

Circle of Courage (Reclaiming Youth at Risk—*Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern*)

The Circle of Courage is a model of youth empowerment based on a Native American approach to life. The model, adopted by hundreds of schools in Canada, is composed of four core values:

- belonging (a need to feel valued and important)
- mastery (developing competence)
- independence (responsibility for oneself)
- generosity (genuine desire to help others).

The Circle of Courage is a philosophical way of explaining why people do what they do, but it also describes how we should treat others. It is a belief system based on treating others with respect.

An individual is at risk of emotional and behavioural difficulties if all four parts of his or her circle of courage are not strong. Schools can use this model to identify the causes of students' misbehaviour and as a guide for improving behaviour, especially for at-risk students. School communities can be "reclaiming environments" that provide a sense of belonging by having adults listen to, interact with and respect youth. Students develop a sense of mastery when teachers, counsellors and other caring adults help them identify their strengths and build on them.

This model suggests that school staff need to promote generosity and create opportunities for students to give and contribute. Focusing on these four core values helps students build character and develop citizenship skills.

Contact information

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Related Web site

<https://www.starr.org/training/youth>

Related publication

Brendtro, Larry, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Bloomington, IL: National Educational Service, 1992.