

**Innovative Proposal
Hope for Youth
Principled-Based Lifestyle Training**

THE ISSUE

Youth raised in deprived and traumatic environments are not prepared to learn life skills in standard teaching forums. According to recent research (Union Pacific Foundation), the adolescent brain learns by building upon prior experiences to make meaningful connections, learns from an emotional base, and learns when physically and emotionally safe. Youth from high-risk environments lack the experiential building blocks and the personal support to utilize conventional Independent Living Skill-Building curriculums.

THE NEED

To increase the learning capacity of youth “brain-based learning” must be integrated into adolescent teaching programs. Self-discovery and hope must take place prior to, and concurrent with, teaching of skills. Youth, especially youth from adverse environments, are in need of a caring adult to foster learning and resiliency (N Garmezy - American Behavioral Scientist, 1991).

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

Principled-Based Lifestyle Training curriculum is designed to assist high-risk youth in discovering their passion - their heartfelt desire in life - while offering the essential building blocks of life skills. The curriculum partners with mentors and the faith-based community. The mentors offer individual attention and learning experiences with a caring adult. Church membership supports wellness and resiliency through a sense of belonging, a standard of self-respecting and respectful conduct, and through a welcoming and unconditional community integration.

THE PROJECTED RESULTS

The projected results will demonstrate discovery, hope, recovery and resiliency:

Discovery

1. Youth will define their passion, their life goals, and role models they would like to emulate.
2. Youth will experience new places, meet and connect with caring and responsible adults and peers, and experience pro-social fun activities.

Hope

1. Youth will have faith in themselves.
2. Youth will have faith in others.
3. Youth will have a spiritual awakening of their higher power.
4. Youth will have hope in their dreams of the future.

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Recovery

1. Youth will learn life skills.
2. Youth will practice life skills.
3. Youth will achieve 60% of their identified program objectives.
4. Youth will circumvent homelessness.
5. Youth will decrease negative behaviors; i.e., drug use, fighting, stealing, apathy.
6. Youth will further their educational/pre-vocational/employment activities.

Resiliency

1. Youth will be able to identify and access their strengths.
2. Youth will be able to identify and access their higher power.
3. Youth will belong to a caring and pro-social community.
4. Youth will know how to access support and resources for problem solving.

The proposal and projected results is in line with the positive impact of mentoring confirmed in a meta-analysis. DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) examined the results of 55 mentoring program evaluations and found generally positive outcomes in the domains most often targeted by mentoring programs: 1) emotional/psychological, 2) problem/high risk behavior, 3) social competence, 4) academic/educational, and 5) career/employment. Moreover, Principled-Based Lifestyle Training curriculum joins mentoring with spirituality. A systematic review of recent research (YJ Wong, L Rew, KD Slaikeu - Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 2006) on the relationships between adolescent spirituality and mental health showed that higher levels of spirituality were associated with better mental health in adolescents. Institutional and existential dimensions of spirituality had the most robust relationships with mental health.

The three core elements (brain-based adolescent learning, mentoring, and spirituality) of Principled-Based Lifestyle Training is supported by a body of research for adolescent wellness, recovery, and resiliency.