

Overview of The Seven Challenges[®] Program for Adolescents and Young Adults

Presented at Washington State-wide
Co-Occurring Disorders Conference

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Robert Schwebel, Ph.D.

The Seven Challenges[®]

www.sevenchallenges.com

Youth in the Early Stages of Change

- Don't think they have a problem
- Don't think their lives would be better without drugs
- Don't know what it takes to overcome a drug problem
- Don't feel they could succeed
- Not prepared to succeed

The Mad Rush for Abstinence

The mad rush is a frantic attempt to convince youth that drugs are dangerous, that they personally have been harmed by drugs, and that they must quit.

It is argumentative and harm-based counseling.

Bad Outcomes from the Mad Rush for Abstinence

- Fakers (tell the adults what they want to hear)
- Fighters
 - Aggressive fighters
 - Passive-aggressive fighter who play the game: “Go ahead, try to make me quit”
- Fleers: “Got no problem. No way I’ll quit. I’m out of here.”
- Followers: Try to quit, but with narrow focus on quitting and not enough attention to situational and co-occurring problems, often results in failure.

Stop the Mad Rush

- Stop complying with political demands for immediate abstinence.
- Start where youth are at, not where we wish they might be, not where they might pretend to be, not where they might be for a fleeting moment in time..

Start

- Traditional counselor role (make own decisions)
- Work with adolescent development, not against it
 - Establish an independent identity (Erik Erikson)
 - Formal logical thinking (Piaget)
 - Prepare for adult role (Havighurst)
- Stages of change (Prochaska)
- Holistic approach: life problems & skill deficits
- Relationship in therapeutic outcomes (Michael J. Lambert research)

The Seven Challenges: An Empowerment Model

- A decision-making model
- Behavior change model: Provides individualized support for behavior change from day one
- Mastery Counseling: Comprehensive counseling, that incorporates work on drug issues

All of above supported by reading and supportive journaling

1 We decided to open up and talk honestly about ourselves and about alcohol and other drugs.

2 We looked at what we liked about alcohol and other drugs, and why we were using them.

3 We looked at our use of alcohol and other drugs to see if it had caused harm, or could cause harm.

4 We looked at our responsibility and the responsibility of others for our problems.

5 We thought about where we seemed to be headed, where we wanted to go, and what we wanted to accomplish.

6 We made thoughtful decisions about our lives and about our use of alcohol and other drugs.

7 We followed through on our decisions about our lives and drug use. If we saw problems, we went back to earlier challenges and mastered them.

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The Seven Challenges

Challenging ourselves to make wise decisions about alcohol and other drugs

7
CHALLENGES



Decisions about Drugs

- On-the-spot decisions vs. Fully-informed decisions
- Two types of drug related problems
 - Problems with drugs themselves
 - Problems with authority that happen to involve drugs
- Three options:
 - Quit
 - Keep within new limits
 - Keep using without new limits

Check-in at Each Session

- ABSTINENCE
 - Did you use since last session
 - Did you have a close call
 - Is there something that puts you at risk of using between now and the next session
- NEW LIMITS (parallel questions)
 - Did you exceed your limits with any drug since last session
 - Did you have a close call
 - Is there something that puts you at risk of exceeding your limits between now and the next session

Mastery Counseling: An Empowerment Model

- How it work: People who want to take control of their lives pay attention to what is happening in their lives; leaving alone what is going well and working to change what is not going well or as well as they would like it to be going These are their issues. Everyone has issues.
- People work on their issues at every session and their lives get better.

Working Sessions

- We teach youth how to identify the issues that are most important to them, and have them bring these issues to sessions.
- Counselors identify other relevant issues and bring activities or start discussions about these issues.
- We make The Seven Challenges part of the conversation.

Six Stages of the Mastery Counseling Process

1. Initial presentation of an issue.
2. Clarification of the issue.
3. Identification of a session goal.
4. Possibilities
5. Resolution
6. Closure

Reading and Journaling

- Impersonal “we” voice; story telling
- Supportive journaling with 9 journals

Challenge One and Two

- Challenge One
 - Proactively undo negative expectations
 - Redefine success in smaller increments
 - Establish trust and build the relationship first
- Challenge Two
 - Be curious: Allow and encourage discussion of drug benefits
 - Listen to understand
 - Validate reasons for drug use
 - Redefine role as problem-solving partner

Marijuana role play

- 16 year old. Loves weed. Everything is more fun. Forget my problems. Should be legal. More fun with friends. All my friends smoke. Passing in school. Won't get in trouble...this is Washington, you know.
- Overpower. Try to make him or her quit.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Robert Schwebel

Seven Challenges Program

rschwebel [@sevenchallenges.com](mailto:rschwebel@sevenchallenges.com)

(520) 748-8876

www.sevenchallenges.com