

Resource review

Putting youth in the picture

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Putting Youth in the Picture is an education resource designed to prevent young men and women “turning up on lawyers’ doorsteps” (2008b, p. 9) through making poor split-second errors of judgement concerning alcohol use, drug use, driving behaviour, sexual behaviour, texting behaviour and other issues relevant to the lives of emerging adults.

The resource is scenario-based, confronting, engaging, and takes a problem-solving approach, designed to allow the audience to suggest harm minimisation strategies. *Putting Youth in the Picture* has been developed and funded by Peter Shannon and Adair Donaldson, Toowoomba lawyers and winners of the 2005 Queensland Civil Justice Award. The resource was recently shown on ABC’s Four Corners programme (Ferguson, 2009) being used with NRL players as a tool to educate players on the meaning of consent.

Shannon & Donaldson have about 30 years experience between them in helping young people through the court system. A commonality in all of these cases according to Donaldson (2008) has been that:

They all made a poor split second decision...they didn’t set out to cause anybody harm...they then made this fateful decision and then they find themselves before the courts and find that their lives have changed dramatically.

The resource outlines the legal consequences of breaching the law surrounding six real-life scenarios. The legal ramifications of an offence on your record for employment, travel, and life are made very plain. The resource does not make explicit the theory underpinning its approach, but does draw on feminist and deterrence approaches. Its central focus is to be a resource, able to be used in its entirety as a program, or as the raw materials for a course with a differing conceptual approach. There are two DVDs. The first has five scenarios which are aimed at the 15-25 year-old audience. The scenarios deal

with sexual assault, victims of sexual assault (both hetero- and homosexual), motor vehicle accidents (non-alcohol related), bar room brawl/assault, and illicit use of drugs. Each scenario is authentic, being based on court cases the two lawyers have been involved in. The approach is no-nonsense, teaching students accurately where the line is, and what happens if you cross it, as a deterrent. Ethical considerations are raised, but are not the central approach.

The resource has grown organically and has been grounded in much community and end-user support, benefiting the final published iteration. What began as a ‘one-off talk’ at a local high school has developed into a 10-module (1 x 1.5 hours & 9 x 40minutes) training package. There is also an additional (eleventh) module written especially for parents (the second DVD) which tells the story of responsible parents hosting an under-aged party that gets out of control.

Users can choose to watch each scenario with a commentary by Adair Donaldson, or not. As previously mentioned, delivery strategies are very flexible – it gives outlines, suggestions of delivery, but leaves wide scope for the resource to be adapted and suited to different audiences. The situations are largely designed for Australian urban populations and are focussed around the problem-scenarios being portrayed.

Donaldson himself has presented the resource to more than 4,500 students, athletes, health workers, and police and believes the resource is working in achieving the learning goals. Evaluation of the programme is undertaken by end-users. High schools, sporting clubs, a church, police, youth organisations and clubs, liquor industry groups, and parent groups are amongst the current users. CDFVR commends the authors for their initiative and vision. Go to www.puttingyouthinthepicture.com for more details.

References

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