

EPIDEMIC...

No. 4

Straight talk about kids, drugs and families from Straight, Inc.

The Straight Program

Straight, Inc. is a family oriented treatment program for drug users between the ages of 12 and 21 and their families. While a youth is participating in the Straight program he or she must remain totally drug-free. The average age of our clients is 17, and the average client started using drugs at the age of 12. 60% are boys, 40% are girls. The treatment program of 12 to 18 months centers on a self-help philosophy — kids helping kids, parents helping parents, families helping families — the main objective of the therapeutic process being the revitalization of the family system.

While not an inpatient facility, Straight conducts an intense daily schedule of therapeutic sessions, utilizing the dynamics of peer pressure in a positive fashion to create a new lifestyle for the clients. The therapeutic tools utilized by Straight include a modified version of the Alcoholics Anonymous' Steps and Signs which Straight calls the "Tools of Personal Change", plus cognitive therapy techniques which deal with how a person thinks. The program uses a combination of intensive therapy and a structured, progressive approach where young people earn their way through 5 phases of the program to graduation. Straight is staffed by adult professionals who supervise young staff members who have been through the program and have subsequently been trained as counselors.

*"...kids helping kids,
parents helping parents,
families helping families..."*

The 7 Steps

Called "Tools of Personal Change" the 7 Steps used at Straight are actually principles of living — tools that are learned and used during the program and throughout life to help guide the person through the choices that confront him or her. The goal, achieved during the 5 phases of the program, is to internalize the program so that choices are routinely scrutinized — is it in my best interests? does it keep me out of trouble? The 7 Steps are guidelines used to direct this process.

The 7 Steps

1. Admit I am powerless over drugs and come to believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity.
2. Make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him.
3. Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself. daily.
4. Admit to God, myself, and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. immediately.
5. Make direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them, myself, or others.
6. Seek through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God as I understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out.
7. Having received the gift of awareness, I will practice these principles in all my daily affairs and carry the message to all I can help.

(cont. on pg. 2)



The Straight Program

The 5 Phases

During the months of treatment the young people progress through 5 distinct phases in the treatment cycle.

First Phase is the period immediately after the young person enters the program and lasts for a minimum of 14 days. The youth is working on "self". This involves developing honesty about one's past as a "druggie" and about one's "process" (thoughts and feelings) and how the youth sees his or her world. The child lives with a "host" family which has a child in an advanced stage of the program, who is the client's Oldcomer, and is in the building from 9am to 9pm Monday through Saturday and 7 hours on Sunday.

Second Phase is the exciting moment when the youth "comes home". Now he or she lives at home instead of with the host family and adds working on family relationships to working on self. The teenager is in the building 12

school or work on weekdays, then into the program in the afternoon and evening. He is in the building all day on Saturday and Sunday. Minimum time in Phase Three: 7 days.

Fourth Phase is the time when the young person begins staged withdrawal from active involvement in the

"...young people earn their way through 5 phases of the program to graduation."

program. He or she comes to the building after school 3 weekdays and one of two weekend days. The youth is working on constructive use of leisure time and on creative friendships. He or she is permitted, on a written permission basis, to go places for recreational activities with family or friends in the program. Minimum time in Phase Four: 90 days.

Fifth Phase involves only three days in the building, more personal freedom, and working on service to others — social responsibility. Fifth

meaningfully. Different types of raps are scheduled throughout the day, although all focus on drug use and recovery through self-change using the program tools. Led by 2 rap leaders (staff members), raps have topics that involve the group working together on a single rap theme and also working individually on different therapeutic tasks within the treatment process.

Different types of raps are held: A Past-Present-Future Rap develops a theme from the past, beginning either with childhood or the "druggie" past, to the present and then to the future, working on dreams or goals. A Confrontation Rap works with individuals in the areas of honesty and compliance with rules. The group members, under rap leader supervision,

"The goal...is to internalize the program..."

give strong confrontive feedback to particular individuals. A Review Rap may involve review of rules or, for example, the rap that follows an Open Meeting, where kids are given feedback relating to behavior and happenings during the Open Meeting. An Idea Rap takes a basic idea or word and builds on it, layer by layer with group members sharing their insights. An Instructional Rap is where teaching and learning are the primary goals, such as teaching the 7 Steps. Fun Raps are held to give the teenagers a chance to be kids — to have fun with an "off-the-wall" subject like ghosts, UFO's, bananas. Small work groups are also employed during the rap periods to develop an idea, which is then shared in the general session at the end of the rap.

"...rap therapy uses supervised peer pressure..."

Morning Rap, with first and second phasers in the building, deal with the basic foundation tools of the program. It gets the group involved with the day, is quickly paced and deals with the basics — the 7 Steps, the 5 Guidelines for "Straight" Thinking, routines, the 5 Phases, etc. There is little confrontation in the Morning Rap. After lunch, there are Boys/Girls Raps where the group is separated by sex. Topics may be more related to male/female issues and sexual identity, but not necessarily. There is



hours daily, Monday through Saturday and 7 hours on Sunday. Minimum time in Phase Two: 7 days.

Third Phase has to do with working on achievement through school or a job while continuing to work on self and family. This phase also represents the first time a youth faces "do drugs" peer pressure again. He or she has to face old friends at school and say "no". The young person goes to

Phasers assist the staff in working with the Group. Graduation is called "Seventh Stepping" (from the 7 Steps). Minimum time in Phase Five: 60 days.

Rap Therapy

Based on the concept that peer pressure got the child involved with drugs in the first place, rap therapy uses supervised peer pressure to help get him or her off drugs.



more confrontation and more individual work. Higher phase members are starting to arrive, from school or work. The Afternoon Rap brings the whole group together, with more old-comer participation. It is the most confrontive with more group leadership because of more old-comer involvement. Specific issues are confronted, such as responsibility, weaknesses versus strength, etc. The Night Rap, after dinner, focuses on positive themes with no confrontation, to end the day on an "up" note so that clients leave the building feeling positive about the day and themselves.

Family Involvement

Entire families are required and encouraged to participate in the Straight program. The main objective of the therapeutic process is the reconstruction and revitalization of the family system. Open Meetings are held on Monday and Friday evenings,

"The main objective of the therapeutic process is the reconstruction and revitalization of the family system."

bringing together in one large room the teenagers, parents and siblings. First, second and third phase parents are required to attend all Open Meetings, with fourth and fifth phase parents attending the one meeting per week that their child attends. Straight also conducts parent and sibling raps, individual counseling and family conjoint counseling. 92% of the siblings involved in the Straight program never get involved with drugs. Why? The best form of prevention is intervention, and their parents and the

Straight program have intervened with these siblings during the treatment of a brother or sister. Children are a part of families, and families must be treated as a whole for the process to succeed. Youths *must* be accompanied by a parent to be admitted to the program.

Aftercare

A graduate of Straight enters a six-month Aftercare program. Consisting of a series of classes, the Aftercare program strives to support and teach the recent graduate. It offers the opportunity to extend the knowledge they've gained in the program and also to relate the experiences and problems they're now facing alone, without the support of the Straight group. Topics discussed include relationships and social dating, friendships, long-term goal setting, relapse symptoms, basic life skills, positive thinking, etc. Graduates are required to attend 2 classes per week for the first 3 months, then 1 class per week for the next 3 months. Parents are required to attend 1 class per month with their graduate.

"Straight seemed to us to be phenomenal. We have been involved in drug programs, we have seen far more of them, and we have read about most of them; but we have never seen a program that seemed so intelligently designed to bring about success in this very difficult field . . . Straight, we are inclined to suspect, is going to be recognized, eventually, as a national resource."

Andrew I. Malcolm, M.D., F.R.C.P. (C), "An Examination of Straight, Incorporated", Toronto, Canada, 1981.



A message from: William D. Oliver, Executive Director

Straight was founded in response to a need. Kids were in serious trouble with drugs and alcohol and nothing available seemed to really work ...really work in the sense of not only achieving abstinence but also in recovering the quality of life. Some parents and professionals in St. Petersburg, Florida decided to do something about it.

In 1976, Straight was created as a non-profit, privately funded treatment center for drug using kids and their families. It had one client, a handful of staff, little money...but it had two key resources:

- a faith which would not quit
- a heart big enough to love the unloveable.

"Straight was founded in response to a need."

Now just eight years later, Straight has four operating programs: Atlanta, Cincinnati, Tampa Bay and Washington, D.C. A fifth, Orlando, Florida, will open soon. The sixth in the Detroit, Michigan area should open in 1985 along with the probability of a center in Boston, also in 1985. There are currently over 800 children in treatment.

Why? Because Straight works...not only to achieve sobriety but also and especially to recover the quality of life, the ability to become, to achieve,

to fulfill each child's potential as a human being.

Straight is the result of families all over America who refused to compromise, who refused to quit. If we have one secret, it is *commitment*.

- Commitment to recovery
- Commitment to achievement
- Commitment to excellence

We say it all the time. We are proud of our kids — not for what they have done. We are proud of who they have become.



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