



Strength-Based Youth Prevention Programming

David Rogers

Tribal Law Enforcement Program
Specialist
Fox Valley Technical College



Langston-H.S. Senior

"You see me as you want to. If all you see is a stereotype than you shall never know me, but you will forever know who I am not."



Jose – H.S. Dropout

“I am the one people expect less of, the under-achiever, the dropout. No, I think not. But I am the one that had to go against all stereotypes, mean and dirty looks, and much worse.”



How do we view...

- ❖ Youth are predators
- ❖ Family as dysfunctional
- ❖ Community as blighted

- ❖ How do our interventions work under these concepts?



Thinking Errors

- ❖ Common Among Young People
- ❖ Can be Influenced and Changed
- ❖ Can Develop into Criminal Thinking



Youthful Offenders

- ❖ Evolve because of.....?



A Thought

"It takes a village to raise a gangster."



Youth Needs

❖ Dependant Needs

- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Clothing
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Supervision
- ✓ Recreation
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Sense of Belonging
- ✓ Protection





Who Will Provide Them

- ❖ Family?
- ❖ Community?
- ❖ Who Else?



Loss of Ceremony

- ❖ Rights of Passage





Research Confirms

- ❖ That how we view and treat children and their families affects our ability to work with them.



Stigmas and Institutions

- ❖ The labeling process and institutional self-preservation still sustain deficit oriented approaches and programs.





Melissa – H.S. Student

- ❖ “You don’t know me, you just see me. You don’t even give me a chance.”



Victim Blaming

- ❖ Change the child not the school
- ❖ Victim blaming is disabling
- ❖ Translates needs into deficiencies
- ❖ Isolates child and the problem
- ❖ Serves as a segregating function



Victim Blaming

- ❖ Low expectations
- ❖ Low staff morale
- ❖ Reinforce and contribute to negative self identities
- ❖ Legitimize child's resistance
- ❖ Contributes to poor educational and social outcomes



Victim Blaming

- ❖ Of the 56% of students who dropped out of school 73% are arrested within 5 years.
- ❖ Increases burden in justice system





School Suspensions

- ❖ Higher rates of violence
- ❖ 91% of property offenders and drug dealers had been suspended at least once
- ❖ Delinquent behavior strongly associated with suspensions
- ❖ Suspended males 3 times more delinquent than others



Glenn





Strength Based Approaches

- ❖ 1960's adopted for medical tx
 - ✓ Alternative to hospitalization
 - ✓ Developing competence and self-fulfillment
 - ✓ Not treating illness or pathology



Focus On

- ❖ What a child has rather than on what they don't have.
- ❖ What a child can do rather than what they cannot do.
- ❖ What a child has achieved rather than what they have failed.



Elements of Strength Based Programs

- ❖ Identified Strengths
- ❖ Focuses on Building Trust
- ❖ Targets the Development of Competence
- ❖ Addresses ecological factors
- ❖ Reaches out to Youth and Families



Rejects "D" Words

- ❖ Disordered Behavior
- ❖ Disturbed Emotions
- ❖ Deviant Thinking
- ❖ Dysfunctional Families
- ❖ Deprived Environments





Objectives

- ❖ Provide Positive Learning Opportunities and Results
- ❖ Improve School and Community Capacity
- ❖ Value and Address Diversity
- ❖ Collaborate with Families
- ❖ Promote Appropriate Assessment



Objectives

- ❖ Provide Ongoing Skill Development and Support
- ❖ Create Comprehensive and Collaborative Systems



Individual Strengths

- ❖ Talents
- ❖ Abilities
- ❖ Beliefs
- ❖ Dreams
- ❖ Interests
- ❖ Experiences



Family Strengths

- ❖ The combined talents, abilities, beliefs, dreams, interests and experiences of the members
- ❖ Cultural Beliefs
- ❖ History





Community Strengths

- ❖ Culture
- ❖ Values
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Community Norms
- ❖ History



Strength-Based

- ❖ Uses a Practical Set of Skills and Approaches that focus on...
 - ✓ Service Delivery
 - ✓ Solutions
 - ✓ Assets





Strength-Based

- ❖ Gives the youth a real leadership role in creating their program plan and also in shaping the service system



Strength-Based

- ❖ Diagnostic Methods and Techniques
- ❖ Interview Techniques
- ❖ Service Plan Development and Mobilization
- ❖ Report Writing
- ❖ Program Management

Many Risk Factors Arise From or are Made More Intense by These Forces: Directly and Indirectly

Disorganization

An analysis of 40 indicators of social health in America – including trust in other people, connecting to family and friends, connecting with civic and religious groups, giving and volunteering – showed significant decline over the last 30 years.

*Broken Engagement:
America's Civic Health Index
(2006)*

Injustice

The United States and Britain have ranked at the bottom of a United Nation's survey of child welfare in 21 rich countries that assessed everything from infant mortality to whether children ate dinner with their parents or were bullied at school. The United States finished last in the health and safety category.

UNICEF: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Counties, 2007

Confusion

The period from roughly the mid-1960s to the early 1990s was marked by seriously deteriorating social conditions; the decline of kinship and a weakening of social bonds and common values.

The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order, Francis Fukuyama, 1999

Risk Factors: Prenatal/Infancy Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Difficult temperament	Young mother			
Hyperactivity	Maternal depression			
Impulsiveness	Parental substance abuse or criminality			
Low cognitive ability	Poor family communications			
Attention deficit	Low SES			
Pregnancy and delivery complications	Serious marital discord			



Risk Factors: Toddler/Preschool Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Early onset of problem behavior	Lack of guilt or empathy Harsh, erratic discipline			Television violence
Persistent and aggressive behavior	Maltreatment (child abuse or neglect)			
Chronic lying				
Risk-taking & sensation-seeking				



Risk Factors: Mid-Childhood To Early Adolescent Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Stealing	Domestic violence	Poor academic achievement	Delinquent peers/siblings	Low SES
Precocious behavior (sex/AOD abuse)	Poor parental supervision	Truancy	Peer rejection	Community disorganization (crime & violence)
Positive attitude toward problem behavior		Neg. attitude toward school (low commit.)		
Victimization		School transition		
Exposure to victimization				



Risk Factors: Mid To Late Adolescence Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Gun possession Drug dealing Unemployment		School drop-out	Gang membership	



Effects of a Strength-Based Approach Utilizing Opportunities to Build Relationships, Right Wrongs, Create Change

Youth Action Clubs:

Focused on building and utilizing cognitive and social competencies. Included: math, computer, radio and television broadcast, cooking, catering, art and drama, civic responsibility and community service.

Six times fewer delinquent acts

Five times fewer property crimes



Loving:
Organize Relationships to Protect One Another From Drugs

Overcoming:
Right the Wrongs that Perpetuate Drug Use

Ruling:
Lead Efforts to Create Beautiful Drug-Free Places



Protective Factors: Prenatal/Infancy Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Family support	Positive family communication			



Protective Factors: Toddler/Preschool Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Feeling safe at home, school, neighborhood	High expectations Family boundaries Parent involvement in schooling	Caring school climate		Caring neighborhood



Protective Factors: Mid-Childhood/Early Adolescent Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Service to others Values: caring, equality, social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, restraint	Time at home	Planning and decision-making Achievement motivation Bonding to school	Interpersonal competence Cultural competence Resistance skills Peaceful conflict resolution Positive peer Influence	Community values youth Creative activities Youth programs Neighborhood boundaries



Protective Factors: Mid to Late Adolescence Onward

CHILD	FAMILY	SCHOOL	PEER	COMMUNITY
Positive Identity: sense of personal power, sense of purpose, positive view of future		School engagement		Adult role models Youth as resources Other adult relationships



Ted Nolan
Ojibwa



Jennifer Podemski
Ojibwa/Saulteaux



Langston – H.S. Senior

"If you knew me, you would know that I am kind, intelligent, outgoing and understanding. I am a human being just like you."



"Gangsta"

❖ "I am back home. I am still surrounded by gangs, drugs, violence and alcohol. But I am going to try to change because you did something for me that no other adult ever has.....*you listened to me.*"



Final Thoughts

- ❖ “Talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk.”



Remember What Matters

