

ABSTRACT

Transformation, or quick, qualitative change in the level of functioning, is one of the most desired goals of psychological intervention for teenagers and the youth. Can psychotherapist-trainers change or transform teenagers significantly within four or five days? This paper summarizes the positive results in terms of what we defined as “transformational change” (Personal Growth Factors and Remedial Factors) in more than 100 groups of teenagers who participated in a 24 hour training program conducted by the author since 1994.

INTRODUCTION

A professional psychologist offering clinical services for teenagers usually encounter two major areas of concern from parents and teachers.

(1) From a POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY perspective: Improving competency in academics, values, social behaviour, communication, emotional intelligence etc?

(2) From a PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC perspective: Remediating the damage done by faulty management of behaviour: reversing learnt negative behaviour like social withdrawal, oppositional defiant behaviour, conduct disorder etc?

Can we achieve such change by an intensive (short-term) group training program? The present data based on 106 batches of TEENAGER DYNAMIC PROGRAM conducted by this author since 1994 shows that it is possible.

OBJECTIVES

1)To evaluate whether the specific intervention (24 hours of group interaction spread over 4 days) was capable of producing the stated dual objectives of the program (PERSONAL GROWTH and REMEDIAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE).

MATERIALS USED

The study was based on the Program Evaluation Form which was filled out by all participants at the end of the program. Parents' Feedback Form was also used for validation purposes. PROGRAM EVALUATION FORMAT

had two main sections :
(1) Open-ended personal impression about the program,
(2) Three-point rating scale on the following nine PERSONAL GROWTH Factors: Self-confidence Self-motivation, Attention Concentration Skills, Memorizing Skills, Ability to make friends, Assertive communication, Making a speech without fear, Understanding of study methods, and Ability to deal with emotions



What the Participants Say....

“...I felt something different, something showing the real Zenia inside me. I felt like a little chick coming out of the egg. I felt like I was born again.... I will always remember this program because it was a great changing point in my life it broke my shell for me and let me out into this world, beautiful wide world.” - Ashline Zenia Mathias, Fujairah, December 30, 1994

“Well structured and organized to suit every teen. Wonderful orator, friend and guide to present it. Impressive manual that is true, touching, reforming and a preservation of this beneficial experience. Personal attention and candidness especially the confidentiality was remarkable and professional. “Silly things” that we did made every session enjoyable and surely memorable. (The program is) God-blessed, God-given and God-guided” - Jillian Fernandes, Batch 59, Sharjah August 30, 2001



Will to Action

Teenager Dynamic™

A Twelve-Year Experiment in Transformational Training of the Youth

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METHOD

The sample consisted of 360 participants for ACCEPTANCE rating and 50 participants for PERSONAL GROWTH rating. ACCEPTANCE RATING was measured by computing the frequency and percentage of participants who expressed their willingness to recommend the program to their best friends. PERSONAL GROWTH was measured by using the three-point self-rating scale. Each of the nine personal growth functions were evaluated in terms of three categories (“Much Improvement” A Little Improvement” and “No Improvement at all”)..

DISCUSSION

The results clearly supports the hypothesis that the program was capable of producing “transformational change”. Of the 50 participants in the sample only 1.2% (= 0.6) had felt that the program produced “No Improvement” in Overall Personal Growth, whereas 66% found “Much Improvement” during the program and 33.8% found some improvement. 86% of participants reported “Much Improvement” in Self-Confidence during the program. The program was rated “Excellent” by 70% of the participants and “Good” by 30% of the participants. None of the participants rated it as “Just OK” or as “Not effective” ACCEPTANCE rating was much more dramatic. Of a total of 360 participants 353 or 98% expressed their eagerness to recommend the program to their best friends. Only 2% of the candidates (f=7) showed their unwillingness to recommend the program to their friends. But in the open-ended question on impressions”, all these seven participants have given positive comments like “it was an amazing experience”. Therefore we assume that a probable reason for not recommending the program to the friends may be “privacy concerns”.

RESULTS

Following were the results obtained:

PERSONAL GROWTH RATING N = 50

	Much Improvement	A Little Improvement	No Improvement
Self- Confidence	43 (86%)	7 (14%)	0 (0%)
Self Motivation	34 (68%)	16 (32%)	0 (0%)
Concentration	30 (60%)	20 (40%)	0 (0%)
Memory Skills	30 (60%)	18 (36 %)	2 (4%)
Socializing Skills	38 (76%)	12 (24%)	0 (0%)
Assertive Skills	33 (66%)	16 (32%)	1 (2%)
Group/Public			
Communication	35 (70%)	14 (28%)	1 (2%)
Study Skills	27 (54%)	23 (46%)	0 (0%)
Skills in managing Emotions	27 54%	22 (44%)	2 (4%)

Average for all

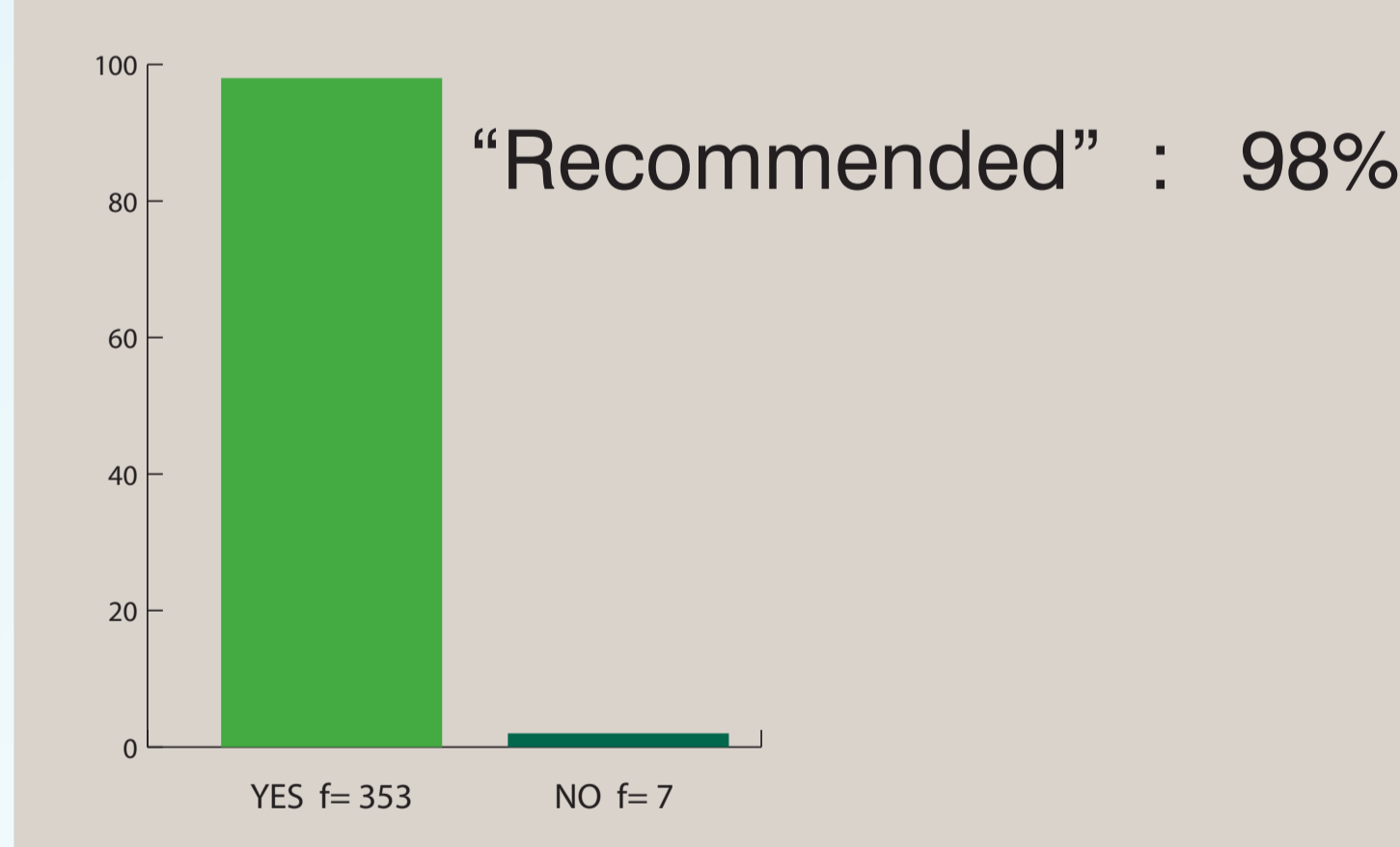
Personal Growth Factors:33 (66%) 16.4 (32.8%) 0.6 (1.2%)

FACTORS : Obtained results supported the hypothesis that the INTERVENTION (“TEENAGER DYNAMIC”) has been effective in producing the stated objectives.

OVERALL RATING OF THE PROGRAM N = 50



ACCEPTANCE RATING N = 360 (Liked the program and are willing to recommend to your best friends?)



CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Although this study was based on the pre-existing data (Program Evaluation Forms), the consistency of the results and the extremely high rate of positive comments suggest that a more structured and carefully designed study with well-quantified “before” and “after” measures would yield valuable data on this innovative therapeutic experiment designed for transforming teenagers. By using a structured questionnaire, observation by parents/ significant others can be collected in order to validate self-rating and to establish sustainability of the observed “change” over a long period. Such rigorous research efforts would further refine the “program evaluation data” and will be a valuable input for further quality improvement.