



For more information visit
www.respond.org.uk

Community based services for children, young people
and adults with learning disabilities

RESPOND
from hurting to healing

The Peaks and Pitfalls of Work around Violence with Adolescent Males from an EBD School.

Respect Conference
Thursday 17th February 2011
Debbie Arthur

Respond Community Based Services

- Psychotherapy for children, young people and adults with learning disabilities
- Helpline 0808 800 0700
- Risk assessments
- Parenting/Family assessments
- Training/consultancy/clinical supervision
- Policy and campaigns work
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors

Referral Criteria

- PWLD who have experienced abuse or trauma (includes bereavement)
- Perpetrators of Abuse & Sexually Harmful Behaviours
- Most referrals made by professionals
- Funded by Health, Social services or Grants
- Some self-referrals or from family
- Some free or subsidised places

The Project

- Client group: Young men with learning disabilities who use violence or have a history of using violence in their intimate relationships (partners, family members)
- Using the toolkit provided by Respect in the sessions to explore the theme of violence and gender roles in intimate relationships and to share the learning with Respect
- 10 weeks: 1 hour long sessions
- Group facilitated by 2 psychotherapists. One male and one female, Nigel Consiglio and Dimpi Hirani

The Journey

- Initial meeting in school
- Building trust and connection with staff
- Inset Training for Teachers & Support Staff
- Introducing the idea of the group to potential group members
- Getting consent
- Setting up the group – venue, travel arrangements
- The 10 sessions

The Group Members

- Five Year 10 pupils
- From an all boys EBD school in inner London
- All have learning difficulties due to the trauma of their backgrounds rather than organic with associated short attention spans and ADHD
- Family Background – all had a history Domestic Violence within the family

Assessment Process

- Immediately apparent structured assessment process was not going to work
- More dependent upon the judgment of the facilitators than the filling in of a questionnaire.
- Needed to open up to the topic of violence in a safe and non-confrontational way
- Needed to package the group in a way that appealed to their desires and goals
- Used pictorial representations of violence as an entry point for discussion
- Anything formal was repudiated or rejected
- A sense of ambivalence, distrust and non-committal attitude among the boys meant there was no hard and fast outcomes from the assessment process.

The Sessions

- Fluctuation of attendance resulted in a punctured sense of group cohesion and trust
- The material to work with needed to be in the here and now rather than planned sessions
- As facilitators the gendered transference and counter transference responses needed to be observed
- There was a constant tension throughout the 10 weeks of keeping the boys attention and engagement and wishing to use and test out the toolkit

The 10 Sessions

- 1: Introduction
- 2: Thinking about Anger
- 3: My Feelings
- 4: Anger & Behaviour
- 5: Triggers to Anger
- 6: Triggers to Anger
- 7: Relationships
- 8: Masculinity, Disability & Power
- 9: Responding to Anger
- 10: Reviews & Closure

The 10 Respond Sessions

- 1: Building Rapport: Games
- 2: Building Rapport: Focusing on Goals
- 3: No Session - Fire Training.
- 4: DVD: Hot Seating
- 5: DVD: Feelings
- 6: Must haves/ not in a relationship
- 7: Icebergs: Talking about anger & triggers.
- 8: Importance of relationships and gender roles.
- 9: Discussion around sex and relationship.
- 10: Important things in a relationship & Review.

Pitfalls

- Working with the inconsistent group population
- Highly distractible
- Dealing with members leaving the room
- Building rapport takes longer with this population
- Working with staff who may be acting out of their own counter-transference of the students
- Sense of worthlessness among students and staff

Peaks

- They came back, they didn't have to
- They engaged in the process, were able to take what was on offer
- Session 4: Hot Seating following 'Kim' DVD
- Session 7: Link between background and educational progress leading to expression of feelings around this
- Session 10: The Note
- They began to build a relationship with Nigel and Dimpi based on respect

Outcome & Learning

- We underestimated their ability to take the nature of the group at face value. In fact the young men valued the straight forward and direct approach and seemed to feel contained by the clarity
- Trust was an important issue, but most importantly it was the precariousness of their relationships with each other that was the decisive factor upon how much they got involved emotionally in the group
- What was actually happening in the group was a reflection of the role violence played in their lives. Working with the immediate dynamics at play in the room
- The toolkit exercises worked when they were used as an initial exercise that generated a discussion about what arose for the group members

Recommendations

- Longer project and longer session : maybe 1.5 hours
- Combination of various techniques: e.g arts therapies, CBT, talking
- Build upon initial links with school and school staff
- No more than 4 group members

Please contact us

24-32 Stephenson Way

London

NW1 2HD

020 7383 0700

admin@respond.org.uk

www.respond.org.uk