Strength-Based Youth Prevention Programming

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

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)

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.


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD</th>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>PEER</th>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult temperament</td>
<td>Young mother</td>
<td>Maternal depression</td>
<td>Poor family communications</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>Maternal depression</td>
<td>Parental substance abuse or criminality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impulsiveness</td>
<td>Parental substance abuse or criminality</td>
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<td>Low cognitive ability</td>
<td>Poor family communications</td>
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<td>Serious marital discord</td>
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<td>Attention deficit</td>
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<td>Pregnancy and delivery com-</td>
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### Risk Factors: Toddler/Preschool Onward

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early onset of problem behavior</td>
<td>Lack of guilt or empathy</td>
<td>Harsh, erratic discipline</td>
<td>Maltreatment (child abuse or neglect)</td>
<td>Television violence</td>
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<td>Persistent and aggressive behavior</td>
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<td>Chronic lying</td>
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<td>Risk-taking &amp; sensation-seeking</td>
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### Risk Factors: Mid-Childhood To Early Adolescent Onward

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>Delinquent peers/siblings</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Precocious behavior (sex/AOD abuse)</td>
<td>Poor parental supervision</td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Peer rejection</td>
<td>Community disorganization (crime &amp;violence)</td>
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<td>Positive attitude toward problem behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neg. attitude toward school (low commit.)</td>
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<td>Victimsim</td>
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<td>School transition</td>
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<td>Exposure to victimization</td>
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Risk Factors: Mid To Late Adolescence Onward

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<tr>
<td>Gun possession</td>
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<td>School drop-out</td>
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<td>Gang membership</td>
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<td>Drug dealing</td>
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<td>Unemployment</td>
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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
Protective Factors: Prenatal/Infancy
Onward

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

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Family support</td>
<td>Positive family communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling safe at home, school, neighborhood</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Caring school climate</td>
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<td>Caring neighborhood</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family boundaries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent involvement in schooling</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service to others</td>
<td>Time at home</td>
<td>Planning and decision-making</td>
<td>Interpersonal competence</td>
<td>Community values youth</td>
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<td>Values: caring, equality, social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, restraint</td>
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<td>Achievement motivation</td>
<td>Cultural competence</td>
<td>Creative activities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Bonding to school</td>
<td>Resistance skills</td>
<td>Youth programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peaceful conflict resolution</td>
<td>Neighborhood boundaries</td>
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<td>Positive peer Influence</td>
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<td>Positive Identity: sense of personal power, sense of purpose, positive view of future</td>
<td>School engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult role models</td>
<td>Youth as resources</td>
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**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