MISSION STATEMENT, PILLARS, AND CORNERSTONES: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Working with people can be an exceptionally complex task. Without guiding principles and a clear vision, many programs suffer a major identity crisis and eventually lose their effectiveness. It's critical that every one at Telos understands 1) what we're trying to do (our mission statement), 2) how we go about doing it (the ten pillars), and 3) why we think it works (the cornerstones of change). These combine to create what we call the Telos Way or Telos Vision. It is our philosophy.

THE MISSION STATEMENT:

In our front lobby, on our website, and in most of the employee and student manuals you will find the Telos mission statement. It's a brief statement designed to “get everyone on the same page” regarding our company objective. Do we want to control students? Do we want to force change? Do we want financial gain? What is it we're after? A careful reading of the mission statement reveals our aim is to “create inspiring interpersonal relationships that invite and assist all people to move toward their ultimate potential.” So there you have it—we are after relationships that inspire positive change in “all people” connected to Telos—that is our mission.

THE CORNERSTONES OF CHANGE:

Many theories attempt to explain change. Why do people change? When someone evolves to the next level of health and functioning, exactly what happens? The cornerstones of change are our attempt to explain this phenomenon. Basically, we attribute true change to love, family, spirituality, principled-living, and insightful choices. So, how does this have relevance for us at Telos? By having an idea of why change occurs in life, we can build-up and refine practices that support how change occurs in a residential treatment setting.

THE TEN PILLARS

Pillars work together to support a structure. Imagine an ancient Greek building surrounded by huge white columns. Each pillar holds a load, all working together to keep the structure from collapsing. The Ten Pillars of Telos are the actual concepts that take the mission statement and cornerstones from theory to practice. In other words, these are the things we do to accomplish our mission.
THE TEN PILLARS

PILLAR 1: THE TELOS WAY OF BEING
We strive to recognize and honor each person’s humanity in all circumstances. A heart at peace is the foundation of our success.

PILLAR 2: RELATIONSHIP-BASED TREATMENT
We know how to give and receive love, allowing us to care deeply for all those connected to treatment. Inspiring interpersonal relationships are the spiritual oxygen of Telos.

PILLAR 3: INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT
We teach principles before rules, avoiding the quick and easy model of change promoted by behaviorists. We aren’t afraid to bend, deconstruct, or rewrite various components of the program for the therapeutic good of a single student.

PILLAR 4: THE EFFECTIVE PARENT
We believe effective parenting can bring about powerful change. The principles of nurturance, kindness, boundaries, flexibility, and unity support effective parenting practices.

PILLAR 5: THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER
We understand desire for change may be high, but actual ability may lag. People must be personally taught what to do and how to do it; hence we must be master teachers.

PILLAR 6: THE PROCESSING APPROACH
We understand and accommodate for the unique needs of students with information processing challenges. By using processing-friendly expectations and practices, these students and families can enjoy successful experiences.

PILLAR 7: EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT
In the absence of knowledge, all choices are hazardous. Acting as humble detectives, we gather information and measure progress as defined by observable outcomes.

PILLAR 8: THE VALUE OF THE TEAM

We understand no one person has a “corner market on the truth.” The best decisions are discussed and implemented as a team. A healthy team makes a healthy program.

PILLAR 9: CUSTOMER SERVICE

We believe in treating customers (students, parents, referral sources, and each other) with respect and professionalism. We practice basic professional courtesies that assure our excellence in customer service.

PILLAR 10: HEALTHY LIVING

We believe healthy principles, beliefs and activities build healthy people. At Telos we value and promote health in all of its dimensions.
Pillar 1: The Telos Way of Being

Much of Pillar 1 is borrowed from the book *The Anatomy of Peace* by the Arbinger Institute. If you haven’t already read it, feel free to borrow a copy from the Telos library. It can transform the way you see your responsibility in human relationships. It can change your life for the better.

Essentially, a person’s “way of being” is his way of interpreting and interacting with the world. We all have beliefs about ourselves and others. We have internal rules that govern our relationships. Our belief systems highly influence our emotional states, which in turn influences our choices. Over time, our patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions create our *way of being* or the way we choose to be.

Not surprisingly, there are many different *ways of being*. Some are more successful for healing at Telos. In this section we will introduce the preferred *way of being* at Telos—and in life—or the *Telos Way of Being*.

**A HEART AT PEACE**

When you perceive someone has wronged you, it’s easy to allow your heart to go to war. You want to fight. You want to attack your accuser’s position and defend your position. In that moment, contention enters your heart. You stop seeing the other person as a legitimate human being with needs just as important as your own. Instead, you see them as a threat, an obstacle, or a problem. You *dehumanize* that person.

Telos is a fast-paced, high-stakes job. You are dealing with the lives of real people, which means emotions can run high. It is easy to become irritated, step on toes, or hurt others. Many of the students are experts at dragging the hearts of their caregivers out onto the battlefield. They can trigger you. We can trigger each other. The moment you allow your heart to go to war, you become trapped “in the box” of your own emotions and defensiveness. Sadly, as you are in your box you invite others to be in their boxes. This is how conflicts are perpetuated—oftentimes with unfortunate endings.

At Telos, we want you to maintain a heart at peace. No matter what happens to you, whether you are justified or not, you have the power and responsibility to retain a heart at peace. You are to teach others to have a heart at peace—it’s part of your job.

**GETTING AND STAYING OUT OF THE BOX**

To get out of the box you must first recognize that you’re in the box. This is difficult, since we “don’t know what we don’t know.” Signs of being in the box include
defensiveness, extremely strong opinions, anxiety, anger, rigid thinking (there is only one “right way”) and irritation.

Once you are aware you are in the box, you must access an out of the box place to help clear your thinking. This may be a favorite quote, prayer, a calming friend, or a special location.

Once you are out of the box, think through the situation anew by asking yourself these questions:

1. What are this person’s or people’s challenges, trials, burdens, and pains?
2. How am I, or some group of which I am a part, adding to these challenges, trials, burdens or pains?
3. In what other ways have I or my group neglected or mistreated this person or group?
4. In what ways am I “being in the box” obscuring the truth about others and myself and interfering with potential solutions?
5. What am I feeling I should do for this person or group? What could I do to help? Is not helping a better way to help?

Finally, staying out of the box requires action on any insights you discover.

THE PEACEMAKING PYRAMID IN ACTION
Consider the following graphic:
This is what we refer to as the *peacemaking pyramid*. Each level of the pyramid builds upon the lower levels. You decide what levels you emphasize in your relationships. The levels you emphasize, in large part, determine the quality of your relationships and ultimately how effective you are at being an emotionally safe friend, parent, spouse, mentor, coworker, etc.

Notice the top of the pyramid is “correcting.” How much of your time as a parent/staff is spent correcting your child/student? 50%? 80%? 90%? Consider the deeper levels of the pyramid. Are there any levels being neglected?

There are two major truths about the peacemaking pyramid:

1. *If you have a problem at one level of the pyramid, the solution to that problem lies in the levels below.* For example, if you are constantly correcting your child, but it doesn’t seem to help, you may need to spend more time teaching him. If you are having a hard time teaching him, you may need to spend more time building the relationship.

2. *Your success at all levels of the pyramid ultimately depends on how successful you are at the lowest level—your way of being.*

The peacemaking pyramid can remind you to attend to your way of being prior to working with students or coworkers. Prior to entering the building, we encourage you to take a few moments of quiet reflection to prepare your heart for interacting with others. Coming to work with a heart at peace is the most important practice you can master.

**EMOTIONAL SAFETY**

Is there someone you can share anything with? Do you remember a time when you felt completely safe being vulnerable? Was it around the campfire with a few friends? Was it with a parent or a mentor? That feeling of complete confidence that you will not be hurt when sharing sensitive information about yourself is what we call emotional safety.

Emotional safety is a valued commodity at Telos. It is the soil in which change grows. It allows overly guarded people to let down their defenses and engage in healing.

Emotional safety—we know it when we feel it, and we know it when it’s absent. As an employee at Telos it is your job to display, foster, and guard emotional safety. Never condone bullying, mean-spirited teasing, exclusion, or mockery. Avoid being overly judgmental or irritable. Work to exude kindness and compassion. Teach your coworkers and students about ways to enhance emotional safety. With it, we all flourish. Without it, all therapeutic progress stops.
SPIRITUALITY: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

One of our cornerstone of change is spirituality. When outsiders read this they may picture church services, prayers, and scripture study. These religious practices are not spirituality. Simply put, spirituality is a connection to something bigger than yourself (be it God, nature, or principles of goodness) that motivates you to make a contribution to the world.

At Telos we avoid promoting one organized religion over another. Instead, we value truth wherever it may lie. Our way of being, emotional safety, seeing people as people, serving others through the humanitarian therapy, Sunday devotionals, and allowing ourselves to love the students are all manifestations of our program spirituality. We believe spirituality softens hearts and opens doors to lasting, meaningful change.
Pillar 2: Relationship-Based Treatment

If you were to browse various treatment program websites across the nation, you would find that nearly every program describes itself as “relationship-based.” This means they are promoting themselves as using staff-student relationships as a catalyst for change. Relationship-based has become somewhat of a buzzword in the RTC industry. In reality, few programs emphasize the building of quality relationships between students and staff. Even fewer teach the staff how to form therapeutic relationships. At Telos our aim is to invite change through inspiring interpersonal relationships. Pillar 2 describes how and why we do this.

HOW REALTIONSHP CREATE CHANGE

For the past seventy years mental health researchers have been studying the effectiveness of various therapeutic approaches and interventions. They have asked, for example, does Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) have better results on alleviating depression over Solution-Focused Therapy? In study after study, one factor has consistently been the clear front-runner in creating meaningful change—the relationship the client has with the therapist.

The client’s relationship with the therapist is more important than what type of therapy is used; how much schooling the therapist has had; or what specific interventions are used. This means there is something powerful about one person feeling warmth and unconditional positive regard from another. Relationships heal.

Many theories about why relationships are so impactful include:
- We are social creatures who need love and connection.
- Relationships allow us to connect to support and help.
- At a basic level we are aware of our interdependence.
- We allow those we care about to influence us more than those we don’t care about.
- Our insecurities and fears prevent us from considering change unless someone we feel safe with guides us.

HOW TO CONNECT AT A PERSONAL LEVEL

For some, healthy relationships come naturally. For others, it isn’t so easy. Over the years we have conducted several internal studies attempting to understand how these relationships form. We have identified the common behavior traits of the staff who have exceptionally warm and safe relationships with the students:

1. They are secure with themselves.
2. They take time to stop and have individual moments with students.
3. They share appropriate information about themselves.
4. They openly express affection.
5. They are positive.
6. They tell students what they like about them.
7. They hold boundaries.
8. They use humor.
9. They sacrifice personal time to be with individual students.
10. They value relationships over rules.
11. They listen.
12. They tell the students they care, then back it up with caring actions.

Though relationships come easier for some, we can all make inspiring interpersonal connections with students and coworkers. By implementing the traits listed above, your relationships will grow.

**CHOOSING TO INVEST EMOTIONALLY**

In postgraduate training, therapists are frequently taught to avoid allowing their feelings toward clients to grow too strong. The concern is that if you allow yourself to feel too much for a client you will (at best) become sucked in to the client’s emotional world or (at worst) cross a sexual boundary.

While there are good reasons to maintain appropriate boundaries, we encourage all Telos employees to allow themselves to love the students and each other. It is possible to be safe, therapeutic, and loving at the same time. Staff who care little for the students (viewing them as a job) damage emotional safety. Students can sense those who are there to manage them. They also sense those who are there with hearts wide open, ready to love them.

Love is a choice. Choosing to love means choosing to feel hurt by students if they disappoint you. Choosing to love means you open yourself to the possibility of pain. Choosing to love also means you choose to invite a very special energy into the healing process. The more you love, the more you get out of working at Telos.

**VALUING RELATIONSHIPS OVER RULES**

Imagine you are a residential staff. You ask Eric, a student, to finish cleaning the bathroom sink before school starts. As other students start filing out of the common area to head to their classes you notice Eric is still sitting on the floor by the bathroom area, cleaning supplies in hand, head hung down. If you value rules over relationships, what will you do? You may say, “Eric, please get up and get those sinks cleaned. The rule is they have to be done before school.”

Now, what if you value relationships over rules? You may say, “Hey Eric, you look sad. What’s going on?” This simple question then leads to a discussion about Eric’s parent’s divorce, his loneliness, and how hopeless he feels. The discussion turns into another deposit in the relational bank between you and Eric. Why did this happen? Because you
took the time to build the relationship as opposed to blindly adhering to Telos structure by the book. Does Eric still have to clean the sink? Sure. But that is secondary to the relationship.

It is possible to build relationships while enforcing structure and rules. It may require you to bend here and there. It may require you to temporarily, or in some cases permanently lower some of your expectations. It may require you to be okay with things not being done on your exact timeline. Flexibility and care are key factors in your role at Telos.

**PRINCIPLES COACHES**

As a principles coach, you are given one student to help – you will be his coach as he works through the program.

The primary objective of a principles coach is to be a friend and support to your student. Principles coaching is voluntary, so you will not be paid to spend time with your student. The fact that you are volunteering is very meaningful. Your student will know your purpose for spending time with him is motivated by a sincere desire to connect and to help.

The secondary objective of a principles coach is to be the go to staff member for a student when they need something: a ride, to purchase a Mother’s Day card, to attend worship services off campus, etc.

Finally, principles coaches provide students with signatures, passing off clinical work in the Principles Program. Students will need you to verify they are completing their therapeutic work before they can advance in phase.

When the course of treatment is over and students are thanking those who have helped them during their stay at Telos, it is not uncommon for them to single out their principles coach as the person at Telos who helped them the very most.

Be an example of service by signing up to be a principles coach. Encourage your coworkers to serve as principles coaches. It is a wonderful way to help Telos use the cornerstone of relationships.
Pillar 3: Individualized Treatment

THE LIMITS OF BEHAVIORISM

For decades researchers, theorists, and mental health professionals, have been using behaviorism to explain and create change. Simply put, behaviorism is the theory that people (and animals) are motivated by two factors; the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The trainers at Sea World train dolphins through a behavioral process known as conditioning. When the dolphin behaves in a desirable way, it gets a fish to eat. When it misbehaves, it gets nothing. Dog trainers use conditioning to shape canine behavior. When Spot sits, he gets a treat. When Spot pees on the carpet, he gets a swat across the nose. Even parents use conditioning in their efforts to teach their children appropriate behavior. When Billy is nice to his mother, he gets a hug. When Billy hits his mother, he goes to timeout. The behaviorists teach that everything we do, at some level, is positively or negatively reinforced.

Most of the treatment programs across the nation have relied on pure behaviorism to shape the behavior of their students. When students obey the rules and act healthy, they get praise and privileges. When students disobey or act unhealthy, they are scolded and have their privileges taken away. In many programs there are even aversive punishments for “bad” behavior, such as push-ups, seclusion rooms, or other forms of negative reinforcement.

Not surprisingly, behaviorism gets results. In heavy-handed behavioral programs where staff rule with fear and intimidation, students quickly change their behavior. Parents come to visit their son and are amazed at the behavioral transformation. The formerly disrespectful son is now clean cut, well mannered, and quick to comply. The parents are delighted! The program has worked miracles for their son!

The problem, however, arises once the student is no longer in the setting that compelled him to change his outward behaviors. All too often, the moment a student leaves the program, he reverts back to his old attitudes and behaviors. Why does this regression occur? Because the student allowed the program to polish his exterior behaviors, but he never had his clinical issues addressed. He was forced to change externally, not assisted to change internally. As they say, “A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still.”

At Telos we strive to inspire and invite change—not force it. While many behavioral tenants are true (for example, in general most of us seek pleasure and avoid pain), behaviorism cannot be the beginning and end of the change process. We are not training animals to do what we want them to do. We are guiding human beings along the path of healing and greater functionality. Remembering this helps us avoid the tendency to jump to the consequence without considering the student, the behavior, the lesson, the student’s heart, how he will best learn, etc.
It is true, from time to time we will use behavioral methods with certain students who require such assistance, but it is not our bread and butter. We exhaust enlightened and effective treatment modalities before we experiment with more basic reinforcement techniques. People can be motivated by more than the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. They can be motivated by duty, love, or a desire to evolve. Human beings are more than just animals, and the change process must reflect that.

**BEHAVIORAL DRIFT**

Like a car that pulls left on the highway, programs naturally pull toward pure behaviorism. It is up to the leaders at Telos to understand the causes and symptoms of “behavioral drift” and constantly pull the program back to its relational roots. Why exactly do people and programs want to slide toward behaviorism? Consider the following:

1. **Behaviorism is fast:** By manufacturing pre-packaged consequences that invoke fear in the students, staff can more easily control behavior. The impact of a behavioral approach is very seductive because the results are almost immediate.

2. **In moments of stress we tend to resort to the way we were parented:** Most of us were raised by parents who relied heavily on behaviorism. Consequences were knee-jerk reactions designed to make us uncomfortable. Most of our parents didn’t have the time or know-how to design a consequence that taught a true principle connected to a violation.

3. **Behaviorism feels good when you are hurt or angry:** Most of us have a pretty well developed “eye for an eye” reflex. When a student does something we don’t like, we want to get him back. We feel the only way to respond to hurtful behavior is to strike back. Behaviorism and egos can compliment each other.

4. **Behaviorism appeals to your sense of justice:** Many of us believe that every crime must have an equal punishment—that justice must be served. We worry that substituting a harsh punishment with a thoughtful teaching moment will “let the kid off the hook,” offending our sense of proper retribution.

5. **Behaviorism is easy:** Being a truly individualized program is hard. There is a lot to remember. Dealing with 40 students as individuals is complex. Therefore, leaders and staff easily fall into the trap of rule-layering and group consequences.

   a. **Rule-layering** occurs when staff and leaders attempt to solve a problem by creating a new rule. When this mentality becomes the program culture, it quickly becomes a complex system of rules and sub-rules, all designed to control the students and make it easier for staff.

   b. **Group consequences** occur when staff members issue a one-size-fits-all consequence for all the students, regardless of their level of involvement in the infraction or whether or not the consequence will make sense
based on individual learning styles. It should be noted, there is nothing wrong with several students having the same or similar consequences for an infraction if the staff have taken the time to think through and assess each individual student’s involvement and learning style.

6. **The fairness argument**: Behavioral programs resist changing their structure for the needs of the one because “it wouldn’t be fair to the other students.” This thinking operates from the belief that fairness and being treated exactly the same are synonymous. At Telos, fairness is *getting what you need*, not being treated like everyone else.

7. **Cost effective**: Using fear-based techniques, very few staff can manage the behavior of many students. This is why many behavioral programs can have staff-student ratios of 1:24 or more. It costs less to run a behavioral program.

Consider the following case in point:

In a program, some students were engaging in breaking open pens and using the ink to give each other homemade tattoos. Of course, the staff were alarmed by this, so they created a new rule—no pens allowed. If a student was caught with a pen, he was in trouble.

A few weeks later, some students developed a clear preference for Ticonderoga brand pencils. They were better than the other pencils. These students started trading pencils for chores, “I’ll give you five Ticonderogas if you do my chore for me.” The staff were further alarmed by this practice. Another new rule—nothing but program-issued pencils allowed. Now students were in trouble if they had a pen or a non-program pencil. The real question is, with all of this rule-layering, when did they find time for treatment?

Where did this program go wrong? At what point did the leadership allow behavioral drift to occur? How would the program have reacted differently if it practiced Pillar Three? If the program confiscates all the pens, how will they ever know if the students are learning to treat their bodies with respect?

**STANDARD INTERVENTIONS IN AN INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM**

If Telos is so individualized, why do we have standard interventions? Doesn’t the presence of “standard” anything contradict Pillar Three? These are compelling questions.

Being individualized and relationship-based doesn’t diminish the program’s need for structure and order. Furthermore, when we find an intervention that has worked well for many students in the past, we want to keep it close by. We call these closely-kept tools our “standard interventions.”
Imagine a carpenter engaged in building a beautiful and complex project. He has familiar tools that will enable him to build 80% of the project. Those tools are all laid out on his workbench. They are tested and tried. He is comfortable working with them. There are, however, some customized tools he will need to finish the remaining 20% of his project. The individualized portion of the project doesn’t negate the trusted and true “standardized tools.” The standardized tools don’t eliminate the need for a few individualized tools. Thus, both standard interventions and individualized treatment can exist at Telos.

Some of our standardized interventions include:

Supportive Approach – falls within the relationship continuum. Designed to have staff consult with students as they problem solve

Authoritative Approach – falls within the continuum. The staff gives a student a choice to redirect or an intervention will be used to help the student redirect.

Crisis Prevention – a model used to deescalate a student in crisis.

Forecasting – a staff member pulls a student aside at the beginning of the shift and details expectations.

Prompt – a staff member asks a student to stop a certain behavior or to engage in a behavior.

Reflect and Process (R&P) – a staff member asks the student to deescalate or redirect by taking a break. The staff member then processes with the student by problem solving and setting expectations.

Communication Block – a student loses his voice with a peer or a set of peers because he is being inappropriate.

10ft Rule – a student is not allowed within ten feet of another student because of inappropriate behavior.

Staff Buddy – a student remains within arm’s length of a staff member because he is being inappropriate or he needs coaching.

Student Buddy – a student is asked to shadow another student because he is in need of support.

Standing Group – a student or a staff call a standing group because the floor needs to redirect or a student needs to express himself.

Line of Sight (LOS) – a student is not allowed out of the staff’s sight.

Support Team Member/Staff Switch Out – a student is not working well with his designated staff members. A new staff member enters the scene as a neutral party to remove the student so problem solving can occur.
Support Team – a support team is called because the student's intensity has increased and the student needs increased support. This intervention is designed to deescalate the student and to make sure correct procedures occur if a therapeutic hold is used.

Therapeutic Holds – an intervention designed to keep the student safe. A physical hold is administered because the student has acted out aggressively.

Removing the Students from the Stimulus – the staff remove the students to a safe area when a peer is acting out.

Community/Morning Groups – these groups are designed to problem solve and decompress the unit on a daily basis.

Emotional Safety Groups – these groups are designed to explore the emotional climate on the unit.

Therapeutic Special Status (TSS) – A status the student is put on if a consequence does not get completed.

**HOW AND WHEN TO GET CREATIVE**

At times you will find yourself stuck with a student, having exhausted the standard interventions. This is when the treatment team meets to discuss formulating a *special protocol*. The team only entertains protocols when there is evidence the tested and true aspects of the program aren’t working (or won’t work). In these instances the team thinks of creative and less traditional ways to help a student progress. Because special protocols are taxing on the staff, we try to reserve them for as needed cases.

Occasionally a student may need a consequence for breaking a rule. In these situations we encourage staff to create *principled consequences*. These types of consequences can be applied frequently. A consequence differs from a protocol. A consequence is a one-time response from a staff member for an isolated behavior. Protocols are interventions that address a larger cluster of behaviors (such as the student being stuck in his progress). So, don’t feel limited in issuing principled consequences. We want you to use your creativity liberally in responding to case-by-case student behaviors.

To issue a principled consequence, you:

1. Identify the principle the student violated (e.g., respect, tolerance, care, honesty, etc.).
2. Think of a task the student can perform that will teach the principle violated.
3. Ask yourself if this task is something the student will likely “get” or understand.
4. Communicate the consequence to the student and record it on HQ.
5. Follow up to assure the student has completed the task.

**Example**: A student swears at a teacher. He has violated the principle of respect. After thinking it through, you ask him to interview his three favorite staff and three favorite
students, asking them when they have felt the most disrespected and how it impacted them, then report what he learned in community meeting. You then follow up the next day to assure he completed this task.

Many programs micro-manage and over regulate staff behaviors. We want you to feel free to use your mind in creating interventions that you think will impact the students. Your leaders will help you learn to think and act therapeutically.
Pillar 4: The Effective Parent

Much of being an effective staff is using effective parenting principles. When you think about it, Telos staff are surrogate parents, trying to raise surrogate sons. Pillar Four describes the principles and behaviors that make up the effective parent.

THE RELATIONSHIP CONTINUUM

There is a saying, “wars are won in the general’s tent.” All good parents start with a good plan—something that governs the way they see their children, how they interact with their children, and how they respond to crisis. At Telos we call this plan The Relationship Continuum.

All staff at Telos have regular trainings on the Relationship Continuum. Fluency in the continuum is required of all who have interactions with students.

Telos Relationship Continuum

- Reasonable
- Flexible
- Mild/medium-distress
- In-control
- Irrational
- Oppositional
- High-distress
- Inciting
- Danger to others
- Danger to self
- Major disruption
- Failure of Auti App

**SUPPORTIVE APPROACH**
- Soft tones
- Shoulder-level posture
- Kind and patient

**AUTHORITATIVE APPROACH**
- Always neutral tones
- 4-foot and 45-degrees
- One clear redirect
- Set boundary as a choice
- “You can lower your voice or take an R&P in the hallway”
- Issue R&P

**CRISIS PREVENTION**
- Call Supervisor for a removal
- Remove peers to a safe area
- Consider staff switch-out
- Supervisor calls Support Team
- Elbow lead
- Therapeutic hold
- Staff debriefing

Teflon Demeanor

- Telos Way of Being
- Principled Consequences
NURTURANCE AND KINDNESS

Think of the last time you were dealt with harshly. Have cruel, mean-spirited people inspired you to become a better person? Most of us respond much better to kind people. The tough, angry, intimidating parenting style has no place at Telos. Our staff are kind, patient, warm, and approachable.

Are there ever exceptions to this rule? Yes. When the team has determined that a more straightforward, no-nonsense approach is preferable for the student’s growth, we can adapt to that style. Even this approach, however, can be administered in a kindly manner.

HOLDING BOUNDARIES VS ADAPTATION: THE DELICATE BALANCE

In one Telos leadership meeting a long line was taped on the floor representing the continuum between accountability on one side and adaptation on the other. Attendees were asked to choose a point on the line where they stood. Did they believe in holding students strictly accountable to rules and curriculum as written? Did they believe in accommodating to students individual issues and needs? Or were they somewhere between the two extremes? As the attendees placed themselves on the line they learned more about the different perspectives that made up the team. The exercise shed light on some of the philosophical differences behind past disagreements about directions to take in treatment. It was a challenging and interesting activity.

Where would you place yourself on the line; accountability, accommodation, or somewhere in between?

What is the right stance? Well, that depends entirely on the student/issue. One student may need significant accommodations in school, but may need to be held strictly accountable residentially. Another student may have a high bar in school, but may need accommodations regarding chronic behavioral issues that will change very slowly over time. The key is not being stuck on one side or other of the continuum. If you rigidly adhere to your one way of viewing the students, you become a one trick pony, thus missing out on opportunities to help a broader spectrum of students. By rigidly adhering to your chosen lens you may even interfere with the team’s ability to see the student clearly.

Work to understand yourself, then work to be fluid and flexible in how you choose to see the students.

When students misbehave or create a safety issue, we must respond. The nature of the student action—whether or not it creates a clear safety risk, should determine how you respond. Students at high risk for suicide, self harm, harming someone else, sexual perpetration, or drug use, should be placed on Safety Watch. This assures the student will be close to staff, and visibly sets the student apart by having him wear a safety shirt. This is a visual cue for staff to keep the student under high supervision. The use of Safety Watch is reserved for only the most salient safety related issues and is not a punishment.
If a student engages in some major misbehavior that requires him to be close to staff, he can be placed on Staff Shadow. This is similar to Safety Watch in that students are to be arm’s length from staff, but they are not to wear a safety shirt. Keep in mind, Staff Shadow is also reserved for major discipline issues.

Getting off Staff Shadow or Safety Watch requires a student to resolve his high-risk behaviors or correct the violation and get different Telos leaders to sign a contract allowing him to return to his former freedoms and privileges.

Most of the disciplinary responses at Telos will NOT include Safety or Staff Shadow. Most consequences will be creative, principle-based, or logical consequences created by staff in the moment. We want you to trust your instincts and work to create valuable principled teaching moments when students misbehave.

The Residential Response graphic below helps illustrate how safety and discipline systems at Telos work together to create an environment of stability.

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THE MENTOR COMMANDMENTS

For residential staff, there are a few “musts” when it comes to supervising the students. We call these items the mentor commandments. Being proficient at these seven items will be important if you are to advance at Telos. Your supervisor will score you on them after every shift. Your scores will be reported to residential and Telos leadership as we determine how we can best support and develop you as a mentor.

1. JOIN WITH AWARENESS: Avoid sitting and directing students from the team couch. We want you in the lives of the students. Play the board game with them. Kick the soccer ball with them. Be involved in their activities while maintaining awareness of the students and events taking place around you.
2. **EXECUTE PROTOCOLS:** Special instructions called protocols are developed for some students. If you are supervising a small group of students, it is your job to know and execute those instructions consistently from shift to shift, day to day. Your supervisor will make sure you have the instructions on hand when you need them.

3. **STAFF ARE IN CHARGE:** Ever been to a home where the parents weren’t in charge? It is chaos, and few good things happen in such settings. As much as some of our students would love to run the shift, you must remember you are the authority figure, and you are in charge. Find ways to establish this with the students while maintaining a heart at peace. You will find that boundaries consistently held support healthy relationships.

4. **MOVE OR SINK:** As the saying goes, “Idle time is the devil’s playground.” Make sure you have a good plan for your time with the students. An unstructured afternoon with no plan will breed crisis and chaos.

5. **FORECAST EVERYTHING:** As you will learn in Pillar 6, our students need time to process upcoming events. The success of your shift will correlate with how well you preview the activities and expectations of the shift.

6. **Q IS L.A.W.:** The Q is the instruction and tracking sheet mentors use to supervise students. It lists privileges, protocols, rules, and limits. Additionally, your “Q” is composed of the small group of students you are responsible to oversee and mentor. Following the Q is very important.
   a. **L** stands for “limits.” Make sure you enforce the limits and rules for each student listed on the Q.
   b. **A** stands for “account.” Account for all students on your Q at all times.
   c. **W** stands for “walk.” Walk or move together as a Q throughout your shift. The exception to this is students who have specific privileges to move throughout parts of the day away from their Q.

7. **KEEP IT CLEAN:** Our environment impacts the way we feel and behave. Cluttered, dirty bedrooms invite cluttered, darkened moods. You are expected to ensure your surroundings (the vehicles, grounds, rooms, building) are up to Telos standards.

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**A TEAM DIVIDED: BEING UNIFIED**

Anyone who has worked extensively with families knows just how destructive divided parents can be. As a parenting team we always work toward being unified. While respectful disagreements are par for the course, we strive to keep talking and strategizing until we find a solution we can all rally behind. In the event the team wants to move in a direction you disagree with, choose to support the team anyway. Don’t
undermine, backbite, or complain about not getting your way. Part of being a unified parent is recognizing unity is more important than proving you are right.
Pillar 5: The Effective Teacher

A father once told his five-year old son, "You can play outside, but don't leave the cul-de-sac." After a few minutes the father noticed his son wandering down the street, far beyond the limits of the cul-de-sac. The father ran to his son, swatted his behind, and said, "Didn't I tell you not to leave the cul-de-sac?"

Tearfully, the child replied, "What's a cul-de-sac?"

In working with staff and students, we must be master teachers.

YOU CAN'T EXPECT WHAT YOU HAVEN'T TRAINED

For staff and students alike, being at Telos is like being asked to fly a Boeing 747 jet. The desire to fly the plane may be high, but the ability to fly the plane is most likely low. How then, do we create competent pilots? We must teach them, button by button, and lever by lever. We cannot expect staff or students to do what we have not trained them to do.

So often students enter the program with a desire to have good social skills, manage depression, etc. It is easy to confuse desire with ability and become frustrated by their lack of performance. When you see staff or students struggling, ask yourself if you have taught them exactly what to do. Never assume people "just know" or "will pick it up." Experience has taught us most people need specialized, specific, skill-upon-skill training. It is up to you to teach them.

TEACHING THE PRINCIPLE: INSIDE-OUT CHANGE

Ideally, you will spend most of your time teaching principles. A principle, once understood and embraced, can govern behavior. In your teaching efforts, be principle-minded. Talk about the why behind rules. If a student has failed to keep a rule, teach him about the principle behind his behavior. Attempt to convert staff and students to correct principles. This creates lasting change.

TEACHING THE ACTUAL PRACTICE: OUTSIDE-IN CHANGE

How did you learn to tie your shoes? Think back. Chances are one of your parents taught you. But how did they teach you? Did they lecture you about the importance of tied shoes, then walk away? Did they talk with you over and over about "just doing it?" Did they threaten to give you a consequence if you didn't tie them?
Most of us had a mother or father who got down on the floor with us and demonstrated shoe tying step-by-step. Perhaps they had a story that illustrated their actions (the little rabbit goes around the tree, through the hole…). Then they had us do it while they watched, offering patient feedback along the way. Once we succeeded they poured out praise.

Few people understand a student who has never learned proper social skills needs clear, step-by-step instruction if he is to ever function as he should. Because social skills are intuitive for us, we assume it is intuitive for the students, and they are simply choosing to remain socially dysfunctional. We attempt to turn up the heat to compel the student to choose to function. We may offer inspirational pep talks to motivate the student to function. We rarely recognize the need to teach the student to function.

Remember to be a master teacher in working with the students. Follow these steps:

1. Identify the skill in need of development
2. Talk about why the skill is important
3. Kindly tell the student exactly what it is you are seeing
4. Discuss what proper application of the skill looks like (sounds like, etc)
5. Role-play until the student demonstrates competence
6. Challenge the student to use the new skill “in the field”
7. Offer specific feedback and encouragement

IN THE MOMENT FEEDBACK FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Those of us who have been employed know the difference between textbook learning and on the job training. Most people learn the foundation of their profession or trade in school, then go on to a workplace where supervisors guide them through the practical application of their knowledge. At Telos both staff and students learn best from their on the job training, or in the moment feedback.

Most human beings instinctually avoid conflict. When we see an undesirable behavior or trait in someone we know, we tend to either silently suffer through it, or complain/gossip to a third party. We avoid offering constructive feedback directly to the person we have a problem with.

As an employee at Telos you need to become comfortable with the discomfort of others. As a staff member, you are required to teach the students, and that means occasionally creating discomfort. As a member of the Telos team, you are required to teach and train the staff and students you work with or supervise. That means you must (in a respectful and professional manner) tell it like it is. You must be on the search for teaching moments, hungry to find ways to improve yourself and others. If you are conflict-avoidant, you are sacrificing growth opportunities for students and staff.

Staff and students frequently need instruction in the moment. To do this, pull the staff or student aside (away from an audience), and:
1. State what you observed
2. Ask the staff/student if he/she thinks there is a more effective way
3. Validate his/her idea or share the idea you have
4. Offer support and encouragement

This type of non-threatening feedback needs to be dispensed liberally to staff and students. We are trying to create a training-loving culture here at Telos.
Pillar 6: The Processing Approach

*Processing issue* is a general term that describes a variety of learning disabilities influencing how the brain processes information. As you may know, computers have processing speeds—the speed at which the machine can compute large amounts of information. If you’ve ever had a slow computer you’ve experienced the drag and occasional crash as it attempts to process data. Like computers, the brain processes information at different speeds. Some people process quickly. Others struggle to handle large amounts of sensory data. Many of the students at Telos have processing issues.

**THE FUNNEL**

Think of your brain as a funnel. Water goes in the top and comes out the bottom. Processing students have narrow funnels. Sensory data going into the funnel (e.g., sights, sounds, stressors, etc) is not processed efficiently. Like a funnel being filled up too quickly, a processing student’s brain can overflow with too much stimulation. This overflowing looks like shutting down, isolating, getting angry, being oppositional, and getting stuck in rigid thinking.

Since a processing student can’t widen his funnel through sheer willpower, what is he to do? First, his environment must be shaped to limit the amount of sensory data going into the funnel. Second, he must learn to dissolve the rigid thinking that tends to plug up his funnel. We must be experts at 1) controlling sensory data and 2) teaching mental flexibility.

![Funnel Diagram](image)
We have a set of practices that guide the way we work with all students. These practices are processing-friendly because they help students manage their sensory input (to keep the funnel flowing). We call these practices the processing approach.

**THE ARM AROUND THE SHOULDER APPROACH**

What feeling does the name of this section evoke? What does it mean to have a teacher guide you with an “arm around the shoulder?” Clearly, it is not the drill sergeant approach used in many programs. Barking orders from across a room tends to trigger our processing students. Approaching them with a figurative (or literal) arm around the shoulder will have a much better outcome.

An “arm around the shoulder” approach means:

1. Soft tones vs harsh, loud tones
2. Approaching the student vs maintaining distance
3. Asking vs ordering
4. Assisting with the task vs supervising from afar
5. Patience and kindness vs frustration and irritation

The spirit of this approach helps processing students manage their funnels. It prevents the perception of hostility and invites flexible thinking. Watch yourself closely, assessing if you are using the arm around the shoulder approach.

**THE 80/20 PRINCIPLE**

Mentor A is trying to get one of his students to class. The student is rigid, angry, disheartened, and feels rebellious. His funnel is on the brink of overflowing. Mentor A thinks, I’ve got to get him to obey me. Otherwise, he won’t respect me and he’ll never take me seriously. I need to win this battle. So he pushes forward with the mandate, “You need to get up to class right now or we’re going to carry you up.” How will this student likely react? What is this mandate doing to his funnel level?

Mentor B is in the identical situation. She thinks, I wonder how I can get this student unstuck. I’ll bet some flexibility on my part will invite some flexibility on his part. This interaction isn’t about winning or losing—it’s about avoiding a crisis, lowering his funnel level, and hopefully doing some teaching along the way. She offers the following 80/20 compromise; “I can see you’re feeling really upset. If I help you by giving you ten minutes to relax in your room, will you help me by going to school without any problems?” How is this student likely to react? What will likely happen to his funnel level?

The 80/20 principle is simply allowing yourself the flexibility to compromise when students are stuck. Sometimes, by giving the student 20% of what he wants, you can get 80% of what you want. The staff that promotes the 100% my-way-or-the-highway approach is more likely to end up with a behavioral meltdown resulting in 0% for both parties.
FORECASTING
When planning an outing, it’s nice to know the weather forecast. Knowing the forecast helps you prepare for what is to come, thus reducing your anxiety.

Processing students struggle with transitions. Abrupt changes can plug their funnels. Stopping the board game to go up to lunch, for example, can result in irritation, defiance, or rigid thinking. Forecasting is the act of giving students a heads up shortly before any kind of transition. It can also be talking through the activities of the day at the beginning of your shift. Something as simple as, “David, we’ll be putting the game away in about ten minutes so we can make it to the movies on time” can save you hours dealing with a behavioral meltdown.

FRONTLOADING
Like forecasting, frontloading can help a student manage his funnel. Frontloading is the act of reminding a student of his old behavior patterns prior to making a request. For example, if Billy gets overly competitive during board games, staff might say, “Billy, in the past you have allowed yourself to get really worked up over a game like this. I hope you will choose to stay calm this time.” For a student who gets defiant when asked to do chores, staff may say, “John, in the past you’ve gotten angry when I ask you to do the dishes. I’m hoping you will choose to react differently today.”

Frontloading takes the shock factor out of requests by reminding students of old patterns while gently challenging them to change.

BREAKING IT DOWN
Multi-step instructions are difficult for processing students. Complex tasks often need to be broken down and given to the student step-by-step. For example, avoid assigning tasks like, “Alright guys, I want you to get this room clean and finish all your homework before the activity.” A processing student may need you to say (using the arm around the shoulder approach), “Zach, let’s get this room cleaned up. Will you make your bed while I pick up these books?”

SLOWING IT DOWN
Processing students struggle during the hurry-up moments of the day. Getting hygiene, chores, and breakfast done in time for school isn’t always a simple feat. Whenever possible, slow things down just enough for your processing students to keep their funnels flowing smoothly. This may mean you offer extra time, or simply walk them through difficult tasks. Remember, just because it seems simple to you doesn’t mean it is simple for them.
APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS
We all have high hopes for our students. We want them to function optimally. We want them to emerge from Telos competent, confident, and polished. Then reality sets in. Processing students have some very real limitations. It is unrealistic for us at Telos to “make the deaf hear and blind see.” We need to understand the limitations of our students, and our own limitations as professionals.

So often our emotional reactions are influenced by our expectations. The mother expecting her son to become a criminal is delighted when her son grows to become a non-spectacular but law-abiding citizen. The mother who expects her son to become the next Nobel peace-prize winner is devastated when he grows to become a non-spectacular but law-abiding citizen. Expectations can dictate emotional states.

Some of our students will never become functionally organized (while at Telos). Some will never become 100% socially appropriate. Accepting this is a key to our success. Accepting our limitations helps us 1) avoid burnout, 2) focus on the variables we can control, and 3) prepare the families for the realities of their sons’ lives.

That being said, we can always hope and work for the miracle. At times we are surprised when total change occurs. It is rare but possible. We must understand that we are very limited in our ability to force or guarantee change. All we can do is stack the deck in favor of the student changing himself.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT
Processing students need extra help in organizing their lives. Try to be patient with their disorder and chaos. Lovingly teach them a better way while understanding that the change may not come on your exact timeline. Some processing students may need the extra support of an executive function (EF) coach (explained in Pillar 5).

SOFT DEMEANOR
Work hard to manage your own emotional reaction when working with a processing student. Chances are the student has had more than his share of perpetually irritated adults disapproving of his behavior. Hold boundaries while maintaining a soft, kind demeanor.

AVOIDING SARCASM
Many processing students are very literal. When asked, “What brings you to Telos?” they may respond, “An airplane, then a minivan.” Because they don’t get subtle humor, sarcasm, and metaphor, try to be very concrete with them. Tell them what you need
and avoid snarky, sarcastic humor or banter. Processing students can be easily confused or offended by something said in jest. Even when a student appears to laugh and get the joke, he may be using a learned response to cover the deficit.

THE PRODUCERS PATH

You are surrounded by producers and consumers.

Consumers like to consume. They spend much of their lives taking in the creations of others. Consumers don’t see themselves as being able to impact the world around them. They are passive, content to wait for success to come to them. Oftentimes consumers see themselves as victims. They look at the condition of their lives and blame the people around them. “I could be happy if others would treat me with more respect.” “I would be in better shape if there weren’t so many fast food restaurants on my street.” “I can’t be happy as long as I’m living in this family.” Consumers become black holes, sucking in the resources and positive emotions of others, giving little in return.

Producers have a very different mindset. They see themselves as active forces in their lives. They know they can impact the world around them. They recognize they may not always have control over events, but they have control over how they react to events. They step into the world each day with a desire to take action—to produce. They see themselves as behind the driver’s wheel of their lives. Producers don’t spend much time feeling sorry for themselves. They don’t see themselves as passive bystanders. They don’t get caught up in victim thinking. If they don’t like their circumstances, they change them.

Imagine you are on a slow sinking ship in shark-infested water. As you observe your shipmates you see a difference between the producers and the consumers. The consumers cry about how unfair the situation is. They get angry at the captain of the ship who should have kept everyone safe. They fight over who is to blame. They stand still, frantically looking around for someone to save them. The shake their fists at the sky, angry at God for making sharks and oceans in the first place.

The producers react differently. They immediately go about passing out life vests. They organize the lifeboats and create efficient systems for getting everyone in quickly. They offer assistance to others. They believe they can make a difference. They work for their survival.

In the grand scheme of things, who has changed the world for the better, consumers or producers?

Imagine a wild horse galloping along a plain. It is beautiful and powerful, but completely unmanageable. The traveller who wants to use this horse will have to harness and train it.
For decades behavioral scientists have known that highly effective people use a specific set of skills. Researchers call them executive functioning skills. These skills are the saddle, bridle, and harness that make the wild horse useful. They are the skills producers use to impact their present and take control of their future.

The Producer’s Path is a program that introduces these powerful skills to the students at Telos. Much of the Producer’s Path work will take place in the classroom with the Academy teachers. They are responsible to teach and reinforce these skills every day. Students who need more intensive help with executive function may work with a Telos trained executive function coach (EF Coach). Additionally, the Producer Skills should be discussed and reinforced in every department at Telos. Become familiar with these skills so you can help students in their quest to become producers:

1. **Time Management** - The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important. For example, a teenager can establish a schedule to meet task deadlines.

2. **Organization** - James stayed up late the night before the report was due. He couldn’t find the instructions sheet the teacher gave him or the book he was supposed to have read. He opened his backpack and a mass of papers spilled out. Was the book on his shelf? Thousands of odds and ends, papers, books, clothes, and other objects sat crammed onto and into his shelves. Clothes covered the floor of his room. Could it be he had already completed the report? He couldn’t remember. This was not a new situation for James. Cluttered backpacks. Cluttered shelves. Cluttered bedrooms. Cluttered minds. Successful producers create systems that organize their lives. By being organized they get more done with less effort.

3. **Task Initiation and Completion** - The hardest thing about completing an undesirable task is starting. Many of us struggle with procrastination. There is always an interesting television show on when it’s time to do homework. There is always a fun activity competing with the chores we have to do. “I’ll get to it later,” we say. The most successful and effective people know how to self-start. They can look at an overwhelming task, feel the reluctance, and “dig in” anyway. They know how to stick to the task until it’s complete.

4. **Attention** - Attention is our brain’s ability to focus on one part of what is going on around us while at the same time ignoring other things that are happening. Many people struggle to tune out distractions, especially when bored or disinterested with the task at hand. Most great accomplishments have required hard work and focus through periods of discouragement, boredom, and fatigue. True producers are able to fight through distractions that take them away from sustained attention.

5. **Metacognition** - Producers are able to think about how they are thinking. They are able to recognize when they are stuck. They know when to ask for help. They understand their weaknesses and use strategies to counter them.
They have the ability to stop and reflect on their work, making needed corrections. They are self-aware. For example, a student with strong metacognition may know that he tends to rush through assignments. He watches for signs that he is rushing and forces himself to slow down. He may have a friend check his work before he turns it in because he knows he has a tendency to miss things. He knows his weaknesses and uses strategies to compensate.

6. **Flexibility and Shifting** - Cognitive flexibility is the ability to consider something from multiple mindsets, shifting from one mindset to the other easily and quickly. The opposite of cognitive flexibility is ridged thinking, or getting stuck in seeing something from only one mindset. Randy struggles with flexibility and shifting. He understands what happened in the book his English teacher assigned but struggles to write about the “main theme.” What’s even more confusing to Randy, the teacher told the class there are several different interpretations of the meaning of the book.

7. **Working Memory** - Imagine working memory as a desk. Some people have large desks. They can place all kinds of information on their desk to sort and file away into the long or short-term memory folders. Other people have small desks. They can’t fit very much information on the desk before things start to fall off and get lost. Still others have desks that are so small they can barely hold one piece of information at a time. People with lower working memory struggle to hold much information in their mind as they are completing projects. As a result they can struggle with large projects, complex tests, and balancing multiple commitments. They tend to “drop the ball” frequently by forgetting about assignments and commitments.
Pillar 7: Evidence-Based Treatment

At Telos we want to know if what we are doing is making a real difference in the lives of the students. We want to know change is occurring (as opposed to suspecting it is occurring). This means we rely on evidence to verify students are progressing through their stay at Telos. This practice is called evidence-based treatment.

CLINICAL SOPHISTICATION

If you are diagnosed with cancer, chances are you won’t seek treatment from a family doctor. Just as some doctors are more capable of understanding and treating perplexing and complex physical conditions, some therapists are more capable of treating perplexing and complex mental health conditions. At Telos we work hard to be clinically sophisticated.

Clinical sophistication means:

1. We are competent in the most current treatment models.
2. We are competent in the most effective treatment models.
3. We are competent in the most researched treatment models.
4. We have an ability to understand complex students.
5. We use best practices in our treatment.
6. We have ways to verify our treatment is working.
7. We hire the “cream of the crop” in terms of clinical talent.

To put it simply, we need to know our stuff. We want to be the very best in the nation at treating the population we serve. Why do we want to be the best? Because excellence in market-based treatment will raise the bar for the industry worldwide, resulting in more families receiving better help. Clinical sophistication is one way to achieve excellence at Telos.

THE “GUT FEEL” VS BEHAVIORAL DICHOTOMIES AND TARGET BEHAVIORS

Most programs have treatment teams that operate off a gut feel. When reviewing a student, the question is asked, “Is Billy getting better?” One staff may reply, “Yes! He feels a lot happier this week.” Another may respond, “Absolutely not, he swore at me this week. He’s getting worse.” Everyone has his/her own opinion based on personal anecdotes with the student. Each staff is relying on his/her personal interactions, feelings, and hunches to gauge the student’s clinical progress. This is like judging the size and scope of an entire room by looking through the keyhole.

At Telos we begin with the end in mind. By selecting target behaviors we would like the student to improve in, we have a point of reference to measure progress. For example,
Mike may present for treatment with oppositionality, anxiety, and a tendency to isolate from people. After reviewing the various behavioral dichotomies at our disposal, we may decide to track “oppositional vs compliant,” “anxious vs calm,” and “engaged vs isolated.” The target behavior would be clearly defined, and staff would begin measuring the frequency and severity of each behavior. Over time, these measurements are converted into numbers and displayed on a graph. The treatment team then uses these graphs to measure the effectiveness of various interventions and the overall course of treatment.

By focusing on real behaviors, we avoid falling into the trap of seeing the student through one single lens. Target behaviors bring a greater level of objectivity to our evidence-based treatment.

**HUMBLE DETECTIVE**

At Telos we are fond of a quote from a science fiction novel, “In the absence of information, all choices are hazardous.” One of our many roles at Telos is to be information gatherers. Because we base our clinical decisions on objective information, we must be experts at observing behaviors and reporting back to the treatment team.

As an employee at Telos you must consider yourself a humble detective. What do detectives do? They search for truth. You are engaged in a search for the truth about 1) how your students are functioning and 2) what will help them heal. That desire for truth outweighs the desire to be right. Humility is the quality that strips the detective of ego, allowing him to gather information without pre-determined agendas. Above all, the humble detective wants the truth about his/her students.

**DIAGNOSTIC PRECISION**

Most students enter Telos having been to dozens of other professionals. Along the road of treatment students typically pick up several competing diagnoses. What looks to one professional like ADHD looks like bipolar to another. The bundle of labels attached to their son’s behaviors confuses parents and students.

At Telos we want to clearly understand exactly what students are dealing with. By knowing the true problems, we can prescribe the true treatments. The process of carefully and patiently getting it right diagnostically is called diagnostic precision. This practice further highlights the need for humble detectives at Telos.

Diagnostic precision doesn't typically come all at once. Our students are like 1,000 piece puzzles, but we have no orienting picture to work from. Understanding the students takes patience, open minds, and continual information gathering. One of the best gifts we can offer parents is a true and deep understanding of their son’s challenges.
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

If we are to be good information gatherers, we must know the signs and symptoms of the most prevalent mental health disorders. It is not enough for the program therapists to understand how anxiety-induced opposition differs from processing-induced opposition—mentors must know as well.

The intense need for all staff to know the signs and symptoms requires Telos to be a training-intensive program. Take trainings seriously. A casual attitude about attending and applying trainings will have a detrimental impact on the treatment team’s ability to treat the students.

Some common signs and symptoms trainings include:

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
4. The Many Forms of Defiance
5. Processing Students
6. Rigid Thinking
7. Personality Disorders
8. ADHD
Pillar 8: The Value of the Team

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Students come to Telos because their family team at home wasn’t skilled or large enough to help them function properly. The power of residential treatment is the ability to use a larger team of skilled people to teach and heal. To reach our program’s ultimate potential, we must respect and value teamwork.

TREATMENT TEAM

The treatment team is the guiding authority in each student’s treatment. It is the central nervous system of Telos, sending instructions out to the various muscle systems of the body. Just like the brain, the treatment team relies on constant feedback from all departments as it guides the process of treatment.

The time of the treatment team is very valuable. For each student, there are few precious minutes to make critical decisions. We cannot squander treatment team time storytelling or pontificating about our pet theories regarding the students. Instead, we follow a clear format of reporting, analysis, and planning for each student. The format keeps us focused on the most important issues at hand.

TRIANGULATION

Think about the last time someone hurt your feelings. Did you go directly to him/her to express your hurt? Or did you go to a safe third party to complain about the offending individual? The act of pulling a third party into a conflict for support is called “triangulation.”

Triangulation is a natural occurrence. As human beings we have a deep need to be validated. When we are at odds with someone, we want assurance that we are in the right, so we reach out and collude with someone who can side with us. This brings us comfort and confidence. It feels good to have a “neutral” party tell us we are right and the offending party is wrong.

Though triangulation may feel good to the wounded ego, it is dangerous and destructive in many ways. Consider the newly divorced mother who triangulates her children by airing her marital grievances with them. Consider the former friends who never get to resolve a conflict because they are both too busy recruiting others to see the conflict their way. Consider the organization infested with unhappy coworkers who choose to collude with each other about the perceived injustices of the workplace. Triangulation is a cancer that pollutes and destroys friendships, families, schools, churches, and even nations.
Triangulation cannot be allowed to exist at Telos. Dark pockets of rebellion among the team must not be cultivated behind closed doors. It is your job to guard against triangulation in all its forms.

How do you know if you are engaged in triangulation?

1. You are talking with a third party about a conflict you have with someone at Telos for whom you don’t have a stewardship over.
2. You are a frequent listening ear for someone who brings his or her conflicts with program leaders to you for advice (more often than not they are seeking validation, not advice).
3. You find yourself talking with “your people” about the failings of another department or employee.
4. You see camps forming, and you are in one of them.
5. You avoid going directly to the person you have a problem with.

What is the difference between leaders discussing ways to resolve issues with those they supervise and triangulation? The difference is stewardship. When you discuss concerns about those you have a stewardship over, you are supervising and leading. When you discuss concerns about those you don’t have a stewardship over (such as those parallel to or above you on the org chart) you are triangulating.

How do you avoid triangulation? The answer is very simple: If you have a concern about someone you don’t have stewardship over, 1) go directly to the person you have a problem with, 2) go directly to that person’s supervisor, or 3) remain silent.

Unchecked triangulation will undermine the team. It will create civil wars between staff and leaders, between departments, and between the students and staff.

At Telos we have little tolerance for triangulation. Engaging in this practice will result in formal discipline up to and including termination. Keep in mind, you will not be disciplined for having concerns—the key is expressing them in the right way to the right people.

**THE DANGERS OF DEPARTMENTAL AGENDAS AND TURF-GUARDING**

Departmentalization occurs when various departments in an organization lose sight of the larger whole. It is like the engine of a car proclaiming, “I’m the engine. Without me the car won’t move! I’m the most important part of the car.” While the engine is vital to the car’s functioning, what about the wheels, or the brakes? All components are needed—all are valued.

In organizations there is a tendency for one department to see the program through its one lens. Therapists, for example, may care only for what directly affects them, looking down on residential and academic duties. Residential may become overly absorbed with their way of seeing things, considering other departments as less critical. Team members may view marketing and admissions staff as only concerned about “filling beds”
and “making money.” When this occurs people lose their sense of team. They begin guarding their interests, unwilling to do anything above and beyond their job description. They lose sight of the fact that Telos requires all departments working in harmony. The program loses its spirit.

Avoid seeing things only through one filter. Work to value the needs of those outside your department. What is important to them should be important to you. Never promote a covert departmental agenda to “protect your people.” Say what you mean in a respectful and direct manner. Avoid being too fragile to handle feedback. Be upfront and inclusive in all your efforts at Telos.

Remember organizations, departments and people are not perfect. Once you start having a heart at war or a non-Telos Way of Being toward another department or person, you will ALWAYS find flaws to validate your concerns. Chinks in the armor are easy to find if you are looking hard enough. Finding them becomes easier the more entrenched you are in triangulation. Instead, try to focus on principles of optimism, gratitude, teamwork and sacrifice while implementing the strategies of courage, assertiveness and accountability as you work with frustrations.

**EACH VOICE IS HEARD**

Some team members are viewed as power players on the team. Typically, these people are leaders who are highly respected and experienced. Occasionally, these power players can have undue influence over the team. When they express opinions as absolutes, less experienced team members find themselves easily convinced or too intimidated to disagree.

All voices are heard and valued at Telos. The team shouldn’t allow one member to bully others or do the thinking for everyone. No one person has a corner market on the truth.

Try to avoid phrases such as, “The right thing to do here is…” or “We definitely need to…” Instead, phrase questions and ideas in a way that allows for alternate views (ex. “It seems to me that…” “One idea would be to…”). This can help others feel empowered to share their views.

Of course there will be times when, having heard all the views, the leader of the treatment team has to make a judgment call. This can be done in a respectful and validating manner.

Once a decision is made as a team, it is your duty to support it—even if you disagreed previously. After all is said and done, the team must be unified. Students, parents, and staff should never hear, “Well, I didn’t vote for this, but I’m going along with it anyway.” This sends a message of disharmony and conflict to those who need steady leadership.
THE HOME TEAM

Research indicates that a student's success post-discharge is largely dependent on the quality of the social supports waiting for him at home. At Telos we use the Family Bridge technology to help parents build a home team aimed at guarding the student's treatment gains once home.

Therapists should emphasize the development of the home team nearly every family session. A home team should:

1. Consist of people who are willing to help and support the student.
2. Clearly define who will play what role in the student's life post-discharge.

It's difficult to overstate the importance of a student discharging to a well-defined, active home team. It may be the factor that saves his life.
Pillar 9: Customer Service

What does being service-oriented mean to you? What role does service play in your life? Do you consider yourself a service-minded person? Many who find their way to Telos take great joy in service. It is important for us to recognize that service is at the heart of our work.

Upon hearing the term customer service most people imagine smiling, friendly sales clerks ringing up patron’s purchases. True customer service goes far beyond convenience store hospitality. As you know, Telos considers itself a relationship-based program. Customer service is the relational practice that enables us to:

- Build and maintain trusting relationships.
- Keep referral sources aware of the excellence of our work.
- Foster emotional safety.
- Model professionalism.

The term customer applies to students, parents, referral sources, and each other. As a representative of Telos, we should not pick and choose who receives customer service. We provide service indiscriminately.

THE MINT ON THE PILLOW

Think of the last time you received exceptional service. What was it about the experience that impressed you? Chances are you were struck by some small detail that communicated care. When checking into a hotel, we expect a clean room, but the little surprise—the “mint on the pillow”—is the thing that makes the biggest difference in how satisfied we are. For some reason, the doorman that loans you his umbrella makes a bigger impact on you than the expensive décor or spotless carpets. At Telos we want our customers to have frequent “mint on the pillow” experiences.

BASIC PROFESSIONAL COURTESIES

Some people live organized, tidy lives. Others struggle with clutter and chaos. Different personality types manifest different strengths and weaknesses. At Telos, regardless of our personality types, strengths, or weaknesses, we are expected to rigorously maintain the basic professional courtesies of our positions. These include:

1. Arrive to work on time.
2. Have a 24-hour turn around regarding returning phone calls and emails.
3. Never drop the ball regarding communication with a referral source or parent. It is your responsibility to make or return contact.
4. Use your calendar. Every time you schedule something, record it.
5. Be punctual. If you are going to be 15-minutes late calling parents, don't assume that they will be okay with it. Let them know.
6. If you are on vacation, make arrangements well in advance for someone else to cover your duties.
7. Attend your meetings. If you are late to a meeting and miss information, it makes more work for the facilitator.
8. Silence your cell phones. Don't answer them in the middle of a meeting.
9. Be responsible for the information presented to you in meetings. Take notes on what you hear, then implement the information. Don't require multiple trainings on the same subject.
10. Avoid Internet surfing and email checking during meetings.
12. Dress professionally when meeting with visitors. In the absence of knowledge, visitors will judge us based on our appearance.
13. It is important to have fun. We must, however, avoid crude or sexual humor that can take away from the sense of emotional safety on the team. Be sensitive to other's feelings.
14. When you see people in the building you don’t know, make time to introduce yourself.

We should consider it unthinkable to allow our careless or casual behavior to create more work for those around us. In the same breath, the hope is that we will be anxious to have each other’s back when someone needs a favor.

If we drop the ball regarding customer service, we can expect to be called out on it. Repeated customer service failures will lead to discipline up to and including termination. Taking communication and customer service seriously is a critical part in maintaining a true relationship focus at Telos.

**REFERRAL SOURCES**

Education consultants are the professionals who refer the vast majority of our families to us. The trust and respect of the education consultant industry is vital to our success as a company. With no consultant referrals, we are unable to help families. Without families to help, we are all unemployed.

Unfortunately, some professionals in our industry choose to view communicating with education consultants as “just another task” as opposed to viewing them as valued team members. Other professionals simply forget to update consultants regularly, leaving them in the dark as to how their students are progressing.

As a company, we have promised every education consultant that he/she can expect excellent communication from Telos. This responsibility falls mostly on the shoulders of the primary therapists, clinical directors, admissions director, and director of marketing. Therapists provide education consultants with:
1. Notes from a pre-admission call to the student’s wilderness therapist.
2. Weekly voice-to-voice updates regarding the student’s adjustment in the first month of treatment.
3. Monthly voice to voice updates on the student’s adjustment from month two through discharge.
4. A written monthly treatment update delivered directly to the consultant’s email (not just posted on the Family Bridge).
5. First notification of major concerns or developments in the student’s treatment (e.g., assault, runaway, drug use, serous accident, doubts that the student is appropriate for Telos, etc).
6. Several discharge strategy calls with the consultant prior to the student leaving Telos.

The following is a list of the dos and don’ts with education consultants:

**DO…**

1. **Keep them informed.** They should be contacted at or prior to admission. Treat them like a third parent.
2. **Don’t over-rely on email.** Contact should be voice-to-voice as often as possible.
3. **Make an attempt to understand their perspective.** Ed consultants make their living by finding the right placement. They are desperate for their student to succeed at Telos. For this reason alone they need a lot of communication.
4. **If there is a significant event (e.g., runaway, assault, suicide attempt, cutting, injury) let them know ASAP.** It makes consultants feel awkward when a panicked parent calls them about an emergency at Telos they aren’t aware of.
5. **If the consultant comes out to visit a student on your caseload, make time to spend with him/her.** A face-to-face discussion builds more professional rapport than a myriad of telephone calls.
6. **Make sure you are clinically sharp and on top of the case.** Consultants refer to therapists, not programs. If you are known as a good consultant therapist you increase your value as a professional and to the organization.

**DON’T…**

7. **Don’t get into power struggles over the course of treatment.**
8. **Don’t get sucked into the mix if the family is upset with the consultant.** Kindly refer them to the consultant if they have issues with him/her. You will have to work with that consultant long after the family is gone.
9. **Whatever you do, don’t talk about aftercare options without the consultant’s involvement.** If the family asks you for your recommendation regarding transition placements, say “I’m an expert in treating your son here at Telos, but your consultant is the expert on knowing all about the best transition placements for your son. Let’s talk to him/her about the next-step.” When you sell the family on a transition placement, you risk undermining the professional plan the consultant is building and circumvent the job they are hired to do.
PARENTS
Child development is complex. Some students are the product of brain chemistry. Others simply fell into the wrong crowd of peers. While parents undoubtedly impact the growth and development of their children, it is important to remember that parents don’t necessarily “cause” children to be a certain way.

At Telos we treat whole families. This means part of our job is addressing challenging patterns among parents. As we go about our treatment, avoid slipping into a disrespectful or blaming stance toward parents. This perspective can trap us in a defensive position when given feedback. We appear to be more concerned with protecting and defending our professional decisions than seeing the situation through the eyes of a parent.

Never say or write something about a parent you wouldn’t be comfortable sharing directly with them. Regardless of their interpersonal difficulties or problems, treat them with respect and dignity. When it is right to challenge a parent, do it with professionalism and care. Never lose your temper with a parent. They have been through much and deserve the best care we have to offer.

Regarding communication, the basic professional courtesies of Pillar 9 should be strictly adhered to. If a parent’s need for communication is far beyond your capacity to deliver, ask for help from your supervisor. It may be appropriate to respectfully set some boundaries on your time. When customer service expectations need to be modified or reduced for clinical reasons, the decision should be channeled through your supervisor and the treatment team.

Concerning parents, we should look for opportunities to surprise them with mint on the pillow experiences—the little acts of care and service are the things they will remember. The little things make all the difference. Our goal is to meet or exceed even their unexpressed needs.

STUDENTS
During the course of treatment it is easy to lose sight of the fact that our students are our primary customers. Ultimately, we are here to serve the students and their parents. Work to err on the side of respect and courtesy when interacting with the students. Like their parents, they will remember the little acts of service more than anything else at Telos.

Don’t break commitments to the students. Keep your word. Model responsible communication. Manage your emotions and give them the very best you have to offer. When you need to set boundaries, consider their feelings and proceed in a way that preserves their dignity.
EACH OTHER

As friends and colleagues, we are very comfortable with each other. This familiarity leads to casualness, which can lead to disrespect and neglect. A sad truth is we tend to treat those we are closest to the worst. It is critical that we always remember we are each other’s customers. We are obligated to extend the basic professional courtesies to each other as coworkers and friends.

Telos employees are expected to adhere to the return and report model of communication. This means you never wait for others to follow up with you. When issued an assignment, complete it on time and take the initiative to communicate the outcome to all parties involved. For example, if asked to check up on a student who is in the emergency room, you would fulfill the assignment, then report his status to the team and parents via email. This simple reporting practice helps the team over-communicate and build trust.

At times, you will be asked to support a decision from your supervisor, the leadership, or the board of directors. While people’s voices and opinions are important at Telos, there will be occasions when you will be expected to comply with a top-down management dynamic. Part of being a good leader is being a good follower. Strive to follow and support instructions from your leaders without undue questioning.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A key principle of healthy living is accountability. Individuals, families, and organizations without accountability tend to drift toward chaos and disorder. Our expectations at Telos are ambitious, and we support an accountability-based management style.

If you violate the basic professional courtesies or referral source communication expectations of Pillar 9, expect to be approached by your supervisor. Telos management will work with you to help you develop a plan for improvement. If you manifest an ongoing pattern of negligence regarding customer service, you will forego raises, may be disciplined, and may eventually lose your position at Telos.
Pillar 10: Healthy Living

At Telos we believe mental health is inseparably connected to behavioral, physical, spiritual, and relational health. We adhere to practices of healthy living.

SOCIAL DETOX
Drug addicted people attending treatment often go through a detoxification period that allows time for harmful chemicals to leave the body. Many of our students are mired in socially toxic cultures and practices. Clothing, music, friends, and cultural subgroups may promote unhealthy lifestyles students need to detoxify from.

Social detox is our practice of not allowing students to continue identifying with socially toxic groups. We screen incoming clothing, monitor music, and prohibit extreme hairstyles in an effort to help students let go of their subcultures and focus instead on their emotional and behavioral issues. Once students gain some distance from the peer groups dictating their values, they are more able to create their own identity based on their own core principles.

As a staff member, avoid dressing or behaving in a way that sends socially toxic messages to the students.

CHEMICAL ABSTINENCE
Illegal, addictive, and uncontrolled substances have destroyed many lives. At Telos we promote substance-free living. Employees who smoke or use illegal drugs, even in their personal lives, cannot work at Telos. Employing smokers would present a confusing double standard to the students.

Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” As an employee at Telos, we encourage you to be the change you wish to see in the students.

WHY TRIATHLONS?
Over the past two decades researchers have established a link between cardiovascular exercise and lower levels of depression and anxiety. At Telos, the students train for triathlons to:

1. Capitalize on the benefits of exercise as it relates to managing mood and cognition.
2. Increase self-esteem.
3. Have fun.
4. Assess their current level of functioning.
5. Learn life skills and the importance of life fitness.
6. Engage in supportive and competitive athletics.
7. Address principles like work, courage, self-improvement, and sacrifice.

Interestingly, students tend to approach workouts the way they approach life. Those who avoid workouts avoid other hard things. Cheaters in school cheat during workouts. Fearful students fear the workouts. One way we monitor student progress in treatment is by monitoring workout behaviors.

We encourage you to get involved in the triathlon program. Feel free to work out with the students, volunteer at triathlons, or participate in the races themselves. If you do, you will feel the physical and emotional benefits of being a member of Team Telos.

NUTRITION
Proper nutrition is an essential element of mood management. The Telos dietary staff work hard to provide students with meals that are balanced, healthy, tasty, and attractive. Avoid bringing highly sugared treats for the students. Don’t allow the use of caffeine. As a courtesy, avoid drinking caffeinated beverages in front of the students. While an occasional indulgence is fine, don’t undermine the hard work of the cooks and dieticians by allowing students to gorge on junk food.

HEALTHY ACTIVITIES
So often students admit to Telos not knowing how to properly use leisure time. The Telos recreation therapists (RTs) specialize in helping student learn to appreciate healthy activities. Working together, the RTs and residential staff plan exciting, healthy, entertaining, creative schedules for the students. Activities include but are not limited to:

- Rock climbing
- Swimming
- Team Tasks
- Airsoft
- Paintball
- Mountain Biking
- Skiing and snowboarding
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Racquetball
- Hiking
- Camping
- Team Sports
Telos values the lessons young people learn through competitive team sports. Students can play on the Telos Titan’s basketball, football, or soccer teams.

Staff should take the initiative to get the students up and out of the house. Avoid letting evenings and weekends get stale with too much sitting around. It is up to you to help the students (in spite of their protests) experiment with healthy ways to spend time.
Conclusion

Take the time to evaluate yourself in relation to the Ten Pillars. Everyone at Telos is expected to learn and support these principles. If you are diligently working to uphold these ideas, you will find Telos will patiently work to develop you professionally. If you struggle buying in to any of the Pillars, you may find yourself at odds with the professional expectations associated with your job description. If you are unsure about any of the ideas discussed in this manual, talk with your supervisor or a member of the leadership team about your concerns. Your leaders will work with you to resolve your concerns. Keep in mind, these Pillars are the bedrock foundation of Telos—people with strong and persistent disagreements about this philosophy may be happier in a setting more in line with their personal theories and beliefs.

An excellent program starts with an excellent vision. Add excellent people with a well-defined plan for achieving that vision, and you have a place where miracles happen. The Ten Pillars help us turn our good intentions into focused, collective action. Thank you for being part of this tremendous work.