

The CENTRE for Restorative Practice



What is Restorative Practice?

During crises, three students were playing with the fire extinguisher and accidentally released the extinguisher. Because of this, the lessons for the rest of the day were cancelled, the students were sent home and showers were called to clear up the mess. The three students were sent to the disciplinary room. As the damage had resulted in many injuries, the principal had wanted to report the matter to the police. But was persuaded by the fire teacher Helen Ong to resolve

this through conducting a conference using restorative approaches instead. The principal eventually agreed. All the affected parties were involved from the three students and their families, to the victims who visited the school principal, the fire teacher, their classmates and even the school cleaners, who spent several hours to clean up the mess. During this conference, the students heard everyone's thoughts and feelings caused by their actions. Everyone had a chance to say how they felt. The cleaner even stated that it was not the

cleaning that she was upset about, but the safety of the students. The three students were given a chance to say how they can make things right after hearing from their parents, classmates, cleaners, fire teacher and principal.

During the conference, everyone discussed on the suitable consequences of their own actions. They provided a chance to all parties and made the offenders realize the impact of their actions on the affected parties. It also got the students to take responsibility and accountability of their wrongdoing. Instead of doing things TO them (giving punishment), restorative approaches focus on doing things WITH them (finding problems together).

Now, imagine if the conference had not been conducted. The possible outcomes are:

- If a police report is made, the students may be charged.
- If the students are punished, how will they really learn from their wrongdoing? Will they just "What?!" How will the parents react when their teacher informs them of their children's wrongdoing? How will they discipline their children? And how will the students feel about that?

Restorative Practice Framework focuses on the fair process, the behaviour of the person but not the person. It helps to repair and restore relationships between the offender, the victim and the community-at-large. Most importantly, it helps to reduce the re-offending rates.

Although the justice system agrees to promote the rehabilitation of offenders, the re-offending rates in many countries illustrates how people who come into contact with the criminal justice system tend to remain within its confines. Restorative practice (RP) is a term that covers a broad range of activities and practices which emerged from the progress of addressing violence and reconciliation between victims and offenders developed in United States and Canada in the 1970s. Restorative

practice views crimes not simply as an infraction of rules but as a form of interpersonal conflict which creates harm to real people.

The Launch of Centre for Restorative Practice

LCCS started incorporating restorative practices to both school and community work since 2008. In late 2010, LCCS became the first agency to be a licensee of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). This means that LCCS is now a certified agency who can provide RP trainings in Singapore.

Soon after, the Centre for Restorative Practice was officially launched in Jan 2011. The establishment and accreditation will continue to help us to further reaching out to the community as LCCS seeks to be an advocate for the use of restorative practice in institutions, schools and communities.

References: Joan Sawe Hoffman, Linda Kross, and Robert Cohen, Editors (2010). Beyond Retribution: Global Restorative Justice. In: Youth Violence: Progress, An Impact of ABC-CLIO LLC.



PODZ Youth Mentoring



Support is especially crucial during a period just before a youth's discharge from the Singapore Girls' Home. Home, to be the first year of their release. Having a caring adult from the community to mentor the youth is important in helping them in this transition.

Started in 2006, Podz Youth Mentoring is a community project for youths completing their rehabilitation programme with the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS). The objective of Podz is to provide a caring adult from the community to mentor the youth in a way that is consistent with the rehabilitation philosophy in the Home. The objectives are:

- To provide a source of social support and mentoring for youths who are on their way to completing, or who have completed their Court Orders.
- To complete satisfactory completion of their Court Orders.
- To help youths sustain their good progress and prevent the re-offending or violation of anti-social and negative behaviours after completion of their Court Orders.

Year	Number of Volunteers	Number of Youths	Number of Batches
2008	19	22	1
2009	73	79	4
2010	59	71	4
2011	38	40	2 (as of Jun 2011)
Total	189	212	13

Reintegration into the community is a key part of the rehabilitation process for these youths. MCYS hopes that together with the programmes and support that youths receive in the Home, mentoring will help youths build readiness as they return to the community.

Podz runs for a full year. A mentor is introduced to the youth to guide them in their transition back to the community and provide support and help whenever the youth should need it. Each mentoring relationship is unique, assessment and research are done to make the best possible match so that the mentor (podz) can benefit from the programme.

Like a pea in a pod, mentors and youths will work together to nurture the seeds of potential in the youths, spark new hopes and create new bonds for the realization of a better future for our youths and our community.

In 2008, Lutheran Community Care Services became a partner of MCYS for the Podz Youth Mentoring Programme. Over the past 4 years, we had successfully reached 159 volunteers (mentors) with 212 youths from Singapore Girls' Home and Singapore Boys' Home.

- Banking one-to-one mentors for the mentoring services. LCCS organizes group activities to strengthen the bonds between the mentors and mentees.
- Over the past 4 years, the activities that LCCS has organized include:
 - Teambuilding at Singapore Girls' Home
 - High Impact Element Training at Republic Polytechnic
 - Band/Jamming Programmes by Formentor

- Refurbish at Alpha Outlet
- Chaiyaporn at the Park at Ngong Ahn Polytechnic
- Karaoke at K-Bar

Every year, LCCS organizes the Volunteer Appreciation Event to recognize our reliable volunteers for their efforts and contributions. LCCS also hosts graduation dinners to address the successful completion of Podz with the mentors and mentees.



GOALS and Mission



Students Work Services (SWS) is all about helping at-risk children, youths and disadvantaged youths suffering from relationship difficulties. SWS plays the role of a relationship adviser in finding the root cause of their problems and reaching, to the best of our capability, the underlying issues that our clients face: knowledge or understanding.

SWS is proud to share that we have helped 126 of the Enhanced Step Up (ESU) clients out of the total clients in Singapore, making LCCS one of the leading ESU agencies in Singapore. Our aim is to raise awareness and support our clients in developing the healthy relationships they can with people. A key method that helps us to achieve this is the development of our emotional literacy. It focuses on exploring their attitudes, values, self-image and relationships, as well as developing their life skills. The SWS Centres take a proactive approach in working with youths and children, engaging them in quantified

support while providing a long-term framework for improving relationships, acquiring life skills and developing independence. Working with such vulnerable clients is often humbling yet rewarding and provides the team with the opportunity to develop ideas for the Centre's future.

Building on everything that we have learnt from those we have worked with, 2012 will begin the next chapter of SWS' evolution. We have plans to expand our current services and projects and reach deeper into the hearts of the communities to benefit all our young clients who deserve to be safe and equipped with skills to build healthier futures. SWS will be establishing our very own Life Skills Academy to create the next generation of services, which reflects the organization's aspirations and goals. Many of our clients from disadvantaged homes face common emotional and personal challenges

from their generational relationship problems that makes it difficult to focus on their education and future goals. Life Skills Academy wants to empower, engage and inspire by providing choices to take up opportunities that will help them to live independent and fulfilling lives. We want to focus our skills on young people and those with lower mental health, and equip them with life skills to achieve happy and harmonious relationships.

The Academy will be working with various stakeholders to create a unique and dynamic service to its clients. In addition, the Academy will be creating job opportunities through its ESU programmes, with the support of private sectors. We look forward to 2012, and your continuing support for LCCS.

A ROLE MODEL from Ex-Offender to Mentor

EVE GOH, 23, HR ADMIN, IS A NEW VOLUNTEER WITH THE PODZ YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMME.



Know that it is never, ever too late to pick yourself up!

What motivates you to be a volunteer?
 A: I'm an ex-offender and a former resident of The Psych Girls' Home. I wanted to get back to the community for helping me to get over the past and for giving me a 2nd chance.

What makes you different from other volunteers?
 A: Because of my own experience, I can relate to certain types of cases more. I came from a broken home and my parents were separated when I was 5. Having gone through a similar phase, I had that I might be able to understand the youths more, in one way or another.

Tell me about your first meeting with the Singapore Girls' Home.
 A: Honestly, I was pretty nervous and kind of nervous when I was going to meet the girl for the first time. LCCS and helped to break the ice through their fun activities and enable the girl to warm up to me pretty quickly. When it was time for our one-to-one talk, it was easier to see into a conversation with her. I expressed this satisfaction and happiness that it was difficult to describe, something I never only volunteers will understand. I'm very happy that I took the initiative to become a volunteer.

be REALISTIC It is NOT all picture PERFECT

LIM HUI HUI, 24, HAS VOLUNTEERED 7 TIMES FOR THE PODZ YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMME AND INTENDS TO CONTINUE DOING SO, EVEN AFTER MANY SETBACKS AND OBSTACLES AS HER MENTEEES HAVE NOT BEEN EASY TO DEAL WITH.



Some people became too emotionally-involved and let it affect them in a negative way

Can you share with us your past experience as a volunteer with LCCS?
 A: The 1st boy whom I was a mentor to, had a very troubled past. His parents passed away when he was only 3. The 2nd boy went missing and I was unable to contact him. I hope those who were to volunteer would realize that not all cases that you handle will be successful. There is also a possibility that you will encounter difficult cases. Some cases are emotionally-mediated and let it affect them in a negative way. The world's not a bed of roses. If you want to become a volunteer, you need to be mentally-prepared that there are, and always will be, situations where you have tried your best but there's nothing left for you to do.

Tell us something that most of your friends do not know about you.
 A: My aspiration to become a volunteer is because of my late grandfather, who supported and believed in me throughout my childhood. Family has to always remember that, family support is ultimately the most important to a child. Unfortunately, most of the troubled children and youths do not have much support or encouragement from their families.

Tell us how you are as a LCCS volunteer.
 A: There was once when I waited for a sentence 3 hours for my mentee, who I met up with me during our 1st session after he was discharged from the Boys' Home. I know that not everyone will easily open up to volunteers like me, and hence I decided to show him my sincerity by being patient. There was also another time where he did not even turn up. Patience and initiative are qualities that a good counsellor should possess in order to have any breakthrough.

FINDING joy in Helping Others

MERLE DESOUZA, 47, A PART-TIME COUNSELLOR, TURNED GRIEF TO JOY AND SATISFACTION BY JOINING THE PODZ YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMME.



It is because of my non-judgmental attitude towards the youths that makes me a good volunteer.

What motivates you to work in the social service sector? How did you know about LCCS?
 A: When my son passed away a few years ago, I needed to channel that energy to somewhere else. I decided to take up psychology and counselling to help people and never looked back since. Executive Counselling and Training Academy, where I studied, introduced me to LCCS and I've been a volunteer for the Podz mentoring programme ever since.

Tell me about the most satisfying experience.
 A: I was a mentor to a 17-year-old girl from the Singapore Girls' Home. She was sad about the thought of returning to school, and wanted to work as a chef. I had asked for special permission to allow me to bring some clay into SGH as a way to bond during one

Fight a Good Fight

One too many angry arguments? Transform that screaming match into an opportunity to resolve conflict - with no collateral damage.

- 6 SIGNS YOU'VE HAD A "GOOD" FIGHT**
- The both understood when the other was arguing and grasped each other's point of view
 - The argument was conducted in a peaceful calm and rational manner: there was no yelling, blaming, screaming or name-calling
 - Neither of you felt defensive because the issue was stated in a non-accusatory way
 - During the argument, neither of you changed up past issues or unrelated matters
 - You managed to solve the issue together at the end or at least come to a compromise
 - The solution you came up with together resulted in a positive change in attitude towards behavior

Conflict is inevitable in a marriage, and even happy couples fight, says Dawn Chuan, a senior therapist with Light & Mindfulness Counselling Centre. "The absence of arguments in a relationship may actually indicate that the relationship is unhealthy, as the couple may be too afraid to breach topics that they know will stir up conflict or they may be emotionally distant from each other," she points out.

Keeping negative feelings bottled up will not only affect your emotion health, but your marriage, too. If there is one clear solution to the problem, you may end up feeling unacknowledged or unloved, and resentment may set in.

"If you don't talk about your problems," Dawn cautions, "they will show in other ways, such as not talking about your partner, ignoring each other, or making casual references to each other. Eventually, they will end in a divorce in satisfaction with your spouse and marriage, because the same issues will continue to rear their ugly heads."

Of course, not every issue is worth fighting over, to pick your battles. "Arguing about every little thing will do nothing but drain your emotional

Keep working at it

One thing that is definitely useful to resolve issues as you meet, have to work those issues again." Dawn adds. "Lastly, if your spouse is conflict-averse and reluctant to even raise any issues with you, let alone argue about them, she suggests getting him or her to open up using the steps outlined previously. "You just have to keep trying," she says.



SET YOUR GROUND RULES
 As a couple, agree on some rules for if and when you do argue war. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- Should you agree to put a time limit on your argument - not going to bed angry for instance?
- If you cannot make a conflict, will you agree to compromise at the end of the argument? Or should you call in a "referee" to mediate that party to help you settle the argument?
- Do you need a "time-out" to call a time out if either of you gets completely worked up during the argument?
- What kind of arguments will you both agree to make together, and what would you be willing to let go?