



Empowering Young women

Chrysalis Girls Program

Evaluation Report 2011



The Chrysalis Girls Program

Is a dynamic, prevention-based counselling program created by young women for young women. The program identifies “at risk” teenage girls aged between 12-17 and offers an intervention education program aimed at reducing and preventing behaviours that left unaddressed often lead to patterns of behaviour and life choices that will impact negatively on themselves and on their wider communities for the course of their lifetimes. Chrysalis is a highly successful program because of its long term, client driven strategies that support and educate participants on a weekly basis for up 4 years.

The programs aims and objectives

Approx 80% of the participants are from family backgrounds where issues such as poverty, violence, abuse and neglect are deeply ingrained over many generations. With the support of an experienced Adolescent Counsellor and a Sexual Assault Counsellor the intervention education program addresses causal issues arising from the young people’s “at risk” status and aims to prevent cycles of violence, crime and abuse from occurring in future generations. Chrysalis implements contemporary counselling techniques, group counselling, art, drama and music therapy, martial arts, yoga, mindfulness training and leadership and mentoring programs to address traumas/behaviours which include:

- Sexual abuse as children
- Sexual assault as teens
- Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms
- Substance addiction
- Mental illness
- Self harm
- Suicide ideation/suicide attempts
- Eating disorders
- Pregnancy
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger problems
- Grief/loss
- Domestic violence within the family, or within their relationships
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Family breakdown

Evaluation

The program is evaluated every year to provide a mechanism for feedback regarding the impact of the program. The evaluation forms are completed anonymously and approximately 60 participants completed the evaluation forms from: Mullumbimby High School, Byron Bay High School and Kadina High School.

Statistical data

- **79%** of participants felt the program had changed the way they felt about school and their education in a positive way.
- **95%** of the participants felt that they could distinguish a noticeable and positive change in themselves since beginning the program.
- **86%** of the participants felt the program had helped them to feel more positive about their future as healthy, productive adults.
- **73%** of the participants felt the program had positively impacted the way they interacted and engaged with their family.
- **100%** of the participants felt that Chrysalis was more relevant, engaging, and educational compared to similar education programs.
- **96%** of participants felt the program had changed the way they feel and behave towards intimate relationships, in a healthy, self empowered and positive way.
- **96%** of participants felt that the program had significantly helped them to develop higher levels of self- awareness and self- responsibility.



Chrysalis topics 2011

Every week a different topic is covered within the program implementing a large variety of psychotherapeutic interventions and educational tools. Some of the key topics covered in 2011 included:

- **Body Awareness** (*diet, menstruation, emotional awareness.*)
- **Anger Management** (*self awareness and responsibility, educational tools, (Mindfulness training and martial arts)*)
- **Family Systems** (*patterns, mental illness, addictions, abuse*)
- **Meditation** (*mindfulness techniques, mental health*)
- **Sexuality** (*sexual readiness, boundaries, respect, empowerment.*)
- **Body Image** (*eating disorders, women in the media*)
- **Boundaries** (*understanding healthy boundaries, the effects of drugs and alcohol, the impact of sexual abuse, self empowerment through martial arts, drama therapy*)
- **Anxiety and Depression** (*prevention, education and personal experiences*)
- **Grief and Loss** (*Understanding the natural stages of grief, importance of ceremony, personal experiences, cultural differences*)
- **Communication** (*active listening , conflict resolution*)
- **Addictions and Substance Abuse** (*Personal experiences/family patterns*)
- **Healthy Relationships** (*identification of and cycles of abuse*)
- **Date Rape** (*prevention and support*)
- **Self -Esteem** (*tools and understanding /self awareness*)
- **Domestic Violence** (*cycles of abuse, personal experiences , prevention and support*)
- **Bullying** (*intimidation and victimisation*)
- **Self Empowerment.** (*understanding the importance of self -empowerment and self -awareness, martial arts, drama therapy*)
- **Art therapy** (*Regularly implemented to address a variety of emotional issues*)
- **Sexual Assault** (*consent, prevention and support*)

Self Empowerment Conferences

The development of Young Women's Self Empowerment Conferences is an extension of the Chrysalis weekly counselling groups. Within the curriculum participants learn group facilitation skills, public speaking and build relationships with others schools. The conferences offer a safe space to express concerns about destructive relationships and behaviours around parents, peers, young men, sexuality, healthy relationships, self respect and substance abuse. The aim of these conferences is to reduce the likelihood of these young people becoming the victims/perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence in the future. Over 100 young women attend the events from local high schools which are facilitated and created by the young women who participate in the Chrysalis Girls Program.

Valuable information is collated from these events that contribute to the programs ongoing and evolving curriculum.

Examples of current opinions regarding healthy relationships and parenting can be observed by the following points expressed at the Byron High Self Empowerment Conference in June 2011:

- A consensus of over 70 young women aged 13-17 believed 80% of all boys at high school are unconscious perpetrators of abusive relationships, particularly in relation to simply playing young vulnerable girls for sexual favors.
- A consensus of over 70 young women aged 13-17 believed parents don't ask why adolescents are behaving in self damaging ways such as going out getting drunk, being aggressive and/or promiscuous they said parents generally just rage at them or punish them without perceiving the behaviour as symptomatic or asking why they are doing these things in the first place. This in turn they said makes them feel unloved so they repeat the behaviour with more ferocity.

Evaluation with wider community

The impact of the program on the wider community is 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.

Chrysalis is a long term intervention and due to the nature of the traumas common to participants, it is often members of the community who have been able to observe changes in behaviour and a participant's wellbeing over a significant time frame that offer the most valuable feedback. An example of this in 2011 came from a teacher who had observed a young woman who had enrolled in the program in yr 8. The young woman was a ward of the state; she had experienced high levels of sexual abuse, domestic violence and neglect. As a result of her trauma the young woman was unable to speak clearly, lift her head or maintain any eye contact. Over the time the young woman participated in the Chrysalis program her teacher observed her symptoms of post- traumatic stress disorder to dramatically decline. In 2011 the young woman graduated. She had gained skills in group facilitation, public speaking, had performed at her high school dance exhibition and she now aims to work with preschool children and apply to Tafe. Many similar experiences have been shared from community members who have observed comparable changes in participants in 2011.

The nature of the trauma participants have experienced, often equates with behaviour that is not conducive to school life. Feedback from a small number of teaching staff in 2011 has been reflective of this. The Chrysalis Program acknowledges that responsibility and consequence for abusive and inappropriate behaviour is paramount and such issues are addressed within the program curriculum. The program also acknowledges the context in which anti social behaviours stem from and aim for sustainable and realistic long term change for “at risk” young women.

Indigenous participants of the program have been observed to develop raised levels of self-esteem, feelings of equality, belonging, self respect and self expression. With ongoing support and participation it is expected that these outcomes will remain consistent and positive in 2012.

Chrysalis Girls Program has been successful in working and liaising with community services such as:

Community Mental Health, Centrelink, Byron Shire Council, Mullumbimby Domestic Violence Centre, Department of Community Services, The NSW Police Department, North Coast Area Sexual Assault Service, Richmond Clinic Psychiatric Unit and Byron Bay Youth House.

Funding, partners and community support

The Chrysalis Girls Program would like to acknowledge the following organisations and community members for their generosity and support in 2011:

- Zonta Women’s Organisation of Lismore
- Brunswick Valley Quota Club
- Nadia MacLeod- Menstruation.com.au
- Zenith Virago- Grief and Loss educator
- Brunswick Valley Surf Lifesaving Club
- Community members and businesses in the Mullumbimby/ Brunswick valley who generously were able to financially support the program to run at Mullumbimby High School.
- Rob Dreyer- who attempted to walk solo across the Simpson Desert in August of 2011 to raise funds for the Chrysalis Program.
- Community members and health care professional’s workers who expressed their support for Chrysalis to continue at Byron Bay High School in July 2011.
- Indigo House Sexual Assault Unit –Lismore.

Awards and recognition in 2011

- Amie Dreyer (Chrysalis founder) was nominated at the 2011 International Women's Day Awards for the work she does, both paid and unpaid for "The Chrysalis Girls Program."
- Amie Dreyer & Jane Mc Gowen (Chrysalis founders) were nominated for and won the Directors Award for Excellence in Education (Education Department) for -The Chrysalis Program.
- Chrysalis was nominated and awarded from The Byron Youth Council for - "Contributing to young people in the Byron Shire."

Conclusion

As this report has shown, 2011 has been a positive, productive and transformative experience for those participating in The Chrysalis Girls Program. The long term benefits of the program are now becoming clearer as participants move out into the world and create futures that are motivated by self-worth, self- respect, compassion for others and a sense of self-responsibility.

In 2012 the program aims to expand to other high schools in the Northern Rivers and continue to grow and evolve as a successful and highly dynamic counselling program committed to supporting and empowering young women "at risk".

"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer."
Albert Camus (1913 - 1960)



Quotes taken from approx 60 anonymous Chrysalis evaluations in 2011- from a broad cross section of girls aged 13-17.

“I’ve learnt to respect and love my parents more”

“Chrysalis has shown me I can be strong and I can do whatever I want in my life.”

“I wanted to die and then I started Chrysalis, now I love my life. Chrysalis makes me happy every week.”

“I’ve learnt to respect myself and go to school and try.”

“Thank you Chrysalis I have a future now.”

“I’ve never been engaged in something as awesome as this.”

“Chrysalis helps me make better choices.”

“I used to think I was fat and ugly and I was always self conscious, I have learnt I am perfect just the way I am, I’m happy.”



Quotes taken from approx 60 anonymous Chrysalis evaluations in 2011- from a broad cross section of girls aged 13-17.

“I stopped having an eating disorder since I started Chrysalis.”

“I pay more attention in class and actually love school now.”

“I’ve learnt that my family are who brought me here, they deserve love and respect.”

“Chrysalis has made me feel so much better, I’ve learnt that I am different and that I’m OK and beautiful inside and out.”

“Chrysalis helps you reach your goals.”

“Chrysalis has helped me to feel as though I can be pretty without makeup.”

“I got a lot of stress off my mind so I could focus and learn more, like I have been lately.”

“Chrysalis is the only thing that is completely relevant.”

“I used to be depressed all the time, there has been a huge change in my life since I started going to Chrysalis.”

“I feel so much more confident.”



Quotes taken from approx 60 anonymous Chrysalis evaluations in 2011- from a broad cross section of girls aged 13-17.

“Anger management has been the thing I’ve learnt the most, because for years before it was a huge problem for me and now it’s not.”

“I have a more positive attitude to school.”

“I have heaps more respect and understanding towards my family.”

I am so much more emotionally stable and have learnt better ways to deal with my crap.”

“I have changed from acting out and isolation to being the real me.”

“Chrysalis has helped me mend my relationship with my mum and it’s given me suggestions on how to act when something goes wrong.”

“Chrysalis is there when everyone else isn’t.”

“Chrysalis taught me there are other ways to deal with anger, because I used to self harm.”

“I’ve learnt I deserve the same respect every girl should have.”

“I was in a bad place if it wasn’t for Chrysalis I wouldn’t be here.”

“I have so much more confidence in myself to believe in the things I want to do.”

