

5-2020

One Skill at a Time- Friends Outside

Jocelyn Lopez Sanchez
California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all

Recommended Citation

Lopez Sanchez, Jocelyn, "One Skill at a Time- Friends Outside" (2020). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 800.

https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/800

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

One Skill at a Time- Friends Outside

Jocelyn Lopez Sanchez

Friends Outside and Janet Garcia

Collaborative Health & Human Services

Department of Health Human Services and Public Policy

California State University Monterey Bay

05/08/2020

Author Note

Jocelyn Lopez Sanchez, Department of Health Human Services and Public Policy, California State University Monterey Bay. This research was supported by Friends Outside.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jocelyn Lopez Sanchez, California State University Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Seaside, CA, 93955. Contact: jlopezsanchez@csumb.edu.

Abstract

Friends Outside is a non-profit organization that provides services to in and out of custody clients with their re-entry into the community. Clients who are in-custody are not learning the adequate skills to integrate back into the community and are not engaged in the classes offered by Friends Outside, which could build these skills. This is due to either seeing the material repeatedly or believing the material does not pertain to them or is uninteresting. When clients don't engage in the classes it leads to higher rates of recidivism, job insecurity and mental health concerns. The project focused on providing engaging activities to help clients increase their attention and focus and motivate them to practice higher-level critical thinking skills. Activities focused on cognitive restructuring, social skill development and/or problem solving skills to engage clients into participating and developing their skills. The results were that the majority of the clients participated more when engaging activities were implemented into the curriculum. It is recommended to be implemented in the future as it was successful.

Keywords: In-custody clients, participation, engagement, skills for re-entry

Agency & Communities Served

Friends Outside is a nonprofit organization that helps incarcerated individuals to reenter the community. The agency provides services and resources in the jail and office setting to help individuals integrate into society. Friends Outside uses a “strength-based approach in order for individuals to achieve a sense of personal responsibility and productiveness” (Santa Cruz Volunteer Center, 2019). Their mission is, “to engage volunteers to restore justice, provide hope, and support change for those impacted by incarceration” (Santa Cruz Volunteer Center, 2019).

Friends Outside provides jail visiting services, where clients are provided one-on-one case management and pre-release services. In addition, they offer re-entry classes, where clients learn the skills to re-enter society by providing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) workbooks on anger management, social values and responsible thinking. Family services are provided to provide families with information on visitation, referrals to criminal justice agencies, and family events such as Kid’s Day (Santa Cruz Volunteer Center, 2019). All of these services hope to integrate incarcerated individuals back into their communities as well as to continue supporting individuals who are out on probation and lastly, to provide support to their families.

In the Santa Cruz office, Friends Outside supports many individuals who are African-American 4.3%, Caucasian 42%, Latino 20%, Pacific Islander 0.2% and unknown 31.2% (Friends Outside, 2019). Friends Outside has served about 100 inmates who are serving more than one year in the county jail who have received support from Friends Outside, when released 40% will stay in regular contact with the aftercare volunteers for the first 60 days in the community, 20% of the aftercare clients will find housing and stay out of jail for the first 60 days

in the community and lastly, 30% of aftercare clients will receive ready to work documents and employment (Friends Outside, 2018).

Problem Description

Clients are not learning the necessary skills for re-entry into the community. This creates a bigger problem once they are in the community because they will feel lost and hopeless. When the clients are released from the jail, they can fall into old habits that can lead them back into jail. By returning, it can affect their well being as well as their friends and families. When released parents or individuals who still “suffer the negative effects of a distrustful... adaptation to prison life will find it difficult to promote trust and authenticity with their children” (Haney, 2001). Once transitioned the parents or individuals may still depend on institutional structures and routines that they may find parenting to be difficult (Haney, 2001). The stigma that comes when individuals are released from prison affect them by not seeking the services they need to reenter the community. When the clients are released back to the community most of them “receive minimal preparation and inadequate assistance and resources, which [can] make their re-entry into [the] communities challenging” (Visher and Mallik-Kane, 2007 as cited in Li, 2018). When returning many have a “criminal conviction [where it can lead to] unemployment prospects, public housing assistance and social services” (Coates, 2015 as cited in Li, 2018). Li (2018) stated that some released prisoners have a difficult time getting a job because of their criminal record, they have limited education and there’s the stigma of education as well that in most states allow employers to deny jobs to those who have been arrested but not committed a crime.

Contributing Factors

One of the contributing factors is lack of client engagement in the jail classes. The jail classes consist of working on the CBT workbook with topics of anger management, social values and responsible thinking. The purpose of these topics is to help clients gain skills to re-enter the community. Clients are not engaged in classes as topics are not relevant. Adults “are more able to use shared connections and experiences to explain and build upon concepts from class in ways instructors cannot” (Davis, 2103).

Interns and volunteers do not have adequate curriculum materials to facilitate classes. Interns and volunteers work from the CBT workbook but are not properly prepared to facilitate classes as they are not given a facilitators guide or other materials. Davis and Krajcik (as cited in Davis, Palincsar, Arias, Bismack, Marulis & Iwashyna) (2104) noted that, “text and graphics that can be incorporated into curriculum materials... [can] promote teacher learning as well as student learning.” Having other materials can make the learning experience enjoyable and can create participation. By providing the facilitators guide it can help interns and volunteers prepare before facilitating the class.

Some of the inmates do not pay attention because the facilitator is teaching in an ineffective or irrelevant manner. The facilitators that work out of the CBT workbook just read, ask questions and move on to the next material. Facilitators run the class in a specific way that often forgets that they are teaching clients and instead focus on finishing the material as quickly as possible. Davis (2013), stated that monologic classroom conversation is when the teacher does not give students the opportunity to participate or express themselves (Nystrand et al., 2003). For example, facilitators can use monologic discussion by using the ineffective and mechanical

Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) structure where the “instructor asks the questions of the students where there’s already an established or anticipated answer” (Davis, 2013). By giving these types of questions it does not allow for the clients to think of answers and instead lead clients to not pay attention.

Consequences

One of the consequences is that inmates will reoffend when they are released into the community. Many of the inmates do not have the necessary skills to reenter society or they do not have support from their families. When inmates are released, they are encouraged to go to Friends Outside to check in and complete any additional programs. Unfortunately, many do not return to seek these services. According to the California Auditor, “Recidivism rates for inmates in California have remained high, averaging about 50 percent...” and in the country, California has the 13th highest recidivism rate (2019). This is concerning because many of these individuals reoffend and go back into the system while hurting themselves and those who care about them.

If clients are not learning the necessary skills for re-entry into the community it might create job insecurity for them. Not having the skills for a job interview could possibly impede them from submitting applications. Most jobs require applicants to submit resumes, which the majority of them do not have. Not being able to apply for a job is a barrier for them to successfully re-enter society. Peterson (2015), mentions when “employers ask to investigate the criminal records of applicants, ex-offenders have a harder time obtaining jobs; and when they do find employment the jobs are often not very well paid.” When employers investigate their applicants history they will not want to hire the applicants because they do not want to cause any trouble with their companies, or employees. Making assumptions before they get to know the

person is unjust and unfortunately many incarcerated individuals have a difficult time finding jobs.

Inmates can feel a sense of hopelessness as well as have a mental health issue not diagnosed. Although, some inmates have someone they can talk too they can still have the sense of feeling alone which can lead to depression or suicide if not diagnosed or treated. Spending weeks, months or even years behind bars can play an emotional toll on their mental health. James and Glaze (as cited in Sell, 2012) mentioned that,

approximately 24% of all United States' prisoners reported recent mental health concerns, while county jail inmates report 21% and federal prisoners are reporting about 14% and approximately 23% of all United States prisoners and 30% of all county jail inmates reported symptoms of major depression, suggesting that over 50% of incarcerated adults experience depression.

Inmates are being diagnosed with major depression. This can include being incarcerated for a long time, not being able to see loved ones, or they keep everything to themselves instead of talking with someone. It is important for inmates to be able to ask for help as it can save their life or others.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Lack of client engagement in jail classes	Clients are not learning the necessary skills for re-entry into the community	Recidivism rates in CA
Inadequate curriculum materials		Job insecurity
Ineffective/irrelevant teaching lessons		Feelings of hopelessness/ mental health concerns

Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

The proposed capstone project for Friends Outside is to include workshops and activities along the CBT curricula that's based on four workbooks. The main purpose is to engage clients in classes and to provide resources for re-entry into the community. By providing activities that connect to the curricula, clients will see a new or different way of developing their skills. The activities will be broken into groups where they will be given a certain amount of time to discuss their responses before returning as a big group. These activities will be focused on cognitive restructuring, social skill development and/or problem solving skills. Increasing the participation among clients will be beneficial as they will be learning new ideas and seeing different perspectives. Sharing their experiences can create trust in one another and build stronger relationships. Initially workshops on resume building, interviewing skills, and applying for school were considered to increase client participation but due to loss of funding the Program Coordinator II decided it would be best to limit changes on the curriculum .

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to increase client engagement in the jail classes and to include better curriculum materials to integrate the clients back into the community. Many of the in custody clients are not participating or engaging in the classes because they have already seen the curriculum in previous classes and some of the material is repetitive or they are not interested as it does not relate to them.

If clients have seen the material many times they will no longer be interested in the class because they already know what to expect. Clients stop participating and engaging as there's no new material. As mentioned above, clients will be asked beforehand what topics they are interested in (that relate to skills for re-entry) to add to the existing curriculum. Clients sit in a half-circle facing the facilitators and do not move from their seats. By adding appropriate activities such as breaking the clients down into groups they will talk among themselves and after a few minutes will have the opportunity to share what they talked about in their groups as a class. By adding this activity the clients will be encouraged to share. Also, having clients write things down on the board can be helpful for the clients to be more engaging as they will be moving around and being part of the lesson.

By adding engaging activities that are relatable to the clients needs, clients may feel connected to the activity and participate. By using positive language instead of negative language can make clients feel more comfortable and respected than by using negative language that the curriculum may have. By providing activities that can better develop their skills can be beneficial when integrating back into the community.

Project Justification

Adults have different learning styles and while many might not know what their learning style is it can be important for the clients to know which way they learn best. There's three learning styles that are visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The activities that will be done for this project will fall under these three learning styles for the clients each have their own way of learning. According to the Principles of Adult Learning & Instructional Systems Design,

We retain approximately 10 percent of what we see; 30 to 40 percent of what we see and hear; and 90 percent of what we see, hear, and do. We all have the capability to learn via all three styles, but are usually dominant in one. (n.d.)

The activities that will be included for the visual learners will be videos, readings or demonstrations of the given topic. For the auditory learners it can include lectures, group discussions or stories and examples. Lastly, for the kinesthetic learners it can include practice demonstrations or writing/note taking.

By adding different activities to the existing curriculum it will be beneficial to add content that the clients can relate too as it will be easier to retain and the clients will have the opportunity to make a connection with the content and apply it to their real-life (Principles of Adult Learning, n.d.).

Project Implementation

In August 2019, the project was discussed with Janet and in September 2019 the project was approved. Janet provided the curriculums that were being used and provided the training manual. The curriculum that was considered and implemented was social values. Most of the materials were provided by the Rountree Medium Facility as certain objects or materials were allowed. The facility provided expo markers, board erasers and pens. Additional materials were either provided by Janet or by the intern.

The curriculum of social values was updated by making changes to the existing activities or adding new activities to fit clients needs. The activities were added to better enhance their skills. Once the curriculum was updated and finished it went through a final revision. Before starting the classes, the curriculum was reviewed and materials were prepared beforehand. A few

weeks prior to the first class, the 4 workbooks from the agency were reviewed and together decided on the one that would work best along with the other intern, Melissa. Melissa looked over the curriculums from a different organization and chose the ones that would best fit the clients needs. Research was done on possible activities, some of the activities that were included were the values activity, personal value exploration and writing a letter to someone. Activities were chosen by the topics that were discussed on the curriculum.

On the first day of implementation clients were given a pretest that consisted of seven questions that determined whether they participated in class or not. Some of the questions were asked to be rated from a scale of one to five. Questions included:

- What do you *like* about the class (Skills for Re-entry)?
- What are your *dislikes* about the class (Skills for Re-entry)?
- If you have been here more than once, why do you keep coming back to this lifestyle?
- What would you like to gain from this class (Skills for Re-entry)?

On a scale from 1 to 5 , 1 being the least and 5 being the most, please rate and answer the following questions:

- How much do you participate in class? Why or why not?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years from now? Do you think it's possible to get there?
- How useful do you think this class (Skills for Re-entry) is?

Once reading their responses, their responses were taken into consideration for it to be added to the curriculum and necessary changes will be taken into place as well as including different activities.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the last session was moved a week earlier. The post test was not conducted. The post test was to determine whether there was an increase in participation or whether it stayed the same. It was expected to receive suggestions from clients to improve the curriculum and feedback on the way classes were being managed.

A detailed implementation plan and timeline can be seen in the Scope of Work in Appendix A.

Assessment Plan

To measure how effective the courses were the plan was to provide a pre and post test to determine how much the clients learned and see if any changes in their behaviors changed as well. Seeing if there was an increase in client participation and engagement will help determine if the changes in the curriculum were beneficial or not. Questions that were included on the pre and post test will include:

- What did you *like* about the changes made in the class (Skills for Reentry)?
- What were your *dislikes* about the changes made in the class (Skills for Reentry)?
- If you have been here more than once, why do you keep coming back to this lifestyle?
- What did you gain from this class (Skills for Reentry)?

On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the least and 5 being the most, please rate and answer the following questions:

- How much did you participate in class? Why or why not?
- Now where do you see yourself in 5 years from now? Do you think it's possible to get there?
- How useful did you find this class (Skills for Reentry) to be?

Expected Outcomes

What was expected from this project was to increase client participation in the classes and learn or better develop the adequate skills to re-enter the community. By increasing participation by half the class (50%), depending on how many are enrolled in the class, this project will be successful. It will also be deemed successful if more than half of the clients rate the questions a 4 or a 5. The purpose of this project is to give the clients the appropriate tools to integrate back into the community. By changing the curriculum to tailor to their needs, clients will be interested in the classes and will be participating more. By participating, they will be able to learn how to talk in front of others and collaborate with one another. This can be beneficial to them as they will acquire these skills that can help them get a job once out into the community.

Project Results

As mentioned above, due to unforeseen circumstances, COVID-19, a post-test was not conducted. Due to COVID-19 a national shutdown was taken into place because of the pandemic it led to a shelter in place and many places were being shut down including Friends Outside. This led to the discontinuation of the classes. What was expected on the pre and post test was to see whether there were changes in participation or if it remained the same. There was also an expectation to see an increase in client knowledge on our workbook and if they had gained or

developed their skills. It was expected to receive suggestions from clients to see if they had liked the changes or what were areas of the curriculum that could have been better improved and in the structure of the class.

Towards the beginning of the project implementation clients were given a pretest. The pretest results may have been skewed higher than expected for a variety of reasons. Some may have felt they needed to put what they believed what I wanted to hear, may have believed they participated enough or other reasons. Initially the class started with nine clients and throughout the weeks there will be an increase or decrease of clients in the class due to dropping the class, moving to a different facility or being released.

Although the post test was not conducted the results have been successful. By providing engaging activities and having the clients read instead of the facilitators brings a welcoming approach and gives them the opportunity to talk and be open. One of the activities was a short story that reflected on one's personal values and clients were broken up into groups to discuss their values and how each person has different values than their own. After they discussed as a class their values, their groups values and why people have different values.

Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, the pre and post test might have not been the best measurement to measure client participation. Initially, there were nine clients and throughout the weeks clients were dropping the class, being moved to a different facility or were being released. At the end, the posttest was not conducted due to the unforeseen circumstances of the pandemic of COVID-19

and the shelter in place. Throughout the weeks that the classes were running there was an increase of client engagement and participation. The activities where they participated more were when they were broken into groups before going as a big group and when they were able to move around. Activities were added to increase the participation of the clients as many of them have seen the same material.

To better increase participation, it is recommended to ask clients beforehand of possible topics that they are interested in. The result of this will be adding appropriate changes to the existing curriculum to better access the clients needs to integrate back into the community. By listening and taking appropriate measures clients will feel heard and might feel more comfortable participating in the classes as they will be interested in the topics that they can relate too.

References

- California Auditor. (2019). Retrieved from
<https://www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2018-113.pdf>
- Davis, E., Palincsar, A., Arias, A., Bismack, A., Marulis, L., & Iwashyna, S. (2014). Designing Educative Curriculum Materials: A Theoretically and Empirically Driven Process. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 24-136.
- Haney, C., 2001. *The Psychological Impact Of Incarceration: Implications For Post-Prison Adjustment*. [online] ASPE. Available at:
<<https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/psychological-impact-incarceration-implications-post-prison-adjustment>>.
- Hope Smith Davis. (2013). Discussion as a Bridge: Strategies that Engage Adolescent and Adult Learning Styles in the Postsecondary Classroom. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 13(1), 68-76.
- Petersen, T.S. J Bus Ethics (2016) 139: 443. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2650-0>
- Principles of Adult Learning & Instructional Systems Design. Principles of Adult Learning & Instructional Systems Design. Retrieved from
<https://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/downloads/freebies/172/pr%20pre-course%20reading%20asignment.pdf>
- Santa Cruz Volunteer Center. (2019). Friends Outside - Santa Cruz Volunteer Center. Retrieved from <https://scvolunteercenter.org/programs/friends-outside/>
- Santa Cruz Volunteer Center. (2019). What We Do - Santa Cruz Volunteer Center. Retrieved from <https://scvolunteercenter.org/programs/friends-outside/what-we-do/>

Sell, T. A. (2012). *The relationship of life satisfaction and happiness with anger and depression in male inmates* (Order No. 3505753). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. (1013613905). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.library2.csumb.edu:2248/docview/1013613905?accountid=10355>

Appendix A

Scope of Work

This should be completed for Milestone #2. Below is a sample format.

Activities	Timeline/Deadlines	Staff Responsible
Finalized capstone project idea	November 2019	Janet Garcia
Look for possible cognitive behavioral activities	January 2020	Jocelyn Melissa
Work on curriculum	February 10, 2020	Jocelyn Janet Garcia Melissa
Prepare materials for group classes	February 10, 2020	Janet Garcia
Pre test and first session	February 11, 2020	Janet Garcia
Review pretest and make necessary changes to curriculum	February 2020	Jocelyn
Finalize activities	February 2020	Jocelyn Janet Garcia
Ongoing learning about the policies in the jail	Spring 2020	Janet Garcia
Last session of curriculum	March 10, 2020	Janet Garcia

Receive feedback	Unable to continue due to COVID-19	Janet Garcia
Post test on knowledge of curriculum	Unable to continue due to COVID-19	Janet Garcia
Evaluate pre & post tests	Unable to continue due to COVID-19	Janet Garcia