



Year 9 Drug & Alcohol Youth Forum Report

When you see the words Drug & Alcohol Forum you typically expect a forum based on D & A substance use and the effects it has on people within our environment, this is what we didn't want. Instead the day needed to be about, who you are? the situations you find yourself in, and looking after yourself and others. To run a workshop like this we needed someone that would be on the same page, so we invited well renowned workshop facilitator Peter Slattery to present a full day workshop based on the principals of 'Beyond alcohol and drugs' 'The other side of...Beneath the surface...Beyond substances.

The forum had a two-fold approach to the above topic.

- Helping strengthen the ingredients that add to young people growing strong and increasing their chances of having happy and healthy lives
- Helping young people manage the situations they encounter in their lives right now and working out what can they do to stay safe in these situations and look after others.

The workshop focused on all the things research tells us, that help young people to do well in life:

A sense of purpose

A sense of belonging

A strong sense of yourself

Good relationships

Being in charge of yourself.

Workshop ingredients for happy healthy young people:

Meaning

We all need a sense of purpose, a sense that what we do and who we are actually matters

Good strong relationships

Being connected to other people in supportive and uplifting ways seems to be good for us. Some of us are like more contact and some of us like being on our own more. So there are variations, yet for most us, relationships really matter

Being actively involved in life

Being actively involved in what happens around us, rather than being passive recipients of whatever we are offered, is good for us. It creates a sense of involvement and interest in our own lives and those of others

Being in charge of yourself

Having some sense of control, some power, influence in our lives builds within us a confidence and ability to tackle life's hardships and challenges

A good strong sense of self

Much more than self esteem, this is a deep sense of worth, of belonging, of having a clear place and purpose

Other's having positive expectations

We do well when others expect the best of us. (The reverse is also true). These expectations of us need to be positive, high and realistic. We tend to do well when others focus on what we can do rather than what we can't; on our qualities rather than our shortcomings

Hope

We need a sense that we can get through something; a belief, a faith that 'things can be better', that 'life will be okay', that 'we can make it.'

Challenges we faced were:

- Keeping the young people motivated
- School's support and participation eg. Received requested names of participating students from high schools two days before forum date
- Facilitator skills weren't up to the pace required to run an emotional workshop

Things we would do differently would be:

- Mix up presentation content/activities eg. More interaction
- Include/involve older peer facilitators
- Have facilitator training before hand
- Provide Certificate of Participation
- Reduce participation numbers/numbers of students
- Divide/rotate workshops
- Increase overall numbers participating

Advice for other CDATs:

- Allow plenty of time for planning
- Give away freebies, the students absolutely love them

Great outcomes:

- Students talking about an increased range of choices and consequences
- Better understanding of the connection between self esteem and Drug & Alcohol use
- Recognition of local supports networks eg Family, Friends, Services
- Identify the people that are the faces of local youth sector services
- Raised awareness of the importance of family and friends
- How family and friends decisions impact on their lives and the choices they make.
- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Increased participation in activities throughout the day
- Many young people throughout the day could recognise someone they could go to for support
- identified other activities that are fun and minimum risk

Our overall expected outcome was, increased awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol. However, during implementation the focus changed to empowering young people to recognise and identify supports in their lives to help them with choices, and to increase self worth and confidence.