



The Tobacco In Schools Recovery Project



Research Team

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Project Overview



Education & Recovery

The Tobacco in Schools Recovery Project was piloted with the students of The Elizabeth Wynn Wood Alternate School and delivered by a professional addictions team of partners composed of The Smokers Treatment Centre and Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services.

The students were offered an opportunity to participate in the recovery group process by submitting in writing their reasons for wanting to break free from tobacco. Of the 83 who expressed a sincere interest a total of 25 were accepted into the semester driven class.

The group met for an hour twice a week and was led by one female and one male professional tobacco addiction counselor. For the first 20 sessions:

- a new and effective tobacco recovery tool was presented,
- with concrete examples of how to apply it to their recovery plan.
- every student was given a tobacco recovery manual and workbook.

Once their tobacco recovery plans were in place we collectively set a group quit day followed by every Monday night thereafter for those who had trouble achieving that date or had relapsed and wished to set a new quit date immediately.

This *train and transfer approach* is characterized by the students developing both a deep understanding of the nature of their addiction and then arms them with the most effective recovery tools available to the addictionologist.

As the group proceeded and evolved the excitement grew, the confidence rose, and many students had to be placed on a waiting list to get into the tobacco recovery class. This is indeed a first.

“High school students waiting to get into an addiction recovery group.”

Staff and Principal's Observations

After extensive evaluations the students gave their 100% endorsement of the approach and highly recommended it for all high schools in the Ottawa area. The one major change the students suggested was to have detox weekends built into the process and seen as an outward-bound school adventure. All the students expressed a desire to see this element brought into the project and felt it would dramatically increase the outcome numbers. the benefits for the school/program/institution.

- empowered staff to be proactive in an area of genuine concern
- tackled a potentially confrontational issue in a non-confrontational manner
- connected a diverse group of students with a common problem and they were quickly assimilated into a cohesive group
- communicated to the student population that the staff did not dismiss and condemn their problems but provided a vehicle that would help them overcome these problems
- the school student population viewed the exercise as a cool place to be and non-smokers were shown more respect
- students quickly identified the addictive nature of tobacco with other areas of their lifestyle ie. drugs and alcohol
- obviously, a positive influence on overall school climate
- overall, health issues became a theme at the school
- creates a climate of acceptance for other unique initiatives
- provided some of the school population with life-skills that will be integral to their future

Main Student Recommendations

- all high school students should have access to such a program
- detox weekends should be offered to all smoking students in the course
- each student should have their own textbook-manual
- classes-group meetings should be three times per week
- counsellors should be able to connect with youth
- ceremony is important to all students

Summary of Student Survey

- 100% of the students felt it was a positive experience
- 100% of the students set a quit date
- 67% of the students stopped smoking on quit day
- 100% of the students relapsed
- 92% of the students set a new quit day
- 25% of the students are now smoke free
- 100% of the students would recommend this group to other students
- 100% of the students believe the experience will help them become tobacco free

Student Comments



“I really enjoyed this program and I know it will be successful in other schools.”

“Freedom is of most importance in my life and freedom from addiction is included in my quest for freedom”

“It made me realize I don't need this, it not only kills me but costs me \$\$\$”

“This group rocked, I really liked sharing and hearing how everyone else is doing and on what makes them smoke”

“Thanks a bunch Murray, you saved my life”

These sessions have been a really powerful and motivating experience”

Elizabeth Wyn Wood Alternate Tobacco Recovery Project

Principal's Review of Smoking Cessation Program

Elizabeth Wyn Wood Alternate Program is a high school diploma program that accommodates at-risk youth. Students usually arrive in the program because they were not successful in the traditional setting.

The student population has an unusually high number of smokers. A survey was done in school that established the fact that approximately 75% of our students were smokers. The staff felt we could be more proactive in getting out a message that we don't condone this behavior. Through our ties with Rideauwood Addiction Centre, we were made aware of a program they were running for an adult group to deal with their addiction to smoking. Staff felt we could investigate this and see if a program of that nature might be feasible for our setting.

The program innovator, Murray Kelly, was brought in and a presentation was made to staff. Murray's style and passion convinced the staff that it would be worthwhile to establish a smoking cessation group in our school. At this time, staff made a commitment in terms of school funds and energy. It was a decision that took the program in an exciting direction.

The school wide assembly that introduced the students to the concept was an unqualified success. The students were immediately engaged and the number of students seeking the course was more than could be accommodated. It was dramatically shown that the students would welcome help with their smoking addiction problem. This was an issue that both staff and students could get behind together. The premise of success rested with the idea that having young people look at this problem, automatically translated into success. The journey took place in a non-judgmental atmosphere that ensured a positive experience for all participants.

The Process

Building the Team

The tobacco recovery project at Elizabeth Wyn Wood Alternate High School began shortly before Christmas 2004 with preparatory meetings between Rideauwood representatives, School Teachers, Counsellors, Social Workers, and Administrators.



General Assembly

The program itself was launched in the gymnasium with an all student and teacher assembly at which time the tobacco cessation idea was presented to the school by Prof Murray Kelly, author of the Tobacco Addiction Counsellors Certification Course, for the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Board in Toronto, Canada.

Integration Policy

The Tobacco Team was sensitive to other addiction services being provided for the students and co-ordinated their on-going programs with the Principal/Administrator ensuring that all measures necessary to provide continuity and safety were followed. Briefings with concerned teachers and front office staff were held when warranted.

Registration & Assessment

Each student was asked to write, draw or communicate why they would like to participate in the tobacco program. Those that were selected were reviewed by the administrator to identify any possible dangers zones or pre-existing dual disorders that could affect the student in any negative way.

School Initiative

The teachers and administrator had a special meeting with the counselors at which time the entire approach was explained with a specific request that all teachers buy into the project, make it a school wide initiative and give the recovering student some extra room to move especially in the early days of withdrawal.

Schedule

The group began meeting every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Counsellors arrived 40 minutes early and stayed 40-60 minutes for debriefing and special needs follow-up. Each smoking student was provided with a copy of the Tobacco Recovery manual, titled, New Tools for Survival.

Typical Group Process

Soon after 10:00 the counselor would call the meeting to order and do a check-in round:

to establish order,
connect with each student,
introduce an effective tobacco recovery skill
provide each smoker with a chance to voice their concerns and
hopes to determine where each student was along the recovery continuum.

Often common themes and core issues would emerge and the counseling team would explore those with a view to building confidence in the recovery process and develop a certain level of trust that over time they will break free.

Ceremony

The recovery group evolved a culture of it's own which involved a candle burning, sweetgrass smudging, respect for the group and each speaker, a commitment to confidentiality, anonymity, balance breathing, guided meditation, sharing our journey with others without advice, identification as opposed to comparing, and deferring to the prime counselor when requested. The group ended with the Serenity Prayer and a Cree Blessing.

The Journey

At the very first group meeting the students were presented with polished journey stones to symbolize the road that must be followed when recovering from an addiction as powerful as tobacco (nicotine).

Program Offered

Each group meeting had a theme integrated with the overall process of recovery.

The three phases of this challenge were identified as:

1. getting ready
2. transition
3. maintenance

The entire project followed the outline below.





PHASE ONE

GETTING READY — 6 Weeks - Two Meetings per Week

1. ASSESSMENT/OVERVIEW

- a. General Assembly
- b. Student Registration
- c. Student Profile
- d. Tobacco Addiction
- e. Health Risks of Smoking
- f. Creating a recovery plan

2. CORE ISSUES UNDERLYING TOBACCO ADDICTION

- a. Loss, feelings, & identity
- b. Integrated addiction model

3. CREATE ACTION PLANS - SUPPORT SYSTEMS/CONTRACTS/INFORMATION CHARTS

- a. Family, friends, school supports,
- b. Family, friends, counsellor contracts
- c. Action plan building chart overview
- d. Time/place chart
- e. Activities emotions chart
- f. Daily Action Plan Chart
- g. Danger Zone Chart
- h. Relapse Learning Chart

4. TRANSITION DAY (if ready)

- a. Withdrawal symptoms information
- b. Integrated addiction model
- c. Feedback/support



PHASE TWO

Becoming Tobacco Free — 6 Weeks - Two Meetings per Week

Transition Group

I. Tools/Skills for Students

- a. Pain and Sabotage
- b. Fear and Anger
- c. Grief and Loss
- d. Transference and Relapse
- e. The Walk of Life



PHASE THREE

Maintenance/Anchor Group — 8 Weeks - Two Meetings Per Week

MAINTENANCE/ANCHOR PHASE

- Maintenance Issues
- a. Transference Identification
 - b. Lapse Identification
 - c. Relapse Prevention
 - d. Relapse Learning

ON-GOING THEMES AND SKILLS

BREATHING EXERCISES
 MEDITATION
 AFFIRMATIONS
 WALK OF LIFE
 WALKING MEDITATION

YOGA
 FITNESS
 NUTRITION
 MASSAGE



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