

## *Chapter I*

# **A THERAPEUTIC APPROACH TO THE REHABILITATION OF THE YOUTHFUL DRUG ABUSER**

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APPROXIMATELY three years ago, the SEED was founded in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, by Art and Shelly Barker. The basic design of the program is the general treatment model developed by Alcoholics Anonymous; however, there are several modalities which are peculiar to the SEED. The description which follows is basically an outline of the goals and methods of the program; however, certain intangibles which are difficult to describe exist in the program.

The SEED was developed because of a desperate need for help which existed for young people in the Fort Lauderdale area as a result of the heightened incidence of drug abuse. It was felt that new approaches to the problem were needed; therefore, the SEED concept evolved. The SEED program's concept was based on the premise that man can change his behavior and can live and cope in his environment. The young people who seek help from the SEED program learn that they can no longer "cop out" with drugs; but that they have daily problems and must learn to live with them. At the SEED, they obtain a sense of belonging to something meaningful along with the knowledge that they can find purpose

in their lives with the extra ingredient — a sense of dedication toward helping themselves and helping others to help themselves. The primary function of the SEED program is to provide rehabilitative services for the young person who has become a drug experimenter, user, abuser, or addict.

### *Application Criteria*

The SEED is made available to anyone needing help. The addict who must have some sort of maintenance — such a Methadone — to assist him in achieving detoxification will not be accepted by the SEED until such time as he is able to tolerate a truly “cold turkey” program of abstinence. Since its main program is not detoxification, the aim is to work with the experimenter, user, abuser, or addict who has used drugs less than ten years. Because of the age range — nine years to early twenties — parental consent of the majority of applicants is needed.

Anyone seeking help from the SEED and in need of detoxification treatment is referred to the appropriate facilities. Those applicants who are in need of medical attention are referred to appropriate hospitals and/or their private physicians. These young people then come back to the SEED program once they are considered to be in sound medical health. Other than these selected criteria, the SEED makes no distinction concerning participation in the program.

Physical discomfort of “withdrawal” is at a minimum among participants. Even those young people who have used heroin for two or more years and have \$200-a-day habits (this is equivalent to \$60 to \$65 in New York) take only approximately three days to pass through the withdrawal symptoms.

### *Background of the Program Participants*

A unique factor of the SEED program is that it reaches into the schools. In this community, estimates show that between 70 and 85 percent of the children are experimenting with, using, or abusing drugs. The SEED has been successful in reaching young people through referrals made by principals, teachers, and

counselors of the various schools in Broward County. The apparent change in students using drugs such as the decline of grades, failures, and dropouts, along with attitude change has added to the frustration and dilemma of educators. Due to the referrals made by educators to the SEED program, the majority of the young people destined to become delinquents and burdens on society have been able to continue in school education and to aid teachers in understanding the drug problems of the young. The young abuser is of considerable help in helping other drug abusers since he understands not only the values but also the language of the drug culture (Hardy and Cull, 1973).

Many young people, no matter how well they progress, have environmental backgrounds which are quite impossible for them in terms of adjustment. If there is no reinforcement from the family, the young person will meet constantly with disappointment and discouragement. For those young people in this particular situation, the SEED has been able to assist with the cooperation of either the courts and/or various agencies (vocational rehabilitation, family services, etc.) in obtaining foster homes and has been successful in continuing to work with them in their new environments.

### *Service Delivery System*

The first phase of the SEED's program consists, in most cases, of a two-week program of intensive group discussions but is expandable when needed. During this two-week period, the group discussion sessions average approximately twelve hours per day. In these sessions, the participant is aided in gaining insight into what he is and what he has done to his life by taking drugs; but more importantly, he learns what his life can be for him and the impact he can have on others if he is *straight*. These two weeks represent the equivalent in time of the participant's going to a psychologist and/or psychiatrist for a period of three years on a one-hour, once-a-week basis. The 14-day intensive group sessions provide a radical and comprehensive change which facilitates the learning process of the participant. The SEED is operated on a continuous seven-day week basis. The participant in this 14-day program is at

the SEED from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., during which time he is involved constantly in "rap" sessions under the supervision of staff. These rap sessions are carefully guided and the intensity is maintained at a controlled, effective level. When necessary for certain individual needs, "rap" sessions also are held on a one-to-one basis with a staff member.

Upon successful completion of this first phase, an additional three-month period ensues which requires the participant to attend four group sessions a week. This phase of the program offers practical application of his learning processes. He learns to function and cope in his environment while returning to the group involvement. The criteria of success of this program are based not only on the fact that the young person is drug free, but also on his attitude change toward life; that is, there is a love of self and others, community and country, and a sense of dedication to help his fellow man.

Due to the age of participants, they can adjust well to change. The amount of attitude change in the individual seems to indicate that the three-month period is quite effective. In some instances, individuals require either an extension of the two-week period or an extension of the three-months' program. Periodic follow-up is done to see how the participants are doing.

If the participant learns well and grasps the meaning of honesty, love, respect, discipline, and affection, there is no need for him to go back to drugs. For the young people who are found to have deep-rooted psychological, or serious physical problems, the SEED makes referrals to medical doctors, psychologists, and/or other community programs. This is true particularly during the individual's participation in the two-week intensive program.

Up until his introduction to the SEED, the *druggie's* best, most reliable friend has been the lie that he speaks and lives in order to mislead his parents and his teachers. This same lie directed to a staff member at the SEED is guaranteed to trigger a *choicely worded* verbal barrage not soon to be forgotten. Why? Because the staff member is a former *druggie* himself and can *smell* a lie that you or I would accept as fact!

Because it is tough to lose an old friend — and the lie has been his *best* friend — it must be replaced with something of at least

equal value. This is where the SEED asserts its true strength and individuality. Just after the above-described verbal barrage, the staff member will close the one-on-one session by saying to the thoroughly deflated recreant, "I love you." No one who has heard this shopworn phrase as it is spoken at the SEED can fail to be deeply moved by the sincerity and purpose behind its use. The reinforcing effect of true concern (love) is quite awesome.

The success of the SEED program also depends largely on family participation. The families are encouraged to attend two meetings a week to participate with the young people. Through this participation, the parents can get an overall picture of what the SEED is about and can see the gradual improvement of not only their own children but also those of other parents. They also can acquaint themselves with these other parents.

The group participation of parents and children, particularly those parents who are deeply involved with the program, has produced remarkable results in that the family unit is brought closer together and gains a better understanding of the dynamics of its problem. Also it has been observed that a greater level of love and compassion evolves within the family.

Fundamental to the continuing success of the SEED's program — especially during the period immediately following the two-week initial phase — is a highly effective intelligence network put together by Art Barker, which is composed of ex-druggies, teachers, police and concerned friends. If an apparently rehabilitated participant is seen even talking with an unreconstructed acquaintance, Art knows about it in a matter of minutes and is able to get to the offender for further therapy before recidivism sets in.

### *Staffing and Training*

The SEED has been able to train group leaders and help them develop talents of leadership. It also has been successful in encouraging these group leaders to continue more intensively in all endeavors to help combat the drug problem in the Fort Lauderdale area.

The SEED is strictly a paraprofessional organization with its



group leaders and staff coming from the program. Because of its uniqueness, the quality of staffing can be maintained only on this basis. Art Barker is responsible for the overall operation of the program and for seeing that the outline and guidelines which have been developed are followed and the objectives fulfilled. He is also responsible for seeing that the other personnel maintain a high level of proficiency in meeting their obligations and fulfilling job requirements. Additionally, he is a liaison officer with other agencies in the community to effect cooperation and coordinate efforts that benefit the community maximally without duplicating existing services.

There are four senior group leaders whose responsibility it is to maintain group supervision when groups are in session. They assist in training new group leaders and junior group leaders. The junior group leaders are individuals who have gained some insight into the workings of the SEED program, but as yet have not developed the maturity or had experience which would prepare them to take a major responsibility for the conduct of either the initial intensive group sessions or the latter therapeutic group sessions. As they gain responsibility, they move on to being senior group leaders and assume a role of deeper responsibility. The staff of the SEED program, 25 paid and 15 volunteers, can effectively handle the approximately three hundred active participants in the program.

### *Impact and Results*

The SEED has had a demonstrable impact in the Fort Lauderdale area. Its program has reached into the courts, the jails, the minority ghetto areas, and the schools of Broward County. The Broward County Personnel Association officially has adopted the SEED as its 1971 drug project and is assisting in obtaining employment for the successful young people while in, as well as when leaving the SEED program. The district supervisor of the Florida Parole and Probation Office and his staff have been playing a vital role in the rehabilitation of these people during and after their participation in the SEED program. The SEED also uses resources such as Broward General Hospital, Henderson Clinic, Family Services, Community Services, Vocational Rehabilitation,

and adult education on an emergency and a referral basis. The SEED recently became a member of the Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System (CAMPS) which is sponsored by the local city governments of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County. CAMPS is attempting to create a force of local agencies to effectively coordinate and cooperate in employment-developing opportunities. One role of the SEED is that of rehabilitating young people to enable them to become employable and constructive members of society and their community; therefore, involvement with these other social action agencies is essential.

It is interesting that the professionals who visit the SEED to observe the program seem to elevate different factors to prominence. One man might be struck by the obvious affection which permeates relationships between staff and participants; another by the sense of discipline displayed; and a third by the basic honesty of the program.

We feel the most effective factor influencing the youthful drug abuser at the SEED is peer pressure. The youthful ex-druggee is a potent influence in exerting conformity behavior. Cull (1971) has shown that peer pressure is influential even among schizophrenics who have rejected interaction with the social world in a manner somewhat similar to the members of the drug culture. Social roles are changing rapidly. No longer do the elders in our culture exert the impact on behavior and judgments they did in the past (Cull, 1970); consequently, the SEED has turned to the group which can exert sufficient social pressure to change behavior — the youthful *ex-druggees*.

The drug dependence problem is one of the most pressing in the country, and Broward County is no exception. This is evidenced primarily by arrests, particularly of the youth between ages 13 and 20. The SEED's records substantiate this age span and document the fact that many youths start on drugs at an early age and advance from marijuana to hard narcotics within one year. In an effort to combat the drug problem, the SEED was founded approximately two years ago. The basic model for the program is the general treatment program developed by Alcoholics Anonymous, with some very important modifications.

The counselors or staff members are rehabilitated drug

offenders. After having gone through the program themselves, they have been judged to have the necessary skills and motivations to assist in helping others. These skills consist basically of the ability to develop an empathic relationship with others, the presence of strong desires and a dedication to help others and themselves, and finally, the ability to become skillful and successful group leaders.

The group sessions may be categorized loosely with the more formal Guided Group Interaction and Transactional Analysis type groups. In the sessions of the SEED, both formal and informal group pressures are brought to bear upon the individual members by other members and leaders. As may be expected, it takes a very skillful leader to know when and how to apply pressure to any particular member or any particular segment of the group. This leader also must know how to channel the group's pressures to effective and fruitful endeavors. The group leaders are extremely adept at reading the character of each member and then applying or halting the pressures. Having once been drug offenders themselves, they are able to pierce the protective shell which each drug offender throws about himself. The group leaders refuse to fall into the verbal and the cognitive traps which the drug offender erects. In the language of Transactional Analysis, the leaders see the games drug abusers may be playing and refuse to play them. They then point out to the individual how false ideas have led him to his present state of affairs.

The atmosphere where this guided group interaction takes place contains simply *affection, empathy, discipline, and love*. This *love* is a powerful tool in the hands of skilled leaders. In social power terms, the leader has been endowed referent power by the other members of the group. While at no time will he deny any group member, he does, however, skillfully manage the application of power. He uses his power to maintain motivation by reassuring those members who may have just received the brunt of a group session.

The above-described atmosphere of love has been coupled with the skillful handling of guided group interactions to form the SEED's unique and highly successful program. A new member attends two full weeks of twelve-hour sessions. If he has not made



adequate progress, he may continue for two more weeks. Once a member has shown that he is responding, he is then allowed to return home. Prior to this he has stayed in the home of another participant and has gone to school or work from that home. After finishing this period, he returns to SEED for further group sessions every night for three hours and all day Saturday. This process lasts for three months. The member is then *straight* and attends only once or twice a week from then on.

During the day, there are two separate groups – one for males, the other for females. Particular problems are discussed and solutions found. In the evening, there is a general session which every member attends. The staff members take turns leading the discussion and help each other whenever necessary. Twice a week there is an open session in which parents, friends, teachers, probation and parole officers, and concerned others participate. At the open meetings, there are usually about 250 members and up to 400 visitors.

An essential element in the success of the SEED is the amount of community participation and aid. Referrals to the SEED program come through many channels. Some are self-referrals, others come because of parental or peer pressure. The various courts are probating individuals to the SEED and sometimes send an individual to it for a pre-sentence diagnostic type study. Many individuals, of course, come because of the attention of concerned adults such as relatives, teachers and police officials. The SEED, because of its unique method and unequalled success ratio (now claimed to be over 90 percent), has managed to gather full community support.

### *Summary*

In summary, the SEED is an organization of former drug offenders who are dedicated to helping others. Its program of guided group interaction, honesty, concern, and understanding seems to have meshed into a workable method. The testimony of parents, doctors, friends, teachers, prison officials, members of school boards, and others all point to the fact that the SEED is a viable, dynamic program.

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