through a school counselor or in clinical settings, staff shortages, short stays, provider experience, and large caseloads often limit the quantity and sometime quality of individualized services provided. Ripple Effects topics can be assigned to increase the dosage of efforts to reach specific treatment goals and provide an evidence-based tool for less experienced providers. Student-directed use of the program can also serve as a bridge to building relationships between service provider and client, as well as empower and motivate youth in the treatment process.

Ripple Effects expands the reach of counseling and treatment with:

1. Social emotional skill-building and behavioral training tutorials that directly address specific areas linked to improved functioning. Separate manuals in this series explore the use of Ripple Effects as:

- Universal Promotion of core social-emotional competencies for positive youth development
- Targeted Prevention: Risk Reduction
- Personalized Positive Behavioral Intervention: Sample Individual Treatment Plans

2. Bridged communication. Ripple Effects does not replace mental health professionals, whose nuanced judgment is more needed than ever. Rather, it gives young people language for talking about what's on their mind. It can be an effective bridge to communication with youth who may be sullen, withdrawn, or too embarrassed to bring up a sensitive topic. Youth have disclosed anorexia, abuse, and suicidal feelings after using the program, even when they had previously refused to do so. Students' sense of a private, protected space for personal exploration is essential to their use of Ripple Effects. It is correlated with the positive outcomes to date.

3. Youth centered personalized problem solving. Students can access as skill-building extension and reinforcement, or as a means to help deal with a personal challenge. This removes barriers to support such as having to wait for an appointment or finding the right counselor or therapist, and provides students with the help they need when they need it. *In all tutorials involving student health or safety, Ripple Effects programs strongly encourage students to seek help from an adult they trust.*

4. Augmented individual and group sessions. Because the cornerstone of mental health treatment is a one-to-one relationship, live counseling/therapy by a qualified professional may be the least scalable of effective interventions. Yet, it has proven outcomes that must not be ignored. Ripple Effects can be an effective way to triage therapy and treatment services and extend the reach of counselors and therapists by augmenting individual and group sessions.

Why Use Technology?

The most unique and powerful aspect of Ripple Effects is its capacity to engage youth in accommodating their own learning – driving their own skill building efforts. While in many mental health settings it is seen as counter-productive to allow time on the computer, early studies show that targeted Ripple Effects use can be successful in these same settings.* Research has consistently shown that both adolescents and adults are more honest in disclosing mental health information to a computer than to live professionals. Ripple Effects technology leverages that inclination to put research-based, proven effective strategies at the fingertips of youth. The program offers them:

- Help for mental health issues from obsessive-compulsive disorders, to eating disorders, to communicative disorders; providing skill building in core social- emotional competencies; and encouraging youth to talk to an adult they trust.
- A whole tutorial devoted to how to access and use live mental health provider resources.
- A concrete opportunity to participate in their treatment goals and plans.
- Contextualized, culturally sensitive, trauma-informed skill-building and behavioral training in areas that are most concerning to them.

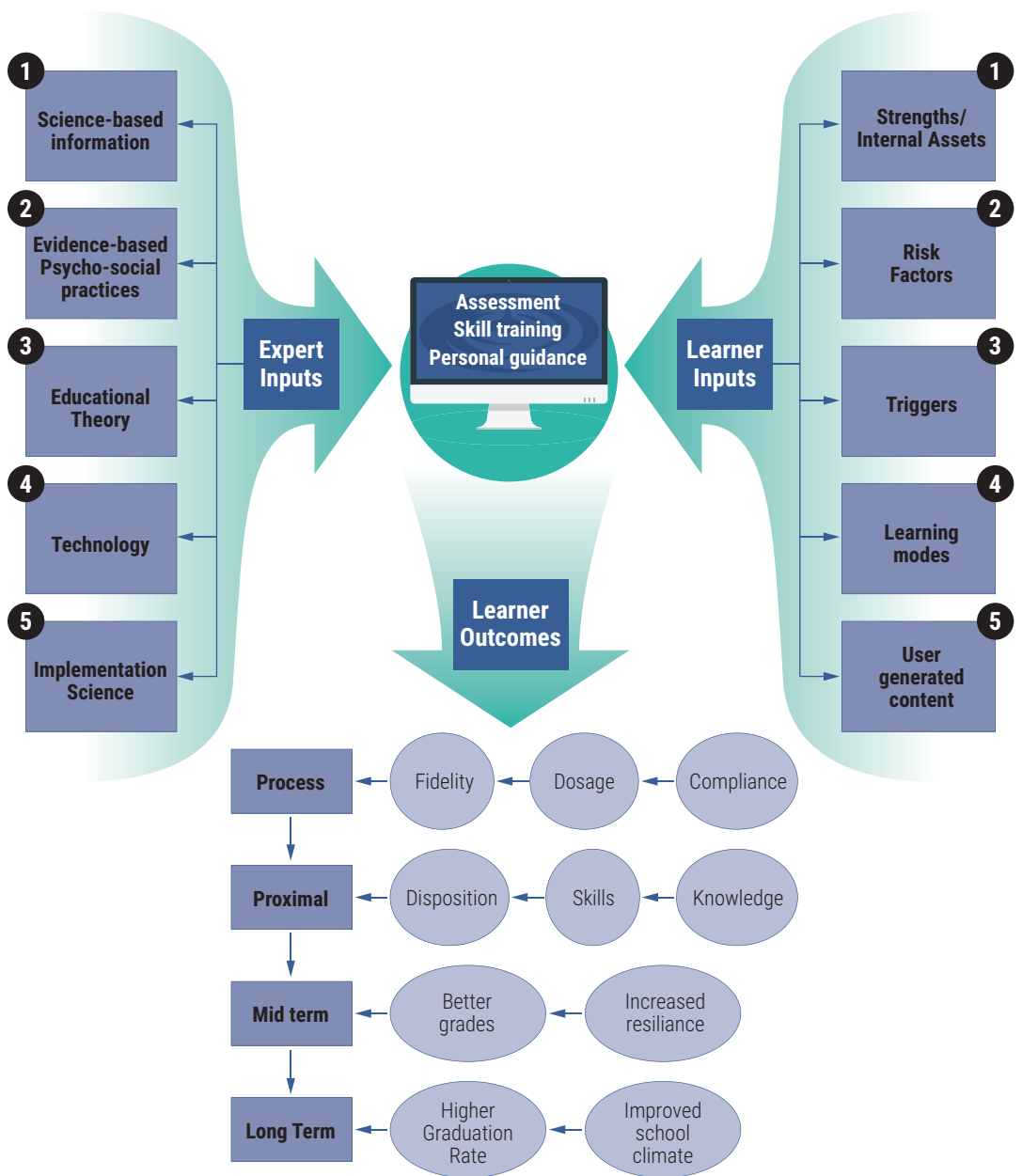
** In a matched-control study of middle school students with mental health diagnoses in a partial hospitalization program, Ripple Effects software was used to enhance psychosocial group sessions. Students were assigned topics related to their treatment goals and were allowed opportunities to choose their own topics. Pairwise comparisons of students in the technology -enhanced treatment school with controls had significantly fewer days of treatment and substantially higher rates of successful discharge. (Bruene, Butler, Prator, Kempinski, Lai, & Silverstein, 2017)*

The Ripple Effects Whole Spectrum Approach

A number of strategies have been proven effective in addressing different child and adolescent mental health disorders. No one strategy has been proven effective with all youth. Ripple Effects draws from a compendium of proven, preventive, and therapeutic mental health strategies, and combines them with evidence-based instructional practices that account for differences in how people learn. In general, Ripple Effects uses cognitive-behavioral strategies, along with motivational interview and counseling techniques, in a learner directed, differentiated, digital environment.

The *Whole Spectrum Learning System (WSLS)* represents a cohesive system with a very large, continuously updated, digital information base. This breadth of information can be used to configure implementation plans based on local goals and constraints.

A detailed description of the logic model on the following page, and the underpinnings of the *WSLS* can be found in the downloadable book, *From Multidisciplinary Theory to Multimedia SEL Interventions: The Conceptual Underpinnings of Ripple Effects Whole Spectrum Intervention System*, (Ray, 2009). rippleeffects.com/pdfs/theorybook.pdf



Navigating the Whole Spectrum Learning System

Ripple Effects WSLs incorporates a wide spectrum of effective interventions, with a focus on cognitive, behavioral and social skill training strategies for over 700 concrete problems. It is an adaptive system. That is, it changes based on input from the learner. The Ripple Effects expert system emulates the best judgment of a multidisciplinary team of domain experts. It functions metaphorically like a wise friend. It does not dispense medical advice, rather it “listens.” It paraphrases and re-presents learner input – and then presents strategies that could be of help. The expert system built into the program matches the users’ topic selection to a prescriptive set of proven effective strategies. By clicking on links, youth can go deeper into the suggested strategies. In the process, the program unobtrusively guides them to the formation of core social-emotional competencies, including problem-solving skills.

For each tutorial, Ripple Effects training platform includes between 9 and 13 context-specific, differentiated modes of learning, including:

Scenario-based case study - Every topic starts with a problem-solving scenario that presents a challenge facing a young person. Inquiry-based questions help put the user in the protagonist’s shoes, clarify the topic through example, and ask participants to brainstorm and evaluate those options.

Cognitive framework – The “Info” screen offers science-based information about areas of a youth’s concern. For specific concerns, such as panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive-compulsive disorders, depression, and more, the tutorials include plain language, explanations of symptoms, and definitions.

Step-by-step skill training – The “How to” presents and demonstrates relevant evidence-based strategies particular to that topic.

First person, video storytelling – “True Stories” are told by youth who have dealt with the topic and learned from it.

Peer modeling – Modeling videos show youth using the skills being taught.

Transfer training practice – “Apply it” offers opportunities for common application of what has been learned, set in situations involving friends and family, media analysis, and role-plays.

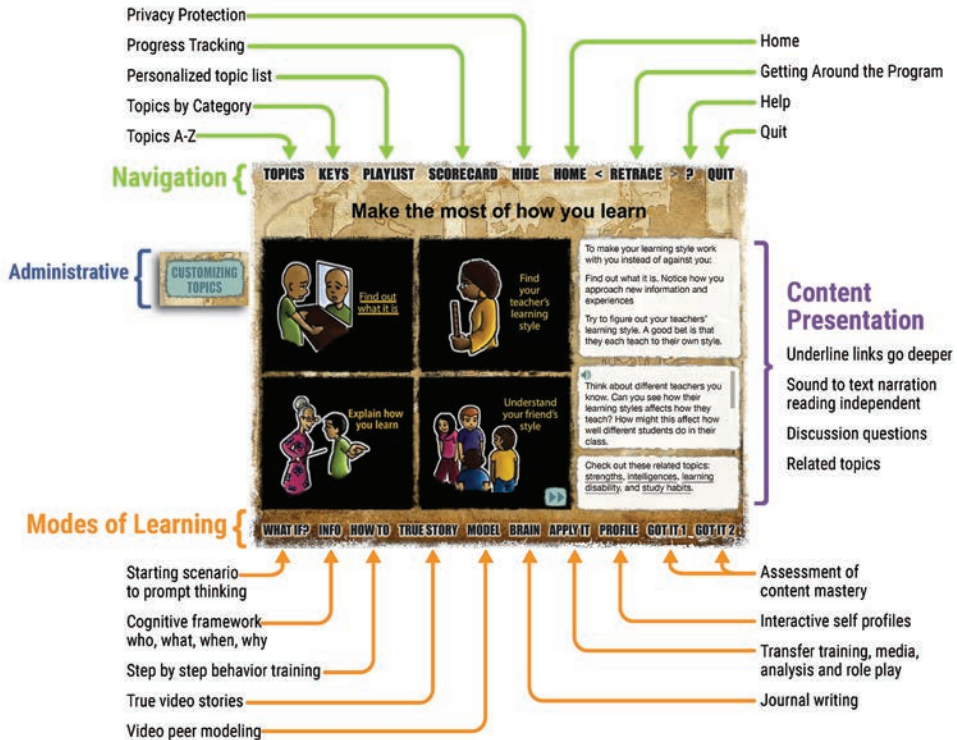
Reflective inquiry – Open-ended questions throughout the tutorial can be used as discussion or writing prompts.

Assisted journal writing – The “Brain” journal uses a structured problem-solving framework to guide youth in deep thinking around the topic, and in generating possible solutions and plans.

Individual interactive profiles – Profiles in a range of areas such as assertiveness, emotional regulation, learning style, temperament, and more provide the user with the feedback using strength based language and descriptions.

Game-based assessments of content mastery – These activities assess knowledge and bring each user to mastery.

Whole Spectrum Learning System™



An overview of Ripple Effects Whole Spectrum Learning System (WSLS) can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCJIOzUi4vBKPgOSHEBcvgOA/videos

Implementing Ripple Effects

As previously stated, Ripple Effects is not intended and should not be used to replace the nuanced judgment of mental health professionals, or prescribed medications for psychiatric diagnoses. To increase the effectiveness of implementation here are a few things to consider:

- **Develop an implementation plan.** This can take several paths. One option is to have the youth login into the program and have them seek out a topic in an area they consider of interest or concern. Once you set them on the process of investigation, the program will guide the youth to the necessary skill building. Another option is for implementers to customize the plan, by creating a personalized scope and sequence. Customized scope and sequences can also be created for groups.
- **Customize the plan.** Use the implementation manuals to match the program's tutorials to treatment goals and/or other skill building programs/curriculum. The alignments were developed to illustrate overlaps of Ripple Effects with diagnoses and treatment approaches, not specific prescribed use. The most effective use of Ripple Effects is to contextualize, customize, and personalize the program to and with the unique user.
- **Focus on strengths.** When developing a plan, be sure to include tutorials that leverage strengths for skill building. Any weakness may be the flip side of a potential strength. For instance, stubbornness is also an expression of perseverance. A good tutorial to begin with is often the topic "Strengths" which has a self-profile that can be printed.
- **Introduce the program.** elp the youth login. Provide an overview of how the program works and set expectations of use. The "?" on the home screen launches a 2 minute video, describing one way to use the program.
- **Protect and respect youth privacy.** Journal writings are password protected. Remind users never to write into the program unless they have logged in with their own password, and to make sure they log out when they're done. If implementers are requiring youth to print out their journal entries as part of their learning portfolio or record, they must inform youth ahead of time. In some cases, students may request an implementer to act as a scribe.
- **Login info is retrievable, passwords can be reset.** Implementers can reset passwords in the Educator Dashboard, under "Manage Students."

- **Understand tutorial names.** Tutorials are listed in both youth vernacular and the lexicon of professionals. To increase engagement, consider choosing the topic names students are most familiar and comfortable with when assigning topics. Formative evaluations involving focus groups indicated that the desired point of entry for most students are not traditionally recognized risk factors, such as family violence, drugs or gangs, but appearance issues and peer relationships. Students expressed almost no interest in proactively learning core social emotional abilities. Instead, their expressed interest was in “nots” – “not thin,” “not popular,” “not athletic,” “not good looking.”
- **Be aware that Ripple Effects tutorials refer out serious problems.** For all tutorials that involve health or safety, Ripple Effects programs strongly encourage youth to seek help from an adult they trust, link them to training in how to use community resources, and guide them in how to ask for help.

Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problems among children and youth. For some, they can take the form of generalized, exaggerated nagging worry over everyday events, hampering daily activities and relationships. For those with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), these thoughts are obsessions, showing as great concern for order; fear of acting on aggressive impulses; or fear of dirt, germs & contaminations. Their behaviors are ritualized and compulsive, such as repetitive hand washing, checking and rechecking, repetitive actions such as stepping only on the cracks of a sidewalk; concerned with arranging things. Youth with Panic Disorder have feelings of fear and dread, especially around fear of death or “going crazy,” accompanied by intense, frightening physical sensations, such as chest pain, a pounding heart, and shortness of breath.

With treatment, youth can learn to manage and overcome some of the symptoms of Anxiety Disorders. There are numerous research-based treatments for the disorder with some of the most common being: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and medication. Ripple Effects programs can be used in these ways:

- Tutorials specifically related to the disorders, include, but aren't limited to:
 - Ripple Effects for Kids:** Anxious, Nervous, Afraid, Triggers - catching
 - Ripple Effects for Teens:** Panic attacks (anxiety attacks), Anxiety, Fear, Nervous habits, Psychosomatic (“in your head”), Triggers - outside
- As a reinforcement of CBT, multiple tutorials encourage self-talk, identifying and managing feelings, recognizing the difference between realistic and unrealistic thoughts, encouraging positive thinking patterns, and replacing negative thinking patterns and behaviors with positive ones.
- To supplement ACT, related skill-building tutorials include, but aren't limited to:
 - Ripple Effects for Kids:** Mindfulness, Liking yourself
 - Ripple Effects for Teens:** Mindfulness, Self-acceptance, Breathing
- To supplement DBT, related skill-building tutorials include, but aren't limited to:
 - Ripple Effects for Kids:** Responsibility, Conflict, Feelings – knowing, Feelings – understanding, Feelings – control you, Feelings – dealing with
 - Ripple Effects for Teens:** Responsibility – for feelings, Conflict – resolving, Emotions – yours, Feelings – owning, Feelings - handling
- A comprehensive scope and sequence for developing social emotional competencies and alignments with the Developmental Assets model can be found in the Universal Promotion Scope and Sequence for Positive Youth Development at rippleeffects.com/teachers/.
- Perhaps the most effective use is to use the program to help identify and develop a sense of self-efficacy in those areas that are most concerning to the individual student.