

Emotional Skill Building: A Program Plan

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## Introduction

Approximately eight percent of adolescents aged twelve through seventeen suffer from a major depressive episode (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011). While eight percent is not large enough to merit an emergency, the percentages become larger and more alarming when age is broken down into smaller brackets. In 2001, a study was done showing that while only four percent of adolescents age twelve to thirteen have an emotional illness<sup>1</sup>, that number triples to twelve percent at ages sixteen and seventeen (Kessler, Avenevoli & Merikangas, 2001). Students with a low emotional intelligence may be at a higher risk for developing a mental and emotional illness such as major depression disorder (MDD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

Mental and emotional illnesses in adolescents can have many lasting effects through their adult life, such as a decrease in the ability to concentrate and maintain energy which can lead to problems at school and work, including the relationships with those around them (Jayson, 2008). The effect that the lack of emotional intelligence has on one's ability to build relationships with others can often lead to many other problems. Without the ability to recognize, monitor, evaluate, and influence the emotions of yourself and others, an individual has a more difficult time connecting with others and building meaningful relationships (Jayson, 2008). Difficulty building and maintaining meaningful relationships can increase the chances of other major problems such as substance abuse, eating disorders, addiction, reckless behavior, self-harm, and suicide (Kessler et al., 2001), the worst of these being suicide. Although only twelve percent of adolescents age sixteen to seventeen have an emotional illness, Jayson conducted a study in 2006

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this program plan, an "emotional illness" refers to an individual's lack of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize, monitor, evaluate and influence emotions of self and others.

that showed that fifty-five percent of students in an undergrad program thought about suicide (Jayson, 2008).

It is apparent that between high school and college, adolescent's ability to handle emotions declines. The British Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) states that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a psychotherapeutic treatment for a wide variety of disorders (BABSP, 2005). A study done in 2008 showed that eighty-four percent of participants in a CBT group felt prepared to avoid future mental illnesses and felt that their emotional intelligence had increased (Stice, Rohde & Gau, 2008). In order to fight this area of concern, an emotional skill building class held at Squalicum High School geared towards the students who are not feeling emotionally supported has the potential to lower the rate of mental and emotional illnesses in students as well as the rate of depression and suicide in college students. If the community of Squalicum High School (SqHS) had a class for their students, funded by volunteers and partial grant money, the rate of emotional and mental illnesses should go down by ninety percent. A difference can be made when students are supported emotionally and are taught how to recognize and evaluate their emotions.

### **Community Needs/Assessment Plan**

To learn more about the specific needs and wants of this community and obtaining my baseline data, I will be using a qualitative approach. This qualitative baseline data will consist of myself conducting interviews with counselors, staff members, and willing students at SqHS. To ensure that I am examining the correct population, I will have access to information about the students from the counseling center. The interview process will only include the students willing to be interviewed; students will not be forced to ask any questions they do not wish to talk about.

The potential stakeholders would consist of SqHS counselors, SqHS students, parents of students involved, children of the students involved, and myself. To make sure this program is right for each individual, students will be given a survey asking a series of questions on their home life, school performance and emotional status. We will also ask the students what they hope to achieve by attending the class to ensure the class will actually be of benefit to each participating member.

### **Project Program Description and Design**

This emotional skill building class will be a program geared toward students at Squalicum High School who are having difficulty with school, work and/or relationships due to a lack of emotional intelligence and emotional support. The overall goal of this program is to help young adults recognize, sort and manage emotions in a healthy way in order to increase their self-esteem, school performance and relationship building. The target population consists of Squalicum High School students in the geographic area of Bellingham Washington. The duration of the emotional skill building classes will be one academic semester and will be offered both semesters.

The stakeholders in this program include the parents of the students involved, teachers at SqHS, school counselors (especially those working directly with the program), and myself. Teachers and counselors will participate in collaboration with me in order to provide potential improvements and recommendations for the program. Donations will be requested from the school to help aid the expenses faced each semester.

Main activities of this program will include finding a space to hold the classes in, recruiting counselors and/or teachers who have experience in emotional intelligence and in

working with adolescents, writing curriculum and activities that equip the students with the emotional skills they need, and making an entrance questionnaire. There is also a need for advertisement around school so the students will know about the class, for which informational pamphlets need to be made.

Finding the space to hold the classes will be my responsibility. I will talk with Squalicum High School staff and discuss options as far as finding an open classroom at the school we may use, as well as any compensation they might want for using the space.

The second activity will include recruiting counselors and/or teachers with experience in emotional intelligence and in working with emotionally troubled adolescents. I will be contacting Aramis Johnson, a counselor at Squalicum High School, first. Mr. Johnson and I will discuss which counselors or teachers he feels would be qualified to assist in teaching the classes, and from there it will be my job to contact them.

Once we have finalized the volunteers, we will meet to go over the curriculum, entrance questionnaire<sup>2</sup>, and informational pamphlets. I will brief the volunteers on what the program goal is and what our intended outcomes are in order for them to get a better idea of what we need in the way of curriculum. In this meeting we will go over the curriculum and entrance questionnaire to see if there are any questions or if there is anything that should be added or removed in order to achieve the program goal.

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<sup>2</sup> The entrance questionnaire will be used to determine whether the needs of each student individually match the goal of the program. The questionnaires will be kept in the counseling center and will be given to students who show interest in the class.

## Logic Model

<b>Name of your Program:</b> Emotional Skill Building <b>Goal:</b> To help young adults recognize, sort, and manage emotions in a healthy way						
INPUTS/RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	IMPACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselors</li> <li>• An open area to hold sessions.</li> <li>• Money for activities/supplies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find an empty space.</li> <li>• Write curriculum and plan activities.</li> <li>• Recruit counselors and teachers.</li> <li>• Advertise around campus.</li> <li>• Make information pamphlets.</li> <li>• Write up questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One two-hour after school session per week.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young adults will have an increase in knowledge on different coping mechanisms for different emotions.</li> <li>• Increase in emotional awareness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young adults will be able to recognize their emotions and will handle them in a healthy way/won't be afraid to confront their emotions.</li> <li>• Reduced stress level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall increase in self-esteem, school performance and relationships.</li> <li>• Young adults will understand and show the value of self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and interpersonal skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having emotionally stable and healthy members of society.</li> </ul>

## Implementation

**Month 1 (March):** Contact Aramis Johnson who is a guidance counselor at Squalicum High School and has built many strong relationships with students. We will discuss possible teachers or other staff members that may be interested in being an instructor for the program. I will contact the teachers and staff members Mr. Johnson directs me to in order to build a team of instructors for the program. After contacting teachers and staff members, we will hold interviews in order to assess how well each individual is capable of instructing and supporting students on an emotional level. I will also contact the principal of Squalicum High School in order to discuss the possibility of using a room on campus to hold the class as well as any funds they may have that can go towards the program.

**Month 2 (April):** Our team of instructors will meet twice a week in order to go over program goals and outputs as well as go over curriculum. Creating the curriculum will be a collaborative effort, while keeping in mind the target demographic. The classroom that the class

meetings will be held in will be finalized and days and times will be scheduled for each semester (starting fall semester 2014). During these weekly meetings, the team of instructors will also create an entrance questionnaire for those interested in attending the class and compiling the information needed on the pamphlets.

**Month 3 (May):** In May, we will focus on publicity and logistics such as any possible finances. We will create the pamphlets to place in the counseling center as well as in the main office, health center, and athletic office. We will start reaching out to students who we suspect could benefit from the program and ask them to consider taking the class.

**Month 4 (June):** Since the students get out of school during the second week of June, this month will also be spent reaching out to students.

**Month 4 (September):** Before school starts back up, the students participating in the program will get a letter in the mail, reminding them that the class is starting during the third week of school. In the upcoming weeks before the class starts, the team of instructors will be refreshed on the curriculum.

One of the challenges that our program may face is coming up with finances. Although this is a very low-cost program, Squalicum High School does not have a budget for a class like this, and therefore our program will be run on volunteer donations. The biggest cost I see is providing food for the students during the program (providing food-based incentive is a norm at this school). Most teachers buy food for their students out of their own pocket, so this expense may be hard for the program to cover.

## Evaluation Plan

The evaluation process would consist of having each participant take a survey before and after the program. The entrance questionnaire will stand as the pre-program survey. At the end of each semester, the participants will be given a similar questionnaire to that of the entrance questionnaire as well as a feedback form. This will provide us with comparison material as well as an idea of what worked well and what did not.

## Budget

Item	Amount	Source
<b>Revenue</b>		
Request funds from Squalicum High School	\$350 per academic year (\$175 per academic semester)	Squalicum High School
<b>Expenses</b>		
Questionnaire and pamphlet printing	Donation	Squalicum High School
Room Rent	Donation	Squalicum High School
Misc. Supplies (for activities in curriculum)	\$200 per academic year (\$100 per academic semester)	Office Depot
Food for meetings	\$75 per academic year (\$37.50 per academic semester)	Costco
<b>Total</b>	\$0.00	

The main source of income that this program will have will be received from funds via Squalicum High School. We will be provided with \$350 for the academic year. All of the printing needs that we have will be taken care of by Squalicum High School, therefore not costing the program any money. The classroom that the class is held in will also be donated by Squalicum High School and will not cost the program. An estimated \$200 will be spent over the academic year on supplies to help aid the curriculum. In order to provide food for the participants, we will go to Costco for small, non-perishable snack items.



## **Conclusion**

This program will provide high school students with the necessary emotional intelligence needed to build meaningful relationships with others as well as improve their school performance, self-esteem and confidence. By reaching out to teachers and counselors who have already built relationships with the students, we will be able to build a class where the participants feel comfortable and safe. Squalicum High School can provide this program with many of our needs, including a facility, a team of instructors, printing needs, and funds. Once we have our team of instructors and the funds needed, we will be set up for the entire academic year.

Although our program does not make a profit, it will be cost effective because the bulk of expenses can be provided by the school for no cost. This saves us the cost of a facility, utilities, phone lines, etc. By having all of this provided by Squalicum High School, we can focus more on the curriculum.

The approach of an emotional skill building class geared towards high school students creates the opportunity for these students to increase their self-esteem and build relationships. Students with higher self-esteem are more likely to exceed in school, not only high school, but also college. Helping these students to build meaningful relationships will also help create community among the students where they feel supported and accepted.

### References

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