



Olver looks for long-term solutions



Kim Olver

People used to look at Kim Olver as if she were speaking another language.

Now, Olver sees a different reaction when she explains the concepts of choice theory and reality therapy.

“Now when I teach it, I get comments like, ‘This is common sense,’” said Olver, a lifelong counselor. “And then I say, ‘It’s common sense that is not common.’ Because we still try to control other people.”

Olver’s goal is to connect with people rather than control them. She serves as the executive director of the William Glasser Institute and William Glasser International, and she joined the National Safety Council in 2015 as a consultant for three defensive driving programs: State Courts Against Road Range (SCARR), Chronic Offender and Alive at 25.

In many ways, Olver’s experience counseling foster families, military families and many other individuals has overlapped with NSC’s mission to promote safe driving. Olver aims to understand why drivers behave the way they do, and she seeks behavioral alternatives that can lead to sustained solutions rather than punitive measures that rarely lead to lasting changes in how a person drives.

A long-term outlook is one of the key components of choice theory, Olver says.

“I could describe choice theory in many ways, but I think the most prominent feature that is pertinent to defensive driving is that we all make choices based on what’s most important to us at any given point in time,” Olver says. “Choice theory tells us we’re all intrinsically motivated.

“From the outside in, you can give us information, you can threaten us with tickets or jail time, but if the person doesn’t

think the consequences are going to happen to them, or if they think the rules weren’t written for them, then they’re just going to do what they want to do anyway. The idea from a choice theory perspective is, ‘How do you help people find an intrinsic reason to do the responsible thing?’ And the responsible thing is getting your needs met without interfering with other people meeting theirs.”

Choice theory explains why people do what they do, Olver says. Reality therapy is a way of talking to people to help them take a closer look at what they are doing.

For example, someone might ask a driver who is a chronic offender several questions: What is it that you want? Is what you’re doing against the rules? Are you endangering yourself or others? Would you consider an alternative that would

allow you to be able to do what you want, when you want, without the negative consequences?

“I think we’re going to be looking to train our chronic offender instructors to be able to ask those kinds of questions,” Olver said. “Glasser put those particular questions together in reality therapy, but the process of asking questions has been around since Socrates. It’s really Socratic questioning where you’re asking people to look

at what they want, look at the behaviors they’re using to get it, and ask them is it working and is it responsible? How can we help you get what you want in a responsible way?”

Olver and her colleagues have finished working on the SCARR program, and the Chronic Offender program is next on the agenda. When that is finished, they will transition to Alive at 25.

The teamwork on the projects has been terrific, Olver says.

“It’s very rewarding,” Olver said. “It feels really good to put this together with such a fantastic group of team workers who are all contributing their time and their talents to make this come together. It’s amazing. It’s a great process.”

“The idea from a choice theory perspective is, ‘How do you help people find an intrinsic reason to do the responsible thing?’ And the responsible thing is getting your needs met without interfering with other people meeting theirs.”

Following the data



You may wonder how the National Safety Council decides on our safety priorities. For more than 100 years, we've gone where the data lead us. The Council has been collecting, analyzing and sharing unintentional injury and fatality statistics for more than a century. Our *Injury Facts* publication was launched in 1921 and is published annually. A copy of every

issue is archived in the NSC Library.

The introduction to the edition that captured the data for 1920 – it was called *Accident Facts* back then – reads:

"The fact that 76,000 lives were snuffed out by so-called 'accidents' in continental United States during 1920 is a challenge to every intelligent citizen who has any pride at all in the place which his country assumes [to be] among the advanced civilizations of the world. A due regard for the sanctity of life, the length as well as breadth of life, is one of the distinguishing marks of real achievement in the ordering of human affairs."

I believe these sentiments still hold true today. Sadly, in recent years, our annual count tolls more than 130,000 deaths – due to completely preventable causes. The numbers do not even convey the devastating impact unintentional injuries have on individuals, their families and society. Compared to other leading causes of death – heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease and stroke – where victims are typically in their 70s, the average age of an unintentional injury victim is 44. Many of these individuals are in the prime of their lives.

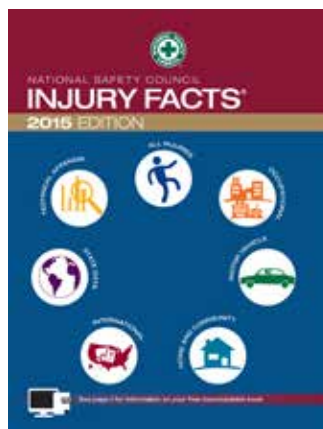
In 1920, the top five leading causes of unintentional death were attributed to falls, auto, burns, railroad and drowning – in that order. Fast forward to today and the top five

causes are poisoning, motor vehicle crashes, falls, choking and drowning. A lot has changed in the past century, but with all our technological and medical advances, there are more preventable deaths than ever.

Would people in the 1920s have thought that unintentional injuries would be the leading cause of death of those ages, 1 to 42, almost a century later? We track the data within *Injury Facts* to identify trends so we can educate policymakers and encourage individuals to take action to prevent these needless tragedies. In addition to advocating for safer workplaces, NSC addresses motor vehicle crashes through our efforts

on distracted and teen driving, as well as through our defensive driving courses. Our strategic initiative focused on preventing prescription pain-killer overdoses, classified as poisonings, came from data showing that poisoning deaths now surpass motor vehicle crash fatalities.

You can trust the National Safety Council to closely monitor and report on the latest injury and fatality trends. But to save lives and prevent injuries, we urge you to use and share the Council's resources for both workplace safety as well as off-the-job topics. If we all work together, in the next 100 years we can eliminate unintentional injuries as a top cause of death.



Deborah A. P. Hersman
President & CEO
National Safety Council

INJURY FACTS UPDATE

Use the statistics below to update your instructor manuals.

Standard Defensive Driving Course 8/6, 9th edition

- **35,500 people** were killed in motor vehicle related collisions. This is about **97 people** per day.
- **4,300,000 people** were injured in motor vehicle incidents annually. This is about **11,800 people** per day.
- About **55.7%** of crashes are due to driver error.
- In your lifetime, statistically you will be involved in a collision about **every 10 years**. (That's about six collisions in your lifetime.)
- Of all fatal collisions reported, about **55.9%** were caused by someone choosing one or more unsafe behaviors.

State Specific – Defensive Driving Course 8 VA, 9th edition

- **35,500 people** were killed in motor vehicle related collisions. This is about **97 people** per day.
- **741 people** were killed in motor vehicle related collisions in Virginia. This is about **2 people** per day.
- **4,300,000 people** were injured in motor vehicle incidents annually. This is about **11,800 people** per day.
- **65,114 people** were injured in motor vehicle incidents annually in Virginia. This is about **178 people** per day.
- About **55.7%** of crashes in the United States are due to driver error.
- In your lifetime, statistically you will be involved in a collision about **every 10 years**. (That's about six collisions in your lifetime.)
- Of all fatal collisions reported, about **55.9%** were caused by someone choosing one or more unsafe behaviors.

State Specific – Defensive Driving Course 6 NY, 9th edition

- **35,500 people** are killed and **4,300,000 people** are injured in motor vehicle collisions.
- Locally, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles, in New York state **1,188 people** are killed and **169,177 people** are injured in motor vehicle incidents each year.
- That's 3 people killed and **463 people** injured in New York state each and every day!
- About **55.7%** of crashes in the United States are due to driver error.
- In your lifetime, statistically you will be involved in a collision about **every 10 years**. (That's about six collisions in your lifetime.)

- Of all fatal collisions reported, about **55.9%** were caused by someone choosing one or more unsafe behaviors.

DDC 6 TX, 9th edition

- **35,500 people** were killed in motor vehicle related collisions. This is about **97 people** per day.
- In the state of Texas, **3,382 people** are killed annually on our highways.
- **4,300,000 people** were injured in motor vehicle incidents annually.
- In Texas, the number of people injured in collisions each year is **232,041**.
- About **55.7%** of crashes in the United States are due to driver error.
- In your lifetime, statistically you will be involved in a collision about **every 10 years**. (That's about six collisions in your lifetime.)
- According to the Federal Railroad Administration, in 2013, **249 people** were killed and **954 people** were injured in highway/rail-grade crossing collisions across the nation.
- Unfortunately, Texas is the **No. 1 state** for these collisions, with **95 injuries** and **19 fatalities**. (In 2013 there were a total of **225 rail-grade crossing crashes** reported.)
- Of all fatal collisions reported, about **55.9%** were caused by someone choosing one or more unsafe behaviors.
- All motor vehicle crashes in Texas represented an estimated **\$25.7 billion** in economic losses in 2013.

NSC PTD, 5th edition

- Approximately **35,500 people** are killed every year because of motor vehicle crashes.
- **4,300,000 disabling injuries** in motor vehicle crashes per year
- **\$288.1 billion** in total costs
- **2.5%** decrease in motor vehicle fatalities from 2012 to 2013
- **3,964 fatalities** involved large trucks
- **72%** of these were occupants of other vehicles than large trucks.

The choices behind our driving behaviors

In the mid-1980s, the Defensive Driving Courses group of the National Safety Council took on a great challenge. For more than 20 years, the DDC programs had been designed to help people be safer drivers. Then, we began working with problem drivers who had been cited for their current driving or selected by their employer for refresher training. It was time to work with drivers who elected to drive in the manner they wished to – seemingly without concern for anyone else on the road.



James A. Solomon
Subject Matter
Expert, Defensive
Driving Courses

We began working with Dr. William Glasser and Dr. Robert Wubbolding. We started with Dr. Glasser's book, "Control Theory – A New Explanation of How We Control Our Lives," and Dr. Wubbolding's book, "Using Reality Therapy."

Both reality therapy and control theory are counseling terms developed by Dr.

Glasser. As we worked through the design of the first edition of DDC Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving and then DDC Alive at 25, Dr. Glasser published "Choice Theory." Please read carefully these interesting concepts, and think of them when you look around at the people seated in your DDC classroom.

Needs

All living beings have needs, and we all want to be in control of our own lives. How we elect to do so may not be acceptable to others. That's why we have a stream of "lawbreakers" in DDC classes.

We all have only five needs. One is physical; the other four are psychological. The physical need is survival (self-preservation). The psychological needs are love/belonging (acceptance), fun (enjoyment), freedom (independence) and power (recognition).

Some people value freedom over fun or love, and belonging over freedom. As we live day to day, we seek control over our lives and try to fulfill our most treasured needs first.

Mental photo albums

When something we do satisfies one of our needs, we file a mental image of it in our "mental photo album." If it does not work, we dismiss it. If it is painful, we remember not to do

it again. Please do not believe that these photos are always correct. They may be dangerous, illegal or immoral. But they worked for the individual at that moment. Unfortunately, people who make poor choices have a mental album of pictures that are not acceptable.

Wants

This mental picture album becomes a menu of what we want. Getting the want fulfilled takes care of the need for that particular instance. Please remember that "needs" can never be totally satisfied. However, a want can be satisfied or changed depending on where we are in our lives.

Perception

We each have our own unique perceptions about what we see, hear, do or experience. We look at these events based on the mental photo album. The question is "Am I getting what I want?" If I am, why would I change what I am doing? If I am not, then I must decide to change the mental photo of what I want or change the way I am trying to meet that need.

We know that motorists who receive traffic citations did not set out to get a ticket. So, what do they do? If they keep the same behavior, it will result in more negative encounters with law enforcement. So, do they stop speeding or get a radar detector? (The radar detector only works for a while before they get a ticket again!)

Consequences

When a person behaves in any manner, that behavior has consequences – some positive and some negative. The odd thing is that I may receive a positive consequence for a negative behavior. For those who speed every day and do not get caught, or slowly roll through a red light when turning right, they "get away" with it for a while. This sets up a mental image that the speed limit sign or the red traffic light is only a "suggestion."

When a police officer finally confronts them, they often say that they always drive that way. So, they have led themselves into the problem for which they are now receiving a negative consequence – a traffic ticket, driving school, a crash, or loss of the vehicle or their license or their life. The harsh reality is that innocent people and families often pay the consequences for the poor behavior of the driver we just discussed.

COMMENTS (cont.)

Personal knowledge

All events I experience in my life go through two interesting “tests.” We call these value filters. The first filter involves my knowledge – learned or adopted. There are things I must learn from the driver’s handbook when I study to take the written test for my state driver’s license. Other things I adopt from watching people drive or from what I am told. This applies to the old adage that a law enforcement officer using radar must allow me 5 miles per hour over the posted limit. This, of course, is untrue. But if I adopt it as part of my knowledge, I will not slow down even if I see a police officer – and then am surprised when he or she pulls me over for speeding.

One valuable thing about our Defensive Driving Courses is that we design them to test, clarify and qualify the knowledge filter of those who take or online, classroom or self-study programs.

Personal values

All of our values come from inside of us. Good or bad, it is our call. As seen many times in the public arena, a person who was always known for doing “good” turns out to have a “bad” side to them. Again, they decided if their action was good or bad. We then branded the action good or bad based on our personal values.

This is really true when a law-abiding motorist is stopped for speeding. They usually tell the officer they were not “really” speeding. But the radar detector reads that they were driving 50 miles per hour in a 40-mile-per-hour zone, which is illegal.

Why did you do that?

Have you ever made the parenting blunder of asking your child, “Why did you do that?” And of course the child

answered, “I don’t know.” The child knows why he or she did it. But even at a young age they are smart enough to realize that by telling you why they chose to do something wrong, they are admitting guilt. They want to avoid guilt and the consequences that go with it.

“Why were you driving above the posted speed?” The simple answer is because I chose to do it. I looked at what I was getting out of life and believed that at that specific moment, I was not getting what I wanted to satisfy one of my needs. So, I chose an action based on a stored mental image that I believed would get me what I wanted.

If I wanted to go faster, regardless of the posted speed limit, I sped up. I was getting to my destination faster. But to the law-enforcement officer who stopped me or the bicyclist I hit, my chosen behavior was outside of the acceptable values. Now I am later than I was and very unhappy with the consequences of my behavior.

What do I do? Well, I could buy a radar detector to allow myself to operate above the law. Or I could leave a few minutes earlier and drive at the posted speed limit. Those who purchase the radar detector eventually meet a police officer with a newer radar that their detector will not pick up on. So, they are back to square one, trying to decide what to do to get what they want. Time to change mental images!

Advance your style

Although reality therapy and choice theory are the base on which we have built our Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving, State Courts Against Road Rage, and new Chronic Offender programs, as well as the next edition of *Alive at 25*, the components are in all of our current DDC programs.

I encourage you to purchase the books and other works by Dr. Glasser and Dr. Wubbolding and move your teaching style to a more advanced level.

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