



Chrysalis Girls Program

Evaluation Report 2010

Background

“The Chrysalis Girls Program” – is a prevention based youth development and support program conceived by young women for young women. Chrysalis is a client driven initiative that over the past 4 years has delivered weekly group counselling sessions and community building conferences to identified “at risk” adolescent girls in High Schools in Northern N.S.W. The program has been facilitated and developed by professional counsellors Amie Dreyer (Youth/ Holistic Counsellor) and Jane Mc Gowen North Coast Area Health- Sexual Assault Counsellor.

Project Overview

The program aims to reduce “at risk” behaviours through the development of qualities in the participants such as: self esteem, compassion, self-awareness, healthy body image, respect for self and others, leadership and mentoring roles, self- empowerment, creativity, development of healthy personal boundaries, empathy and a commitment to helping others in need.

A large majority of the participants have experienced high levels of trauma in their lives these include: sexual abuse and assault, grief and loss from a deceased parent or family member, domestic violence, teen pregnancy and abortion, homelessness, are living in foster care/wards of the state, self harm, suicide attempts, substance abuse/addiction, depression anxiety disorders, psychosis, anger and rage disorders and family breakdowns. Chrysalis implements weekly group counselling and follow-up counselling for the participants and their families/caregivers as a tool to heal trauma and support the participants to transform adversity. Counselling and therapeutic interventions include: professional adolescent counselling, sexual assault counselling, mindfulness training, meditation, yoga, martial arts, art therapy, music therapy and holistic therapies.

Evaluation

Evaluation forms were developed to provide a mechanism for feedback regarding the impact of the program. The evaluation forms were completed anonymously from participants regularly attending the program from: Mullumbimby High School, Byron Bay High School and Kadina High School. Participants were aged between 13 and 17yrs and had been attending the program for up to 2yrs and some only as long as 2 months.

Results

Statistical data

- 100% of the participants felt that The Chrysalis Girls Program had helped them emotionally.
- 100% of the participants felt they had become more self aware and learnt more about themselves.
- 90% of the participants felt the program had positively impacted the way they interacted and felt about their family.
- 89% of participants felt the program had changed the way they felt about school and their future in a positive way.
- 91% of participants felt the program had changed the way they feel and behave towards intimate relationships, in a healthy, self empowered and positive way.

Topics which had the most impact

Each week a different topic is covered within the program through a large variety of psychotherapeutic interventions. Some of the topics which the participants identified to have had the most impact and students enjoyed more than others were:

- *Family Systems*- an understanding of how family behaviours and patterns can influence an individual such as addictions, mental illness, abuse, co-dependency and issues relating to equality. Through exploring their family trees participants were able to identify what behaviours may have been passed down through previous generations (up to 4) that were healthy and empowering and those that were not.
- *Body Image*- the impact of the media was explored and the history of where the notion began that a woman should look a particular way was analysed. This included multicultural expectations and modern Western expectations. The participants used a personal timeline to explore when the first feelings of inadequacy began, current issues and strategies for building self esteem were explored and implemented.
- *Self Esteem*- Strategies were implemented to nurturing a healthy self esteem with a focus on the importance this issue has on young women and participants learning to take responsibility for their own self esteems rather than looking outward to relationships and drugs and alcohol.
- *Personal Boundaries*- explored through drama therapy the impact of trauma on breaking down healthy boundaries, with a particular focus on sexual abuse and assault.
- *Anger*- Explored the impact on participant's lives that dysfunctional anger has such as relationships with parents and family, teachers and friends. Anger was explored as a single emotion and participants were encouraged to address the feelings behind the anger such as, grief, guilt, shame, hurt and fear. Strategies for controlling and expressing anger in a healthy way were implemented through art therapy and martial arts.

Examples of participants written responses to evaluation questions - taken from a broad cross section of participant's answers aged between 13 and 17.

Has Chrysalis helped you emotionally in any way and if so how?

- ◆ *“Yes because it has helped me become more confident in myself and more aware of life and the things around us.” – (participant 1yr)*
- ◆ *“Yes its given me insight into what life's like for other people and helped me not get to that point.”- participant 8 months*
- ◆ *“Yes, realising I have an opinion and a right to say it.” – (participant 4months)*
- ◆ *“It's helped me see that's there is more to life than being used by guys.” - (participant 2 months)*
- ◆ *“I learnt how to ditch an abusive boyfriend, to chill and enjoy life regardless of my past.” (participant 1half years)*

What have you learnt about yourself?

- ◆ *“That I have soooooo much potential, I'm a leader and I am strong.” (Participant 1yr)*
- ◆ *“That I'm a lot different to how I thought I was I'm a good person.” (Participant 1year)*
- ◆ *“I've learnt to love myself for who I am.” (Participant 4 months)*
- ◆ *“That I am worth something, I can be open and trust others.” (Participant 1 year)*

Has Chrysalis changed the way you feel about or interact with your family?

- ◆ *“Its helped me understand that my family don't always understand what life is like for me and I have to be more open to help them understand.” (Participant 4 months)*
- ◆ *“Yes I'm a lot calmer and I listen a lot more to people” (Participant 8 months)*
- ◆ *“Yes that I need family to feel safe and Chrysalis is the family I don't have.” (Participant 2 yrs)*
- ◆ *“No but I have tried to.” (Participant 1 yr)*

Has Chrysalis changed the way you feel about school and your future? If so how?

- ◆ *“Yes it encourages me to attend, Chrysalis is the reason I go to school on Fridays.” (Participant 1 half yrs)*
- ◆ *“It has made me realise I am not a dumb ass and that I can do it.” (Participant 9 months)*

◆ “ *Not about school, but about the future, I feel more spontaneous and excited towards the future and opportunities that come with it.*” (Participant 1 yr)

◆ “ *Yes now I feel like I want to go to uni and get a good career.*” (Participant 4 months)

Has Chrysalis changed the way you feel about intimate relationships? If so how?

◆ ‘ *Yes that my sexuality should be respected and treated equally.*” (Participants 3 months)

◆ “ *That I don’t need someone else to make me happy and I shouldn’t change myself for anyone else.*” (Participant 1 year.)

◆ “ *Yes that they should be special.*” (Participant 6 months)

◆ “ *Yes I’ve learnt how some boys can act to be careful and how you should wait for the right guy who will treat you right.*” (Participant 1 year)

Is there anything else you’d like to say about Chrysalis?

◆ “ *It’s a great group and has had a great big impact on my life in a really positive way, and I love you Amie and Jane and all the Chrysalis girls.*” (Participant 1 yr)

◆ “ *It has changed my life forever!*” (Participant 2yrs)

◆ “ *Its amazing and all the people who support it and all the people who make it , thankyou!*” (Participant 1yr)

◆ “ *We need to have a talking stick but I love Chrysalis!*” (Participant 4 months)

Evaluation with wider community

The impact of the program on the wider community was evaluated through informal discussions with key stakeholders which included: Parents, teachers, the core groups, members of the Northern Rivers Community and also counsellors/therapists who have seen participants independently of the program.

The vast majority of the feedback has been very positive.

Parents have observed tangible changes in the way their children are communicating with them and have seen there is now a motivation to want to understand, empathise and bond which was previously not there.

Teachers have noticed a decline in truancy and an increase in motivation towards school attendance and studies. Teachers have also observed raised levels of self esteem and lower levels of depression and anxiety from participants.

The overall feedback from the wider community has been very supportive and positive.

Chrysalis Girls Program has been successful in working and liaising with community services such as Community Mental Health, Centrelink, Department of Community Services, The NSW Police Department, North Coast Area Sexual Assault Service, Richmond Clinic Psychiatric Unit and Byron Bay Youth House.

Conclusion for evaluation 2010

The Chrysalis Girls Program has been a highly effective prevention program for supporting “at risk “ adolescent girls in high schools across the Northern Rivers in 2010. Although the program has known to be successful over the years of its development it was not until 2010 that the degree of positive change, transformation of trauma, levels of self empowerment, awareness and esteem have really become obvious. We would like to thank all those who have supported the young women involved through compassion, understanding and respect in 2010.

the Chrysalis girls program

Amie Dreyer December 16th 2010