TOO ANGRY TO LEARN? AGGRESSION REPLACEMENT TRAINING FOR YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES IN A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT SETTING.

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ABSTRACT: Child care professionals at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres in Montreal, Canada incorporated Aggression Replacement Training (A.R.T.) into the treatment approach offered to clients in the Residential Treatment Services Division. This psycho-educational training adds the cognitive behavioral approach to the agency's systemic, family oriented treatment model, in its work with maladjusted and aggressive adolescents. A.R.T. (Goldstein, Glick and Gibbs, 1998) was introduced on a residential campus where methods and strategies were implemented to develop this structured learning approach and include it in the everyday programming. Family groups were designed to assist in transfer and maintenance of skills.

INTRODUCTION

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is a large Child and Youth care agency in Montreal, Canada. Its clientele ranges in age from 0-18 years old. Services are rendered under the Health and Social Services Act, the Youth Protection Act and the Young Offenders Act.

In the 1990's, Batshaw's residential treatment facility at Prevost, Quebec campus experienced an extremely problematic rise in levels of violence and aggressive behavior. Youth were becoming more aggressive towards parents, teachers, peers and youth care staff. Interested parties (youth care workers, social workers, program managers and co-ordinators) began to look at Aggression Replacement Training (Goldstein, Glick, Gibbs 1998) as one promising response to these issues of increasing violence. Management recognized the practical nature and potential of the program as well as the enthusiasm of their front line workers to take on such a program, and so supported a small number of staff to begin development of the A.R.T. project. With the success of some pilot projects, Batshaw has moved forward towards using A.R.T. on an agency wide basis.

This article will present an overview of the Goldstein A.R.T. model, its three components and the tools used to deliver the program. The choice to use A.R.T. at Batshaw and a special emphasis on the inclusion of parents and family members in Family A.R.T. follows. The article closes with a brief look at some of the various responses to the program to date.

The project presented in this paper evolved on a residential campus with seven units, 2 closed and 5 open units for adolescent boys. Inspired by the *Prepare Curriculum: Teaching prosocial competencies* (Goldstein, 1988) and *Aggression Replacement Training* (Goldstein, Glick, & Gibbs, 1998), a group of child care professionals began working towards delivering Aggression Replacement Training (A.R.T.) on campus in both custody and intermittent custody situations in the mid 90's. In January 1999, after some pilot projects and an A.R.T. Intermittent Custody Program were completed, a full blown central A.R.T. program, open to all campus residents, finally began. This prosocial skills training program was offered to interested, voluntary youth and their parents. It was also offered to youth that were court-ordered to follow a program which teaches anger management.

AN OVERVIEW OF A.R.T.

The Strategy

Aggression Replacement Training (A.R.T.) consists of three components: Social Skills Training, Anger Control Training and Moral Reasoning. One hour is allotted weekly, for each A.R.T. component over a period of ten weeks. Each group is comprised of 5-7 trainees and 2 animators. When adolescents are placed or sentenced to receive services from a rehabilitation centre they bring with them antisocial and aggressive behaviors. Adolescents arrive in care, with their own repertoire of behaviors learned over a period of ten years or more as they interacted with their own world. We have chosen to train youth to replace their "overlearned", aggressive and antisocial behavior patterns using Aggression Replacement Training. A.R.T. implements "overlearning" as a strategy to enhance transfer and generalisation of the prosocial skills taught in this comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth (Goldstein et al, 1998, p.160-161).

Four Tools Used to Train Youth in A.R.T.

A skilled A.R.T. animator must present prosocial skills in his/her interactions with all trainees. Using repetition, the best form of emphasis, the animator trains the youth in the use of prosocial skills, to counteract the years spent overlearning aggressive antisocial behaviors.

To accomplish this, the animators use four specific tools. Modelling is the first tool. Animators use modelling by providing prosocial examples to demonstrate a skill or anger reducing technique. In a brief skit, animators show the prosocial behavior to be learned by the trainees.

Trainees are then required to imitate the demonstration through the use of the second tool: role-playing. The trainees, who are encouraged to use a situation directly relevant to their own life experience, perform a role-play of the same prosocial behaviour. The purpose of the role-play now becomes twofold. First the exercise helps the trainee to practice the skill. Practice, or overlearning, is the name of the game. We counteract ten

years of overlearning antisocial behaviors with overlearning of prosocial. Then by using a role-play from the youth's own experience he/she will more likely use the skill to improve his/her responses when faced with the same situation in the future. This further improves the potential for these prosocial skills to be generalised by the youth and transferred to his/her repertoire of behaviors. The new skill can then replace the antisocial behaviors that have not served him/her well.

To overlearn and internalise the skill or technique, homework is assigned to the trainees to reinforce their skill acquisition through practice and repetition. The homework, in turn, becomes material for future role-playing.

A key to supporting the learning process is through positive reinforcement of appropriate learning accomplishments. Animators use performance feedback, the third tool, to highlight and emphasise the trainee's accomplishment in skills training, through praise for a correct answer and a job well done. Animator's look for *every* possible opportunity to praise trainees. After all, youth in residential care are more prone to receive corrective intervention than lots of praise due to the context and nature of residential placement for adolescents. This positive reinforcement has the effect of motivating the youth to work harder in order to experience more positive feedback and a greater sense of pride. This "too angry to learn" reaction by youth in care seems to disappear when their efforts in A.R.T. training are recognized and acknowledged strongly. Indeed, it is remarkable how these youths who take such adversarial stances with youth care workers and social workers seem to connect and become more open to treatment after A.R.T. Animator's (youth care workers and social workers) clearly demonstrate through the program that it is their primary focus to get the trainees out of placement and back into society. When lack of trust by the youths is broken down through the A.R.T. training process, trainees connect with trainers and true opportunities for the youth to learn surface. When trainees become less angry, and begin to trust animators and unit staff, then they are no longer "too angry to learn".

Finally, the critical tool to successful A.R.T. training is transfer training. Animators from a central A.R.T. program attempt to enhance the generalisation of skills taught to trainees by giving a written A.R.T. update to the residential unit staff team, school, nursing department and all those who are in contact with the youth on a daily basis. Memos sent to advise these persons provide a synopsis of what the trainee has been learning, so all staff can encourage the use and practice of these skills in everyday living. Again, the more practice the more likely a trainee is to internalise and retain the material learned.

Furthermore, for optimum generalisation of these skills to take place, it is most effective for parental/family participation in the training to occur. Hence the formation of A.R.T. training programs for the parents and families. If what the youngster has learned in residential treatment

can be transferred to the home environment, the potential for true change and use of prosocial alternatives is greatly improved. Another important benefit is that A.R.T. Family groups provide training to parents who may also have deficiencies in the prosocial skills taught in the curriculum. Taking the program enables parents to have new skills, which will serve them better, especially in their role as coaches for their children.

THREE COMPONENTS OF A.R.T.

1. Social Skills Training (Skillstreaming)

Experience at Batshaw has reinforced the premise that social maladjustment is highly correlated with lacking social skills. The youth in our care have been placed out of their homes for protective reasons or for offences committed. Whatever the reason for referral, the majority of our clientele can benefit from Social Skills Training. Goldstein and his colleagues have identified 50 skills, which make up this component of A.R.T. (Goldstein et al, 1998, p. 212). Ten skills have been suggested for use in the ten-week program. The principal of the training is to stay with one skill until the group has mastered the skill. In our program at Batshaw, we cover an average of 5 to 6 skills in the ten-week period.

Each session follows the same steps: all trainees are asked to explain what they think the new skill is all about or to define the skill, with animator's help, until all trainees understand. The co-animators first model the skill by acting out a carefully chosen scenario which explicitly shows each of the deliberate steps, which actually make up the skill. The animators then establish the youth's need for the skill by eliciting a situation from each trainee's past or future when the skill could apply (e.g. Making a complaint when someone borrows something without permission). Each youth role-plays as the main actor in a role-play scenario of his/her own design. The role playing of a scenario which is relevant to the trainee's life experience, also serves to enhance greatly the likelihood that the youth will transfer the A.R.T. skill for use in his everyday life. Animators provide performance feedback as often as possible and teach trainees to do so as well. Again, for the trainee to generalise the skill into his every day repertoire the use of performance feedback is a strong positive reinforcement. When the trainee receives praise for a job well done he/she is more likely to use the skill repeatedly. Finally homework to practice the skill is assigned, until the youth has mastered the use of the skill. The trainee is required to practice the skill as often as possible during the 7 days between Skillstreaming sessions. With practice comes acquisition of the skill and transfer of the skill into the youth's "playbook" for life.

This process is repeated with each skill to be taught. Animators use notes and modelling scenarios to teach each skill. Fifty skills are clearly delineated in Goldstein's text as illustrated in Figure 1 below (Goldstein et al,. 1998, p. 243).

Group V: Skills for Dealing with Stress

Skill 31: Making a Complaint

Steps	Trainer Notes
1. Decide what your complaint is. 2. Decide whom to complain to. 3. Tell that person your complaint. 4. Tell that person what you would like done about the problem. 5. Ask how he/she feels about what you've said.	• What is the problem. • Who can resolve it. • Consider alternative ways to complain (e.g. politely, assertively, privately). • Offer a helpful suggestion about resolving the problem.

SUGGESTED CONTENT FOR MODELING DISPLAYS:

School or neighborhood: Main actor complains to guidance counselor about being assigned to class that is too difficult.

Home: Main actor complains to sibling about unfair division of chores.

Peer group: Main actor complains to friend about spreading a rumor.

Figure 1. Typical example of an A.R.T. skill

2. Anger Control Training

At A.R.T. orientation, trainees are taught the dynamics or ABC's of anger. A stands for an Action which stimulates a reaction of *anger* in someone, B for the Behavior or response to the Action, C stands for the Consequences of the behavior or response. At first, youth are taught to identify their triggers or, in other words, what causes them to get angry. External triggers are things like getting pushed, being insulted etc. Internal triggers are thoughts, words, or actions, which are self-induced in response to external triggers. When the person pushed or insulted responds, by saying to him/herself, "I'm gonna smack 'em! ", their anger level escalates. It is at the level of these kinds of internal triggers where intervention to control the anger needs to begin.

Trainees learn to recognize their cues or physiological signs, which show them they are getting angry. These are signs like accelerated heartbeat, tensing muscles, gritting teeth, change in body temperature or altered facial color.

When youth can then recognize their cues, it's time to begin introduce the next concept, anger reducers. Anger reducers 1, 2, & 3 are important, fundamental techniques which are used as first line of defence against loss of anger control. Reducers 1 and 2 are deep breathing and counting backwards are techniques designed to physically calm one down and focus on something else. Deep breathing is the important first line response to anger which serves to assist in restoring physiological balance to a body where adrenaline and other bodily juices are flowing furiously.

Reducer 3 is a technique used to divert one's attention away from the anger-provoking situation, to more pleasant thoughts or pleasant imagery. All trainees are required to formulate their own unique and calming pleasant image, for future use. The classic one is being at the beach, sand between your toes, warm sun on your shoulders, waves rolling in, sun setting etc.

When trainees have each developed their own, personal, pleasant image then they are instructed to choose a Reminder for themselves. The reminder is a word or phrase they can say to themselves to instruct themselves to control their own escalating anger. They use statements like: "Calm down!" or "Forget it, it's not worth it! " or "Relax!".

Anger Reducer 4 or "Thinking ahead" is a most effective technique of anger control. Thinking ahead involves teaching our students to stop and think, before acting in a way they could later regret. Trainees are coached to think of possible consequences for aggressive responses. Then they are encouraged to come up with alternative solutions. Trainees are coached to develop a greater range of thinking going from most serious to least serious consequences, from short term to long term consequences and from internal consequences to social and legal consequences.

Animators teach trainees to use Self-Evaluation, in a number of ways. Firstly, trainees learn to replace support and performance feedback received in training sessions through self-talk in the form of self-coaching statements during or after an anger provoking situation. Secondly, animators teach self-rewarding statement use, for trainees to encourage themselves after correctly using anger control techniques. Coaching and rewarding themselves helps prevent their facing the consequences of their unchecked aggression.

Finally another tool used by trainee and animator alike, is the self-evaluation tool of the "Hassle log". The log is used as a sort of snapshot of an anger-provoking situation, which the youth has experienced. He/she has responded to the hassle with control or lack of control. The trainee then examines where and when the situation took place, with whom it took place and exactly what transpired. Next the subject can look at his/her triggers, cues, and his/her use of reducers, thinking ahead, reminders etc. Animators can use the log to monitor progress and then tailor training for the individual trainee. Ultimately, the hassle log also provides the trainers with personalised role-play material that the trainee can use in acting out the hassle situation using correct anger control techniques.

The use of the role-play is also a key tool in Anger Control Training. The hassle logs provide relevant role-play material. Finally, the skills learned in Social Skills Training become the anger control technique that rounds out the Anger Control Training. After using all the techniques from deep breathing to thinking ahead, the trainee replaces an aggressive behavioral response with the ultimate tool, the prosocial skill he/she has been practising in Social Skills Training.

3. Moral Reasoning Training

This part of the training allows youth to examine the underlying values that make them chose certain behaviors over others. Moral reasoning is used to help the youth to see clearly "why they do what they do." A typical Moral Reasoning session starts with the presentation of a moral dilemma around themes such as the use of violence, drugs, the wellbeing of others and the making of choices on other issues which entail the use of their value system. Youth are invited to indicate what they would do in the shoes of other persons described. The idea of the exercise is to have youth exposed to other people's values and to become aware that not everybody thinks like them. This further challenges the anti-social values that underlie many of the choices our clientele make.

Goldstein explains that according to Piaget and Kohlberg, children in the process of interacting with others, develop more mature social perspective taking and moral reasoning (Goldstein et al, 1998, p 99). The aim is to move those functioning at a purely egocentric, less mature moral reasoning level to a mature level of morality based on empathy, values of respect for others and principles of justice.

The Moral Reasoning Training provides deep food for thought to the trainees. Values are challenged and concern for others or at least greater awareness of others are the by-products. Most important of all, this component reinforces the need for our young trainees to think before they act.

IMPLEMENTATION OF A.R.T. AT BATSHAW: PREVOST CAMPUS

Prevost's Choice

Beginning in 1992-1993, Batshaw's exposure to Aggression Replacement Training came through training and program development with an associated Rehabilitation Centre, Le Centre d'Accueil La Cité des Prairies. Cité des Prairies was providing services to Batshaw youth who were court ordered to long term secure custody for crimes committed contrary to the Young Offender's Act. Also, some individual interest in A.R.T. among child care workers, social workers, program managers and co-ordinators was responsible for a movement towards adopting A.R.T. as a treatment intervention for youth on Batshaw's Prevost campus. Some pilot projects were attempted and a new, weekend, intermittent custody program was designed and begun in 1996 with Aggression Replacement Training being its central focus. These experiences demonstrated the simplicity and relevance of the A.R.T. concepts for youth in residential care, the relative ease with which the program could be delivered, as well as the positive response from youth and families. As a result, the interested management and front line staff chose to begin to develop Goldstein's A.R.T. program for use across Prevost campus.

Budgetary constraints common everywhere in the 90's of North America slowed the process, but finally, in September 1998, four child care workers were sent to a Goldstein seminar to become Aggression

Replacement Trainers. These four later trained other workers to become animators. In the winter of 1999, with a resident psychologist familiar with the Goldstein model, these trainers began a central A.R.T. program for Prevost campus.

STARTING UP

To offer a central program open to all units on Prevost campus required a great deal of effort and perseverance. A public relations blitz was required. The steps involved were the following: 1) Plastering the walls of the living units, school and administration building with Anger Control posters and skills from the Skillstreaming curriculum (e.g. Keeping out of Fights, Listening, Understanding the Feelings of Others, Negotiating, Using Self-control, etc.). 2) Meetings with child care workers and program managers to describe the program. 3) Informing the teachers about the program and organising a schedule of training sessions which would not disrupt the classes of the trainees. 4) A weekly newsletter was published and forwarded to living units, social workers, parents, school, security and all who come into direct contact with the trainees on a regular basis. This letter enabled the recipients to be aware of what the trainees were learning. This made possible the encouraging and coaching of trainees to use and practice their acquired skills in everyday life. 5) Interviews were set up with all potential trainees who voluntarily applied to take A.R.T. The interview process enabled the selection of a group of trainees from those youth with the greatest need and motivation to take A.R.T.

The response to the P.R. blitz and the first session was so enthusiastic, that it was necessary to train 2 more animators and offer a second group in the spring of 1999. The responses to the early sessions were mixed between skepticism and great enthusiasm for the program. Youth care staff reported a 50% decrease in violent episodes in clients using A.R.T. as well as an increase in trainee's use of prosocial skills. As a result, youth care staff encouraged more clients to take the program.

A.R.T. FOR THE FAMILY

Both Batshaw's treatment philosophy and Goldstein's Aggression Replacement Training model strongly assert the importance of parents or significant others being involved in the treatment process designed for their youth. Using a model developed during the pilot project at Cité des Prairies, the Prevost A.R.T. project expanded to include a Family A.R.T. program to be run in conjunction with the existing youth A.R.T. program. The Prevost campus director reorganised his budget to permit the staffing of two new people who were trained to animate both A.R.T. and family A.R.T. in 1999.

To organise an A.R.T. Family group it is necessary to first understand that parental involvement is key in the treatment of youth in residential

care. That understood, it becomes imperative to try to overcome any obstacles preventing parents from attending meetings. Other A.R.T. groups for parents have even paid parents to attend. At Batshaw we used other methods to bring parents to Family A.R.T.

Firstly, parents were sent a description of the program by mail. This was followed by personal phone calls to determine parent's interest level. If parents were keen but had problems being able to attend, A.R.T. staff were troubleshooting with the parents to facilitate the process. First parents were offered two different nights to choose from to attend meetings. Next, if transportation was an issue, the program animators offered a pick-up service from a number of convenient locations (shopping malls or subway stations). Bus or Subway tickets were offered to persons who could be hindered by financial limitations. Babysitting services or other arrangements were worked out so parents could be free to attend. Newsletters, which identified to parents what skills their sons were learning, were mailed weekly to parents who did attend and also to those who could not.

Parents who attended the group benefited from a support group type atmosphere. The early sessions unified the parents who discovered that they were not alone in their guilt or disappointment. Having their children in residential treatment rather than at home brought pain and shame to the entire group of parents. The rides on the pick up van brought some parents together with others and also with the animators who rode along or drove the pick-up van. The result was a better connection and less inhibited interaction during group time.

These family A.R.T. groups are so popular that parents frequently return for a second session. In fact, at least one parent from every group conducted at Batshaw since 1993 has returned to repeat the program.

FAMILY A.R.T. CURRICULUM

The Family A.R.T. program is delivered over 7-8 weeks in conjunction with an A.R.T. program for youth that runs for 10 weeks. Each session begins with a warm up period where the group is stimulated to think and participate in solving a riddle, brainteaser or some other form of "icebreaker". This puts the parents in a relaxed and more receptive frame of mind to absorb the material. For the first three weeks parents are given a condensed version of A.R.T. An overview of the entire program takes place first, followed by a more in-depth look at Anger Control training. A sample of the dilemmas used in Moral Reasoning are used to help parents appreciate what their sons are learning in that module, also. The main focus however, is Social Skills training.

At the first session parents share specific experiences and feelings about what it has meant for them to live through their son being placed or sentenced to residential care. This exercise usually helps to bring the group together through tears and emotionally charged stories about their children at the time of placement/sentencing. The guilt parents feel gets

expressed, then they realise they are not alone. After the tears, parents share joyful experiences when they share a fond memory of some cherished moment with their child that took place before this terrible mess. Parents bond together during these shared experiences, making possible their alliance as a group determined to do whatever is in their power, to help their child get back on track. When parents feel comfortable the group focuses on learning and role-playing skills which they will use with their own children beginning at Week Four.

An exercise in empathy training is used to prepare parents for the use of role-playing, whereby parents act out a simple emotion such as fear or happiness. No words are used in the role-play, so observers must focus on the actor's walking style, facial expression or body language in order to put one's self in the actor's shoes. Then they attempt to identify the particular feeling being modelled. The benefits are improved powers of observation and a better awareness of the feelings of others. Meanwhile, some experience in role-play has taken place, without parents having to deal with the intimidating task of speaking. Speaking comes next in full-fledged role-playing.

Parents or significant others then continue to role-play amongst each other until the fourth meeting when the youths join the Family A.R.T. group. At this point youth and parents begin role-playing together choosing role plays which are real issues for them. Together they can now act their real issues, using the prosocial skills taught in the program. At this point, as previously discussed, transfer training becomes the focal point in the Family A.R.T. program.

A session from Anger Control Training called the "Angry Behavior Cycle" teaches youth to look not only at what they do when others make them angry. This session forces them to look at what they do which makes other people angry. Pushing other people's "buttons" creates more conflict for them to have to deal with.

First the session is conducted in youth A.R.T. where youth care workers and A.R.T. animators help trainees to identify what they do that infuriates others (e.g. use sarcasm, ignore others, deliberately provoke those most likely to lose their temper). Then the trainees contract to stop some of these behaviors that make others angry. In the Family A.R.T. sessions, both youth and parents identify their behaviors that anger other family members and then contract to change those behaviors. Now the real work begins! Parents and youth begin to role-play situations in their real lives which create family conflict. Finally the family resolves some really typical struggles that all parents and children go through in life and even some more serious problems which are unique to them.

Our experience has been that families practising basic anger control techniques such as deep breathing and reminders coupled with basic social skills like Listening or Negotiating can experience major improvements in family interactions. All of a sudden, a family functions better because all of a sudden, they are *communicating*. We listened to one

family praise the program for the improvement when they applied two simple steps from the Listening skill they learned in Family A.R.T. : 1) Look at the person who is talking to you and 2) Wait your turn to talk. After some practice of the listening skill at home, they found themselves being able to actually complete a conversation without ending up in a big argument. Clearly the more practicing of the skills in the role-plays, the more the parents and the youth can experience positive changes in family interactions.

As a consequence, we encourage parents to do homework with their youth when they are at home together. These skills can then be posted on the fridge at home so that they will be transferred to use in real life situations.

ROLE REVERSAL

Once the animators discover the family dynamics of the trainee family, the use of role reversal becomes useful to the training in many cases. For instance, when role playing a negotiation concerning curfew between youth and parent we often choose to have them play each other. Then not only does it help them to practice the skill of Negotiating but it also requires them to see the negotiation from the other's perspective. In turn this helps in the development the skill of Understanding the Feelings of Others.

A remarkable example of role reversal in role-playing was in the case of one of our trainees and his stepfather. At one point the youth had said to stepdad, "You can't tell me what to do you're not my real father!" leaving a hurtful rift between the two who got along well together in the past. A month later, during a role play in Family A.R.T. while practicing the skill of Making a Complaint, the animators had stepdad and youth reverse roles. While role playing a complaint to stepfather about curfew, stepfather, in the role of his stepson, was coached to say, "You can't tell me what to do you're not my real father!" The youth, who was playing the role of his stepfather, stopped dead in his tracks. A hush fell over the room and stepson felt the pain he had inflicted previously on stepdad. They proceeded to discuss this hurtful comment which had never been processed and were able to eliminate this barrier that was effecting their current interactions. The benefit of the exercise was that they were now over that hurdle and able to focus again on the task of developing better skills for future interactions.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF A.R.T. AT BATSHAW

The strengths of the program are made clear through feedback given to A.R.T. animators by other youth care workers, teachers, parents and even the youth themselves who complete the program. Everyone learns something useful, even the most skeptical. Teachers reported better behavior of youths in the classroom that were using A.R.T., than youths not involved in the program.

The greatest strength is that A.R.T. is easily recognizable by youth care workers as synonymous with good youth care practice, which they have been striving to deliver as part of their jobs. In fact, A.R.T. incorporates training techniques which youth care workers already employ. Essentially A.R.T. is not a new philosophy but rather a new language, which easily becomes used by all youth care workers who become exposed or involved in A.R.T. In turn this means more consistent intervention approaches between youth care workers and therefore improved responses by our youth.

Parents whose youth have seen the results of their youth's participation are reporting concrete tangible results and improved family interactions. Also parents consistently request more A.R.T. for their children and for themselves.

Finally the greatest strength the program offers is that it simply makes good sense. Batshaw workers are given the task of helping youth resume a life in the community or with their families. By teaching youth how to control their anger, how to interact with others in a prosocial way and to consider the moral implications of what they think and choose to do, we are doing what we must for these youth. We are giving them the tools to better take on the life ahead of them. We are doing real youth care work.

The limitations of the A.R.T. program are clear and obvious. We are in the business of making small gains with youth in our care. We can't solve all their problems or deal with all the baggage they carry with them simply by offering A.R.T. It is not a panacea. However it is a real positive force to use in beginning the process. In fact the A.R.T. experience can easily be the spark that ignites the youth to begin to make change when he/she sees personal progress and a better ability to communicate coming out of an A.R.T. experience.

The true effectiveness of A.R.T. measured by an evaluation process at Batshaw is in the beginning stages. This process can also be hindered by the time and cost needed to complete elaborate evaluative studies. Nonetheless some evaluation studies are in place.

The most significant limitation to A.R.T. at Batshaw is the cost required to deliver the program in a manner which is concerned about sustainability, proper training of staff and adequate staff presence to deliver the model effectively. To run the A.R.T. program as it needs to be run requires a quality control rationale which takes into account the need for supervision of trainers, a uniform program content across the agency, as well as all the needed support of review training, evaluation, etc. The obstacle to these is of course lack of adequate funding. Fortunately Batshaw has put some funding aside for the project now and in the future. Greater funding is obviously required. The greatest limitation to the program is this monetary factor which is common to many youth care establishments in North America today.

RESPONSES TO THE PROGRAM

Social workers, A.R.T. animators and youth care workers in the living unit, see mini subcultures developing between youth who connect in A.R.T.. As they realise that they are not alone in the struggles they face with parent(s) and sibling(s), the trainees begin to ally with peers in using and coaching others to use the A.R.T. techniques they have learned. The group begins to function cohesively around a positive theme rather than a negative one. A.R.T. begins to be part of their daily routine. That, of course, is the goal.

Parents appreciate A.R.T. because they see concrete changes in their children's behavior as a result of the training. Youths enjoy the program due to the positive feedback they receive from animator and especially their family. Together they see the gains they are making in residence and most importantly at home.

The experiences of Batshaw A.R.T. animators involved have been very rewarding. Needless to say A.R.T. animators are feeling enthusiastic about teaching the program. In so doing, they are rejuvenated in their jobs. As clinical frontline staff, they are experiencing tangible returns for their efforts which come in the form of appreciative comments from parents and trainees. As well animators are seeing significant, visible behavioral improvements in the A.R.T. youth. In fact, to celebrate the achievements of our trainees we conduct a sort of "Graduation" night for all trainees who have participated in the program. They invite their families and friends. Both parents and youth are presented with certificates for their participation in A.R.T. Animators and families discuss the benefits of the program over pizza and cake and then inevitably someone asks, " Could we return next session, for more A.R.T.?"

There are some skeptics, as there are in any agency when new programs are introduced. However none of the skeptics are actually A.R.T. animators as yet. Overall, the experience of A.R.T. pioneers at Batshaw who have chosen to use this program in their practice, has been a rewarding one. Despite budget restraints and the turmoil all youth care workers have experienced in the last decade, A.R.T. training for youth and families is like a breath of fresh air. Here's a chance to feel good about our work again. Here's a chance to try to address the increasing trend of more aggressive behavior amongst our youth. Let's hope the funding and opportunity to do this work quickly increases. At Batshaw the program will continue to expand and develop. This is childcare worth doing!

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