

STOP! THINK! CHOOSE!

By: Mrs. Makeada Bourne,
Community Programme Officer, NCSA

A seven year journey with the National Council on Substance Abuse's (NCSA) **Stop! Think! Choose!** Group has resulted in the creation of a unique business - 'Broad Street Media' and the launch of a Public Service Announcement for the deaf and hearing impaired community.

A look back into 2008 would reveal that there were no drug educational and HIV materials or forums for deaf and hearing impaired persons. Meanwhile, there were growing concerns about alcohol abuse among this population. Additionally, the HIV/AIDS Commission identified them as a high risk group to contract HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's).

Hence, the launch of the STOP! THINK! CHOOSE! programme in March 2010. Since then, the NCSA has implemented fifteen successful projects, including weekly interventions at the Irving Wilson School.

The programme sought to:

1. Increase the knowledge of the Hearing Impaired and Deaf community about HIV/AIDS, STIs and Drug Abuse.



From Left - Anthony Marshall, Anthony Pile, Dario Nightengale, Rahmat Jean-Pierre, Tracey Walker, Desiree Prescott, Bonnie Leonce (partially hidden), Alicia Wharton, Sandra White-Belgrave, Makeada Bourne (sitting).

2. Increase awareness of HIV and other STI's testing procedures.
3. Introduce participants to positive alternatives to drug use.

With this in mind, the latest project, 'Know the Facts... Make the Choice', strove to achieve the above goals through a three-pronged approach in collaboration with a number of government stakeholders. In the first phase, we engaged our parent Ministry, the Ministry of Home Affairs; in the second phase, we partnered with the Ministry of Health; and in the third phase, we worked with the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth - specifically the Youth Mainstreaming Programme.

During the third phase, twelve (12) members of the STOP! THINK! CHOOSE! Programme were enrolled in the first ever Media Course for the deaf and hearing impaired persons. The media course was hosted by the Youth

Mainstreaming programme under the leadership of Mr. David Denny, the Youth Projects Coordinator. Mr. Rahmat Jean-Pierre was the tutor who motivated and empowered these students and, Mrs. Bonnie Leonce was the interpreter who also gave guidance throughout the course. During the period November 2016



Hon. Stephen A. Lashley, Minister of Culture, Sports & Youth delivering the opening remarks for the PSA launch for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired at the NCSA.

to May 2017, Mr. Jean-Pierre taught the students various aspects of the World of Media including: script writing, photography, lighting, editing and movie making.

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Foreword



Mr. Mark Maynard -
Board Member, NCSA

It is a significant irony that I should sit here to write this foreword for “**Matters of Substance**”, the Quarterly Newsletter of the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA). Were you to have met me some time ago, it would have been under a completely different set of circumstances and would have been a sure deterrent for any such

exercise, since I was once addicted to drugs. For at least eighteen years of my life, I had moved from curiosity to experimentation and eventually use and abuse of marijuana, cocaine, crack-cocaine and other narcotic substances. At that time, the NCSA was not yet established but I was lucky, and indeed blessed, to have met a psychologist who counselled me for approximately one year. During the recovery process, I came to the realization that “coming off of drugs” was merely the first step in a very long journey to recovery. Much of what happens when we “come off” is that we are now in the same position as non-addicted persons with the same needs for daily living. Eventually, I was released from the slavery of drug addiction through the divine intervention of Jesus Christ; and I therefore give him credit for leading me to where I am today.

Approached by former Manager, Mrs. Tessa Chadderton-Shaw, to sit on the Board back in 2007, I had the mind-set that the NCSA was primarily a counselling mechanism. However, the NCSA is holistically placed to service almost all needs with regard to drug prevention and intervention; and indeed, one of the primary goals of the NCSA is to position itself as the foremost institution for drug intervention in the country. We are working assiduously to fulfil that purpose and have in recent times filled a significant gap by providing a dedicated counselling service. We will continue to work towards making NCSA the foremost source vis á vis substance abuse and its attending circumstances on both the local and international arena. Over the years, I can attest that the agency has developed a number of programmes to educate persons on drugs and drug abuse within communities, schools and private sector organizations.

Essentially, the world has become a global village in which we must play an integral part in the various international efforts. I therefore commend the Management and staff of the NCSA for the sterling work done on a daily basis, both locally and internationally as we serve as a small but needed and purposeful cog in the wheel of substance abuse amelioration. I trust that we will be blessed as we continue and excel in our efforts to fulfil the mandate and vision of the NCSA with integrity, hard work and boldness.

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Above:
Mrs. Bonnie Leonce (left) interpreting for Mr. Dario Nightengale, Manager of Broad Street Media.

Right:
A cross section of the invitees who attended the PSA launch.



As a result, the students have produced a Public Service Announcement (PSA) for the deaf showcasing the effects of alcohol abuse. The PSA, which was launched 28th June 2017, encouraged the deaf and hearing impaired population to STOP, THINK and CHOOSE not to abuse alcohol as a coping mechanism but to choose LIFE. The NCSA hopes that this PSA will reach members of the population that we were unable to educate directly.

Additionally, the group produced a ‘Go GREEN’ video, which depicts the impact of the course on the group, as well as an informational and motivational video about deaf persons locally and internationally who have succeeded in their chosen profession. You can look out for these videos on the NCSA’s Facebook page, various social medias and mainstream media.

However, the climax of the course is that these once unemployed young people have come together to form a first of its kind in Barbados – ‘The Broad Street Media’. The uniqueness of this business is that it is owned by the deaf, but caters to both the deaf and hearing populations. Launched at the recent Barbados Manufacturers’ Exhibitions (BMEX), this group is well able to produce for example; PSAs, business cards, video recordings and photography at a very high quality for any type of event. The NCSA wishes them all success in their future endeavors.

We are truly proud of this group and how hard they have worked. They rose above their disability, stigma in society, and the current economic challenges to be leaders and advocates of the deaf and hearing impaired population.



Impact of drug use on the child and the family

Ms. Sacha Jn. Pierre, Counselling Psychologist Intern, PAREDOS

“I heard the sounds everywhere...emanating from my room, the kitchen and even from the neighbor’s house. Whenever he drank or smoked, he would come home angry. I was tired of getting beat up, tired of having to stay hungry for days because his salary was being spent on weed and alcohol. I was only a child. I became tired of making excuses, tired of running.... I was just tired. Not even my three suicide attempts were a refuge for me. Unfortunately, on each occasion, someone found and stopped me. I wish they had let me die to escape it all. No one understood the pain and turmoil I had to endure every day for my eleven years.....until I decided I had enough. If death was not a refuge, maybe, just maybe this would help. I am Jason, 13 now and I am an alcohol and marijuana addict.”



The effects of drugs are everywhere and nowhere – everywhere because they are in every family and workplace, nowhere because so much of the behaviour is hidden from public view (Wormer & Davis, 2013). The rate of drug use continues to escalate worldwide, with significant and distinct effects on the family. Drug use not only affects the abuser and his or her life, but also the lives of family members and those close to them. Each family member may be affected by drugs differently. Most available information on the enduring effects of parental drug use on children, indicate that a parents’ drug use often has detrimental effects on children. Some of these effects include cognitive, behavioural, psychosocial, and emotional consequences.

often feel responsible for the problems of the alcoholic parent, subsequently leading to high levels of tension and stress. Among the other effects, are fear of abandonment, low self-esteem, guilt and feelings of helplessness. Younger children also experience nightmares and bedwetting, in addition to those previously mentioned. Like Jason, the emotional trauma often leads not only to suicidal ideations but suicide attempts as well.

It is essential to note that repeated interference with normal brain function such as drug use (including prescription drugs) leads to long-term effects on one or more of our cognitive skills. The developing brain is particularly susceptible to the effects of drug abuse; prenatal, childhood, and adolescent exposures produce long-lasting changes in cognition. Children of alcoholics

Likewise, behavioural effects of drugs on the child and the family are numerous. Amid the lifelong problems recorded, are impaired learning capacity, leading to regression in some abusers and eventual school drop-out; a predisposition to develop a substance use disorder; adjustment problems, including increased rates of divorce, violence, and the need for control in relationships; and other mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. (Giglio and Kaufman:1990; Johnson and Leff:1999; Sher:1997).



Parents sometimes appear to be oblivious to the detrimental effects of their drug use on their children until a crisis occurs or treatment is sought. Parental drug use increases the probability of a child developing a drug abuse problem due to the direct and or indirect exposure to drugs within the family.

The drug use by a family member also has many significant and enduring impacts on family dynamics and functioning. Family cohesiveness is often affected by the prevalence of drug use. Families customarily report great stress, conflict and anxiety as a consequence of trying to protect family members from the negative impact of drugs, whilst attempting to limit the damage



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arising from their behaviour towards the rest of the family. Further, individuals who abuse drugs are likely to find themselves increasingly isolated from their families. Drug abusers often interact with other abusers or participate in other forms of antisocial activity. The cyclical nature of drug abuse is such that an impact in one aspect is likely to influence others. Nevertheless, the wider society is apt to experience the repercussions, as is being seen regionally and worldwide.

The detrimental and often irreversible impact of drug use on the child and the family should be of paramount concern to the various stakeholders in Barbados and the rest of the region, as the effects can be, and often are, enduring. Our society comprises of children, their families and the wider community. "The family is the foundation of society, as the family is, so is the society". When drugs affect the family, it inevitably affects our entire society.

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"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

-Maya Angelou

Upcoming Event

Project SOFT 2017

The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) is in the process of making preparations for our fifteenth (15th) annual one-week residential camp, **Project-Safe guarding Our Future Today (Project S.O.F.T.)**, for **40 children** who sat this year's Common Entrance Examination. The camp will be held at the **Marian Retreat House, Verdun, St. John** from **August 27th - September 2nd 2017**.

Under the theme **"KNOW THE FACTS... MAKE THE CHOICE,"** the camp will prepare the children and their families for entry into secondary school by discussing the multiple life challenges that they will face during this transition.

Registration Fee \$60
Registration period July 11 - August 11, 2017
or until spaces are filled.

For further information please contact
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Parenting Tips

Submitted by Ms. Jennifer Baptiste – Junior Programme Officer, NCSA

Create an atmosphere of sharing and be aware of “roadblocks” that prevent sharing.

Children will most likely communicate in an atmosphere where parents demonstrate an interest in what they have to say. Parents should try to be “present” when the child has something to share. Being “present” means to stop, when possible, whatever activity you may be doing to give the child your full attention. If you are not able to give your child your full attention at that moment, let him/her know you want to hear what he/ she has to say as soon as you are finished. Check in with your child once finished, seek clarification, offer support and suggest possible solutions if necessary.

Roadblocks may occur when parents belittle the child by name-calling, ridiculing or shaming e.g. “Stop being a sissy!” Man up!!

In this type of environment, the child may fail to communicate because he/she may **fear** being ridiculed. As a result, the child may turn to someone else who does not necessarily share the parents’ values especially on sensitive issues like drugs, sexuality, religion etc.



Children should be allowed to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings in a safe environment without fear of negative consequences.

In today’s world, the parent is no longer the authority on information. Children have access to information via the internet and thus their opinions may differ from that of their parents/guardians. Parents should be open and willing to listen to their children’s opinions and feelings about topics such as drugs, sexuality etc. Children should feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and feelings with their parents without fear of repercussions.

Communicate Effectively

Use “I” messages instead of “you” messages.

“I” messages are most simply explained as a way of expressing our thoughts and emotions about a specific experience or using a statement that often begins with “I”.

For example, “I get angry when you do not take out the garbage”

“I get upset when you do not tell me when you will be late from school because I become worried about your safety.”



On the other hand, “you” messages often appear as an attack on the “person” and not the “issue”. Examples of “you” messages are:

- “You never do what I ask”
- “You always leave your room untidy”
- “You always pick a fight with your brother/sister”

“I” messages are effective because the focus is on the issue or concern and not on the person. “I” messages promote the opportunity for discussing the topic or concern and finding possible solutions. In contrast, statements that begin with “you” tend to evoke defensiveness and an escalation of emotions rather than a desire to compromise and solve problems.

Create clear structure and boundaries

- Routines
- House rules
- Chores
- Consequences
- Provide positive attention and focus on the good your child does
- Spend time with your child purely for the sake of it
- Be a good role model and manage your emotions

The Family - God's Institution



Reverend Dr. Earl A.M. James

Since we are all born into a family of some type, we all have the notion of what a family is but that notion is often times not true. It is universally agreed that the definition of the family remains elusive. Below are some of the definitions used to describe a family:

1. A family is any two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption, residing together (U.S Bureau of Census, 1997).
2. A family is defined as two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility and decisions, share values and goals and have a commitment to one another over time (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences).

Because I am a Christian and a Pastor, I cannot help but manifest my Biblical bias as to the definition of the family. The family relationship is the institution of GOD which lays the foundation of all human society. From the beginning of creation, GOD made them male and female “for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife”. The word “cleave” means to stick to something like glue.

To unite or be united closely in interest or affection; to adhere with strong attachment.



Therefore, the husband must leave his parents' home and take care of his own family. According to the Holy Bible, GOD intends for the man to be the head of the household and the husband has been

instructed to love his wife as he loves himself. However, in today's society the role of the male and female within the family structure has changed significantly. Years ago, the male was the bread winner while the female stayed at home to care for the family. Men anticipated that on returning home from a hard day's work, dinner would have been prepared and the house cleaned. Today we have both parents working, yet some men still have the same expectations as yesteryear.

In some instances, these unrealistic standards often lead to verbal and physical abuse which affects the children.



For the purpose of this article I will only mention two issues.

Parenting Styles

This is often a very good recipe for the breakdown of the family relationship when parents have different parenting styles and cannot compromise on decisions affecting the child(ren). When children receive conflicting instructions from their parents, they are left confused as to what to do and how to behave. Therefore, it is important for both parents to work together to keep the family intact. There is an old adage that states “when two elephants fight the grass gets hurt” - It is the children who are affected most in a divorce or break-up in the home.

Communication

Ineffective communication is another

hindrance to the development of a good family relationship. Whereas effective communication is the fuel that runs the engine of a relationship and takes it to its final destination. In my opinion, a lack of communication was one of the causes of the breakdown of the relationship in the Garden of Eden. Eve failed to communicate with her husband and her husband who was supposed to be the leader and head of the home failed to communicate with GOD; thereby giving free access to a third party - that third party was the devil. Likewise most relationships are destroyed because one of the partners may allow a third party to enter the marriage union. When partners fail to communicate and resolve issues; one partner may seek love and affection from an outside source. Much like what happened in the Garden of Eden, that third party may cause the breakdown of the relationship.

Conclusion

As I conclude this discourse, allow me to share two solutions to have a healthy family. The first one is effective communication. Earlier I said that communication is the fuel that takes the relationship to its final destination. Couples should seek to resolve issues quickly and amicably. The Bible says, “Let not the sun go down on your wrath” (Ephesians 6:26). Also in your anger, don't withhold affection from each other. The second one is unity. Parents should discuss and set clearly defined rules for children. Remember a strong family produces a strong, peaceful and healthy society.

Dr. James is a published author and has written a book entitled “The Toxic Believer”

THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE

How to help children overcome life's challenges

Written by Ms. Dionne Bowie - Counsellor, NCSA (Clinical Psychologist, MSc)



We try our best to keep children safe. We hold their hands when they cross the street, we teach them right from wrong, to not talk to strangers, to choose friends wisely, and to “just say no to drugs”. Yet, no matter how hard we may try, children will still encounter challenges and hardships – from life’s little stressors, to difficulties at school or home, to natural disasters, poverty, abuse, and trauma. Let’s face it – life can be hard and we all need the ability to bounce back when life knocks us.

This is resilience. Simply put, resilience is the ability to overcome adversity. Psychologists have long wondered why some people thrive despite their traumatic experiences while others seem to falter, at times developing behavioural difficulties, mental health issues, and maladaptive coping strategies such as substance abuse.



While genetics may play a role in how resilient we are, resilience is by no means a fixed trait. Rather, it is a combination of factors that can be developed to protect us from risks and to promote positive functioning after adversity. Resilience includes both internal assets (individual characteristics) and external resources. In general, individuals with high levels of resilience tend to: Have caring and supportive relationships; believe in themselves and their ability to overcome challenges; be flexible in their thinking; be emotionally aware and accepting of unpleasant emotions; and feel in control of the things in their life that they can change while accepting the things they cannot.

We could all do with being a little more resilient. Certainly, for many of us life may not seem to be getting any easier and today’s children and teenagers are faced with new challenges and

barriers to overcome. How then can we help them to blossom in the face of adversity and to become strong, healthy, and successful individuals? Below are some ways that you can help your child or loved one to become more resilient.

Develop a Secure Attachment

Secure relationships are built on the presence of unconditional love, trust, and support which provide a secure base and haven for children to retreat to during moments of stress and adversity. To help develop and maintain a secure relationship: Spend quality time with your child; provide unconditional love and support; make time to talk often with your child; and show interest in their activities, opinions, concerns, and feelings.

Encourage Extracurricular Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities and community/church groups can help your child to develop positive relationships, life skills, and a sense of mastery. Support your child in taking safe, considered risks (e.g. performing on stage, trying new challenges) and consider volunteering as a wonderful way to develop their confidence, their sense of self and their abilities, and the belief that they can succeed in changing the world.

Develop Emotional Intelligence

Help your child to recognise, understand, and manage emotions. This starts from young with the labelling of emotions (e.g. “You are angry that Kelly took your ball”) and continues with the demonstration of healthy emotional responses by parents and loved ones. This is further strengthened with the development of healthy coping skills and the acceptance of emotions as normal but temporary parts of life. By understanding that emotions are neither scary nor permanent, your child will be better able to tolerate moments of stress or distress.

Encourage Self-Expression

Help your child to find ways to express themselves such as through art, music, dance, poetry, journaling etc. Self-expression can provide a healthy outlet for reflection, the processing of thoughts and feelings, and healthy independent coping.



Teach Self-Care

In life-and particularly during difficult times-it is important for us to take care of our physical and mental health, and our emotional wellbeing. Promote self-care by encouraging healthy behaviours such as exercise, a balanced diet, good hygiene, and relaxation. Teach your child mindfulness by practicing focussing on the here and now; taking time-outs from technology and overstimulation; and centering their thoughts and emotional states using deep breathing exercises, gentle stretching, or a nice walk on the beach. By increasing our mindfulness, we can increase our sense of control, our emotional wellbeing, and our resilience.

Create Structure

Children need structure to feel safe. Routines, rules, positive expectations, and discipline all create order, guidance, and support in what can sometimes feel like a confusing world. This is particularly important in helping children to deal with the uncertainty that may follow adversity.

Develop Realistic Optimism

Experiences are shaped by our thoughts and how we try to make sense of events and others around us. Help your child to look for the positives, to reframe how they see difficult situations, and to consider alternative explanations and solutions. This promotes flexible thinking, emotional control, and thus resilience.

Promote Personal Goals and Problem-Solving

Help your child to solve life's problems – big or small – and to develop the ability to set attainable goals and to take small steps to achieve targets. This promotes a sense of mastery and the belief that they can affect change.



Remember – all of us have the capacity to be strong, resilient beings. It is never too early nor too late to start taking steps to develop greater resilience in ourselves and our children. Try a few of the above suggestions and continue your research online for more tips and strategies.

