MODULE 4: ENGAGEMENT

A little boy races across a soccer field, gets to the ball, and kicks with all his might. Minutes later he is rolling on the ground in tears, his legs burning with pain. He does not know it, but he could die from what is happening inside the cells of his legs. His exercise has triggered a chain reaction of that is turning his normally life-giving red blood cells into killers. The usually doughnut-shaped oxygen-carriers are being twisted into the shapes of crescents or sickles. Like nails trying to flow throw a garden hose, they jam. In the narrow capillaries, only wide enough to let red blood cells through one at a time, the sickled cells block the flow of blood. The cells of the child's leg muscle, in need of oxygen, are the first to die. Because the blood cannot flow fast enough, the muscle cells are not getting enough oxygen. They are suffocating and they begin to die.

(Rensberger, Life Itself, 1996)