

## Truck Metaphor

The Truck Metaphor is designed as a simple way to conceptualize problems with angry, violent and abusive behavior (and other problem behaviors). Within this metaphor, erratic and dangerous driving represents problem behaviors.

The understanding of this metaphor begins with a story and then leads to a multi-dimensional depiction of how different parts of the truck and driving skills can link to a range of potential contributors to violent behavior.

The Truck Checklist is a guide to case formulation and treatment planning.

(Nickerson 2008)

## Why the Truck Metaphor?

A Tool for Assessment and Case Formulation

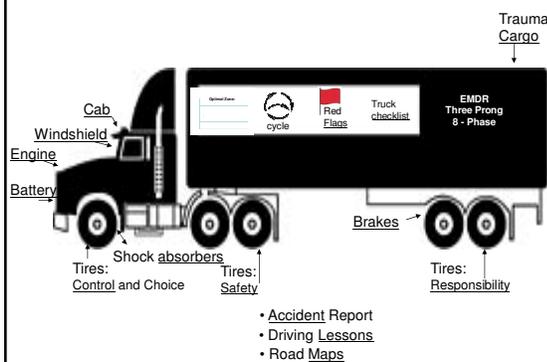
Metaphors can help:

- Access the brain more fully
- Increase awareness
- Connect to deeper knowledge
- Keep concepts simple

The metaphor offers a comprehensive guide to key components of treatment that can be shared with the client wherever useful.

The metaphor can be shared with client or simply used as an aid for the therapist.

### Truck Metaphor for Problem Behavior



### Truck Metaphor: Clinical Checklist

- Accident Report:** Reviewing Past Behavior and Its Consequences
- Cab:** Secure Self/ Resource Development
- Clean Windshield:** Sense of Vision and Mindfulness
- Engine maintenance:** Health and Self Care Skills
- Tires:** Appropriate Thinking/ Positive Beliefs
- Brakes:** Self Control
- Battery:** Managing Arousal/ Energy Levels
- Shock Absorbers:** Affect Management/ Tolerance
- Driving Lessons I:** Skill Development: Self Control
- Driving Lessons II:** Being aware of other drivers: Empathy
- Co-Driver:** Developing Co-Conscious Mindfulness
- Who's Driving?:** Moods and Ego States
- Road Map:** Goals/ Sense of Purpose and Direction
- Support:** Others who understand and can support me
- Tighten the Load:** Trauma Awareness
- Unload the Packages:** Trauma Processing



Preliminary Work: Getting Help

## Getting Help

A therapeutic alliance can lead to:

- Understanding the issues
- Stabilizing a crisis
- Solving Problems
- Receiving guidance and collaboration
- Making permanent changes



Complete Vehicle Inspection: Full Assessment

### Complete Vehicle Inspection: Full Personal Assessment

Use Truck Metaphor Checklist

- All parts impact upon the larger problem
- Neglect of any part will undermine progress
- A full assessment will include recommendations and priorities for change



Accident Report:  
Accepting Responsibility for One's Behavior

### Accident Report: Accept Responsibility for Past Behavior

- Report objectively what has happened
- Face the reality and consequences of past behavior
- Move beyond denial
- Commit to a life of increased safety and stability
- Separate the past from the present
- Realize that change can happen in stages



Facing the Difficulties:  
Acknowledging the Wounded Self

### Facing the Difficulties

- Acknowledge current difficulties
- Understand the impact of past trauma and the current vulnerability to problematic behavior
- Understand the difference between **explanations** for the past and creating ongoing **excuses**
- Realize that more effective solutions exist
- Develop humility to avoid humiliation



The Cab: Secure Self

### The Cab: Secure Self

Resource Development to:

- Be self-aware
- Sense self-worth
- Protect and keep yourself safe
- Learn to set limits and boundaries
- Have appropriate sense of personal power
- Be secure in the driver's seat



Dashboard: Quick Signals

### Dashboard: Quick Signals

The dashboard is a quick read of vital warning signs

Scan frequently when driving new roads:

- Make sure all systems are working
- Monitor internal cues
- Form a relationship with your dashboard (like the amygdala of the brain)



Clear Windshield: Clarity of Purpose

### Clean Windshield: Sense of Vision and Mindfulness

- Future Vision: Look ahead? What matters?  
Clarify values  
Establish sense of purpose  
Set personal goals - Prioritize
- Peripheral Vision (Mindfulness)
- Rear View Mirror: Look backward just enough to be sure your vehicle is safe and that you are aware of others



Engine Maintenance: Self Care

## Engine Maintenance: Health and Self Care

Attend to the working parts of one's engine

- Health status/ Self care
- Brain trauma (TBI)
- Hormonal influences (PMS)
- Nutrition and Eating habits
- Exercise and Fitness
- Sleep hygiene
- Substance use/abuse
- Addiction management/recovery
- Need for medication?



Good Tires: Appropriate Positive Thinking

## Tires: Appropriate Thinking

- Negative thinking often fuels problem behaviors. It is generally an ongoing concern to monitor and improve.
- It is important to be able to access appropriate thinking (positive beliefs) as soon as possible in each of these areas:
  - Rear Tires: Responsibility
  - Middle Tires: Safety
  - Front Tires: Control and Choice
- A commitment to acting on healthy beliefs needs to be achieved before trauma processing

## Identifying Negative Thoughts

Externalizing blame can blind a person to the control they have over a problem situation

Negative thinking may be first identified as negative thoughts about others ("she's the problem", "he always starts it")

Examples of negative beliefs about oneself:

- The quality of my life doesn't matter
- I am unsafe
- I am powerless

## Front Tires: Control and Choice

Key Question to ask oneself: Do I realize that I have control over the choices I make and that there is always something I can do to avoid problem behaviors?

- Violent behavior is generally infused with inappropriate use of power and efforts to control or limit the choices of others
- Careful development of a true sense of self-worth can be used to reduce "entitled" demands for control

Positive beliefs to internalize:

- I have control (of myself)
- I have power (over myself, nonexploitive power with others)
- I can make appropriate choices (filter out bad thinking)

## Middle Tires: Safety

Key Question to ask oneself: Do I understand what it means to feel safe and am I committed to creating safety in the relationships I have?

A lack of the internal experience of safety contributes to a sense of chaos and a "nothing to lose" attitude

Positive beliefs to internalize:

- I can create safety in my life (by allowing all that matters to me to be safe)
- I can protect myself (and others)
- I can be trusted
- I can trust my good judgment

## Rear Tires: Responsibility

Key Question to ask oneself: Does my life matter enough to make improvements?

- Unmanaged shame can be a disinhibitor of responsible behavior and self control

Related positive beliefs to internalize and then extend to others one interacts with:

- I matter (as do others)
- I deserve good things (and can modify behavior to get them)
- I am OK (I don't have to be constantly affirmed by others to be OK)
- I am capable (of doing the right thing)



Brakes: Self Control

## Brakes: Self Control

It is important to:

- Understand the need for self-control
- Brakes must be strong enough for the vehicle
- Know when to slow, when to stop
- Test the brakes even when things are OK



Battery: Energy and Arousal Levels

## Battery: Energy and Arousal Levels

Learn to:

- Function within an optimal window of arousal
- Read energy and stress levels
- Regulate and recharge energy
- Identify what generates good energy



Shock Absorbers: Affect Management

### Shock Absorbers: Affect Management / Tolerance

- Rigid emotional constriction is often linked to problem behavior
- A capacity to tolerate the normal ups and downs of life ("bumps") reduces the risk of a major problem
- Increasing affect tolerance includes both:
  - "negative" emotions (sadness, vulnerability, confusion, fear, hurt, helplessness)
  - "positive" emotions (happiness, enthusiasm, fun, pride, love, human connection)



Driving Lessons I: Ability to Use the Vehicle

### Driving Lessons I: Self-Control

- Know all working parts of the vehicle and develop mastery over them
- Practice/ rehearse appropriate driving behavior (You can't pull out the manual while driving)
- Practice for triggering conditions (bad weather)
- Use Rest Stops: Practice "Time Outs"
- Anticipate the bumps in the road



Driving Lessons Part II:  
Awareness of Others (Interpersonal Skills)

### Driving Lessons II: Interpersonal Skills

- Learn about the needs of other drivers and pedestrians
- Share the Road: (Expand interpersonal skills)
  - Anticipate the needs of other drivers: (Develop capacity for empathy)
  - Expect traffic jams: (Develop conflict resolution skills)



Call for Back-Up: Wiser Observing Self

Call for Back-Up:  
Developing Co-Conscious Mindfulness

Radio for more information: It can be useful to have a connection to a bigger picture. This allows one to detach from the immediate situation, gather more information and use good judgment.

Remember the radio is there

Know who else or what part of oneself to "call on" for the right guidance



Who's Driving Today?: Moods and Mindsets

Who's Driving Today?:  
Moods and Mindsets

- Understand your different moods and mindsets
- Different moods and mindsets drive by different rules
- Only moods and mindsets that know the vehicle should be "licensed" to drive



Road Maps: Purpose and Direction

Road Maps:  
Sense of Purpose and Direction

- Stop taking the same old roads out of habit
- Identify where you want to or need to travel
- Plan your daily trips and your long term adventures



Good Buddies: Appropriate Social Support

Good Buddies:  
Appropriate Social Support

- Changing behavior patterns often means steering clear of people who reinforce bad behavior.
- Change is helped by people who know what you are dealing with and believe in change
- Seek out good drivers that care for their vehicle



Managing the Cargo:  
Trauma Awareness and Containment

Managing the Cargo: Trauma  
Awareness and Containment

- Safely take cargo “inventory” (history of past trauma)
- Tie the cargo down carefully
- Decide what to unload and when



Unloading the Cargo: Trauma Desensitization

Unloading Packages:  
Trauma Desensitization

- Only do this with the help of others
- Start with small packages for practice (build the muscles for unloading)
- Unload packages that are “in the way”
- After unloading some packages, be sure to tie down the rest before driving



Larger Cargo: Big "T" Trauma Desensitization

### Larger Cargo: Big "T" Trauma Desensitization

Remember:

- Safety first
- Unload in good weather
- Unload wisely
- Rebalance the load before driving off



Positive Change Brings A Healthy Awareness of the Past



A Focus on the Present



And an Interested Anticipation of the Future

### Eight Phases of EMDR

(Shapiro 2001)

1. Client History and Treatment Planning
2. Preparation
3. Assessment
4. Desensitization
5. Installation of Positive Cognition
6. Body Scan
7. Closure
8. Reevaluation