

Kátia Almeida & Susana Bernardo – Pressley Ridge (Portugal)

The use of the Circle of Courage® model and Group Process with youth at risk

Summary

The workshop explored the 4 basic universal psychological needs of the circle of courage® while working with kids at risk, using competition/cooperation activities; it also used the power of the group process while helping young people to address their circle of courage needs.

Flow: The workshop was organized around several activities that required different cognitive and emotional skills, while using different reflection techniques. The different activities were linked with each other to promote a growing process until reaching the desired goals. The expectation is that everyone could find some comfort in different activities always through a growing group process.

Target Group

The target group is youth at risk (ages from 13 up to 24). The kids are at risk mostly because of behavior and emotional problems. We recommend that the group is up to 24 kids with the ratio of one adult per every 8 kids. The ages should also be impaired. We do not have 13 year old kids in the same group as 18 year old ones.

Trainers

The trainers are licensed psychologists. They are facilitators trained by Katia Almeida (Pressley Ridge Portugal) in therapeutic crisis intervention, social entrepreneurship, Adventure Therapy, experiential education and in the re-education philosophy (Nicholas Hobbs).

Methodology

1 - Group formation



Material: playing cards with funny faces (you can find it in kids' toy stores)

- The participants were asked to stand in a circle. Each participant received a card and we told them not to look at their cards until everyone had its own.
- The participants were then invited to look at their own card, to put it away and then make the face and make a sound in order to find the other group members.
- There was one 'lonely card' - the goal of this card was to address how hard it is when someone is left out (the importance of belonging)

2 - Something in common

- The 4 groups were invited to form a circle and to find something in common that is not obvious
- Reflection method: asking several questions for a yes and no answer and the participants responded with thumbs up or down for yes or no. Rational for this: to have non-intrusive feedback from everyone in a short time frame. To have general feedback on how the group is going, addressing only the people whose answer was different than everyone else's. This is a really good strategy when we do not have enough time, or when we have people in the group that are not comfortable to speak out loud or "be in the spot".

'Belonging' was addressed during this activity.

3 - "Communities"

- There are 4 arcs placed in a big circle with one arc full with objects (soft balls) in the middle.
- The instructions are given just once and the group is told that once the instructions are given, they cannot speak with each other and need to start right away.
- Instructions: the winning team is the one that will have ALL the balls inside their arc
- Rational for this: competition/cooperation.

Belonging & mastery were addressed during this activity.

4- Black jack



- Invite the participants to get into a large circle. Give each participant a card and ask them not to look at it. (In case someone peeks at their card, have them trade cards with their neighbor). Inform the group that this is a silent activity and they may not use their voices for the duration of the activity. Ask them to place their card to their forehead so it is visible to the rest of their team. Instruct them to play 'Blackjack' as a large group. Only by adding up numbers, each participant must be included in a 'hand' that equals a combined value of 19, 20, or 21.

Simple blackjack rules in case you are unfamiliar with them: Aces equal a value of 1 or 11. Royalty cards equal a value of 10. All other number cards are face value. When given a range of 19, 20, and 21, group members should be able to include EVERYONE in the group no matter how many participants you have. Even groups of 15 should be able to complete the task as long as you deal a few aces.

Suggestion: Throw a Joker card in and make it a 'wild' card, so it can be whatever value they want it to be.

Variation: Group Black jack! The object of Black jack is to subtract points, rather than adding them. Instead of trying to get into groups totaling 19, 20, or 21 as in Group Blackjack, participants start with 21 and subtract card totals to get into groups that total 0, 1, or 2.

Debriefing topics:

How did you get into your groups?

Did anyone feel left out?

How did it feel when someone helped you find a partner?

Rational for this: provide the group with an opportunity to practice cooperation, using different skills from the group. Belonging & mastery were addressed during this activity.

5 – Card punch



- Organize the participants in groups of 6 or more players; set up the playing area – set up one circle/group on the ground away from the starting line; then set up the card punch pads – In each webbing circle, set out one suit of 13 cards, facing down. Have all the players start behind the line. The group is informed that none of the equipment within the activity can be adjusted or moved and the participants while playing cannot communicate with their group. When the time starts, each participant at a time, has to turn just one of the cards face up. The goal is that the group can figure out the position of each card, in order to turn them up in the right order – from Aces to King. The group is given some time to plan the strategy. They play one first time (without turning the cards up), they have more time to plan and then play a second time. It is during the second time that they have to leave the cards facing up. If they fail on the sequence, they have to start all over again.

- *Reflection methods:* discuss in the group what happened with emphasis on the group process; share in pairs with people from the other group the feelings and learnings during the group process. Sharing in pairs provides a great opportunity for everyone to have enough time for active listening and to be heard, in a timely manner. It is also a non-intrusive and safer way for people that are not comfortable to share in a larger group.

Rational for this: problem solving – great to meet the needs of mastery & independence

6 – “The power of touch”

- Half of the group is invited to sit comfortably on the floor with their eyes closed, in a chosen spot, but not too far away from each other. The other half of the group is invited to walk around following the facilitator’s instructions and touches someone who...
- After several instructions, the groups change roles and we repeat the exercise. The things that the facilitator says do not have to be the same.

Rational: generosity & belonging

Why do we use this practice

In every practice we use at Pressley Ridge, we always have the Circle of Courage® as one of the fundamental theoretical frames. The reason is because we believe that if we are aware at all times of the fundamental universal needs of every youth and if we try to address it in everything we do, we are helping them thrive in a very effective and therapeutic way. When we work with the kids, we work towards long lasting successful changes that can remain over time.

We also use group process with our kids. The majority of them is having or has had some form of formal therapy. Most of the problems they have, are in the context of the interaction with others, especially peers and family. So we use the group process as a way of helping them learn better ways to cope with others and to learn about themselves – especially self-control, self-concept, empathy, problem solving and decision making.

Adventure Therapy components

For this practice to have the Adventure Therapy component, it is necessary that:

- The kids are in a therapeutic process and a family member provides permission for the use of Adventure Therapy – it has to be consensual;
- There are therapeutic goals and a purpose that was discussed and agreed with the kid and/or family member;
- There is an adventure component – if the activities are done outdoors and in contact with nature;
- The facilitator is a licensed therapist and/or psychologist with knowledge and/or experience in the outdoors.

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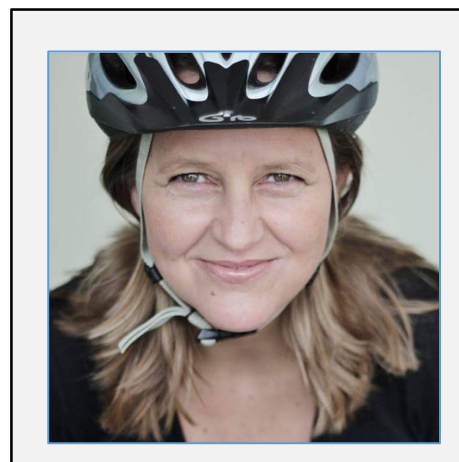
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Master in Sport Psychology; postgraduate in Psychosocial intervention with children, youth and families; specialized in therapeutic crisis intervention. Founded Pressley Ridge in Portugal in 2000 and has been leading the organization ever since. Has extensive experience in the development and implementation of skills programs for vulnerable children, youth and families, especially in outdoor settings; is a trainer/supervisor in many different contexts mainly in the areas of therapeutic crisis intervention.

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