Youth*Moves*

A news-sheet for people interested in Youth Issues in Australia **Iss. 7 Term 1 2002**

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welcome!

Welcome to the seventh issue of "Youth*Moves*". As a Psychologist and Speaker specialising in youth issues I created this newsletter to give brief 'snatches' of youth news, info and resources relevant to busy people relating with young people. I hope this newsletter is of interest and help to you. If I can assist your work with young people in any way (by offering counselling services, speaking/training or just answering a question about youth issues), please feel free to phone me on 8357 1711, or email innovateks@chariot.net.au …le

Up Dates

National youth week: 7th – 14th April

There is heaps of stuff going on around Adelaide to celebrate national youth week. Check out the website for more info on what is going on in your area. "http://www.youthweek.com"

National Tobacco-free day: April 10th.

This day highlights the tobacco industry and how it targets young people. For more info contact Candy Flemming (08) 8291 4143

Passion in the square - Wed April 10th from 11am-3pm in Victoria Square. This event encourages young people to get 'passionate' and voice their concerns and hopes for the future. The day includes bands, youth performances, stalls, activities & special guests.

Cope are running one-day programs for people who work with youth. "Engaging Young People and their Substance Abuse" is on Friday 19th of April and "Supporting Friendships" is on Friday

Child and Youth Health provide excellent resources via their website. For example, you will find tips on handling nervousness and worry, as welll as parent issues. There is also a particularly interesting article under the "News Flash" link on young people tackling drug issues in the Adelaide southern metropolitan area. Visit http://www.cyh.com/

The Government are offering seeding grants for young people on boards and committies. Grants are being offered up until April 19th. For more info visit http://www.maze.sa.gov.au

A great site for young people to share information and their own stories is http://www.somazone.com.au

Sean Covey's book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens" is not only helpful but also very entertaining. It is designed for teens with short attention spans and well worth a read. Available at Cope bookstore 116 Hutt St, Adelaide.

Dealing with Conversations about Suicide

By now, we've all heard the statistics on youth suicide. They are scary. Australia has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world. Youth suicide has tripled since the 1960's. Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people, surpassing car accidents.

Young people are very aware of these statistics. Most young people at some point in their life, know of a person who has taken their own life. And being curious creatures, they often want to discuss the topic of suicide. A pertinent question for adults who deal with young people is how to deal with these kinds of conversations. Some tips follow.

First, **ask young people questions**. When the topic is raised, seek out their thoughts and feelings on the subject. Be alert: Sometimes young people talk about suicide generally as a way of indicating their personal anguish. If there is any indication this is the case, **always** check this out. A non-threatening phrase can be, "Have things ever got so bad for you that you feel like life is just too hard?". Follow up. Always seek advice if you are concerned about a young person.

Second, regardless of whether the conversation is with a distressed young person or one who is simply curious, **always promote help-seeking behaviour**. Remind young people that people want to help them. Bring up specific ways in which young people can get help. Assert that there is *always* hope, and situations which appear hope-less are never really so. Use an example from your own life if possible to show how difficult situations do change and get better.

Third, **never romanticise or idealise** people who have completed suicide. Emphasise that these people were suffering greatly but they were *wrong* to believe there was no other solution. Be especially careful to avoid talking about methods of suicide and their lethality.

Finally, **allow the topic of suicide to be raised by young people themselves**. It is NOT necessary or desirable to have formal lessons on the topic, to ask students to write essays on suicide or even to have school plays with suicide as a feature. *Studies show that school based programs which raise the topic of suicide per se, and that ask students to be aware of warning signs in their peers, and so on, can actually be harmful to some students.* A better approach is to teach teens coping skills for difficult times. I have a program called ***Parachute*** which does just this. For details, or if you have any questions on this issue or concerns about a young person, please feel free to email me for advice at any time.

"Its not what a teenager knows that worries her parents. It's how she found out".

Thoughts!

A Teenager is….

A person who can't remember to walk the dog but never forgets a phone number.

Someone who can hear his favourite band 3 blocks away but not his mother calling.

A whiz who can operate the latest computer without a lesson but can't make a bed.

A student who spends 5 minutes studying history and 12 hours studying for her driver's license.

Produced by Kirrilie Smout, Psychologist and Professional Speaker specialising in Australian Youth Issues.
Kirrilie is available for keynote presentations, training, counselling/assessment of young people and offering comment on youth issues. For information please contact Innovate Psychology and Education: Ph. 8357 1711; Email innovateks@chariot.net.au