

V.O.I.C.E.S – The School Project

Concept Note

V.O.I.C.E.S believes in understanding choices and interpreting information and knowing what skills one should have to handle situations that make them uncomfortable. Young people of today are motivated to bring about a change in spheres of our society that need improvement. The issues that characterize adolescence are ones that young people would like to challenge and discuss.

V.O.I.C.E.S provides a space for young people to get sensitized towards these issues, to express the changes that they feel they can bring about and to have a satisfying experience while doing the same. The project also helps foster a symbiotic relation between two sets of individuals, who have grown up in similar contexts and environments, and can benefit greatly by interacting with each other, that is the facilitator and the student.

There is a special focus on students between the ages of 12 and 14 because a lot of our distinctive characteristics and sense of understanding as to whom we are develops during these years. Teenagers experience a whole range of issues as they grow up, such as peer pressure, bullying, dissatisfaction with the way they look, etc. We feel that a better understanding of where these issues originate plays a productive role in creating a thought process within young people, about the impact they have on our sense of self-identity.

Through interactive workshops, we provide young students a non-judgmental space to examine issues with various perspectives, clear misinformation and in that process, hopefully, develop their own opinions. What is unique about this workshop is that it is completely planned and conducted by young people between the ages of 17 and 20, who have not only been trained, but facilitate better as peer to peer communicators since they have first hand experience with the issues being discussed, making them more accessible to students.

The issues we are looking at discussing and exploring in V.O.I.C.E.S are:

- Peer Pressure & Bullying
- Substance Use
- Body Esteem and Health

These issues are addressed within a Life Skills and Mental Health framework. By this, VOICES hopes to engage schools students in discussions on the above topics and looks to discussing effective methods to deal with these issues (coping mechanisms) thereby encouraging the inculcation of basic life skills.

VOICES Project Goals: 2009 – 2010

Qualitative Goals:

- Access to Information:
 - Through the workshop model, promote information and highlight sharing of experiences on the issues of body esteem and health; peer influence & substance use.
 - Promote identification of these issues.
- Skill Building:
 - Students develop mechanisms to cope with the above-mentioned issues, and supplement their decision making capacity i.e. informed decisions.
 - Create safety nets for effective stress management amongst young adolescents.
- Participation:
 - Ensure students and the project team fully participate in the workshop model.
 - Ensure that targets of students and project team that they articulate are met.
 - A safe and comfortable environment to share opinions and opinions, both in training and workshops with school students.

Workshop (Model) Goals:

- Facilitative discussions with groups of 10-15 students each (three-part programme in three schools in Delhi), repeated over 3 weeks in 3 sessions, with follow up projects in between and after.
 - Safe and comfortable environment for all students to share opinions and experience
 - Students express that they feel comfortable about the way they are and look.
 - Students are individually able to identify the coping mechanisms most suitable to them to address these challenges (Body esteem and health; peer influence & substance use).
 - Research on issues (BE & H, PI and SU); Developing a Training of Trainers Manual; Needs Assessments with stakeholders; Training; Workshops Implementation; Evaluations & Follow-Ups.

Team & Training:

- Skill development (communication skills, facilitation skills, articulation, research, leadership, promote open-mindedness)
- Increased involvement at all stages: conceptualization, planning, implementation, evaluation, follow-ups. Include mechanisms for acknowledgement and recognition.
- Work experience (Delegation): Research (Needs Assessment and Session Formats), Manual, Team Training, Volunteering at other TYPF programs
- Meeting the goals of individual team members
- Equip volunteers and project team with information and facilitative skills to conduct workshops effectively.

VOICES has been suspended as a programme across 2010 – 2011, and will be re-opened for in a research and development phase in 2012. For more details, please contact Ishita Chaudhry, CEO at theypfoundation@gmail.com.