

“PEERS FOR CHANGE”

Developing peers to take peers out from substance abuse
Residential Workshop Report 2015



Organized by:



Childhood enhancement
through Training and Action
(CHETNA)

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Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA), founded under Public Charitable Trust Registration Act in 2002, envisions building a child-friendly society. The organization seeks sustainable solutions to long-term problems of 'street and working children (SWC) through an integrated, community-based, participatory approach that reinforces civil society as well as government initiative.

The project 'Peer-to-Peer substance Harm Reduction Centre' was initiated in 2010 by partners CHETNA and ipartner India and later joined by Plan India with an objective to work with street and working children (SWC) using substances. With its two centres, one in Nizamuddin and another in Mathura, it primarily targeted children who lived and/or worked at the railway stations and consumed substances. During the project's five years' journey over 900 children have been assisted through its centres, helping them get rid of substances or at least minimize the hazards by reducing their intake. The experience gained from these centers helped CHETNA expand its tentacles into other areas.

Peers always play important part in life of children at stations hence we have developed many participatory peer led models in this journey.

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Note: Children consent has been taken to publish their picture.

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OVERVIEW

Central to the CHETNA's efforts towards empowerment of street children is a unique initiative, in which a group of children are taken for a residential workshop for 3 days aimed to bring a positive change in their lives by inculcating values which empower them. This year's residential workshop focused on those children who live around addicts but themselves are not or mild users of drugs. The aim was to mobilize these children into an action group that will help them stay away from drugs and also help their peers in coming out of drug addiction, under CHETNA's "Peer to Peer Substance Harm Reduction Program".

Substance abuse and drug addiction are one of the biggest problems prevalent among street children, impacting them at the physical, emotional as well as behavioural level. Their life situation, for example living alone at the railway station, makes them even more vulnerable. Children are a force that can be tapped and channelized into the right direction if they are given positive simulation. This workshop tried to provide an enabling environment so that the children can learn to cope with this problem of substance abuse and also be a force that can help other children to come out of addiction.

This workshop at "Indira Gandhi Holiday Home for Children" at Damdama, Haryana gave a chance to the children to experience an environment in which they could imbibe new positive habits and let go of their negative habits. It provided them with a drug free environment where they could learn and incorporate qualities that would help them in coping with their life problems and life situations and also enable them to help their friends and peers, increasing the impact of this initiative exponentially. A new environment helps in learning new ideas as the old conditioning of life do not act as a hindrance rather new experiences are formed which get deeply imbibed by the child's psyche. Hence the residential nature of this workshop broadens the scope of learning, making it more concrete which is constantly reinforced by the various activities that take place during the entire period of the workshop.



OBJECTIVES

- To enable the children to protect them from substance abuse and also learn how to help peers come out of addiction.
- To inculcate qualities and skills which helps them cope with the problem of addiction and strengthen them.
- To create an action group of 20 children who go back and help other children in coping with the problem of addiction and help them come out of it.
- To create a training module this can help other children to learn how to help peers who are substance users.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP

THE JOURNEY (21st November 2015)



The three day workshop to Damdama Haryana started on 21st November 2015 where a group of 25 children boarded a bus from the Nizamuddin centre of CHETNA. The children were from Delhi and Mathura and most of them lived at Nizamuddin railway station or Mathura junction. The boisterous bunch of children filled the bus with their energy. They looked out of the window with wonder in their eyes, as we passed the tall buildings of Gurgaon, and the airplanes on the runway of the airport. Suddenly the journey was interrupted by the bus breaking down, but rather than dampening the spirits of children it was taken as an opportunity by them to play games and sing songs, livening up the entire atmosphere of the bus until another bus was arranged. On reaching the destination "Indira Gandhi Holiday Home for Children" the children were first briefed about the rules of the holiday home and then lead to the dining room for sharing about venue and child protection guidelines.



The participants were then assembled in the activity room and given jackets, a pair of shoes, inner, a cap and some basic toiletries and sent to their rooms along with their supervisors to rest until dinner. Post dinner music was organized and the children danced to their latest songs, until their bed time.

WORKSHOP DAY 1 (22nd December)

The first day of the workshop started with official welcome and prayer. The objectives of the workshop were discussed with the children. Rules to which all the participants were required to abide by, all through 3 days of workshop, were framed following a democratic process. One by one the children themselves stated the rules that they felt were needed for the smooth running of the workshop. Setting the tone for the participatory nature of the workshop, children were given responsibility to ensure the rules were followed, by putting children into three **Children Management Committees** – Food Committee, Time management and discipline committee, and Cleanliness committee. This was followed by a unique introduction activity called “**Child in the Mirror**” in which the children stood in front of a mirror and introduced themselves as if talking about another person. Very interesting insights about the how the children perceive themselves and their lives came out during this activity. Post tea break the first session of the workshop started with an ice breaking activity called **Free Association** in this the children were given a word and they were asked to say the first word that came to their mind in response to that word. This was followed by the first group activity “**Peer on a Balloon**” in

which each child was given a yellow and a red balloon. The participants were asked to make a face of that child whom they helped come out of drug addiction on the yellow balloon and on the red balloon a face of a child whom they tried to help but could not get him or her out of addiction. One by one each child came on stage and spoke about both the instances. This brought to the forefront the various ways in which the children try to help their peers in getting out of drug addiction. After this the children were divided

into four groups and each group was given an aspect of drug addiction which they had to show in the form of a small skit. The children were given time to prepare their skits. At the time of the presentation of skits a group of children from



prominent Gurgaon schools who were at the Indira Gandhi holiday home for the day visit came to interact with the children of the work shop. The first skit on the causes of drug addiction was presented through a role play of how a child is forced to come out on the streets due to strife in the family where peers take advantage of his emotionally fragile state and introduce him to drugs. The second group presented a skit on the bad effects of drug use by showing how drugs can cause cancer and could even lead to death by accidents like coming under a train, and also lead children to crime. The third groups play depicted how they can help other fellow children who are drug addicts. This group showed this by situations in which they sacrificed something for their friend despite him being an addict and this inspires the friend to leave drugs. The fourth group showed how with the help of self-control, by removing themselves from the situation where drug use is prevalent, by remembering its harmful effects they have stayed away from drugs despite staying in an environment where drug use is rampant amongst their peers. This officially ended the day's activity of the workshop.

WORKSHOP DAY 2 (23rd November 2015)

After a lovely breakfast the children started the day with prayer and recap of what they learnt from the activities of the previous day. This was

followed by discussing the performance of the three committees and new members for the committees were nominated. The day's session started with a game **Trust Fall** in which a child was made to stand in the middle



and he was blind folded other children were told to stand around him and act as his protective circle. The child with the blind fold was asked to fall in any direction and the protective circle around him will hold him and not let him fall. This activity brought out the importance of trusting peers and

showed the participants how they have to act like this protective circle in the outside world for their peers who have fallen into the trap of drug addiction and help them come out of it. The next group activity was called **"Mann Ki Baat"** (Voice of Heart). In this the children were told to imagine the face of a person who has had a positive impact on their lives and think about the qualities which they liked about them followed by visualizing a person who had negative impact on their lives and the qualities that they dislike about them. Each child was asked to share who they visualized and why. Through this activity a list of qualities came out which impact the children in a positive manner and what they perceive as helpful, hence the participants were made aware of the qualities which had a positive impact and qualities which give a negative impact on their lives and their peers.

Next a special **treasure hunt with difference** was organized for the participants. The children were divided into two teams. The first team named themselves "Jagga Jaasos" and the second team was called "James Bond". Through the treasure hunt Team Jagga Jaasos had to find 10 steps with the help of which they can help their peer in coming out of addiction. Similarly Team James Bond had to find 10 qualities which are required to be able to help another child come out of addiction. Both the teams were given 25 minutes to find the ten slips with these qualities and steps. Both the teams left no stone unturned and with great zeal and vigour found all the steps and qualities within 25 minutes. Through this activity the children were introduced to the qualities and steps which would assist them in helping their peers come out of addiction. These qualities and steps were discussed with the children. During the discussion the steps were put in an order and the ten qualities were explained to the children adding on to their understanding of it. In the afternoon session the

participants played various outdoor games through which they understood the importance of teamwork and how by working together they can overcome various challenges. During the evening dance session the children were divided into four teams which would present a cultural program the next day evening.

WORKSHOP DAY 3 (23rd November 2015)

The last day of the workshop was dedicated to the outdoor **Dar Ke Aage Jeet Hai** (Win over fear) adventure activities like rock climbing, rappelling, flying fox, shooting etc. these activities demonstrated how to overcome and handle challenges in life. It helped the children in practical application of the qualities discussed the previous day. For example during the rifle shooting exercise an activity called **“Shoot The Devil”** was used by the children, in which the children named two of their bad habits and vowed to let go of them and shoot them away with their gun shot. The outdoor activities had physically exhausted the children and so the children were made to relax by a special relaxation activity in which they laid down and relaxed each and every part of their body. This was followed by Feedback of the children about what they learnt during the workshop was taken. The workshop culminated with a cultural program **Kisme Kitna Hai Dum (test your strength)** in which four teams of



the participants showcased their dancing, singing and speech making talent.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES (An Analysis)

The activities of this workshop were constructed around a concept of equipping a group of street children with an ability to help other street children come out of drug addiction and substance abuse. The training module started with the concept of understanding self which included activities like Mirror Introduction, Free association, Mann ki baat. The second part of the module dealt with understanding peers in which the participants understood how their peers perceive the problem of substance abuse, they also gained insight on the various qualities which were perceived as helpful and the traits that had negative impact on their peer's lives by sharing their life experiences with the help of Role Play and the Balloon activity. The third level of the workshop focused on the idea of Enabling Self. In this with the help of activities like Treasure hunt, Outdoor games and Adventure games various qualities and steps required to help a peer suffering from addiction, were inculcated and demonstrated by the participants. The fourth and final part of the programme was enabling Peer, in which the participants use the qualities and steps learnt in this workshop and help people they know with their addiction.



1. CHILD IN THE MIRROR

This innovative introduction activity gave insight and understanding of the background the children come from, their like's dislikes and their perception of life. In the process of speaking about the person they saw in the mirror some children gave intimate details about themselves. For example eleven year old Shabana from Mathura expressed her anger towards her father who physically abuses her and therefore she doesn't want to go home and prefers to live at the railway station. She spoke like a boy looking into the mirror. This is a survival technique used

by her to hide her identity in order to protect herself sexually and physically. It also indicated her deep need to affiliate with and be a part of the dominant group in her environment (which is Mathura railway station) which invariably consists of boys.

Therefore through this new technique deeper understanding of the lives, likes dislikes, problems of the children came to the forefront. Hence the

2. FREE ASSOCIATION

This activity was based on a technique through which unconscious ideas and feeling come into the conscious mind. In this the participants were made to sit in a circle and the facilitator in the middle of the circle gave a word and each child responded with the first word that came to their mind when they heard the source word. During the activity the participant's inner and unconscious associations with the word came to the forefront. For example words like belief, trust, support, helping came in response to the word friendship. This showed the importance of friendship in the lives of these children. In the absence of parents and family the most intimate bond these children create is friendship with their peers. It is also the most influential bond in their lives as these children are each other's support. This reinforced the idea of the workshop that street children themselves can be the most effective force that could help other children who are addicts.

3. PEER ON A BALLOON

In this activity the children were asked to draw a face of one person they helped come out of addiction on the yellow balloon, and on the red balloon draw a face of a person who they tried to help but were unable to bring them out of addiction. Each child spoke about how they helped in the two scenarios. Through this activity techniques



already used by the children to help others came into the forefront. It was observed that the participants have tried to make their peers leave substance use by telling them how harmful it is, by using the influence of parents or CHETNA centre,

by providing better work opportunity on the condition that they leave drug use, at times even by intimidating them or beating them up (

when the peer was younger). Similarly the times when the participants could not help were when the drug using child was not in constant contact, all members of their family did drugs or the peer was elder to them and they didn't have any influence on them.

This showed that the participants had a desire to help their peers and even tried in their own small way, and if their efforts are consolidated they could bring about substantial difference in the lives of their peers who are still struggling from addiction.

4. ROLE PLAY



In this activity the children were divided into four groups with each group to prepare a role on a given theme which were – causes of addiction, harmful effects of addiction, how to save yourself from addiction, and how to help another who is an addict. Children with

the help of real life situations which they have experienced themselves or seen made the storyline of the play. Through role play sense of empathy was initiated in the children. They learnt about the various problems and cause of addiction by themselves playing the role and also demonstrated how they can help themselves and their peers in coming out of addiction.

5. MANN KI BAAT

During this activity the participants were asked to talk about the qualities of one person who had a positive impact on their lives and qualities of another person who had a negative impact in their lives. This gave the children an understanding of how some qualities of a person like unconditional support, respecting the other, talking politely can have significant positive impact and how negative qualities like hitting, misleading someone can have negative impact on their lives and lives of their peers.

6. TREASURE HUNT

This was a special activity in which the participants were divided into two teams. Each team was to find ten qualities or ten steps which they can use to help their peer come out of addiction. The qualities / steps were hidden throughout the campus. On finding the quality/ steps a clue was given as to where they will find the next quality/ step. This activity showcased teamwork amongst the children and through the process of finding the qualities and steps were imbibed by the children. After all the Qualities and Steps were discovered by the participants, the children along with their facilitators discussed the various steps first. The steps were organized in a chronological order by the children. Similarly the 10 qualities they had found were discussed and how to demonstrate them was shown by the children. Through this activity the qualities and steps were deeply ingrained in the memory of the participants since they actively through treasure hunt discovered them and then they were reinforced by the discussion that followed. This activity equipped and enabled the children with a concrete methodology which they can use when they want to help another child who is an addict. During this exercise the children came up with a slogan for their cause of helping their peers come out of addiction – **“NA KHUD KARNEGE NA KARNE DENGE”** (“neither will we do nor let others do”)

QUALITIES

Keep Patience

Good listener

Ability to face challenges

Strong will power

Understand others problems and circumstances (EMPATHY)

Positive outlook

Stay happy yourself and keep others happy

Lead by example

Don't lose your temper

Will to help others

STEPS

1. Identify the child who needs help

2. Create a bond of friendship with the child

3. Understand the environment

4. Understand why they use drugs or any other substance

5. Talk about addiction and make them aware of its harmful effects

6. Tell your experience, and how you left or protected yourself from it

7. Motivate the child to leave substance use

8. Do not pass a judgement

9. Connect the child to CHETNA Center

10. Engage the child in alternate activities

7. OUTDOOR GAMES & ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES



The outdoor games and adventure activities was a special feature of this residential workshop. Children played games like blind fold and bricks game. These were problem solving games which encouraged team work in order to overcome the challenges in front of the participants. It also made children understand the importance of communication and correct guidance. The children during the discussion integrated these games with the problem of drug use prevalent in their environment, and how like the blind fold in the game the children using drugs have a blind fold of addiction on them and are in need for guidance and help by others.

Various Adventure activities like Rock climbing;Rappelling, Flying-fox, Burma Bridge, Commando, Trekking, etc.were enjoyed by the participants. All these activities have a common element, that is, all of them have some barriers and challenges that the participants are required to overcome. The morale of the children attempting the games was boosted up by the clapping and cheering that came from their fellow group members. Children themselves expressed that the cheering helped them finish the task when they were about to give up. After each game, a kind of group discussion was held amongst the participants. They were helped to associate these barriers with their real-life challenges. They realized that as the encouragement from friends helps them overcome the fear of the game and finish the task successfully, similarly their encouragement and support will help their peers come out of addiction and help them overcome their challenge of leaving substance use.

8. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES



The recreational activities gave a chance to the children to express their creative talents. In the run up to this activity every evening post dinner the children were given some recreation time in which they enjoyed singing and dancing and to songs. This orgy of musical entertainment provides children moments of happiness, helping them release their negativity. It also helps in improving their skills of organization, dancing, singing and anchoring. Organized on the last day, the cultural programme forms the most action-packed activity of the workshop. The entire team of children and coordinating staffs are divided into 4 groups, which was done on the second last day of the workshop, so that they have a full day's time for preparation. They worked separately in their groups, mostly during the evening, lest other activities of the workshop get affected. Performances are held in the evening of the last day, wherein all the teams compete against one another. At the end, the winner group is announced by a panel of judges.

OUTCOMES

- The residential workshop inculcated in them qualities and steps required in order to help their peers who are suffering from the problem of addiction.
- The participants got a chance to understand the positive qualities and to use them in the various activities done throughout the workshop.
- The workshop helped empower the participants and it was noticed that the children after the workshop were more confident and felt a sense of duty towards the other children who need help in coming out of drug addiction
- The children with the slogan "NA HUM KARENGE NA KARNE DENGE" vowed to go back and act as a group which will help their friends who use drugs leave their addiction, through the skills acquired in the workshop. Hence an action group by the children has created for the children.



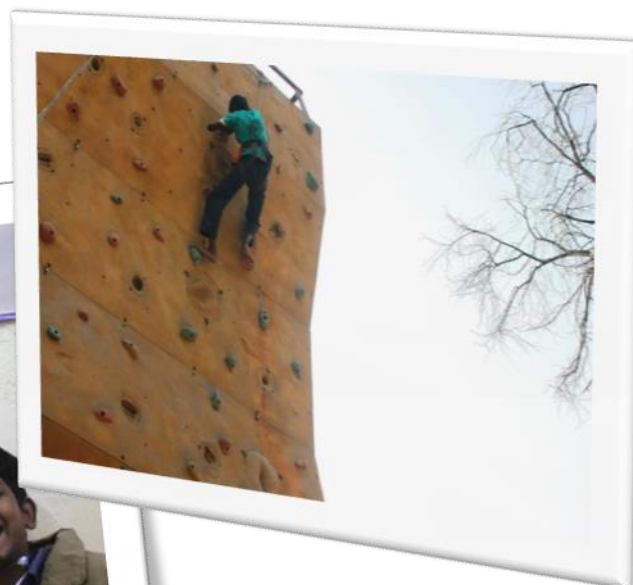
RECCOMENDATIONS

- The participants of the workshop can be divided into two subgroups of age 8 to 12 and 13 to 16. This will provide a more focused approach and the younger children will not get overshadowed by the older ones.
- There should be a follow up workshop for the participants. Their progress should be monitored and assistance provided to them with their endeavour of helping other friends come out of addiction. The impact of workshop on participants can be measure through periodic monthly feedback for six months
- There was a need felt during the workshop to work on the Mental Health of these children, since their stress full environment, traumatic experiences, mal nourishment make them vulnerable to mental disabilities.
- A special mental health centre dedicated to those children whoneed psychological assistance can be set up.
- This program can also be used on a larger scale with school children, since substance use is rampant in all strata's of society. The training module can be modified and used in schools to prevent children from getting into substance use and addiction.
- The model has tremendous scope and there is a need to test its replicability component by organising this workshop one or two times within a period of six months. This will also further fine-tuned the model and make it more effective.

CONCLUSION



The essence of CHETNA's Residential workshop was beautifully expressed by Raju a 15 year old boy from old Delhi railway station - "Yahan aakar mujhe pehli baar pata chala ki main nashe ke bina khush reh sakta hu aur masti kar sakta hu." He said that through this workshop he realized for the first that he can have fun without doing any substance that he can sing and dance and be happy without the influence of drugs. In the difficult lives of these street children such moments of carefree happiness are very limited. Raju statement brings to light what this workshop does for these children. These children due to their circumstance become premature adults and develop behaviour patterns like rejection of authority, aggressiveness, an absence of limits, independence and a lack of affection. Hence suffer from problems with drug addiction, alcoholism, and delinquency, sexual and physical abuse making their overall mental health very fragile. This workshop is an effort in which these children get an enabling environment where they are helped with the problems they face and equipped to deal with them.



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