

“Experiencing Love and Logic With At Risk Adolescents in Botswana”

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Overview of the Presentation

- Background of at risk adolescents' situation in Botswana
- Stepping Stones International
- Love and Logic Approach
- Methodology for implementation
- Results- cases and relevance for at-risk youth
- Challenges to implementation
- Conclusion

Background

- Number of orphaned children in Botswana soaring due to high prevalence of HIV in reproductive years (34.4%)
- 64% of all orphans in Botswana are between the ages 10-17 years
- Kgatleng district (40 km from capital Gaborone) more than 6000 orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) 0-18 years

Background

- Adolescent orphans have multifaceted needs in absence of parental guidance
- Inadequate direction to move towards independence
- Face physical, psychosocial and developmental challenges
- Societal ills encroach on their legal rights, harm health e.g. sexual abuse, violence in families, witness to alcohol abuse, property grabbing

Stepping Stones International

www.steppingstonesintl.org

- Non-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO) providing a unique after school program to adolescent OVC ages 12-18+ years
- First program in Mochudi, Kgatleng District
- Focus on goal setting, barriers to achieving goals and building self-esteem through activities and counseling
- Started with 30 youth 2006 and currently have 60 youth + their families and 1500 youth reached through our peer education program

Stepping Stones International

MISSION

“To empower youth to become leaders of the next generation by nurturing their mental, physical and spiritual well being”



SSI Program Objectives

- Provide opportunities and guidance for OVC ages 12-18+ to become responsible for their decisions and be self-sufficient
- Improve family understanding and communication with OVC
- Equip OVC with skills to protect themselves from HIV, alcohol, substance abuse, pregnancy and peer and family pressure

Sports



Organic Gardening



Income Generating



Activities in the Program

Life Skills



Camps



Expression Activities: Art and Drama



Counselling: art, group, individual

Stages of Progression through the Program

- **Granite-** Foundation for learning and gaining knowledge
- **Emerald-** Practicing what was learned in the Granite stage
- **Diamond-** Peer leaders manage activities at the centre and work on projects in the community

Behaviours of At-risk Adolescents at SSI

- Display behaviours such as bullying, stealing, involvement in intergenerational sex, pregnancy, poor performance in school, abortion, alcohol abuse
- Experience stress and depression from abuse and neglect in the home, grief from parents dying, emotional abuse
- Adults in their lives tend to dominate, use harsh words, punish or make the child feel helpless

School Environment

- Subjects are taught using the banking, method (Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)
 - Teacher “deposits” information
 - Teacher asks student to “withdraw” – regurgitate information
- Students learn to memorize rather than work to understand the information
- Questions of clarification are not welcomed, no room for personal interpretation

Family Environment

- Live with grandmothers, alone or with aunts and uncles with several other children
- Discipline for misbehaving includes beating, additional chores or missing a meal
- An opinion offered by child is considered disrespectful
- In FGD, SSI conducted in 2008, youth stated that what is missing in their families is love and caregiver's confidence in their children
- Lack of confidence leads to poor decision making

Love and Logic Founders

www.loveandlogic.com

Jim Fay

- Cofounder of the Love and Logic Institute
- Coauthor of books *Teaching with Love and Logic* and *Parenting with Love and Logic*
- 30 years in classroom experimenting with love and logic techniques

David Funk

- Coauthor of *Teaching with Love and Logic*
- Special and regular education teacher since 1969
- Developed special education programs

Love and Logic Philosophy

“Character is built out of a formula that involves three things...”

- A child making a mistake
- An adult feeling empathy and compassion for the child
- Child learning from the consequences of his or her action

Principles of Love and Logic

1. Child's self-concept needs to be maintained or enhanced
2. Control is a shared commodity
3. Consequences need to be served with compassion, empathy or understanding rather than anger
4. Thinking needs to be shared- accept the person and reject the questionable behaviour

Love and Logic: Develop Relationships

- Developing a relationship with a child who has behaviour problems:
 - Approach the child six times total over 3 weeks with a one sentence intervention- no judgment and no praise
 - stating something personal positive and true
 - “I notice.....”
- Participants with low self-esteem need to rely on an adult in their life noticing rather than critiquing
- Building connections may lead children in counselling to share personal situations

Love and Logic: Choice

- Children feel empowered when given choices
- Adult is teaching the child to examine their own personal preferences and determine when choices do not match morals
- Choices do not affect the adult
- **???** A disruptive child is off task during a small group life skills activity, what choice would you give???

Possible Answer

“Would you rather continue working with this group or would you prefer to work alone?”

Love and Logic: Consequence

- Strategies remove responsibility of child's behaviour away from the adult and re-places it on the child at fault
- Adult does not lecture, rather allows child to cool down
- Child is asked to determine the consequences that seem acceptable

??? Disruptive child continues misbehaving during the activity, what would you say????

Possible Answer

“Do you think I should continue to let you participate in this group? What do you need to do?”

If the participant says he/she should stay focused then the facilitator says, “What should happen if this behaviour does not happen?”

If the participant does not provide a logical consequence like “I will work on my own” then the facilitator says, “Try again.”

Methodology at SSI

- Hired consultant to train staff – 5 days theory and observed practice
- Training focused on dismissing the **systems approach** to discipline and introduced the **principles approach**
- Systems approach = rules + punishment
- Principles approach = agreed beliefs that are turned into principles (guidelines for human conduct)

Agreed Beliefs

- Staff agreed upon four beliefs in regards to interacting with the youth:
 1. Be responsible for owning and solving their own problems with some guidance
 2. Face logical consequences instead of punishment
 3. Learn how to make decisions then live with the consequences of those decisions
 4. View adults as helpers rather than judges dispersing punishment

Agreed Reactions

- Principles approach does not mean all rewards and punishments are dropped
- Focus placed on developing a sense of responsibility within the child leading to a feeling of shared control
- A reaction to a misbehaving child agreed upon by staff:

“Every time I interact with a misbehaving child I will show empathy instead of anger, shame or guilt”

Monitoring

- SSI staff worked on one skill at a time internalizing the changes, making mistakes and necessary adjustments
- Staff provided regular feedback to each other
- After 6 months, held first refresher training comprised of discussion on successes, changes in behaviour and cases that were taxing
- Every three months there is a one day refresher to hone their skills
- SSI starting to track decisions made and responsible behaviour changes

Results from Counsellors and Facilitators

- Started to use the wording without thinking
- Recognized the ease of managing large group activities without having to shout
- Reduced their frustration and anger levels in trying to persuade the youth to talk

Results among Youth

- Youth responded positively to the change
 - Improved self esteem: “You should be proud of that” rather than “I am proud of you” (sexual abuse case)
 - Internal learning became more permanent: “Don’t worry we will talk later” (bullying case)
 - Choice led to healthy control which reduced attitudes of defiance and resistance – “ Do you want to play football or volleyball”

Results among Youth

- Empathy allowed the youth to focus on a second chance and made the youth feel the adult's disappointment. Felt the pain from inside rather than outside (stealing money case)
- Youth are advising their peers to act responsibly and leave an activity or think about their if they are disturbing another person
- Easier for youth to assess their behaviours, make decisions and determine the consequences

Challenges

- Reluctance to use the techniques- verbiage does not match traditional responses to behaviour problems in Botswana
- Environment at school and home is different so the youth are trying to understand both worlds
- Difficulty understanding and practicing delayed consequences
- Difficult to change control residing with the adult and sharing the control
- Youth had difficulty accepting at first – the victims wanted to see perpetrator “properly punished”

Conclusion



Empathy and shared power lead to the undeniable fact that we cannot change the challenging environment of at-risk youth but we can prepare the youth to become future leaders who can make sound choices and accept their consequences.

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