

**ARISE Foundation Focus Group Results from Avon Park Youth Academy  
on the CHOICES: Drop It At The Door 2-Day Training  
July 25, 2007**

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## **Avon Park Youth Academy:**

This is a moderate risk facility. The program lasts a minimum of 9 months and the facility holds a maximum of 200 youth. This program emphasizes the learning of trades, such as electrical, facility management, landscaping, or culinary arts. On July 25, 2007, a focus group was conducted with the 12 staff members. All were participants in the CHOICES 2-day training

Avon Park Youth Academy  
242 South Blvd.  
Avon Park, FL 33825  
863-452-3815  
Participant since: August 2002

## **Overall Summary:**

The overall results of the focus group reveal the CHOICES: Drop It At The Door 2-Day Training is a highly effect seminar for managing anger and stress at home and at work. The participants have made real changes in their lives that have been beneficial to both their professional and personal lives. They are happy and healthier as a result of this training. The staff was extremely pleased with all aspects of the training and firmly stated that nothing about the training should be changed. They agreed it was the best training in which they have ever participated.

1. What positive changes have you noticed at home and at work since the CHOICES training?

- it has improved relationships at home and at work
- have learned to drop it; the pressure builds at work and I have learned to make a decision not to carry that with me back and forth; know it is a conscious decision

2. Since the CHOICES training, how have you changed in dealing with the youth, fellow workers?

- learned to walk away when they are in your face
- keep myself from feeding into their anger; don't let them get to you; things do not escalate the same way when I don't mirror that response
- relay to the youth that they have a choice in how to behave; do a whole lot more processing with the youth; use to make them do something I wanted them to do, now I give them the choice (ex. You can act X (stop yelling) and Y (we can talk about it) will happen; or you can act A (keep yelling) and B (you will be restrained) will happen); giving them the choice and just talking to them (processing) in this way calms them down easier and gets the interaction to a workable level; a lot more communication with the youth; still have a choice even in a facility

3. How has how you feel about yourself changed since the CHOICES training?

- on a daily basis, I have a more positive outlook (even when feeling sick); I give the positive out to others and I see it returned to me; I make the conscious decision on a daily basis to be positive at the start of the day
- I feel I act now, instead of reacting
- More patience with the youth; realize now that the youth's behavior is not a personal attack on me, they could be acting from something I know nothing about (past personal issues)
- Feel I have learned how to "drop it" and be less irritated at home

\*\*\*Staff reported that one of the co-workers had really changed since the training (he was there saying little himself). Thy said he was less grumpy and less on edge and able to communicate better with the fellow staff.

4. What is the one thing you learned from CHOICES that has helped you most?

- separating personal and professional; leaving the job at the job
- giving positive attitude gets positive attitude

5. What was the most memorable part of the CHOICES training?

Activities and videos:

- ball throwing activity
- role playing
- building blocks on the sand foundation
- gratitude rocks (many reported still having them in their office and glove boxes)
- ESPY awards video
- the focus of attention video (with the gorilla no one sees)
- mirroring activity

One person said that Travis told a personal story at one point that he thinks about every day. Travis was trying to teach them to "drop it at the door." He said that some days when he has had a rough day and he comes home in a bad mood. When he walks in the door his children are excited to see him and they smile and they want a hug and because he is bringing everything in the door with him, he doesn't return that energy they are giving him. He has to stop and remember that everything outside that door has nothing to do with his children and that is it not fair to them to not return their energy. SO he tried to drop it at the door and just focus on his children. The staff member says he thinks about it every day when he comes home to his kids.

6. Which of the stress reduction tools you learned in the CHOICES training do you use the most? (breathing, third person, physical exercise, mirroring, time out, find a happy place, hobby, don't take it personally)

- don't take things personally

- time out
- hobbies (cook, music, garden)
- walking
- act silly/laugh

7. What do you want to see changed in the training?

- nothing; really it was the best training I have ever attended; it was highly interactive, we were discussion and up doing something every 15 minutes
- not sitting around much; feel like it was going most of the time, much more than most trainings
- Travis was very thorough; things were broken down to understand it (brought it down) and everyone went with him; the topics were all interesting
- Used a variety of learning techniques (visual, audio, interaction, handouts); it was all there
- Did not want to leave the training, it was that good
- Do NOT change it; it was the best (especially 2-day training we have ever had)

