An Holistic Model Of Bush Counselling: Cornerstones Of Practice

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Abstract

This paper shares the Bush Counselling model as used by Project Hahn in Tasmania to work with its target audience of adolescents and young adults. The Bush Counselling model is described through a campfire analogy. Readers are invited to adapt the model to their community and, where appropriate, adopt the individual counselling principles into their programs

Introduction

Project Hahn Inc. programs commenced ongoing operations in 1983. Since then, many Australian outdoor counselling programs have commenced and subsequently fallen under the economic rationalists' knife. Although constant evolution has kept Project Hahn vibrant and relevant, we have recently seen even well researched and implemented Australian programs are not immune to closure, for instance see Brand & Smith; 1999. Quite obviously, no program is sacred. Taking stock of our burgeoning Australian industry, there is a need to recognise, particularly for programs of longevity, a wider responsibility to regularly publicise our crux of experiential learnings. Counselling models of individual emotional growth programs are rarely publicised. Recent reality has shattered the 'competitive edge' justification of these clandestine approaches. This paper aims to keep the 'fire' of our outdoor industry 'burning'. By sharing the foundation of our working model we invite other counselling programs to follow our example.

Counselling in the Bush

Our reason why we sit down in the bush in front of a campfire and discuss our experiences, is to coax those thoughts, feelings and behaviours of which we are largely unaware into the conscious realm. The trials and conflicts encountered on a day's journey through the bush are very rich experiences that magnify the individual's emotional, spiritual, physical and mental awareness. The actual gain an individual gets from these experiences is measured through the newfound inner resources generalised to elsewhere in the individual's life. This newfound awareness of self, developed through one's experience, is an ongoing process that encourages the individual back to the uncharted territory to begin the change process afresh. Left unprocessed these experiences may eventually create some change in behaviour, yet for the individual absorbed by the overwhelming stimuli and emotion of the experience, the chance to synthesise the learning may get lost (Nadler & Luckner, 1992). By using an Australian 'flavoured' model we call *Bush Counselling*, we can highlight the learnings and alert individuals to similar patterns experienced elsewhere in their lives. This process assists the young person to bridge the gap and transfer the learnings from the bush into the home, school or work place.

This model follows an adjunctive process of both enrichment and therapy depending on the needs presented by the individual participants (Crisp, 1999). Participants' issues are fleshed out prior to the program in consultation with referral agents and on pre-program activity days with the individual themselves. Similar to the concept of Wilderness Therapy (Crisp, 1999) the natural Australian bush is the medium where the emphasis is on the individual participant's development rather than the group. The group context is used to provide the supportive conduit that allows the individual to work on her/his own personal issues. The group disbands upon completion and a network of individual mentors, who have earlier assisted the young person's involvement, is then harnessed to help with the follow-up of participant learnings back into their community.

The counselling model used on Project Hahn programs is based on a preventive community framework and therefore focuses on normative mixed populations while still including those at-risk, using a program plan of maturational development. Participant populations are not limited to mental health or medical referrals. Participants are not (unintentionally or intentionally) labelled as disordered, dysfunctional or pathological. The emphasis is on well being, rather than ameliorating 'disease'. The aim is not solely to make the unconscious conscious as in psychodynamic therapies. Therapeutic approaches that promote healing may be implemented within this therapeutic milieu, but non-therapeutic behavioural or attitudinal changes may justifiably be the participant's personal goal. The model focuses on a developmental perspective with the target audience being adolescents and young adults. The broad programmatic goal is maturation: changing from helplessness to a greatly increased capacity for self help onto increasingly balanced independence/interdependence, and from a preoccupation with the present to a perspective that encompasses the past and anticipates the future. Additional attributes include moving toward an ability to plan and be immune to momentary frustration, as well as identification and emotional participation in a larger social stratum. A predominant feature of at-risk young people is that aspects of their maturational development have gone into hibernation. An overriding program goal is therefore maturational acceleration.

The Design of the Model

This paper describes the background to the Bush Counselling model and provides readers with an understanding of the theories, therapies and experiences that form the 'cornerstones' (see Figure 1– Campfire Rings) on which this model rests. Further, the paper looks at the specific tools selected to draw on for work with adolescents and young adults. They are the 'hot coals' of the practitioners 'forge' and provide a flexibility to choose from a range of practices to best suit the individuals and group needs.

At first glance the theories housed in the Outer Sanctum may appear contradictory when strictly placed side-by-side. It is within the contextual situation of the issues presented by participants where they have their specific application. The Inner Sanctum describes the tools of practice and their relevance; the approach taken may be selected from a myriad of approaches. This Bush Counselling Model therefore brings together the techniques and procedures of Inner Sanctum practice which incorporate salient features of the Outer Sanctum foundation.

Outer Sanctum

The rocks around the rim of a fire provide the boundary from which the embers can coalesce. Like those rocks, the following theories form the collective basis from which the different aspects of Bush Counselling are melded together.

Lifespan Development

It is essential to understand the human developmental process and how it relates to the behaviour of the people with whom we work. Of prime importance is the consideration of the developmental stage of the individual. Developmental theorists believe that each stage of human development involves a transition phase centred on a dialectic conflict. If each of these crises is resolved successfully, the individual is able to move on to further growth and development. For those who fail to achieve these developmental tasks, a level of confusion arises and the crisis is relived over and over. Marcia (1980) suggests four possible alternatives that occur as a result of the crisis of identity. For young people to develop a healthy sense of their own identity in an external environment that is changing constantly, extreme resilience and a high level of commitment is required. This apparent powerlessness to influence their world can lead to disillusionment and increasing numbers of adolescents find they lack the commitment or the desire to make the difficult choices to secure their personal identity. Often the result of this indecision lessens the potential for personality development and the individual fails to resolve the identity crisis. Some individuals put the decisions on hold (moratorium) and allow themselves time-out to contemplate their options.

An implicit understanding of lifespan theories enables a clear differentiation between thoughts and behaviours that are entrenched from those which are symptomatic of a specific developmental stage. This implies minimal concern for behaviour of a developmental nature; however, this is not the case. A prominent feature of this approach is the targeting of high-risk life styles led by adolescents. Formal operations is the final stage of Piaget's cognitive theory and is likely to occur during the early adolescent years. However, recent studies have demonstrated this level of reasoning may not occur belatedly and sometimes not at all, requiring the counsellor to reason in terms with which the group is comfortable. If this risk taking behaviour is the result of the personal fable effect (ie. the adolescent feeling of indestructibility) alluded to by Elkind (1967) then timely intervention can accelerate the pace of maturation, where this egocentric behaviour may be discarded sooner. By reducing their exposure to risk, the individual, the family and the community as a whole are
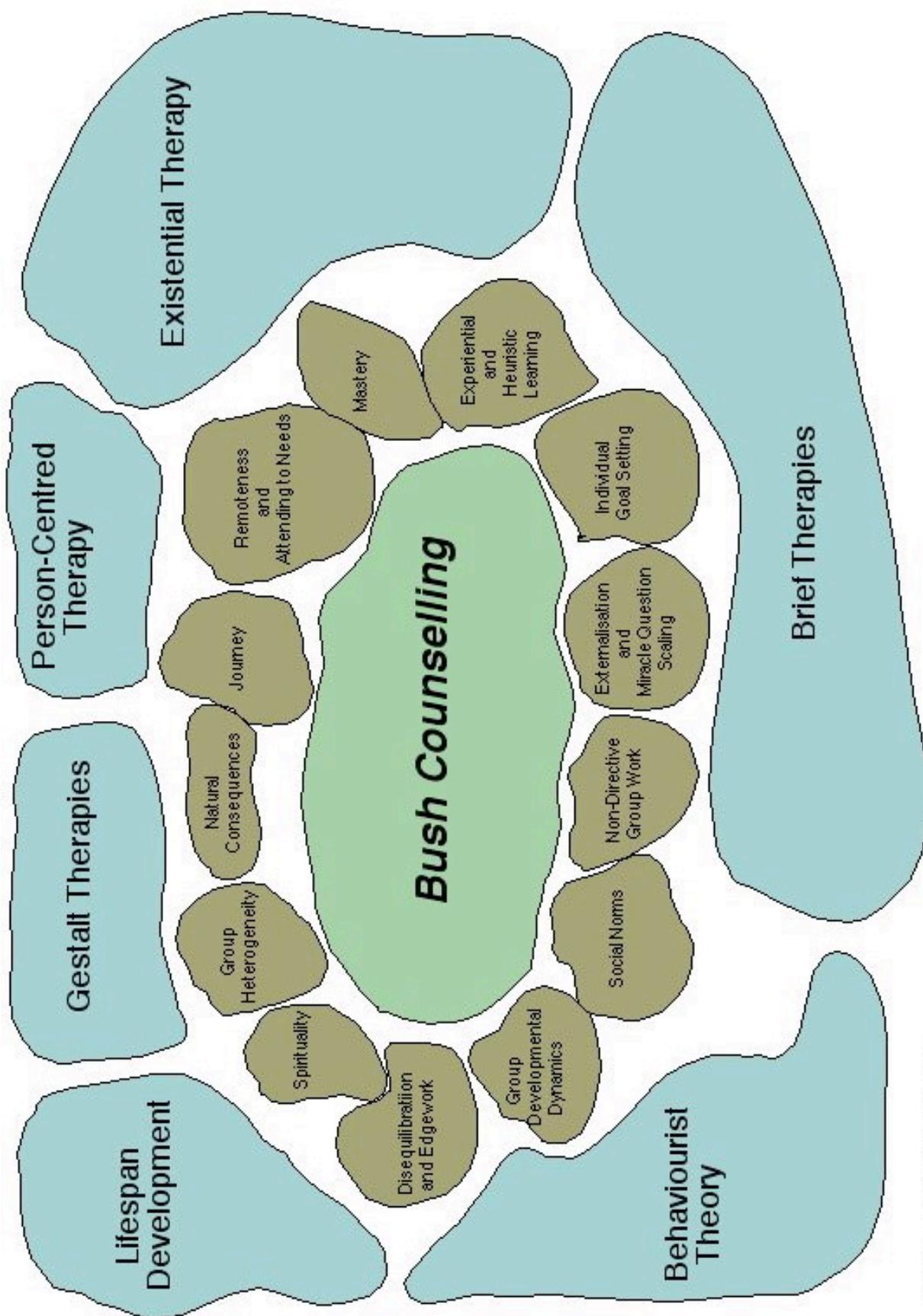
Figure 1. The Campfire Rings

spared considerable pain that is the consequence of a high-risk life style. This intervention can be made using an experience that enables the young person to experiment with elements of risk in an environment where a large contrast exists between the perceived risk and actual risk (Luckner & Nadler, 1992). Through timely Bush Counselling it is believed that the actual risk can be diminished.

Behaviourist Theory

An important assumption of this theory is that learning can improve problem behaviours. It has a strong goal emphasis that encourages the individual to actively work on changing his/her behaviour. We are drawn to this approach by its apparent flexibility and wide variety of therapeutic interventions. Two areas of development that are strongly represented in Bush Counselling are the radical behaviourism of Skinner and the social learning theory of Bandura. Skinner (1971) argues against the humanistic ideas of self-determination and freedom suggesting that environmental reinforcers are the sole factors that motivate humans to change their behaviour. Social learning theory on the other hand rejects this view of human behaviour being linked exclusively to environmental determinants and suggests that individuals do have the capacity to influence their environments (Bandura, 1969). Skinner (1971) advocates a process called operant conditioning whereby learning cannot occur without some type of reinforcement, either of a positive or negative nature. Therefore behaviours that are reinforced with a negative consequence are less likely to be repeated than behaviours that attract positive reinforcement. The uncertain nature of the bush environment invites young people to experiment with different behaviour. This behaviour is reinforced by environmental determinants that reflect either a negative or positive consequence. Bandura's (1969) efforts paved the way for inclusion of a cognitive process into his learning model. He emphasised modelling as a key means by which humans learned to master new behaviours. This is especially significant for work in the bush where group members can learn effective behaviours through imitation and observing each other in action.

Brief Therapy

The unpredictable nature of the bush lends itself to the principles of brevity that are part of solution-focused therapy. One goal of this approach requires resolution of the person's problem to be negotiated within a definite timeframe. Solution-focused therapists look to change as ongoing and resolute. Life is change and change is inevitable, and from this perspective, change is something that people either proactively choose or something that will happen regardless (Corey, 1996). The interaction is short, as the focus is on the issue being presented. The purpose is therefore, not to understand the cause, but rather to find fertile ways of thinking about it and practical ideas to deal with it. In this way the solution is found in the future, rather than delving in the past, with resources used to create solutions rather than wasting energies on understanding the problem. Subtle differences from traditional counselling approaches include the seeking of descriptive rather than interpersonal material, a participant action orientation rather than an insight orientation, and specific instead of longitudinal goals. This includes looking at the core messages in the essence of the story being told, as well as utilising positivity and participant's strengths to find personal solutions in the area of weakness. For young people, we float this idea of deliberate goal setting, as an effective strategy against the forces of powerlessness. The emphasis is on a well-defined plan of action for each group member, which is effective immediately.

Existential Therapy

Existential therapy highlights the freedom of individuals to shape their own destiny against a backdrop of human suffering that stems from living in a meaningless world (Yalom, 1989). An important concept of this therapy is that anxiety is a normal condition of existence. In our daily lives, anxiety needs to be confronted if we are to push ourselves into new territory and change. This therapy has useful applications for the person confronting the existential questions that accompany developmental crises and fits well with young people who are questioning the meaning of life (Corey, 1996). The basic therapeutic goals are to help people realise their freedom to become aware of their potential, to challenge clients to accept responsibility for the events in their lives, and to discover the past decisions that are keeping them from discovering the true meaning of their existence.

Person-Centred Therapy

Like existential therapy, person-centred therapy (humanism) focuses on the phenomenological world of the individual and the modelling of authentic behaviour to group members. By accepting that each person structures themselves according to their own perceived reality, the practitioner has a fundamental need to enter that subjective world. The focus of therapy away from traditional instructive and interpretative roles allows the counsellor to concentrate fully on what is being conveyed and to respond authentically. Carl Rogers (in Corey 1996) believes that a person knows himself or herself better than anyone and through growing self-awareness will make self-discoveries that reshape their world. The emphasis of person-centred therapy is on helping

the client learn to listen to themselves and engage in a more congruent life style. This style creates a caring and empathic tie not only between the practitioner and the group but it also influences interaction between members themselves. The use of active listening skills forms the basis of counselling sessions recognising that few participants ever have the opportunity to be heard without judgement. Young people are usually keen to talk honestly about themselves and unlike many other therapies the person is in the driver's seat throughout the session.

Gestalt Therapy

By leaving the emotional lessons young people learn to chance, we risk largely wasting the window of opportunity presented by the slow maturation of the brain to help cultivate a healthy emotional repertoire (Goleman, 1995). Taking ownership and responsibility for emotions and behaviour can be risky business. Emotional healing requires the courage to take chances, to experiment with new behaviours, to feel emotions in their intensity, and to move toward a better understanding of self. The way forward is to face anxiety, which often takes the form of resistance, rather than to take flight from it. It means experiencing all the things about to occur in their fullness, the entire range of emotions. The counsellor helps to provide the sanctity necessary for this freedom of emotions to surface. The participant should feel free to be angry, sad, happy… and to fully experience her/his authentic self. Specific techniques are not the focus of the counsellor but rather it is the philosophical framework that the different techniques provide (Gilsdorf, 1999). In Bush Counselling the activities are simply the medium which allows participants to work on their personal issues within a supportive group environment of which they have volunteered to participate. Its action-orientation is more conducive to adolescence emotional growth than the adult structures of traditional counselling. Acting out unresolved feelings in the relative safety of their newfound peer group supports the risk involved, and meets the energy levels and social needs of this population.

Inner Sanctum

The following counselling approaches and therapies are drawn from a combination of the theories noted earlier. The campfire metaphor of burning embers represents the vibrant fire, and the 'aliveness' of these approaches.

Disequilibration and Edgework

The Piagetian concept of disequilibration is the conflict experienced by an individual when forced into a process of adaptation (Crisp & O'Donnell, 1999 and Sveen, 1993). Activities that involve a high level of perceived risk allow the individual to experience heightened awareness of the disequilibrating process, encountered prior to successful completion. The terminology for this process is called 'edgework' and by relating to events in their daily living, we can use the activity as a metaphor (Luckner & Nadler, 1992). The feeling of stuckness or uncertainty that an individual encounters on the edge of an abseil is rich in metaphor. At the edge, self-defeating internal dialogue builds up and gets louder, changed physical characteristics become obvious and emotionally the individual is often intensely fearful. Questions asked at this point may assist self-awareness in the individual and help associate what is going on with the outside world. Examples include "What's happening for you at the moment?" and "Can you remember a time recently when you felt/thought like this?" Bush Counselling programs involve a healthy alternative to challenge and risk, which for many young 'substance users' are important parts of their life (DeBever & Price, 1999). The nature of the experience requires commitment to the process and often members have few options other than to continue the experience. An example of this is designing a bushwalk route to include major difficulties toward the latter half of trip. When group members consider the options, they see the way ahead as uncertain though preferable than retracing their steps of the last few days.

Experiential and Heuristic Learning

Learning from experience is the process whereby human development occurs. L. S. Vygotsky

Self-learned heuristic principles are linked strongly to self-motivated learning within the structure of the wilderness program. A key element in humanist and solution-based approaches is for the participant to be in control of her/his own counselling. This non-interventionist approach by the counsellor allows:

> …Individuals the freedom to react and challenge in any way they feel is appropriate and responsible during a wilderness experience. Thus, it is believed that on-going positive future behaviour has more likelihood of success through heuristic learning than if subtle advice is offered (Adams, Denholm & Sveen; 1999 p. 260).

The learning heurist is a great friend to the wilderness counsellor for it provides free of charge a tool of self-determination that operates independently of the counselling relationship. This often happens in wilderness programs where the experience is left to speak for itself. An example of this approach is the orchestrating of

an experience for an individual or group that provides a timely and specific learning. Journals, meditations and solitude all are means through which self-learning evolve. Heuristic learning occurs through post-activity reflection; however, we learn from this experience only to the extent of that our unconscious and level of maturation will allow us (Sveen, 1994).

Heuristic learning is hastened immeasurably through the use of handicaps. This method limits the ability of the participant to use their natural strengths and invites them to use less certain strategies to achieve their goals (Nadler & Luckner, 1992). These uncertainties bring with them a disequilibrating tendency to which the participant responds by attempting to find ways to adapt to the new environment. The range of learnings that stem from this process can be expected to better equip the individual with an increased repertoire of coping mechanisms that can be integrated into their lives post-course (Sveen & Denholm, 1997).

Non-directive Group Work

An unduly dominant leadership style can encourage co-dependency counter to the fostering of independence and promoting of empowerment central to existential, humanist, and solution-based therapeutic goals. A key ingredient in this leadership style is non-directive intervention which gives the individual the control of making her/his own mistakes and finding her/his own solutions (Handley, 1999).

An example of this is in the case of Lucy, a sixteen year old student with a learning difficulty who has set herself the goal of making decisions independently that affect her well-being. Lucy is walking through an overgrown scrubby section of track that is scratching her legs. As a result keeping up with the group is becoming harder and she calls out to the group to wait. She considers the option of getting her overpants out of her pack and putting them on. She decides to ask me if she should put them on. In light of her goal, we'd be inclined to deflect the question and ask her in Rogerian terms, "What would you like me to suggest?" Noting that this is the first time she has been assertive enough to ask the group to wait and sensing that there is some urgency within the group to get going, it is decided to adopt a totally non-directive approach and see what happens. We notice that Lucy gradually is moving toward some type of resolution. She has made a decision to put on her overpants and consequently is able to keep pace with the group without scratching her legs any further. Later on, when asked how she came up with the answer and what difference had it made she replied "I had no choice, I had to make a decision. The difference it has made is that I know that I am capable of making decisions when I have to".

Having asked her what happens in similar situations back at home when she did have a choice she answered, "I get flustered and someone usually my mum makes the decision for me. I just have to figure out now how I am going to stop her".

Group Developmental Dynamics

Gestalt therapy recognises that the developmental progress of every group is important to consider and carefully monitor before disclosure can occur safely. It may seem paradoxical that a community that is built around safety is an appropriate haven for conflict (Peck, 1987). To make the most of the opportunities presented for individual emotional depth, the counsellor has to attend closely to the group needs. Modelling sensitivity and inclusion of all group members are essential practices used to bring the group together. Only at certain stages of group development is it appropriate to include activities and discussions that require trust. This requires flexibility of program structure so that adjustments can be made for different groups. Although described in a number of theories (Tuckman, 1965; Yalom, 1995; Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988), we believe Trotzer's (1977) five distinct stages of group development fit most closely the individual counselling approach used in Bush Counselling.

Security Stage: The counsellor's prime focus is to establish a common ground for communication to occur. This can come about by modelling feelings of discomfort to gain the group's confidence. Active listening and providing for their needs goes a long way toward maintaining a friendly atmosphere. An example of a question that may be asked at this stage is, "What do you need in order to trust and feel safe in this group?"

Acceptance Stage: The need to belong, the need for relatedness is a key requisite for members of the group experiencing Trotzer's second stage. The desire to be a part of the group is a motivating factor for acceptance of each person regardless of their behaviour exhibited outside the group. The counsellor's behaviour therefore needs to reflect this through modelling the acceptance of behaviours and attitudes. Rogers terms this acceptance as unconditional positive regard. An example of a question that might be asked at this stage is, "What is it that makes you feel you belong here?"

Responsibility Stage: This stage involves the recognition that "Yes this is my problem and I have to do something about it." The counsellor encourages individuals to maintain focus on their solution to problems by modelling self-responsibility. This is achieved by demonstrating that the facilitator's weaknesses are recognised and can be talked about non-defensively to members of the group. An example of a question

that might be asked at this stage is, "What do you need to do yourself to solve your personal issue?"

Work Stage: This stage of group development comes later in the program, involving open discussion of personal issues and creating an atmosphere where alternatives can be tried and examined free of threat. This is the moment when individuals can try out new behaviours or attitudes in a safe setting prior to risking changes outside the group. The facilitator's role here is to model vulnerability by actively seeking solutions to problems and asking group members for assistance. An example of a question that may be asked at this stage is, "What can the group give that will support you in trying out this new behaviour?"

Closure: The realisation that something of great significance is coming to an end elicits a sense of sadness in the group. Participants take credit for their own changes, yet the difficult task for each person is modifying behaviour and attitudes outside of the group. People outside the group may not give encouragement or reinforcement to the member for acting in new or different ways. Without a source of support, the chance of regression to old ways is greater. Examples of questions that might be asked at closure are, "Describe one thing you learned about yourself during the program? or Can you turn to the person next to you and tell them how they went with their personal goal during the course?"

Social Norms

Social norms agreed to by the group prior to the start of the program greatly assist all members to establish ground rules for monitoring appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Boundaries as noted by behaviourists act as a liberating force allowing the space and security for young people to work on their issues (Kerslake, 1987). In Bush Counselling three simple points cover extensively the issues that are likely to arise. The giving and receiving of feedback is a useful tool in allowing people to consider changing their behaviour. If the feedback is offered constructively the person receiving it is more likely to hear it without becoming defensive. The second point is no 'put downs' to others or yourself. This includes accepting differences within the group and becoming aware of negative self-talk that may influence personal endeavours to get the most from the program. The third, a very important facet of Gestalt Therapy, is that all group members respect the physical and emotional safety of self and others. Only without fear of criticism or rejection can the individual begin to explore new territory (Luckner & Nadler, 1992). All group members agree to abide by these norms and are encouraged to own, monitor and police them. It is advisable to have a process in place for how the group governs the agreement, before it is gets violated.

Spirituality

In the how of existence lies the answer to the question for its why. Victor Frankl

What is the meaning of life? This is a question asked by individuals in all ages of life from adolescence onward. According to Frankl (1967), existentially defining ourselves through our endeavours and achievements is the key to shaping a meaningful existence. Life is expressed by several writers as a journey metaphor (de Avila, 1995; Luckner & Nadler, 1992). Using this metaphor, Assagioli, states similar ideas to those of Frankl; "spiritual development in a person is a long and arduous adventure, a journey through strange lands full of wonder" (Assagioli, 1995 p.116). There is a need to openly evaluate the spiritual aspects of wilderness programs and to highlight the connections between spiritual strength and the development of individual well-being. Frankl (1967) suggests that often it is an extremely difficult external situation that gives humans the opportunity to grow spiritually beyond themselves. The tough experiences encountered on a wilderness journey have an impact on participants' spiritual development (Assagioli, 1995) but linking this back into the home environment is necessary to increase their definition of themselves within the constructs of their relationships and communities (Ellis-Smith, 1999). Often this is done in a reflective way through a solitary meditation exercise or simply one-on-one during the day's journey.

Externalisation, Miracle Question and Scaling

Brief therapy holds that the participant is the best therapist when it comes to finding a solution to his/her problem. Approaches to help them find a solution may lie in externalisation, miracle questions or scaling. When an adolescent holds self-defeating views of her/himself and is totally overwhelmed by the problem then a process of externalisation can help them lessen the impact. By separating the person and the problem, a space is created whereby she/he can gain some control over its influence. The miracle question is used extensively as a tool to focus individuals away from the problem and into some level of future resolution. It slices a way through the confusion surrounding the problem arriving at the ideal solution first before working backward to pick up the incremental steps of reaching the goal. Scaling is a useful monitoring tool that can be implemented to gauge feelings, physical effects and general well-being in the group. Its greatest application for Bush Counselling is in the monitoring of personal goals.

Individual goal setting

Heatherton and Nichols (1994), when studying people who had successfully changed a major aspect of their life with those who hadn't, found the 'changers' had invariably re-appraised their goals in life and increased their self-knowledge and understanding. Personal goal-setting is central to behavioural therapy (Corey, 1996) When relating this to 'Bush Counselling we encourage goal setting at all levels, individual, group as well as practitioner goals. To create a climate ripe for change, selling the idea of personal growth to young adults is essential. For the young person engaged in the storm and stress of adolescence this may lack relevance, however a well fleshed out and measurable program of change is a key requirement of our work. This includes vigorously challenging young people on programs to formulate personal goals of significance, not just a non-specific aspiration dreamed up to placate the counsellor; to set the scene by modelling a personal goal that honestly describes aspects of your life with which you struggle (Bandura, 1969); and that the counsellor too, has something significant to gain from the process. This 'program of change' may house goals within goals and, using a ladder as a metaphor, each rung is viewed as a specific short-term goal leading to a change of great significance. Further the program of change stresses the need to constantly review goals on the basis that we all bite off more than we can chew at times and conversely encourage the formation of realistic goals requiring real effort and courage.

Mastery

The idea of mastery of tasks and the development of positive self-efficacy is discussed in Bandura's (1969) social learning theory. Wilderness programs use activities like abseiling that promote task mastery. Peer modelling can play a major part in this process, yet success can also be achieved with a supportive peer environment that encourages the individual to attempt the task because the consequences of failing are significantly diminished (Sveen, 1994). Other strategies that can be adopted by both individual and counsellor are the re-evaluating of goals and the use of a staged approach to various challenges (Crisp & O'Donnell, 1999; Sveen, 1994). An example of this might be using three abseils of varying stages of difficulty to encourage a progressive approach to task mastery. This also highlights the need to assess the level of skills within the group and to fix the degree of difficulty to a challenging yet achievable level.

Remoteness and attending to needs

The counsellor's office, for some of the young people with whom we work resembles their school environment which may hold negative connotations, whereas the bush setting where we prefer to practise transmits a stimulating alternative clothed in uncertainty. For personal growth to occur young people must navigate a number of obstacles and as Maslow (1968, pp. 199-200) states:

> Each step forward is a step into the unfamiliar and is possibly dangerous. It also means giving up something familiar, good and satisfying. Growth forward is in spite of these losses and therefore requires courage, will, choice and strength in the individual as well as protection, permission and encouragement from the environment especially for the child.

From our viewpoint, the bush environment mirrors these uncertainties, embodies these strengths and through this uncanny resemblance to the process of change, provides the young person with a powerful metaphor. It is through this disequilibrating process and its resultant internal conflict that the first glimmer of inconsistency appears in previously held thoughts and beliefs (Peterson, 1996).

Central to all counselling theory is the need to provide a safe and secure environment in which to practise. Unlike the air-conditioned office, issues such as adequate warmth and clothing need to be addressed before individuals will focus on the lofty ideals of personal development and behavioural change. If their needs of survival and safety are being met, working with this person on issues relating to the needs of belonging or esteem will likely prove effective (Maslow, 1968).

Natural Consequences

External reinforces, a cornerstone of Skinnerian approaches, is all but passe' in most post-modern counselling practices. Yet in the strategic use of risk-recreation activities such as bushwalking, caving, kayaking and abseiling, the external environment provides the individual the freedom to make choices. For the young person who has suffered from repeated failure, a successful abseiling experience reinforces the actions that enabled him/her to risk uncertainty and step off the edge. Failure on the other hand is a valuable method of learning for both individual and group as it provides opportunities to change behaviours that are no longer effective (Handley, 1999). As a learning tool, future behaviours are influenced through the continued reinforcement of personal decisions which reap success and the subsequent extinguishing of behaviours from decisions that potentially cause discomfort (Sveen & Denholm, 1993).

Group Heterogeneity

'The differences amongst people are what make the community'. Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Modelling is a process by which individuals observe and learn new behaviour without trial and error (Bandura, 1969). Multiple models are particularly effective in the group counselling context for they provide each individual with a view of various successful behaviours (Corey, 1996). Wilderness-based programs that use a heterogeneous basis to group selection employ a variety of methods

> Single individuals from a variety of backgrounds are chosen for each Project Hahn course and pre-existing peer groups are discouraged. Each participant therefore commences the course on an even standing with other members. Thus, without fear of judgement from peers, the opportunity is available to the individual to experiment with a range of new ideas and behaviours (Adams, et al. 1999, p. 259).

The counsellor in his selection process of group members is looking to create positive peer-dynamics, whereby individual group members with elevated peer status become models for those at a lower level (Corey, 1996). An example of this in the wilderness context might come about when a less confident individual observes other group members completing a difficult task (eg. a tight squeeze in a cave) and concludes that because everyone else managed to get through, then so can she (Sveen, 1994). The personal style of the counsellor should support the modelling of appropriate behaviours and demonstrate effective communication skills. This role allows the young people opportunities to view positive skills and experiment with similar behaviours. Through this social learning process the individual enlarges her/his repertoire of skills and behaviour, and is better placed to cope with new situations.

Journey

All counselling theories allude to the metaphorical journey of change. The journey of a small group through a vast landscape allows for a strong sense of community to develop and through establishing meaningful relationships, individuals can come to know themselves. The opportunities for spiritual development are manifold in such awesome surroundings where the concerns of the world lack relevance in comparison. The action mode is integral to any bush journey and it is of great assistance to the Bush Counsellor. Through involvement in the completion of tasks the participant begins to feel

like he or she is in transition. A journey implies that action is involved as the impetus to reach a destination point. In the bush setting this destination is vague and murky and holds within it a sense of mystery and discovery. The passing of time changes as the journey progresses. It takes the participant some time to slow down and move at the pace dictated by the bush environment. The change in emphasis focuses the participant in the present moment and allows the journey to become an unfolding process. Through the sharpening of awareness we become less concerned by the destination and more attentive to the process of journeying. The journey provides each participant with countless metaphors, for example, minimal impact bush walking provides us with the wonderful metaphor of not avoiding the mud, its wetness and its smell. It is facing our fear and our repulsion. Once we are prepared to go through the middle and are prepared to open up we can clearly see how much sense it all makes (Bratzel, personal communication 1999). We look after the country by choosing to walk through the mud and we look after ourselves by showing our willingness to be in our own internal muddiness and raininess.

Summary

This paper has presented a model of Bush Counselling. It has highlighted a preventive approach to at-risk adolescent behaviours through a process of maturational acceleration. The theoretical underpinning of holistic Bush Counselling has been described, sourcing the foundation and applications. To promote the growth of our industry, other counselling programs are invited to share their working models, and readers are invited to adopt them to their community and, where appropriate, adapt the individual counselling principles into their programs.

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