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Promoting Resilience in Youth through a Group Poetry and Art Making Program

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Promoting Resilience in Youth through a Group Poetry and Art Making Program

Abstract

Hope at Hand, Inc. is a North Florida nonprofit that uses therapeutic art and poetry lessons to help marginalized youth recognize and overcome circumstances that limit their successful participation in society. The presentation will demonstrate interventions informed by narrative psychological research to improve resilience through the coping strategies of (1) social competence, (2) problem-solving skills, (3) autonomy, (4) sense of purpose, and (5) life story reframing.

Relevance

Hope at Hand is a recognized service provider specializing in improving the social, emotional skills and mental health of struggling youth populations. Blending poetry with art and wellness strategies creates a safe environment for participants to realize their own abilities, cope with their extraordinary stresses of life and become better able to contribute to their communities. We facilitate hope and resilience. Since 2009, Hope at Hand has developed from a small grassroots nonprofit to one that now provides services to a wide range of populations and community organizations. Hope at Hand staff members have specialized training in education, meditation, poetry therapy and counseling. Our reputation as a direct service provider is reliable and the demand for services is increasing, Aetna insurance company awarded recognition of Hope at Hand as a top mental health provider of Jacksonville, Florida.

Summary

Participants will examine the ways Hope at Hand, Inc., an urban nonprofit organization, commissioned art, and poetry in public spaces to help marginal youth develop resilience, social skills, and reframe their life stories from adversity to hope. A virtual poetry walk experience includes performances and exhibits by at risk youth from an international airport, museum, and street corners. Benefits include reflection about art in public spaces, application of how to curate a public gallery with multimedia, demonstration of performing poetry expressively, and creating exhibits for public space. A critical void is filled with knowledge and practice between the arts, mental health, and citizenship with place-based research in creating a more kind and inclusive society.

Objectives of the session

1. The session will examine the ways in which combining poetry and visual art can engage youth in community, promote cultural understanding, provide a sense of belonging, and help reframe one's story of adversity to one of hope.
2. Attendees will learn about the narrative psychological approaches to improve resilience through the coping strategies of (1) social competence, (2) problem-solving skills, (3) autonomy, (4) sense of purpose, and (5) life story reframing.
3. Attendees will experience a virtual demonstration of a downtown poetry walk that includes poetry festival performances and exhibits by marginalized youth at an airport, park, art museum, and street corners.
4. Attendees will tell their own life stories, reconnect to purpose and community by writing a Haiku poem and six-word memoir, which will be combined with visual art.
5. Attendees will perform their poem expressively and meaningfully (if they choose to raise their own) by learning the effective use of sound, movement, expression, and space.
6. Attendees will learn to curate their own virtual life story museum gallery of poetry and art using a narrated PowerPoint free public domain application.

Format of the session

The Experience, Reflect and Apply (ERA) structure, which requires participants first experience a poem performance or a combined poetry art exhibit, reflect on it through guided

discussion, and apply it in a way demonstrates their understanding. Participants create their own poetry and art for public display.

Evidence

Researchers Clawson, and Coolbaugh, (2001); Coholic, 2020, Kometiani, and Farmer, (2020); Schwan, Fallon, and Milne. (2018); and Stanley, (2021) found that marginalized youth who were guided by a teacher or more capable peers could learn to write and perform poetry and do art making out of adverse experiences for developing resilience - the ability to adapt well in the face of hard times. Resilience, the ability to bounce back from ordeals, can be facilitated through research based, narrative psychological interventions. Stanley, (2019) articulated the instructional practice and value of youth writing poems and creating art about their life stories for resilience is rooted in the narrative psychological conceptual framework known as the Life Story Model. Other influences include Jerome Bruner and Theodore R. Sarbin who introduced and popularized the term narrative psychology. McAdams, a professor from Northwestern University, believed understanding human behavior should be grounded in the knowledge that people make sense of their lives by constructing and internalizing stories. According to this model, individuals begin to organize their lives in terms of self-stories in late adolescence and young adulthood. People reconstruct their past and anticipate their future in terms of internalized and evolving life stories McAdams's research showed that examining how people arrange and integrate the plot points of their lives was the key to understanding how they construct positive, purpose driven identities.

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