

***The conceptualisation and execution of a
conflict resolution programme for the
Streetwise youths***

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1 Introduction

Beyond Social Services is an agency that works closely with delinquent children and youth in the lower economic strata of the Singaporean society. The organisation is one of four operators running the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime (IMYC) initiated Streetwise Programme (SWP); which was developed for youths who have been associated with secret society gangs. The streetwise programme is essentially a “developmental program aimed at changing the behaviour of youths who have unwittingly drifted into gangs” (<http://www.mcys.gov.sg>). The program encompasses family group conferencing, skills development training, recreational activities, academic and career guidance as well as casework management over a period of 6 month. During this time there are restrictions on places the SWP youth are allowed to visit and they are expected to abide by a curfew.

During the recent streetwise program; certain behaviors were exhibited by the youths that had deconstructive outcomes (these behaviors will be expounded upon later). It was eventually agreed upon that a series of conflict resolution (CR) sessions would be beneficial to the boys. It was decided that I should be the trainer for the program due to my exposure and interest in similar anger management/ conflict resolution programs and my experience in the martial arts.

This thesis will highlight the challenges I faced in conceptualizing and constructing the CR programme, the profiles of the streetwise youth, the situation prior to the CR program being introduced into the SWP, what the CR program covered, -an evaluation of the 6 core CR sessions conducted as well as the subsequent follow up work. In addition we will look at aspects of social capital, strengths, alignment and the will of the client and moral reasoning where appropriate.

2 Situational Analysis

An understanding of the Streetwise program structure as run by Beyond Social Services would be helpful in understanding how and why the CR program was conceived. There are 4 streetwise program operators in Singapore and although they share similar objectives and goals, each agency runs the program slightly differently. Beyond takes a sports based approach to working with the youth. A typical week for the youth in the SWP program can include running (twice a week), football (twice a week) and swimming (once a week), in addition there are also special activities such as visiting business establishments, outings, night cycling and high element activities such as rock climbing and abseiling.

2.1 Background

The community workers and youth workers observed that the youth in this batch of SWP were becoming increasingly vocal, bold and even resorting to physical intimidation to get their way. One such incident (that was the catalyst for the CR program) involved a community worker at soccer practice being intimidated by a handful of SWP youths. After trying in vain to round up the boys and give them instructions; the SWP youth surrounded him and in a physically intimidating manner expressed their lack of interest and desire to participate in the soccer training. The worker felt that this was their attempt to exert their strength and showcase their collective power.

3 Getting Support

After this incident the youth and community workers got together to discuss the incident and the current developments of the boys. A range of issues were attributed as to the underlying causes for the youth's recent behaviour, these include the youth's frustrations with the program activities and the

expectations placed upon them, irritations with the rules and regulations and their lack of personal freedom. After discussing several possible approaches to address these developments; the idea of an anger management program that utilized aspects of martial arts and addressed physical violence was envisioned. The reason for such an idea was based on the desire to realign the current methods of engaging the streetwise youth and attend to the WILL of the boys. Many of the activities in the streetwise program were initiated because the youth workers felt they would be beneficial to the SWP youth; regardless of whether the youth liked it or not. Also except in special circumstances all the SWP activities are mandatory unless a medical certificate can be produced. It can be noted that although the youth workers had good intentions, they were imposing their WILL on the SWP boys.

Reflection

Taking this into consideration it is not difficult to understand why the youth were not embracing soccer practice or other “imposed” SWP activities. Their frustration can be attributed to the lack of alignment and addressing of their WILL as individuals by the streetwise program as conducted by Beyond. In everyday society it is not uncommon for us to impose our WILL on to others; for what we think will be for” their benefit”. We see this with musically inclined parents who force their children to attend piano lessons. The end result can be frustration and resentment. This method of working is unhelpful; especially when we are in the business of attending, understanding and influencing people.

3.1 Buy-in from SWP workers

When the suggestion to try out other methods of working with the SWP youth was raised it was immediately met with opposition from the youth workers. They thought their methods were being scrutinized/ criticized and others were viewing them as having poorly managed the SWP youth. In addition they had several concerns -

- 1 The other staffs (whom previously had limited dealings with the SWP youth) were going to get involved in the streetwise program to “fix” things.
- 2 They were not comfortable with the notion of teaching the martial arts to boys who had exhibited anger issues. They felt it would only equip them with the physical skills to hurt others.
- 3 Finally they shared that they had already conducted several workshops on managing emotions and avoid using anger as an expression.

A subsequent meeting was arranged with the youth workers where I hoped to change their perspective. At this point it was crucial to approach the workers from a neutral position and seek their expertise in constructing a program that could fulfil the expectations of Beyond the organization, the youth workers and attend to the WILL of the streetwise youth. Eventually the youth workers relented, and became supportive by sharing their program objectives and outcomes. The following is a list of what they shared –

1. SWP youth to have self control (understand and manage their emotions)
2. Get SWP youths to use their energy positively
3. Develop resilience in the boys
4. Get them to make the right choices in life
5. Have the boys gain self awareness
6. Develop the SWP youth’s personal value

Once the youth workers were receptive to my involvement in the streetwise program they requested for me to construct an anger management programme. Not all of the Streetwise program objectives were realistic in the context of an anger management program. As such I decided to focus on a few

key issues such as developing self control, self awareness and getting the boys to contemplate the results of their actions. After contextualizing this in the context of the streetwise program and taking into consideration the recent developments of deconstructive behaviours among the youths, I felt that it would be more beneficial to develop a conflict resolution program. After all going to the root of a problem is a more efficient way of dealing with issues, prevention rather than cure was the aim. My reasoning was that the emotion of anger doesn't develop out of nowhere, usually it is a response to an undesired stimulus and I felt that the wider issue was conflict management, regardless if it was physical or verbal in nature.

My aim for the CR program was to share with the SWP youth a system for resolving conflicts, a conflict resolution tool box if you will. From there; based on the type of situations they faced they would be able to choose the appropriate response. An example of this was the rock and water principle, if someone is becoming aggressive to you; it would be foolish to respond in kind as it can very likely escalate the situation. A much better approach to such a "rock" stimulus is to be "water" and remain flexible, calm and focused on reasoning your way out of the situation.

Reflection

The biggest challenge to the development of the CR program was getting support from the youth workers and convincing them of the benefits of such a CR program. It was extremely imperative to change the mindset of the youth workers and replace it with one of collaboration and understanding. My role was to join forces with the youth workers and pool our resources, talents and knowledge together to address certain issues with the streetwise youth in a manner that was both engaging to them and appropriate for us. I found the SONI model helpful in understanding the situation. I saw SONI as -

S – Government and policy makers (not pertinent at this stage of the program)

O- I viewed this as the SWP programme, the youth workers were very doubtful and their perspectives needed to change. I needed to convince them and get them to realize we were all working for the benefit of the SWP youth. And that their involvement was central to the development of the conflict resolution programme

N- The network in this case was not relevant.

I- The SWP youth were the individuals.

3.2 Youth Category and Individual Youths

Prior to constructing the content for the CR programme it was important I had a good understanding of the youths and the requirements of the Streetwise program. All the youth in the Streetwise program did not enroll because they wanted to. They enrolled into the program because the Police had caught them for various offences such as rioting, unlawful gathering or being caught belonging to a “secret society”; all these are viewed as serious offences in Singapore. As a result the youth were all referred to Beyond Social Services; if they chose not to attend the streetwise program the alternative was they might end up with a police record. It is safe to presume the majority of citizens out there are not foolish enough to want to risk a police record as it directly influences their opportunities and career prospects, thus the choice to join the streetwise program can be viewed as an artificial one. The SWP youth’s primary goal while at Beyond was to simply complete the 6 month Streetwise Programme and move on. Initially there were 15 youth referred to the Streetwise Program, however over time several of them; for various reasons either dropped out or were expelled. When we conducted the CR Program there were 10 boys remaining (eventually only 8 would graduate).

Reflecting on the streetwise youth collectively; they do fit into a particular social cultural category. They share similar lifestyles, characteristics, behaviours, lingo and fashion sense. There are people out there who would take a superficial perspective on these youth and naively label them only as gang members/ thugs/ trouble makers/ lowlifes/ nuisances. Doing so would mean to not be truly conscious of each one of them and ignore their individuality as human beings. Each one of the SWP youth; while undeniably similarities on a superficial plane, have unique goals, passions and talents.

Reflection

By applying Kohlberg's developmental stages to the SWP youth, it can be noted that they seem to be at stage 2 – the self interest orientation “what's in it for me”. They will often look at what are the benefits/ rewards for them when doing something. They have a tendency to consider, “do the pros outweigh the cons”? And from there they formulate how receptive they will be.

Having been in the martial arts for 8 years and trained in Thailand, Australia and Singapore; I wanted to use make the most of my background as a Muay Thai instructor (Thai Martial Art) to get their attention and interest them enough to be receptive to the CR program material. Through discussions with the youth and taking into consideration their profiles it can be seen that all of them have been exposed to the martial arts and fighting, in addition all of them considered Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li as their idols. Using the martial arts in a social work context while at the same time challenging the boys to think

about themselves and emotions; would provide us with a unique tool to attend, understand and influence the youth on a level that serves their interests.

4 Program Planning

The decision to initiate the CR training was logical based on the backgrounds, displayed behaviors and characteristics of the SWP youths. All the boys had involvements with secret society gangs, had been involved in unlawful assembly and have had rioting incidents.

During the conceptual stages of the CR programme it was requested by the youth workers that the sessions address anger management, self control (understanding and management of emotions), getting the SWP youth to use their energy positively. In addition the use of using anger as an expression by the SWP was also something the youth workers wanted to be eliminated. The youth workers also wanted the boys to develop self belief, personal value (what do they felt they represented/ stood for). In order for the CR program to be relevant I needed to consider the *Will of the streetwise youth and* understand their perspective or “seeing their world through their eyes”. This also meant appreciating their strengths; practically all of them had a desire to be strong and viewed “strength” as qualities associated with being macho and tough. As such their mentality and behaviours were greatly influenced by it. While this may have its own negative connotations I viewed it as an ability on their part to be assertive and steadfast. Furthermore they clearly had an affinity for physical expression and had strong personalities. These are qualities I hoped to tap on in the CR sessions.

The observations of the youth workers and community workers were invaluable. They shared that the SWP youth have their own rational and methods of reasoning. After much interaction with the youth and youth workers it can be concluded that the youth share a common understanding of “right and wrong”. The notions of beliefs, perspectives and ethics held by the SWP youths do

contrast the commonly held beliefs of the mainstream Singaporean society, which is that resorting to violence to solve a problem is ethically wrong and using vulgarities in most interactions is a socially inappropriate method of communication.

Since we were planning a conflict resolution program I felt it would be important to delve into the concept of anger, specifically what are the effects, what does it mean for those involved as well as some of its related issues such as verbal and physical violence. In addition I felt it was central to address the notion of awareness and self control. Combining this with the objectives of the youth workers, Beyond and the WILL of the SWP youth into a seamless cohesive program was my ultimate goal.

4.1 *Roots and Research*

Being an employee in a social service organization and having learnt some social work theories and concepts, I especially wanted to go beyond merely teaching a martial arts class to the youths (an authentic martial arts class should in addition to the physical element; instill discipline, control and virtues of compassion and patience in the students). While this undeniably would have its benefits and in this case certainly attend to the WILL of the SWP youths, I felt it was not sufficient to achieve the ultimate objectives of the streetwise program and Beyond as an organization. As such I saw my role as twofold, firstly I needed to be a responsible martial arts instructor and teach the youth martial arts technique while instilling a strong sense of social responsibility. Secondly I needed to be the social worker and attend, understand and influence the boys. This was an interesting opportunity as I would have to do both roles simultaneously. With these two roles in mind, I chose to create a class format that included martial arts techniques, work sheets for the SWP youth to complete as well as group discussions and debriefing components. The roots of the CR program was derived from the rock and water program, the conflict resolution

network material, my own experiences in the martial arts and dialog with experienced community workers who've worked with youths on issues of anger. The following is a description of the 2 main sources I researched to help construct the CR program.

Rock and Water Program

On a recent trip to Melbourne, Australia I happened to meet an experienced youth worker who introduced me to the Rock and Water program. Freerk Ykema, a respected educationist (with a tai chi background – Chinese martial arts) from the Netherlands created the rock and water program. He developed the program in 1994 to tackle the increase in violent offences perpetrated by male youths. Since its conception it has also proven beneficial for female attendees and has received critical acclaim overseas; particularly in Australia. There are 14 main lessons in the program, each concentrating on topics ranging from boundaries, emotions to breathe control and sexuality.

Reflection

The R & W programme was extremely helpful in providing a philosophy and proven platform that aspects of the martial arts can be utilized in a social work context. I chose not to conduct the program as laid out by the manuals for 2 main reasons. Firstly; the original course is quite encompassing covering 14 core lessons over a 14 week period. Not all of these lessons were relevant to the SWP youth and due to the limited time (3 weeks) to conduct the CR program it was important to only focus on the important topics (themes for each session will be discussed later).

Secondly; the rock and water program strongly believes in equipping basic self defense ability (kicking, punching and wrestling) in the participants so that they have the confidence; mental and physical strength to avoid confrontations. I was slightly uncomfortable with this due to our time constraints, as a martial arts

instructor I firmly believe in the benefits of the martial arts; however, I have observed over the years that there is a spectrum students in the martial arts go through. There is a tendency for new students to be over confident of their physical ability, they learn esoteric fighting techniques and philosophies originating some 2000 years ago and view it as some sort of magical power. With this inflated sense of physical prowess comes an inflated ego, this is the stage where students know just enough to get themselves into trouble. This is akin to someone who is quick on the trigger but doesn't actually have any bullets; in a serious physical conflict the results can be disastrous.

Also I particularly wanted to stay away from developing "tigers", a term used in the martial arts to describe practitioners who chase after earthly strength and who are "more impress with their physical prowess". At the opposite end of the spectrum is what I hoped to share with the SWP youth; the "dragon", this is used to describe practitioners who through seasoning have attained spiritual strength through "humility and self restrain", which is the ultimate aim of the martial arts. Having said this I did include numerous martial arts exercises but not with the objective of developing self defense ability; but rather developing a sense of body awareness among the SWP youth. I wanted to share with them that the body constantly responds to physical signals (such as when you are hunger or tired) When you are aware of these signals emotions such as irritation, anger and frustration can be identified early on and you are better able to manage your actions and avoid resorting to physical and verbal violence when faced with challenging situations.

The conflict resolution network

I came upon the conflict resolution network material after extensive research. The organization aims to provide educational material and manuals that provide the theory and practical exercises to practice Conflict resolution. It includes how conflicts start, how it can escalate and the various effects it has on

the different parties involved. Essentially it shares that conflicts can be avoided and awareness developed through discussions, diagrams and exercises can train one to manage conflict successfully. The material provided many ideas and helped me conceptualise some diagrams to visually highlight the different state of emotions we may go through when faced with a possible conflict; regardless if it's physical or verbal in nature.

Reflection

To augment the diagrams, role playing exercises were utilised to illustrate in detail the different responses we can have to a conflict. For example some people may choose to fight; while others may choose flight. It was important to share with the streetwise youth that that how we react to the stimulus can directly influence the magnitude of the conflict, in addition I wanted to share the possible consequences.

4.2 Content and Method

I really wanted the youth to respect the physical nature of violence and highlight to them the realities of a serious physical conflict. The media is very fond of glamorizes fighting, from Hollywood to the Hong Kong entertainment industry it is common to watch in the movies sensationalized super human abilities to defeat opponents through the use of physical force. This is an area I felt particularly interested in; sharing with the SWP youth the real meaning of training in the martial arts. The public has a distorted notion of the martial arts. Mention the martial arts to a laymen and instantly images of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan flying across the room yelling and screaming while they throw rapid kicks and punches at numerous opponents appear. In reality the martial arts are about focus, hardship, self development and perseverance. Essentially in the martial arts; you get out what you put in; some might say the same thing about life.

After having garnered the support of the youth workers the biggest challenge for me now was to be clear on how the CR program could fit into the context of the current SWP batch; and cater to their WILL while at the same time meeting our own objectives. These included sharing with the youth a more effective means to express themselves, resolve conflict, some techniques for managing anger and getting them to think more about the impact and implications of their actions. Eventually it was determined that there would be 6 core sessions; each session would last 2 hours and consist of a summary of the previous sessions, informal lectures, group discussions, handout exercises as well as physical activities.

The following section of the thesis will concentrate on the individual CR sessions, specifically what was covered and the approach used, in addition I'll add my reflection when appropriate.

CR Programme (SWP)

time	theme	exercise	resource
Wed 4 th Oct	Introduction		
4:30pm	Reflection/ Topics	<p>Give praise and appreciation for making it this far into the SWP</p> <p><i>Why have you continued this far?</i></p> <p><i>What got you into the SWP? – Past incidents</i></p> <p><i>What could have been done to avoid joining the SWP?</i></p>	

	<p>Exercise (in pairs)</p> <p>Importance of standing strong</p> <p><i>perseverance & mental strength, Relates to “walk softly but carry a big stick” – what does this mean?</i></p>	<p>Balance Ex 4 (R&W pg23)</p> <p>Offer Gradual Resistance Ex 5 (R&W pg24)</p> <p>Competition Ex 6 (R&W pg25)</p>	<p>Rock & Water pg 23-25</p>
	<p>Quote</p>	<p><i>“To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the highest skill.” -- Sun Tzu</i></p>	
	<p>Homework</p> <p>- Identify strengths and learn to develop it to avoid trouble</p>	<p>Homework – Find 3 examples (newspaper/ story etc) of people who reached their goal with a lot of confidence and perseverance (can be a sportsman but also someone who conquered a serious illness or has learnt how to live with it)</p>	
<p>6pm</p>		<p>End of session 1</p>	

Reflection

This being the first CR session I felt slightly nervous. Because of the martial arts element in the programme and knowing that some of the SWP were known “fighters”, during the planning stages of the program I tried to anticipate some of the possible reactions by the youth. Would they try to “show off” and hurt one another, or perhaps try to challenge me. Also in order for the CR program to be successful it was important for the youth to take me seriously and know that I was credible when I spoke of the martial arts, conflict and fighting.

With this in mind I started off the session by explaining what the CR program was about and what they could expect, in addition I shared some of our program outcomes. Then we got them to play around with a punch bag we hung

up and subsequently I shared with them my martial arts background and showed them a short video clip of my Muay Thai training in Thailand.

Punching Bag Exercise - *Previously I have seen the SWP youth engage in play fighting or mess around with fighting techniques. They seem to find enjoyment in expressing themselves in this manner. Because of this observed strength (affinity for physical expression) we wanted to hang the punching bag up and give them an opportunity to kick and punch at the bag. Initially the boys were reluctant but after much coaxing each one had an opportunity to hit the bag. After everyone had a go we asked how they felt after hitting the bag. The comments ranged from great and fun to painful and tiring.*

After the first CR session it seemed that the boys enjoyed themselves. It appeared that the medium of the CR program (martial arts) was something they were interested in and could relate to. I was curious though of how much of the theory from the CR programme they would absorb and was receptive to, I supposed only time would tell.

CR Programme (SWP)

time	theme	exercise	resource
Fri 6 th Oct	Conflict		

4:30pm	<p>Reflection/ Topics</p> <p><i>What's the worst that can happen what's the least?</i></p>	<p>Summary of last session</p> <p>Rock & Water Attitude & Levels of emotions in a conflict</p> <p>Into Groups - Self Defence Attitude – Personal experiences (“what would you have done in these situations?”)</p> <p>Victim’s Perspective</p> <p>3 Steps Thinking</p>	PowerPoint
	Exercise	<p>Rock & Water examples (R&W pg 40-42)</p> <p>- Be like water Video -</p>	
	Quote	<p>““Emotion can be the enemy, if you give into emotion, you lose yourself. You must be at one with your emotion, because body always follows the mind.” -- Bruce Lee</p>	
	Homework	<p><i>When did you last have a conflict/ argument (with your friends, family or at soccer etc)</i></p> <p><i>Describe 2 situations and answer these 3 questions each time –</i></p> <p><i>What happened exactly?</i> <i>Did you react as rock or as water?</i> <i>Was it the proper reaction?</i> <i>Explain this</i></p>	
6pm		<i>End of session 2</i>	

Building on the first session we wanted to continue sharing the foundation theory of the CR program. The theme for this session was conflict and was one of the more important sessions conducted. When the boys shared their thoughts

on conflict (verbal and physical) it was interesting to hear some of the shared perspectives. Most of them have very short term thinking and don't seem to put a lot of thought into their responses when faced with a conflict.

Reflection

This was a particularly important session; we shared the concept of the rock and water attitude. When asked which was better rock or water the majority of the boys shared that rock was definitely better; however, one youth exclaimed "are you crazy, you never see Tsunami!" Most people underestimate the power of water and it was good to see the youth start to think about things on a deeper level. At the end of the discussion we shared that in life we can either react to an external stimulus as rock (strong and steadfast) or as water (flexible and receptive) and that one quality was not better than the other, it just depends on the context. Of course if one was to react as water without strong base (susceptible, dependent, and indifferent) then that would be ineffectual.

The stages of emotion we may go through when faced with a conflict was another extremely important feature we shared, in particular the "point of no return". This is basically the point where we have allowed our anger to build to such a degree that it is beyond our conscious control. It was important for the streetwise youth to understand how conflicts can escalate and be mindful of the warning signs. Based on discussions with them they seem to, from their normal state jump to a point of frustration and rage. There seems to be no mid point for them, by sharing these levels of emotions with them we hoped they would develop an internal guideline for self control.

CR Programme (SWP)

time	theme	exercise	resource
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real life conflict scenarios with them and got them to think about what was “the least and the worst” thing that could happen if they reacted a certain way. For example if they were in a peer pressure scenario and were asked to steal cigarettes - what was the worst thing that could happen if they said no/ what was the worst thing that could happen if they did it. On the flip side I got them to answer what was the least that could happen if they said no/ what was the least that could happen if they did it.

The last scenario I shared with them (this had the greatest impact) was an incident that happened to a friend of mine. The boys visualized that they were fit, well trained Kung Fu practitioner and was out on a Friday night in Clarke Quay (night life area in Singapore) with a girl that they were trying to get to know better. After awhile a situation erupts when a group of youths nearby decide they have a problem with you and the girl you are with. The SWP youth could only choose option 1 or option 2.

Do you -

- 1) Apologize to the group and leave the area with the girl.*
- 2) Be assertive and ask them what their problem is?*

It was interesting to note that 7 boys chose option 2 and only 1 chose option 1. When asked why he chose option 1, the youth shared that “it’s a waste of time and if the girl thinks I should fight for her she is not worth it...there are many fish in the sea!” The remaining boys laughed and shared “eh that’s why you got no girlfriend” and “you crazy, you can fight!” Eventually I shared what happened to my friend; he chose option 2 and ended up in the emergency ward. In addition to be intoxicated; several of the youths had knives and proceeded to slash and stab at him, he ended up with 17 slash/ stab wounds. The girl called his family and later fled the scene leaving my kung fu trained friend bleeding profusely on the floor waiting alone for the ambulance to arrive, remarkably he

survived and understandable completely avoids all forms of conflicts these days. After I shared this incident with the boys I again asked them which option they would choose, not surprising all 7 boys changed to option 1. Some of them shared "if they got knives then don't fight", I retorted you would only know after you begin fighting that they have knives and by then it's too late. It was good to observe that at this point they were all quite serious and the mood was somber, they were obviously pondering the issue. It seems that; in terms of moral reasoning, they fall into the teleological ethics category. Based on the consequences (confronted with knives and getting slashed/ stabbed) they changed their minds about asserting themselves because the eventually outcome was not one they were comfortable with.

CR Programme (SWP)

time	theme	exercise	resource
Fri 13 th Oct	Beliefs		
4:30pm	Reflection/ Topics Review Session 1 homework	What do you personally stand for? 3 examples (newspaper/ story etc) of people who reached their goal with a lot of confidence and perseverance	
	<i>Exercise</i>	Ethical martial art techniques	
	Quote	If your mind becomes firm like a rock And no longer shakes In a world where everything is shaking, Your mind will be your greatest friend And suffering will not come your way. -Theragatha	

	Homework – Lifeline	<i>Where are you in your life, where would you like to be and how what can get you there? Dreams/ aspirations (A4 pg)</i>	
6pm		<i>End of session 5</i>	

Reflection

This session the theme was beliefs and followed on nicely to the previous session on “what is worth fighting for”. We began the session by reviewing session 1’s homework; the boys were requested to find 3 examples of “strong” people who fought to reach their goal with a lot of confidence and perseverance. During this exercise I shared with the boys that there was nothing wrong with fighting, it’s your intentions that determine if it is justifiable or not. For example most responsible citizens would never consider fighting if they were cut off in traffic but what if the situation involved someone’s child about to be kidnapped, in all likelihood the “responsible citizen” would in this case fight to the death. I also wanted to boys to understand that fighting wasn’t limited to a physical context but included mental and verbal instances.

We also discussed the notion of strength, which in the case of the SWP youth meant toughness and muscles. Though after collecting the newspaper clippings many of them found people like Lance Armstrong inspiring and were able to consider him a “fighter”. When posed with the question; who was the ultimate fighter, practically all of them mentioned “Bruce Lee”, I countered that it was true Bruce Lee was a fantastic fighter but in my opinion Gandhi was the greatest fighter of all as he managed to kick out the British Empire from India. It took some explanation who Gandhi was but eventually it seemed the boys conceded that Bruce Lee never managed to defeat so many opponents.

CR Programme (SWP)

time	theme	exercise	resource
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Fri 18 th Oct	Self Control		
4:30pm	<p>Reflection/ Topics</p> <p><i>5 Step approach to managing anger</i></p> <p>Using a problem solving approach can help manage your reaction.</p> <p>Stages of emotions (CRN pg H6.2 & 6.3)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self Awareness – What is making me angry? Verbalise it FIRST rather than REACT! (Be clear and specific) 2. Self Control – Stop and think, “How can I react”? 3. Consider your options (think it through). What are the consequences of each decision? 4. Do it 5. Evaluate the outcome of the decision 	<p>http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/deal_with_anger.html</p>
	<p>Exercise</p> <p>Mind Body Spirit awareness - Chi Kung Breath Control</p>	<p>Hugging Tree Tai chi Flow Swinging Hammer Fists)</p>	
	Quote	<p>"To be a samurai is to be polite at all times." Hojo Nagauji</p>	
	Homework – Lifeline	<p><i>Where are you in your life, where would you like to be and how what can get you there?</i></p>	
6pm		<i>End of session 4</i>	

Reflection

This session's theme was on self control. I wanted to address the short term thinking of the SWP youth and share with them a method of managing their reaction to a situation. Based on the previous session and discussions with the youth workers and the SWP youth, it was obvious the youths had a tendency to

react immediately to a conflict and anger was usually the outcome. Because of this I chose to get them to practice the martial arts technique of hard blocking. Seasoned practitioners are able to execute this type of blocking because of conditioning and are able to just absorb the pain. For the new student practicing this can be quite unpleasant as the body is not used to contact and feels shock. I chose this technique because just like in a verbal conflict if someone is making us flustered, responding in an aggressive manner doesn't help. After a few attempts at hard blocking the boys complained that it was too painful to continue, I immediately related this back to the rock and water attitude and likened it to using anger (rock quality) when confronted with an aggressive or unpleasant stimulus (rock), just like two bulls banging heads the outcome is pain for both parties. I then showed them how to use a parry block (which doesn't meet the attack head on but instead redirects the opponent's energy). The boys preferred this method much more as they didn't feel pain, again this was related back to being water (with strong base) it was shared that we could achieve our desired goals without having to hurt someone (either physically or emotionally) . This ultimately is the goal of the conflict resolution program.

As a side note, there was a new addition to this session of the CR program. 16 year old SWP youth who missed the previous 4 sessions turned up. At the beginning of the sessions I had a feeling that he, unlike the rest of the SWP youth was not receptive to what I was sharing and was disinterested in the lesson materials. This could be due to the fact that I managed to convince the other SWP youth in the previous sessions of my legitimacy in addressing such issues of conflict with them and they shared a certain level of respect in my background. seemed close minded and I had a feeling he might try to challenge me. During the break time I remember speaking to my supervisor and shared how close minded seemed. During the subsequent practice of the martial arts techniques seemed to use too much force on the others and mentioned that in a fight situation he would use so and so technique. I suppose eventually he got tired of me sharing and decided to try me out. When I used him

to demonstrate a technique he was quite cocky and eventually became un-compliant. He subsequently tried to wrestle me aggressively to the floor. At this point I felt I needed to protect myself, though only being 16 years old was taller than me and looked to outweigh me by 15kgs or so. At this point I dropped to the ground with him on top of me and proceeded to put him into an arm lock, a submission technique which he succumbed to. He seemed to have his ego bruised and walked out of the room. From my observations it seemed the other SWP youth were surprised at his behaviour although no one said anything. After the lesson I went up to to apologies for hurting him but explained that he left me with no choice but to defend myself and that I was very restrained in my response to his aggressiveness. His response was "next time I'll do better!" This situation made me very extremely uncomfortable; I then immediately spoke to my supervisors to explain what had happened and how bad I felt about the incident. Although I anticipated the possibility of an SWP youth challenging me; I was still unhappy of how things turned out and felt foolish that I needed to use my martial arts on a youth. My supervisors shared that this was something we all anticipated and I did what I needed to do, although this was true I became contemplative of the incident over the next few days.

CR Programme (SWP)

time	theme	exercise	resource
Fri 20 th Oct	Summary		
4:30pm	Reflection/ Topics	Summary of the core CR concepts Feedback & what you personally took back from the programme	
	Quote	"Fear leads to anger, anger leads to, hate, hate leads to suffering." - - Yoda	
	Exercise	SWP youths to decide	
6pm		<i>End of session 6</i>	

Reflection

I was hoping would attend this session so we could conduct a debriefing on the incident; unfortunately he did not turn up. I started off the session by addressing the incident with the other SWP youth to try and understand what they thought of the incident. It was fascinating for me that the boys were very reluctant to discuss the issue and their mood was one of somber. I found this difficult as I thought that surely on a subconscious level they must have knew his behaviour was out of line. It was quite difficult talking to the youth and finally we realized that no one wanted to speak because they were all friends with him. No one was willing to comment on his actions as they viewed it as snitching on him. I was dumbfounded; if someone does something that goes against my personal beliefs (ex stealing) I wouldn't be able to respect the actions of that person. It doesn't mean I don't respect the person it just means I don't appreciate their actions (of course there are exceptions to this in exceptional circumstances). Perhaps in these types of situations the difference is that I am able to separate the person from the action while the SWP youth view it differently.

Or perhaps the lessons from the CR programme were not actually being accepted by the boys. This was something I needed to accept, in reality change or the ability to influence only develops over an extended period of time. Being realistic the CR program lasted only 6 weeks and subsequently the SWP youth graduated from the streetwise programme. Perhaps this is why Beyond takes a long term view while working with the children and youth it serves.

5 Evaluation of the conflict resolution program

Though the total CR program with its core and follow up component lasted only 6 weeks the amount of planning and preparation required for this program to be successful was quite substantial. The program was definitely a work in progress. I say this because at the end of each session we conducted a debrief

and based on the insight we received we were then able to tweak the following CR session to make it more relevant to the boys. The debriefings provided an opportunity for the SWP youth to share –

- what they learnt
- what they observed from themselves and of each other
- what they like and disliked and what they found interesting

In addition we used the 1 to 10 method of rating, 1 (being very lousy) and 10 (being very interesting) and got them to expound on why they chose their ratings (these are some of the debriefing method we use in Campland – adventure learning). The rationale for the debriefing was to gauge how receptive the boys were and how much they absorbed. I really wanted the boys to feel empowered take a leadership role in the CR program. It was pointless for them to simply go through the motions and be robot like, since the program was designed for them they were asked to be critical and we would see how we could keep attending to their needs (WILL) in the next sessions. The majority of the feedback we got at the end of each session was that it was engaging but there was too much talking (theory), they preferred the physical elements.

I chose to continue the format as I planned it which was a combination of theory, martial arts techniques, worksheets and homework. As much as I wanted to keep attending to the WILL of the youth during each of the sessions I couldn't forsake the social work element of the program. Beyond is not a martial arts school, without the theoretical side the physical elements in the CR program was meaningless.

In the appendix I'll share the feedback form we received from the SWP youths after the final 6 core CR sessions. Their feedback will be invaluable for us the next time we conduct the CR program.

5.1 Concepts from the diploma in social work practice

Reflecting back over the planning and execution stage of the CR program; there were some key concepts from the diploma in social work practice that I applied.

Moral Reasoning – Based on the discussions with the youth it seems they have a mentality of teleological ethics. When we spoke about the fighting incident (with my friend) involving knives they all changed their minds and said they wouldn't fight based on the outcome of the fight (aggressors carried knives and stabbed my friend)

Kohlberg's developmental stages – The SWP youth seemed to be at level 2, the self interest "what's in it for me". Perhaps this can be attributed to their age but the majority of the SWP youth seem to have a self serving mentality. This was precisely why it was important to align to them and attend to their WILL; from there hopefully the opportunity to influence them would come.

Alignment and Attending to the WILL of the client – This concept was a major reason for the usage of the martial arts in the CR program. Alignment and the WILL of the client are mentioned more in the following SONI paragraph.

SONI – This was helpful in understanding that there were 4 levels to consider, the **Structure** government/ policy makers and authorities, the **Organization** - SWP program and beyond, the **Network** (though not heavily utilized) and the **Individual** the SWP youth. In addition each level of SONI was involved with the CR program for different reasons and brought different objectives/ traits to the program. **S** – Government, policy makers and authorities made it necessary for the youth to join the streetwise program, **O** – SWP youth workers who were in charge of the boys brought authority, in addition Beyond as an organization desired a development of a program that was both relevant to the youth and

could meet the organizational objectives and the I – SWP youth brought their WILL and strengths to the program.

It was observed that the organization (O); the streetwise program to be specific, was not in alignment with the (I) SWP boys. This caused tension and frustrations for both the community/ youth workers who felt the boys were being stubborn and difficult. The youth in turn felt frustrated with the program activities as well as the expectations placed upon them. It is be futile and counterproductive to expect the youths to simply “fall into line” and get with the program. A more useful approach was for the (O) organization to become flexible, realign to the WILL of the boys (I) and alter their methods.

Initially it was difficult for the youth workers to understand why the need for a CR program (as they believed the SWP already addressed similar issues previously). They felt they were being criticized for poorly managing the youth, when in reality we were simply proposing a more effective method of working with the boys, one that aims to attend to the WILL of the youth while simultaneously incorporating our key goals and objectives. After much persuasion I managed to change the perspective of the organization (the SWP) and received their support for the development of the CR program. The (S) aspect of SONI will also be mentioned in the follow up section of this thesis; the (N) aspect of SONI was not utilized.

5.2 Follow Up

After the six core CR program sessions several of the SWP youth requested to learn Thai kickboxing from me. While Beyond is not a martial arts school I was reluctant to flatly deny the boys. Instead I noted their *strength* for physical expression and felt this was an opportune time to search for a good martial arts instructor who could work with these youth and instill qualities of social responsibility, control and virtues of compassion. During this time my

supervisor was invited to an Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime (IMYC) 10 year dinner celebration. The notion of getting the boys to perform was brought up and after consulting the boys we managed to secure a performance slot for the SWP youth of Beyond. We had several weeks to prepare for the performance and I chose some key concepts we could physically demonstrate through various martial arts techniques, in addition while searching for a martial arts instructor to refer the boys to, I decided to spend more time practising kickboxing techniques with the youth.

Performance

For the performance the youth were then given an opportunity to discuss which techniques they preferred and which they weren't comfortable with. 2 weeks into practice the national youth council (NYC) requested for us to have a practise session at their HQ so they could understand our performance and introduce us appropriately on the evening of the dinner. I remembering arriving at NYC and met the SWP youth there. Just as we were suppose to show the NYC staff our performance the SWP youth decided they did not want to practise. Except for 1 youth the remaining were adamant they did not want to perform anymore. This came as a shock and we requested NYC to give us a 15 minute break. After 10 minutes or so of beating around the bush the boys finally shared that they never wanted to perform. The youth worker with me countered that "we asked you and you consented". The boys then shared that they felt stupid going up on stage and "acting like clowns for the benefit of the important people". They saw performance in general (without financial rewards) as a waste of time. Both the youth worker and I were unable to influence the boy's decision not to perform. The boys shared "we know we are being bastards to you guys but we just don't want to perform". The youth worker then needed to explain to NYC that Beyond was no longer taking part in the IMYC dinner.

This incident left me feeling quite irritated frankly, I couldn't understand the youth. If they didn't want to perform they should have been explicit when

presented with the idea. This was a brilliant opportunity to influence the social structure in SONI. Several key people from NYC and IMYC as well as other organisations who work with youth would be in attendance at the dinner. In addition the deputy prime minister of Singapore and the minister for community development and youth affairs were the guest of honours. This was an opportunity to take the “flaws” (fighting) and turn it into a genuine strength. The boys would have the chance to showcase that although they learnt some martial arts techniques and were ex secret society members, they were still cable of being social responsible youth. I found it strange that they chose to behave in this manner; maybe the boys did it intentionally as they saw it was an opportunity for “pay back”. After all, the SWP youth were heavily dependent on the youth workers who controlled their time and energies during the 6 month SWP programme and imposed their WILL onto the boys. Now that the boys had graduated the youth workers didn’t have the power to influence them anymore.

After many discussions with my supervisors and the youth workers we decided to talk to the boys again. This was too good of an opportunity for the boys to pass on, perhaps it wasn’t their WILL just yet; but it was important for them to understand what the performance represented. Their demo was not meant as a side show to the dinner and they were not seen as entertainers. Eventually the youth workers had to humble themselves and take a one down approach to the boys. This was significant and again the O in SONI was being influenced. All of a sudden the SWP youth had the power and were able to “do a favour” for the youth workers. With the change in the balance of power the boys became favourable to the performance and training could resume (kindly refer to the appendix for the performance program).

Reflection

Hopefully the youth workers learnt from this experience and realised that imposing their WILL was not an effective method of working. As youth workers, if they choose to position themselves in a position of absolute authority and be

rigid, it is unlikely they will garner genuine respect among the SWP boys. This certainly is not a conducive method to genuinely attend, understand and influence the youth.

On the night of the dinner the boys felt like VIPs. They were treated to an 8 course meal and Beyond was allocated a table all to ourselves. The performance went well, though not quite as smoothly as the boys had anticipated. During the last segment of the performance volunteers were requested from the audience. The SWP youth put several arm grabs on the volunteers and told them to get out of it. Most of the volunteers struggled as they were using a rock approach to a rock stimulus. When the roles were reversed the boys were suppose to share the rock and water attitude (never meet force with force). However several of the youth found it difficult to break free of the grabs, some of the volunteers were not being as compliant as their partners had been during training. (In class the boys seemed interested in the techniques but displayed short term thinking, if they could perform the technique once that was enough for them, no repetition was needed). I thought this experience at the IMYC dinner was magnificent for the boys, I observed at the end of the performances that they seemed to realise that the techniques were not as easy as they had initially thought. All in all the performance was a hit and many of the attendees came to our table to share their complements.

A few days after the performance we received 2 emails; one was from the NYC coordinator for youth services who shared - *"Was personally impressed by the boys' performance. In particular I liked the audience participation part. Felt it went well :) Once again we'd like to appreciate Beyond for performing at the dinner. We're glad of the impact that it had on the boys and hope that they'll aspire towards greater heights in future"*. The second email was from the director of NYC who shared *"It was a thoughtful performance, and I enjoyed it. At the VIP table, I also saw that the guests generally stopped to watch the proceedings. Thanks for bringing the boys to do the performance."*

This was certainly inspiring and though we might not have changed the structure of the government and policy makers I feel we managed to make a small impact and share with them that what they perceived as a flaw (physical expression/ fighting) could actually be turned into a strength.

***Karate Training** – I'm happy to share that on the 10th Feb 07 we will be able to refer the SWP youth and other beneficiaries of Beyond to Karate training. Through the use of social capital, we have managed to find a credible Karate instructor keen to volunteer and share the virtues of the martial arts to disadvantaged children and youth*

Appendix

29-Nov-2006

The IMYC 10-Year Commemorative Dinner

Demonstration of Rock & Water Principles

IMYC Dinner 29 Nov 06

Exercise 1

1. Group walks to centre of stage and salutes audience
2. A assumes the rock position while B pushes him (Demonstrates the strength of physical rock)
3. B demonstrates on A the weakness of physical rock (Break the Rock)

4. B becomes water (without strong base) and A physically moves B
5. B becomes water (with strong base) and A commits a strong push (walks through B – akin to kicking in an open door)

Exercise 2

1. SWPs request for volunteers to partner them.
2. Volunteers are requested to get out of various wrist holds
3. Volunteers grab wrists of SWPs, SWPs get out of the various wrist holds
4. SWPs teach volunteers the techniques

Appendix

Pictures of the SWP youth performance at the IMYC Dinner 291106



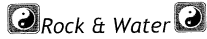
SWP youth on stage with the volunteers



After the performance – notice the youth workers standing proudly next the SWP youths.

Feedback Form

Appendix

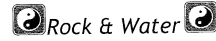


Give us YOUR FEEDBACK on how to make R & W better and more relevant to your needs.

Please think before answering and provide your most honest answers. Circle the appropriate answer.

- I found the lesson**
1. Very boring 2. boring 3. ok 4. interesting 5. Very interesting
- I found the trainers**
1. Very boring 2. boring 3. ok 4. interesting 5. Very interesting
- Did I understand the lesson?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly well 4. Well 5. Perfectly
- Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** the physical parts.
- One suggestion I'd like to make is** have more of the physical part.
- One thing I can practise immediately is** the rock and water attitude.
- Any other comments :** Good and interesting programme.

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W

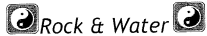


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- Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** more of practical stuff.
- One suggestion I'd like to make is** teach more on physical protection.
- One thing I can practise immediately is** having a strong bid, proving confidence.
- Any other comments :** Nice!

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W

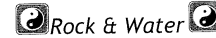


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- Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** the techniques and the mentality of rock and water.
- One suggestion I'd like to make is** give lessons on the physical techniques
- One thing I can practise immediately is** the simple technique,
- Any other comments :**

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W

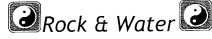


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- Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** more physical activity
- One suggestion I'd like to make is** more of physical activity.
- One thing I can practise immediately is** having a strong base and build up my body.
- Any other comments :** No.

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W

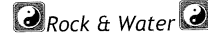


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- 4. Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- 5. What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** less of theory and more practice.
- 6. One suggestion I'd like to make is** to talk w/ man that.
- 7. One thing I can practise immediately is** having a strong back.
- 8. Any other comments:** wonderful.

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W

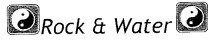


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- 4. Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- 5. What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** with more examples.
- 6. One suggestion I'd like to make is** Nothing
- 7. One thing I can practise immediately is** to control anger.
- 8. Any other comments:** no

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W

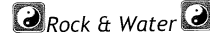


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- 4. Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- 5. What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** more physical stuffs
to help us understand
- 6. One suggestion I'd like to make is** the physical activities
- 7. One thing I can practise immediately is** having footstubs to
work towards my goals.
- 8. Any other comments :** _____

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W



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- 4. Did I find the examples given by the trainers relevant?**
1. Not at all 2. A little 3. Fairly relevant 4. Relevant 5. Very relevant
- 5. What I would have liked covered in this lesson is** how to rock
make monthly
- 6. One suggestion I'd like to make is** the more videos
of Bruce Lee
- 7. One thing I can practise immediately is** having a strategy book
- 8. Any other comments :** This course is fun!

Thank You for Your Participation in R & W