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Overview

“AISLADOS” . Intervention Programs for the development of skills for life.

Quality level

Quality level : 2

Executive summary

“AISLADOS” is a drug addiction program on the prevention of drug abuse and other risky behaviours, aimed at preadolescents and adolescents between 11 and 15. It has been created, drawn up and published by SIAD Association professionals under the supervision of the School of Social Work of the University Complutense of Madrid

Type of intervention	prevention
Sub-area	selective
Setting	
Type of approach	
Target group (universal)	children/young people
Age group	the programme is aimed at preadolescents between 11 and 15.
Target group (specific)	children/young people
Annual coverage	0
Substances addressed	tobacco,cannabis,opiates,alcohol,ecstasy,cocaine and derivatives,amphetamines,methamphetamines,inhalants/solvents
Evaluation type	outcome evaluation (how far are the specific objectives achieved),process evaluation (how far are the operational objectives achieved)
Country	Spain
Start date	01/09/2007

Overall objective

The object of our program is the adolescent's acquisition of social, emotional and cognitive abilities and/or strategies to help him/her prevent risky behaviours in the sphere of addictions. Over the past years, researchers on drug addiction prevention have come to the conclusion that information in itself doesn't prevent certain risky behaviours, and that it's only the acquisition of personal instruments that can strengthen individuals in order to prevent certain problems. By risk factor we understand, a certain attribute and/or individual, situational or environmental characteristic that increases the possibility of developing risky behaviours (Clayton 1992). Likewise, a protection factor will be that which lessens the chance of developing such behaviours. Getting to know the risk and protection factors which make each individual, in his/her particular society, adequately face the problems typical of his/her evolutionary age, is key to consider attainable goals pertaining to the prevention of problem behaviours. The reduction of individual risk factors is the theoretical frame known as skills for life, which aims to strengthen the adolescents' protection factors, by favouring an efficient transition to adulthood, as well as the adoption of adequate behaviours and attitudes. According to this approach, we can classify the skills for life, objective of this educational material, into: Mental or cognitive Social or interpersonal Management of emotions.

Abstract

"AISLADOS" is a drug addiction program on the prevention of drug abuse (and other risky behaviours), aimed at preadolescents, which uses a methodology based on role playing, where active learning, learning by trial and error and group negotiations are essential. The player, through a line of discussion, makes decisions and interacts with other players, and puts himself/ herself in such character's place and pretends to be himself/herself. It is based on a theoretical frame known as Skills for Life, which aims at reducing individual risk factors, by favouring an efficient transition to adulthood, as well as the adoption of adequate behaviours and attitudes.

Context and theory

Initial situation

Adolescence is a stage characterized by major changes, where it is necessary to assume new roles and face up to new evolutionary duties which start out in childhood and give way to adulthood. During this time adolescents undergo certain changes and transformations which affect not only their physical characteristics but also their intellectual, emotional, social and psychological aspects. At a cognitive level the formal thought emerges as a result of the biological maturing process and the experiences, above all, within school (Inhelder y Piaget, 1955; 1972). It affects the way adolescents think about themselves and about the rest of the people. One of the most remarkable aspects in the adolescent development is the construction of the personal identity. A process of exploration and search which culminates in the adolescent's commitment to a series of ideological and social values, as well as a commitment to a future project, which will define his/her personal and professional identity. This inevitable exploration and search for new experiences and sensations is favoured by some cognitive changes that can affect the adolescent's inadequate assessment of the risks associated to certain behaviours- such as drug use, risky behaviours, an aggressive attitude; all of which favour the adolescent's involvement in them. As a matter of fact, some investigations

suggest that such problematic behaviours usually start at this age. In this period, adolescents spend most of their time with peer groups, and this develops into a context of fundamental socialization. Thus, peers become their emotional confidants, counsellors and behavioural models to imitate. Some of the reasons that justify the creation of prevention programs on high-risk behaviours among adolescents are that: 1. Sociological and psychological research prove a high incidence of problems among adolescents, some with individual and family effects and others with community consequences. Among the most common are: Addictive behaviours, Academic problems (dropping out, school failure), Emotional problems, Criminal and aggressive behaviours, Risky sexual behaviours 2. The prevalence and persistence of some psychological problems (“behavioural disorders”), which isolate the individual from the adaptive environment and gradually lead him/her to unsettled behavioural styles and environments. 3. Endowing each individual with emotional, social and cognitive abilities according to his/her reality, strengthens the evolutionary development of adolescents and enhances the possibility of an adequate integration into their environment.

Basic assumptions/theory

The existing literature on the subject suggests that the most effective programmes to help young people develop such skills are those related to interactive teaching methodologies including action programmes, debates, skill tests and activities within small groups. By means of this teaching methodology, we work in the first place with the concepts of certain skills (by defining them, creating examples and correcting verbal mistakes), secondly, we promote both the acquisition and development of these skills (by carrying out guided tests and assessment thereof) and finally we promote the generalization of such skills, so that they can be applied to daily life. One of the main features of “AISLADOS” is the methodological approach, which rests upon role playing, where active learning, learning by trial and error and group negotiations are essential. Our goal is to start with centers of vital interests for adolescents in order to be able to work, through role playing, certain aspects which are difficult to tackle within formal education. Role playing is clearly distinguishable from other types of games (board games, card games, play on words...) Players find themselves in unknown situations created by the Master (that is to say the “educator”) who plays the role of a character and who guides such character through an adventure. The player makes decisions and interacts with other players, and puts himself/ herself in such character’s place and pretends to be himself/herself. Physically the players and the Master sit around a table where there are pencils, papers, dices, boards,... Another big difference in role playing as compared with other conventional games is the objective and temporalization. While in conventional games, someone wins and someone loses, in role playing no one does, no one knows when and how the game is going to end. Each session has a duration which ranges from 90 to 180 minutes. However, the methodology of the programme allows an open temporalization and it is the educator who decides when to stop a session. As each session has a different subject, each educator can stress one area or another.

Objectives and indicators

Process evaluation

Operational objectives

Process indicators

As far as the material in each session is concerned, we will assess simultaneously the theoretical content, whether it belongs to the field of social, emotional or cognitive competence. The methodology used in this evaluation is based on the aforementioned questionnaires.

Likewise, we will assess the teaching material in each session by means of a questionnaire where both the educators and students will state the changes which will be necessary in future applications.

In order to assess the process carried out in each session, the educator will have to fill a session assessment sheet, where the characteristics of participants, who has carried out the session, attendance, whether it was necessary to make any changes in the schedule, the players' involvement in each part (formal or playable) are included.

Instruments used

Type of qualitative instrument

Questionnaires specifically created for the material.

Type of evaluation carried out

Evaluation design

outcome evaluation (how far are the specific objectives achieved), process evaluation (how far are the operational objectives achieved)

Specific objectives and outcome indicators

Specific objective 1

Acquisition of concepts on Social Skills, training and improvement of such skills and generalization of daily routines, on the basis of the following axes: Peer groups Communication skills Education for peace- -Conflict Resolution. Values Clarification Assertiveness- Skills on the response to criticism

Outcome indicator 1

In the outcome evaluation we analyze the changes produced with regard to the implementation of the programme in the formal contents (the cognitive skills, social skills and control of the emotions aforementioned), which are the objectives of our intervention. In order to study if there have been any changes with regard to the attitudes, procedures and concepts of the skills we work on, we will use a comparison experimental design with Pretest-Posttest measures. The technique used in the questionnaire that the players fill before and after the application of the programme is with incomplete phrases. This way we will be able to assess if after applying the programme the players have understood the contents we have worked on from the conceptual and practical point of view.

Specific objective 2

Acquisition of concepts on emotional competences, training and improvement of such skills and generalization of daily routines, on the basis of the following axes: Auto-concept-Self-esteem Emotional control and expression of feelings (anxiety, anger, relaxation techniques...)

Outcome indicator 2

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Specific objective 3

Acquisition of concepts on complex cognitive skills, training and improvement of such skills and generalization of daily routines, on the basis of the following axes: Decision- making process

Outcome indicator 3

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Instruments used

Type of qualitative instrument

Action

AISLADOS is a program whose methodological approach is based on role playing (rp, where active learning, by trial and error and group negotiations are essential. Our goal is to start with centers of vital interests for adolescents in order to be able to work, through rp, certain aspects which are difficult to tackle within formal education. Rp is clearly distinguishable from other types of games (board games, card games, play on words) Players find themselves in unknown situations created by the Master (e.g. the “educator”) who plays the role of a character and who guides such character through an adventure. The player makes decisions and interacts with other players, and puts him/herself in such character’s place and pretends to be him/herself. The players and the Master sit around a table where there are pencils, papers, dices, boards, etc. Another difference in rp is the objective and temporalization. While in conventional games, someone wins and someone loses, in rp no one does, no one knows when and how the game is going to end. Each session has a 90-180 min duration. However, the methodology allows an open temporalization and it is the educator who decides when to stop. As each session has a different subject, each educator can stress one area or another. The adventure has a goal: surviving an extreme situation, facing the dangers of an island, after being shipwrecked on their end-of-year trip. Surviving will be impossible if only individual victory is sought, being cooperation essential. We will put forward situations, faced with which adolescents will have to decide, anticipate consequences, negotiate, control emotions, resolve conflicts, etc. By means of this methodology, we work in the 1st place with the concepts of certain skills (by defining them, creating examples and correcting verbal mistakes), 2ndly, we promote both the acquisition and development of skills (by carrying out guided tests and assessment thereof) and we promote the generalization of such skills, so they can be applied to daily life.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME Apart from pencils, rubbers and dices, the material is different for the educator and the player. • Educator’s notebook. It is an essential guide to follow the plot according to the programmed cards in order to have objective criteria with regard to the

grading and denouement of the various situations. To facilitate the identification of the diff parts of the sessions, we have set up a code which distinguishes the following: - Formal or “theoretical” contents of the sessions(guidelines for the development of the plot and methodology). - Playable part, mainly based on the throws of the dice which will add up points - An outline so that the educator can read the various stages of the game to the players. It is essential that the educator has familiarized himself/herself with each session. • Player’s notebook Designed as the diary of a castaway, it follows a sequential order, where the educator provides the right card at the right moment. Besides, the educator will provide a character card, which will accompany each player throughout the story, and the player will modify it according to the educator’s instructions. The development of the game will be supported by the cards on which players will work as the story advances. In some, it will be necessary to use the addition of skills of the character card, with the score of the dice, thus introducing the concept of chance and mixing it with the functionality and the efficacy of each skill included in the character card. The score can vary according to each player’s performance, and it is the educator who adds or takes away points after assessing the way the player has faced the situations. Boards:there are 4fold-up board.

Results

Process evaluation

Results

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References

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Contact

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Additional information

Number of staff involved 1 Coordinator for each application of the material in a group 2 trainers 1 monitor all part-time

Status/profession of staff involved In order for the intervention to be effective, we need: - Coordinator/supervisor: Psychologists - People who can put the programme into practice: community workers, leisure time monitors (with a previous specific training on the programme). The educators who implement the programme will have among others the following skills: 1. The necessary capability to develop interactive teaching methods 2. Ability to develop the programme within the group process (the ability to enrich, centre and lead the group), 3. Respect for the adolescents' freedom of choice and self-determination, 4. Ability to relate the story by dynamizing and motivating the pupils according to their ages. 5. Ability to create a friendly atmosphere of support modelled by the abilities they work in the programme

Type of evaluator External evaluator

Name of external institution(s) University Complutense of Madrid. Spain

Full reference to evaluation report University School of Social Work M^oJose Barahona Gomariz associate professor of the University School of Social Work of the University Complutense.

Budget

Annual budget
Sources of funding
Percentage from each source

Additional remarks

A feature that makes this material so innovative is the methodology, which is absolutely ludic and participative. The theoretical content is explained after a certain situation is experienced by the players. Thus, the players at this age who have a hard time to imagine and visualize situations (and its consequences) because they have never experienced them in their lives, will find such dynamic work of skills accessible and dynamic.