

6

Simplicity Structured

Introduction

One of the biggest changes that parents and teachers will have to make with No-Influence Mentoring, is moving from a complexity structured model to a simplicity structured model.

The best way to explain this is with the water bottle example. Imagine me holding up a water bottle. When I release it, everyone knows which direction it will head. Down! Simplicity structured means when we teach, we try to ensure what we teach is something that everyone can see and understand.

Knowing which way the water bottle will go when released is not only something everyone can see, but it is so obvious that no one has to think about it (unless you are a smart-aleck kid in the back of the room). The goal of No-Influence Mentoring is to minimize the amount of thinking the students must do.

The idea with the water bottle is that no decision needs to be made; the bottle will only fall in one direction. The goal of the teacher in a simplicity structured environment is to try to ensure that whenever they talk with students, the students do not have to think about what they were told or make a decision on what to do after (see chapter 8 for more information on learning without thinking).

You will also notice that when something is simple, very few words need to be said to help someone understand. In the example of the water bottle, usually no one needs to be trained or prepped to answer which way the bottle will go when released. This means in a simplicity structured environment, everything has to be clear, concise, and simple. In this way, the leadership model can also minimize issues and risks that people will face in learning. When things are simple, the chances that they will not understand goes down.

The complexity structured environment is the opposite. The complexity structure requires more explanation, thinking, decision making, and fewer people understand it. The biggest issue with the complexity structure is that it increases the issues that children have with understanding.

In other words, simplicity minimizes a child's risk, issues, worry, and stress. Simplicity minimizes the number of decisions a child needs to make. Research has found that when people are faced with too many decisions and options in their life, it paralyzes them and causes them to do nothing. Thus, simplicity enables a child to be more proactive and helps them move forward in life.

Figure 6.1 shows the movement that needs to be made from the traditional complexity structure to the simplicity structure.

The first step to moving toward the simplicity structured environment is looking over everything you want to teach or say to a child and seeing if the idea has the characteristics of simplicity.

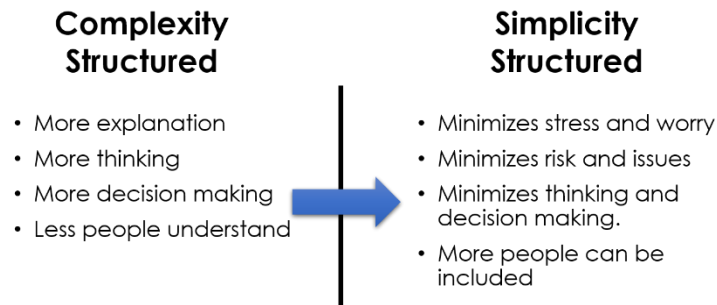


Figure 6.1: Moving from complexity to simplicity

Moving toward simplicity is as much for you as it is for the students/children. The simpler things are, the less you have to do to maintain the family or classroom and the more time you have to focus on the individual. Let me stress that again, simplicity means less work! I was once at a leadership conference and one of the presenters identified that as leaders “We must simplify and serve instead of multiply and manage.” This should be the mantra of every leader. Too many times we get caught up in trying to become more advanced and do more things and be over more programs. In reality, we need to minimize everything that causes us to focus on something other than the individual.

We have found that whenever organizations have tried to become bigger and bring in more complex processes, they have always faced issues. Toyota is one of these companies. In the early 2000s, Toyota desired to grow their business and make more cars and capture a greater share of the market. And grow they did. They began to sell many more cars, but at the same time, their quality started to decline. For the first time, they had major recalls of some of their parts installed in their cars.

In order to avoid these pitfalls of creating a complexity structured environment in your own life, the rest of this chapter will focus on the three main principles to create a simplified structure:

1. Teach Natural Laws
2. Minimize requirements and homework
3. Organize the environment

For an explanation on each step, see the complete text (Available on Amazon).

ⁱ Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice*, (Harper Perennial, 2004).