

(SP) THE DEVELOPMENTAL VALUE OF AN ADVENTURE BASED CAMP PROGRAMME AND IT'S IMPACT SPECIFICALLY ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF THE BURNS SURVIVOR

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Introduction

An individual's self-esteem is influenced by numerous factors. It is thus, important to realise the impacts of factors such as a sense of belonging, peer support and childhood development on self-esteem, especially when working with a special needs/interest group such as burns survivors. Various instruments need to be considered in order to provide an opportunity or create an environment within which not only special needs/interest groups, but also the public at large can build or maintain a positive and strong self-esteem. This study focused on one such instrument, an adventure based camp programme, and the value and impact it has on the improvement of specifically the burns survivors' self-esteem.

Recreation has over many years been accepted as an important aspect of satisfying the basic human needs as identified by Maslow (Potgieter, 2003), regardless of ability or disability. Children that survived a severe burn trauma still have the same basic human needs as other children, especially considering the need to be recognised as individuals regardless of visible differences. This need to live abundant, respectable lives could, among others, be achieved through recreation participation. Adventure experiences as a form of recreation can contribute towards the medical and social rehabilitation of the participant through the acquisition of additional interests and the maintenance of a high level of stimulation. It is for reasons such as these that the World Burn Foundation (WBF) of South Africa structured to help and support individuals who have experienced a severe burn trauma, has hosted since 2003 two annual camps for individuals, who had survived a burn injury (World Burn Foundation SA, 2004). The WBF camping programme aims to provide a safe and supportive environment where the development of self-esteem, a sense of belonging and peer support are the primary focus areas, with the benefits of a greater sense of achievement, higher self-esteem, increased self confidence, and knowing that they are not alone while they are having fun.

Method

Two in-depth interviews (T1 and T2) and an adapted Rosenberg self-esteem scale (SES) were administered with the burns survivors participating. Both tests were administered as a pre- and post-test. The pre-test (T1) interview consists of 11 questions addressing expectations and past experiences, and the post-test (T2) interview consists of 20 questions with regards to experiences during the camp. These questions aimed to evaluate the impact of the camp on the physical, emotional and social areas of the participants' lives. The adapted Rosenberg self-esteem scale (SES) is a brief measure of self-esteem consisting of 10 statements relating to the overall feelings of self worth or self-acceptance measured on a Likert scale.

Results

The burns survivors indicated that they experienced a large number of the activities presented as fun, 96% of the participants reported to have had fun on the

camp. In general, the respondents have expressed to have experienced a safe environment, a sense of belonging and that they felt braver with increased courage to go back home and to school. In general, the WBF adventure based camp programme had a positive impact on the self-esteem of the burns survivors. The following elements of the self-esteem scale showed improvement: a) at times I think I am no good at all – decrease in the average response; b) I feel that I have a number of good qualities – increase in the average response; c) I feel I do not have much to be proud of – decrease in the average response; d) I certainly feel useless at times – decrease in the average response; e) all in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure – decrease in the average response. Thus, the WBF coordination team and facilitators have achieved the objective of providing a safe and supportive as well as fun and enjoyable environment for the participants.

Discussion

In light of the results of this study, the positive impact of adventure based experiential learning programmes on the personal development of individuals becomes evident; especially with regards to special needs/interest groups such as burns survivors. It would, therefore be pertinent for researchers to further explore the impact of such programmes on other special needs/interest groups. The South African Youth and sporting community at large to ensure an enhanced quality of life in unison with local and sport development through the enhancement of self-esteem. Thus, through this process enables a stronger community and sporting contribution from the South African Nation in general.

References

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