

Effects of Kindr after-school Community Programs with groups of At-risk and Traumatized Teens

Purpose: to help participants (youths 15-30) learn how to cope with stress, anxiety and other life challenges. Through ongoing interactive facilitated group sessions, participants learn how to develop kind practices and how to use mindfulness to not only increase kind habits but also to decrease unkind habits that prevent or damage close caring relationships. The goal of these group sessions is to guide participants in using kindness and mindfulness to develop positive relationships that lead to happier, healthier and more loving lives.

Effects of Three Programs in facilitated Tier 2 groups: *Lasting Happiness, Stepping Stones and First Steps*

EFFECTS OF THREE BEKINDER PROGRAMS ON SATISFACTION WITH LIFE AND PERCEIVED STRESS OF AT-RISK CHILDREN

Bonnie Grossen, Evaluation Director, August, 2024

While much research has examined correlates with satisfaction with life (family structure, delinquent behavior), little or no research has evaluated whether intervention can improve adolescents' level of satisfaction with life. This study found that the BeKinder interventions to teach kindness had a significant positive impact on adolescent satisfaction with life, and consequently, implies that these interventions also can reduce delinquent and risky behavior.

The effects of BeKinder interventions to teach kindness were evaluated with a sample of 85 Tier 2 and 3 at-risk adolescents in 7 schools in 7 different states, aged 9 to 18 in grade 4 through 12. The at-risk factors represented frequent behavior problems, anxiety disorders, emotional disturbances, non-compliance, and such. The sample showed significant gains on the Satisfaction with Life survey for adolescents developed by Huebner (1994), the same measure that numerous studies have shown predicts adolescent delinquency, including illegal and risky behavior (MacDonald et. al., 2005; McCarthy, 2011; Olsen et. al., 2021; Tang & Chan, 2017; Valois et al., 2001). Significant effects were found on 4 of the 5 sub-constructs (School, Living Environment, Friends and Family). Effects of the 5th sub-construct (Self) approached significance.

Satisfaction with Life (each item has score of 1 to 4); N=85

	Pre Mean	Pre sd	Post Mean	Post sd	Change in Means	ES	t	p
Overall (40 items)	114.8	14.64	120.86	17.3	6.15	0.42	3.1	0.0013

Satisfaction with Life by Construct								
	Pre mean	Pre sd	Post mean	Post sd	Change	ES	t	p
School (8 items)	19.60	5.26	21.6	5.65	2.00	0.38	3.05	0.003
Living Environment (8 items)	22.55	5.25	23.61	5.28	1.06	0.20	1.82	0.036
Family (8 items)	23.51	4.00	24.59	4.63	1.08	0.27	1.7	0.05
Friends (9 items)	28.69	4.75	29.68	5.06	0.98	0.21	1.58	0.059
Self (7 items)	20.35	4.93	21.38	5.11	1.03	0.21	1.5	0.07

The BeKindr programs also resulted in significantly lower levels of perceived stress. Other research has determined that changes in satisfaction with life affect perceived stress and not vice versa (Tang & Chan, 2017). The effects of the BeKindr programs were significant for the negatively worded items (e.g., in the last month, I got angry when I couldn't do things well) but were not significant for the positively worded items (e.g., in the last month, I felt in control of the important things in my life).

Perceived Stress (each item has score 1 to 4; negative stress reverse scored; higher score is more desirable); N=85								
	Pre Mean	Pre sd	Post Mean	Post sd	Change	ES	t	p
Perceived Stress (10 items)	22.91	5.48	24.57	5.48	1.66	0.30	2.65	0.005
Negative Stress (5 items)	11.04	3.71	11.91	3.55	0.87	0.23	1.93	0.028
Positive Stress (5 items)	11.87	3.95	12.66	3.26	0.79	0.20	1.55	0.065

More details regarding these findings can be found at this link: [Results Report Spring 24 FS SS LH.pdf](#)

Program: *Lasting Happiness* workbook: Effects

Boys and Girls Club (Clermont) Spring 2023 Lasting Happiness Class

Report and statistical analysis by Bonnie Grossen, Chris Loan, October, 2023

DESCRIPTION: A sample of 23 teens of the Boys and Girls Club, aged 12 to 18, volunteered to participate in an after-school program to learn the power of kindness by working through the 15-chapter [Lasting Happiness Workbook](#) facilitated by two trained leaders. Participants received a stipend for attending the sessions for 9 weeks, 2 sessions per week for a total of 18 sessions that were each 1 to 1:15 hours in length. All but one of the participants received free or reduced lunch. A 23-item Happiness Survey (reliability = 0.86, which is very high) was administered pre- and post-program. An inventory of applications to daily life was administered post-program only. Sixteen participants completed both the pre- and a post-happiness survey. We analyzed the change in pre- to post-program scores of these 16 participants using a two-tailed, paired samples t-test.

RESULTS: The change from pre- to post-program as measured by the Happiness Survey was very large, with an Effect Size of 2.46. (Effect Size is the difference in the means measured in standard deviations. An Effect Size of 0.8 is considered large, so 2.46 is extraordinarily large.) A small sample of 16 requires a very large difference to reach statistical significance. Eleven items showed a significant change. Seven items remained significant when a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests was applied. The significant change centered in the item categories of “relationships” (building friendships with kindness and better communication) and “behavior control” (being able to control anger and impulsivity).

On the Inventory of Applications to Daily Life (n=19), 100% reported that they would recommend the class to their friends; 95% reported reaching out with more kindness to family and friends; 89%, being more kind by letting others know you appreciate them; 74%, being more kind when speaking to others. These are highlights of the results. Details of the analysis and further findings can be found using the link: [Boys and Girls Club Clermont October 2023.pdf](#)

Better Way of Mentoring Program: Report of Effects

Bonnie Grossen and Erin Chaparro, December 2023

The Better Way Mentoring Program provided the Lasting Happiness program to a number of teens aged 15 to 21, 61 of whom took both the presurvey and postsurvey. In addition, the Mentoring program provided tutoring/academic assistance, opportunities to participate in activities across the broader community and funds for teams to participate in league sports and tournaments. Each student had experienced an average 10.8 risk factors identified by a Survey of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and 99% were persons of color (African American, Latino or biracial). The students attended mentoring sessions 4-5 times per week. Groups of 8-9 individuals attended a weekly 2-hour session in the Lasting Happiness program with their respective facilitator, for a period of 10 weeks. Individual groups covered 1-2 chapters per week over the course of the sessions. The groups also met on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to discuss the chapters. Participants were compensated for completing weekly reading assignments, written application exercises, and taking part in group discussion sessions.

Results: Overall, there were statistically significant and objectively large increases in the desired direction in all pre-post measures. From presurvey to post, Negative Mental Health Indicators on the Perceived Stress Survey decreased dramatically (SMD = -1.8) and significantly ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, Positive Mental Health Indicators increased dramatically (SMD= 1.5) and significantly ($p < 0.001$). (Any SMD above 0.8 is considered large.) The SMDs in the results below are extremely large. Change of the Satisfaction with Life measure from pre- to post-survey were also significant. Because Perceived Stress and Life Satisfaction correlate with and predict delinquent and at-risk behavior (Tang & Chan, 2017), one can expect lower levels of delinquent behavior from these adolescents. Because there was no control group for comparison and the intervention included many more aspects than the Lasting Happiness program, we cannot be certain that change was caused only by the Lasting Happiness intervention. Other factors in the

Mentoring program could have contributed to the very positive results. Details of the report can be found at this link: [Better Way Mentoring Final Eval 12 28 23.pdf](#)

A Randomized Control Study of the Effects on Mental Health of *Lasting Happiness: A Guide for Teens and Adults*

Erin Chaparro and Bonnie Grossen
September 2022

This study used a control group design. Teens with a background of adverse childhood experiences attending alternative high schools (New Beginnings) were invited to participate in the *Lasting Happiness* (LH) program. A control group also took the pre- and post-surveys.

Across all 3 sites, 65% of the students received free lunch. Approximately 95% of the students indicated that they had experienced some type of interruption in their education and had either failed a previous grade, were expelled, or suspended from school, or dropped out of another school before enrolling in the alternative high school. The NBHS group of schools report only approximately 25% regular attendees and a 78% minority enrollment: 44% Hispanic, 29% Black and 22% white. Their graduation rate was 14% for 2022; dropout rate, 86%. Students in the study ranged in age from 15-21 in grades 8 through 12. In Florida, a student 16 years or older can voluntarily withdraw / drop out of school.

In the present study we used the well-established measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen) to understand the effects of LH on mental well-being. In recent decades, social research has validated important causes of suicide, substance abuse, delinquent, antisocial and criminal behavior to inform strategies for effectively reducing their occurrence. These causes include high levels of perceived stress (a result of failure, hurt, physical and sexual abuse, and so on). The Perceived Stress measure has two subscales: Distress (a measure of general stress experience) and Coping (a measure of feelings of success and being in control).

Results:

- The difference in the drop-out rates of students in the *Lasting Happiness* program (52%) versus the control group (89%) were significant ($p < 0.001$). Students in the *Lasting Happiness* program were much less likely to drop out of school in a setting where the overall dropout rate in 2022, the year of this study, was 86%. The fact that 15 students asked to re-enroll in the program for a second time plus the very positive evaluative comments about the LH program indicate that the content of the LH program was very meaningful to them. This further supports the conclusion that the value they placed on the LH program motivated them to stay in school. The greater retention rate among a group of students who have experienced so much failure and trauma and who are eligible (by age 16) to officially withdraw from school is a very important outcome.

Table 1. Significant findings on the Perceived Stress Survey (Distress and Coping).

		Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	lower	upper	SMD
Distress	*1.	-0.718	0.216	-3.32	0.001	-1.143	-0.294	0.75
	*2.	0.327	0.162	2.02	0.043	0.01	0.644	0.34
Coping	none							

*1. The effect of the Lasting Happiness intervention in reducing distress.

*2. The increase in distress levels over the 15 weeks for individuals in the control group.

- The intervention led to a medium-to-large decrease in distress, an indicator of improved mental health (SMD = -0.75), compared to the control group. The effect is so large because the control group had a small-to-medium increase in distress during the intervention (SMD = 0.34) and the intervention group displayed an outright decrease (SMD = -0.41) in distress.

The alternative high-school population is a very challenging population to evaluate, especially considering that these very troubled participants are of an age that they can officially withdraw from school. High attrition creates special challenges. Despite these challenges, significant positive change was found on the Distress subscale. No differences were found on the Coping subscale, but other research has found that the Coping subscale has produced unwanted variation in assessing stress in highly traumatized populations and has regarded Coping as a nuisance variable (Perera et al., 2017). These results and the very positive evaluative comments of the participants indicate that the *Lasting Happiness* program has much promise. Details of the results can be found at this link: [Final NBHS eval report V2.pdf](#)

Lasting Happiness: Preliminary Pilot Evaluation Summary

Erin Chaparro, Evaluation Director, December 2021

Four partnering agencies participated in the initial launch of Lasting Happiness groups. A total of 20 participants and 4 facilitators worked through the Lasting Happiness workbook together over the course of 15 weeks in the Spring and Summer of 2021. All participants were recruited for participation because they had experienced a significant number of adverse childhood events.

The following groups were involved:

A. Centro Latino Americano – This organization serves a LatinX community. The facilitator planned to conduct a total of 15 sessions, one per week, for 1.5 hours per week, 6 individuals participated, 50% of whom completed all activities.

B. New Beginnings Winter Haven Campus – This organization serves African American, LatinX, and White students. This group started and ended with 6 participants with 100% of participants submitting both their pre- and post-surveys.

C. New Beginnings Lakeland Campus - This organization serves African American, LatinX, and White students. The group started and ended with 4 participants with 100% of participants submitting both their pre- and post-surveys.

D. Independent group from Oregon South Coast- The group started with 4 Indigenous participants. Post-survey data has not yet been entered.

Results: On the measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen), students scored -5.62 points lower on the post-survey, indicating a large reduction in stress. The change was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.03$). The Effect Size from pre to post was 0.86 standard deviations, which is considered large.

On the measure of Satisfaction with Life (Diener), students scored 3.27 points higher (greater satisfaction) on the post-survey, which was not statistically significant from the pre-test ($p = 0.22$). The Effect Size was .46, which is moderate in size. Due to small sample size, statistical significance requires larger Effect Sizes. More details regarding these findings can be found at this link: [Final Eval CKF s pilot youth groups Spring 2021.pdf](#)
