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C R E A T I V E C O N C E P T S

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C O M M U N I T Y P R E V E N T I O N

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Why do teens turn to drugs? Why do young people get into trouble? How do our communities react to troublesome youth? How are youth in general seen in and by the community? How do our communities use their resources for youth development?

These can be complicated and perplexing questions. Too often they are left to the "professional" to deal with. Unfortunately, however, the professionals have not been productive in developing practical and effective approaches to solving community problems such as juvenile delinquency or substance abuse.

At times, it is useful to look in some new directions and ask some new questions about old and pervasive problems. Sometimes changes in our attitudes can open new avenues and suggest new alternatives.

If you will join me, let's undertake such a venture. Let's be so bold as to try to suggest a methodology that can bring positive change in the community. Let's look at substance abuse and juvenile delinquency where it really happens - in the home - in the neighborhood - in the school. Let's develop something that will be lively and appealing.

This thing is called a "CLYDE". And it's essentially a living room discussion group that has grown into a grassroots-level community-wide concept to help prevent juvenile delinquency and substance abuse.

The CLYDE is roughly derived from Community Leadership for Youth Development and it began with a group of professionals who were concerned with finding a new way to help youth.

One of the activities that CLYDE focuses on is to form neighborhood groups in which neighbors discuss the needs of their local areas and figure out ways to solve the local problems.

The CLYDE's primary function is to provide an opportunity for young people to become involved in their neighborhoods.

To make the youth involvement meaningful, the groups are taught problem-solving techniques within an informal structure.

The CLYDE group first conducts a "needs assessment" in which individual members throw out ideas that may be problems in their neighborhoods such as curfew complications or a lack of recreational facilities or youth-sponsored activities.

Then the group goes through a four-step process to determine what the members know about the individual problem, what they don't know, what they need to find out, and what resources would be available to find the information they need.

Finally, the group members conduct a role-playing session in which they assume the identity of special interest groups in the community who would have formed attitudes towards the particular problem. For instance, in a CLYDE session recently, the group members discussed curfew in their community by dividing into small groups representing the police, students who fall under the community's 11:00 p.m. curfew rule, and a PTA group whose members are interested in curfew violators.

By assuming the separate interest-group identities, the CLYDE members learn "a sensitivity" to other groups' points of view.

The CLYDE concept, although it was started with a focus on youth problems, can be used by any group. It provides a means to examine neighborhood problems. Eventually, as group members learn the techniques and conduct CLYDE sessions of their own with new people, the concept has spread into a broadly based system of community involvement.

The hope is that the individual CLYDE groups, once they spread community-wide, could link up for their own common interests.

WHY DOES CLYDE WORK? The main reason is due to the tremendous trust level that is found through its weekly training process. Whether it is used with families or youth agencies staff or Boards of Directors, CLYDE's technique is based on values, communication and decision making skills that so often are lacking in the community structure.

When a community is facing problems like thefts, vandalism, drug abuse, truancy, dropouts and youth with nothing to do, then maybe it is time for residents of a neighborhood to sit down together for some "responsive listening".

The causes of most of these problems are right in the community itself, and the solution also has to come from the community.

New conditions in the home, the neighborhood and the school have to be created to change attitudes that lead to juvenile delinquency and youth behavioral problems. CLYDE was formed to figure out "how".

A major problem is that nearly the entire decision-making process in these institutions is by adults. CLYDE is a "grassroots" training process where adults and youths can acquire leadership skills to improve community conditions for youths.

CLYDE's purpose is to improve communications between youths and adults, reduce delinquency by providing positive alternatives, and to insure "youth's meaningful participation in the decision-making process".

Before we look at the training process, let's begin by asking ourselves several questions. First, what do we believe to be the underlying causes of substance abuse?

Secondly, do the conditions exist in our communities that promote the best interests of young people? Consider this question it relates to the most important arenas in the lives of young people - the home, the school, the neighborhood.

Who would object to that? Everyone wants those positive, healthy, and growth-producing conditions to exist. But where do you begin? Before we get to that, let's ask another question.

Who makes the decisions that determine the nature, scope and quality of the programs and opportunities for youth in the community? In other words, who holds the power and the purse strings in the schools, the recreation opportunities, the service programs, the economic institutions?

The answer is easy. A variety of elected officials, school superintendents, principals, teachers, administrators of various sorts, social workers, board members, parents, and probably numerous others. All of these people have one thing in common - they are all adults.

Consider this statement and ask if it is true of your community: Young people are systematically excluded from participating in the planning, operation and evaluation of programs and opportunities that exist for their wellbeing!

There is strong evidence to support the notion that one of the basic causes of delinquency or substance abuse is alienation. Alienation can result from a variety of conditions and experiences. It exists for youth where there is little or no access to meaningful participation in the events and experiences of the home, the school, and the neighborhood. But youth all too often are excluded from helping to shape those conditions.

Does this suggest what it seems to? Could it be that the conditions for alienation have been promoted by those adult decision makers we identified? Are the very people who were chosen and hired to fill the positions, make the decisions, and lead the way in developing better opportunities for youth a part of the problem after all?

One final question - knowing what you do about your community, if you could take all the resources for youth development that exist - financial physical, human - and redeploy them to best meet the needs of young people, would they be used as they are at present?

These questions may, if they are asked honestly and seriously, begin to suggest an approach to a program of community development that can turn the tables on juvenile delinquency and substance abuse.

In most communities there are many barriers to creating the conditions that promote the best interests of young people. The exclusion of youth from meaningful participation in decision making about youth opportunities is one barrier. The poor allocation of existing resources is another. The failure of adults in responsible positions to communicate with one another is a common barrier. Competition and territoriality

between youth serving programs exist in most communities. The over-dependence of professionals upon their own resources leads to failure to use the many resources that exist in every community for problem solving. Perhaps the greatest barrier is a lack of imagination on the part of leaders in engaging community people in using their talents and skills in promoting the development of youth.

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but as a start it points to some needed changes if we are to turn the tables on substance abuse. The encouraging thing about this list is that it is focused totally on the organizations and leaders of our communities. These are programs and people with whom we stand a good chance of effecting some change. Hopefully, these people are motivated to change and can provide leadership for change.

This is encouraging, because in the past when we have focused our attention upon such matters as poverty, psychopathology, remediation, and control of acting out behavior, we have failed rather miserably.

So our approach to turning the tables on youth problems will begin with engaging the appropriate leaders of our communities in creating the conditions that promote the best interests of young people.

And we suggest an obvious, simple, straightforward first step in this new and exciting direction - LISTEN TO YOUTH! The CLYDE approach, responsive listening, does just that.

For many adults, this will be new and unexplored territory. It will prove to be risky. It will be hard not to appear phony at first. And the young people will probably be skeptical! But let's try it.

Listen first to some high school students as they talk about their school. Does it really turn them on? Do they find learning to be exciting and challenging? Which teachers do they like, and why? Is the Principal a person with whom they can relate? Don't just listen to the achieving student. Talk to the failure-prone as well.

Ask these youth what kinds of changes they would like to see in their school. Ask that they help identify the barriers in the school that stand in the way of positive change.

Then move to the middle school. These students may seem a little young to many adults to have responsible opinions of their own. But you may be surprised. You may even consider talking with some elementary students!

Branching out from the schools, the inquiry can then be expanded to other resources for youth in the community. How do young people feel about the recreation centers, if such exist? Do they like to go there? How is the atmosphere? Is the center open when they want to use it? Do the leaders relate well with youth? The CLYDE neighborhood training course assists parents and leaders in creating a better atmosphere.

What about the service programs? Where can young people turn when they have a problem? Where can they find adults they can trust? Are they comfortable talking across a desk to a social worker in a family counseling agency? Or would they rather relate to a helping person with a different style under circumstances more natural to them?

Where are the favorite gathering places in the community for different groups of youth? Why do they like to go there? Does it cost? If they could create a new gathering place, what would it be like, and where would it be?

Any adult who listens - truly listens - to a sizable group of young people about these and many more matters important to youth, will find a new world opening up. That person will become a new resource in the community. When we talk about listening to youth, we do not mean just the "straight" kids. To listen honestly, one needs to listen as well to the delinquent in the juvenile jail, the drop-out, the runaway, the alienated. The more one listens, the better the resource one becomes. An adult who does this usually finds he or she becomes a real friend of young people.

When adults become engaged in this kind of experience, they make a new discovery. They learn that the important thing is not the answers they give to young people, but rather the questions they ask, and the way they ask them. Adults are supposed to have the answers, but to turn the tables on youth problems, it is far more important to ask the right questions. And to ask them of the right people.

By this time, we have begun to see young people as a resource, while we had previously seen them more as the problem.

If we have taken other adults with us on this quest, we have generated a new cadre of informed people, friends of youth, new leaders ready to promote changes in the community. We have learned to become advocates for youth because we dared to listen to what young people had to say. And we learned that the most important change needed is with the responsible adult leaders of the community.

Now the momentum is building. Young people and adults have locked arms. They have become co-workers, resources to one another, fellow problem solvers. The discovery has been made - It's not the answer that is important, it is the question!

Elected officials, administrators, professionals can be approached differently now. They will have to change and they will have to promote changes to create the new conditions in the community we are after - conditions that promote the best interests of youth in the home, the school, and the neighborhood.

Another discovery we begin to make is that turning the tables on youth problems does not depend upon a small group of highly trained individuals with specialized skills. Almost everyone has something to offer. Youth and adult. Delinquent and law-abiding. Rich and poor. Everyone has a vantage point, and everyone has insight. Our primary limitations are in our attitudes and in our skills to provide imaginative leadership to the use of these new resources for change.

The dynamic we have been considering need not be a fantasy - it can become a reality. The shape it takes will be unique to each community. There is no blueprint to determine its outcome, no model to install to insure its success, but the CLYDE concept is a beginning and one that can effect a social upheaval in this country.

CREATIVE CONCEPTS IN COMMUNITY PREVENTION
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

THE CLYDE TRAINING PROCESS

CLYDE training is a means of motivating, organizing and training citizen representatives of a specific community.

The training process will be initiated by requests from communities to participate in this type of community organization and community development. The training is available to existing groups as well as potential, newly forming CLYDE groups.

TRAINING PROCESS - ONE APPROACH

I. Organization and Preparation

- A. CLYDE TRAINING MEMBERS - A team of members of the CLYDE Training Committee will be assigned to a specific community group.
- B. The team will meet with the community representatives requesting training to discuss the following items:
 1. Explain purpose and process.
 2. Set date, time, place, and desired group size for all sessions.
 3. Begin to develop a list of possible participants - should be about 50% youth and 50% adults.
 - a. Develop strategy and method of getting participation.
 - b. Types of publicity, etc.
 4. Be sure each person understands their specific role and responsibility.

II. Workshops - Four or Five Sessions

Get Acquainted and Value Determination

Outline of Series - Who are we, and Why?

First Session:

Each workshop begins with a get-acquainted exercise. The purpose of the first session is to develop that trust level that may be missing in parent-adult-youth relationships. This trust building approach develops to a high energy response by the end of the four or five sessions.

Second Session emphasizes communication and listening skills.

Third Session is heavy on decision making and how to develop the needed skills.

Fourth Session - Identification of Problems - A needs assessment is conducted and simulation of the problem-solving experiences is held. This helps the group members to develop an awareness of community problems and how citizens can have input into solutions for the problems.

Since measurable results in a program like this are difficult, there is, however, increasing evidence that the name of the game for the CLYDE concept is success. More and more youth are getting turned on to the fact that they are the leaders of tomorrow and can relate to the notion that adults do listen when they know how.

Everyone is a potential leader - some have higher abilities than others, but the fact remains that, given a little time, the CLYDE concept and training process can provide that leadership which is so desperately needed for community change.

FINALLY, if the CLYDE concept were to be summed up by activities, it would be encompassed in the following areas:

CLYDE emphasizes prevention:

- helps young people learn how to make decisions
- focuses on things adults and youth can do together
- trains leadership teams of students and adults
- works with schools to plan substance abuse programs for local school districts.

CLYDE believes that young people have

- positive concepts of good physical and emotional health
- personal resources to turn to in time of stress or trouble

..... rewarding relationships with others
..... challenging and fulfilling experiences in schools and
..... had experience in making personal decisions based on the
examination of information, their own values and consequences
of risk behavior,
they are less likely to turn to the substance abuse solution.

CLYDE

..... conducts training workshops for leadership in the school setting
and in the home
..... arranges training on communication and values clarification
..... works

The CLYDE motto, which was designed by one of the youth who is now a
community leader, sums up the whole CLYDE philosophy.

"THE POWER OF POSITIVE CHANGE FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS IN THE
COMMUNITY LIE WITH EACH OTHER."

Try it, you'll like it.