


A Community-Wide Program to Promote Child Safety, Health and Creative Wonder

Learning to Love More

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Learning Objectives

- Learn ways to involve community in child welfare
- Integrate alternative & traditional approaches to educating and treating at-risk children
- Report results of grants for Truancy Prevention and Creating Caring Community
- Discover effective approaches to challenges and self care



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Collaborators

- Mesa Vista Consolidated School District
- Las Clinicas del Norte
- Synergy Holistic Healing
- Llama Deara Ranch
- NM Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
- Wellness Center
- Garden of Radical Presence

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Stakeholders


- Children
- Their families
- Schools
- Extended villages
- Law Enforcement
- Government agencies such as CYFD and Las Cumbres



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Demographic Factors

- 95% Hispanic population
- Diverse history
- Profound cultural challenges
- Primarily Catholic
- Poverty and resistance to modernization
- Aggressive/violent response to differences
- Entrenched traditions ("it has always been this way")
- Captivating natural beauty of area



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Mental Health Factors

- Widespread drug/alcohol, & gambling addictions
- High degree of crime to support addictions
- Partner and child abuse
- Death: Car accidents, suicide, illness, and murder
- Splintering of families
- Complex PTSD, in roughly 85% of population
- Unresolved grief that has hardened some hearts
- Fear of vulnerability

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Challenges to Work

- Stigma associated with mental and behavioral health work
- Consumer fear that secrets will be revealed and disrupt their lives
- Lack of support for staffs
- Attrition rate of professionals
- Fatalism of population

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Addressing Challenges

- Draw consumers in by providing creative educational programs
- Integrate imaginative, caring, and holistic alternative approaches to health issues
- Educate entire population—staff, school board, parents, and children; be inclusive!
- Support staff through recognition, limits, consistency, physical comfort, humor

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Creative Educational Programs



- Envisioned to reduce and release trauma
- Expressive arts
- Spontaneous theater
- Creation of alliances
- Field trips in nature to discover self/others
- Building of empathy—initial manifestation of love

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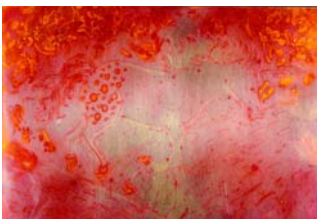
Keys to Trauma Release

- **Movement:** Research-based bilateral movement proven to help individuals self regulate and process trauma
- **Healthy Touch:** Reduces symptoms, replaces cell memory
- **Food:** Long used for social connection
- **Self-expression:** Discover who we are
- **Alliances:** Stand together



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Expressive Arts



- Allowed children to know and express self in painting, mixed-media, masks, dance, and poetry
- Self-expression seems to promote grieving process and resolve trauma

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Art: Themes

Several themes predominated:

- God, crucifixion, devil
- Loss of loved ones through death, incarceration, illness, abandonment
- Hunting/killing of non-human animals
- Love and hate
- Magic (angels, fairies, family)

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Art: Classroom Presentation



- After series of four sessions, children presented work, using dance, poetry, music, and descriptions of what motivated them
- Time of listening and honoring each other
- Practice, even in younger grades, learning to speak in front of groups

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Art: High-Tech Integration

- Students combined art and writing skills by publishing their art themselves in tech lab
- Parents and families can participate by viewing community web site
- Prose/poetry that children added to art poignant reflection of vulnerability



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Art: Tangible Outcomes

- Increased self-esteem as seen in more mutual support, camaraderie, & fewer behavior notices
- Tangible signs of grieving process, such as tears, poetry that honors lost loved one, reaching out
- Increased willingness to share deep parts of self
- Greater sense of chaos as children move to release tension

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Spontaneous Theater



- Through Truancy Prevention and Intervention grant
- **Goal:** Bring fun and enrichment to classroom experience
- Helping others through green circle of caring and inclusion and improvisational skits
- Consultant Rose Najia facilitated

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Theater: What It Is



- Spontaneous skits and sharing in- and outside classroom
- Children-devised skits
- Themes of friendship, caring, and helping
- Also, loss, death, exclusion, trust

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Theater: Allies Stand Up

- *Green Circle* work, allowing children to define inclusion/exclusion, expansion/contraction, growth/stasis
- *Allies*, not necessarily friends, but people willing to reach out when they see need
- Circle is about community, how we draw people in and allow space when necessary
- Discussion of motivation to reach out (safety, connection, vulnerability, feelings)

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Allies: Outcomes



- Deep sharing of losses, especially of parents
- Children reaching out to each other
- Addressing challenges of death/violence, splintering, abuse
- Green circle used in art
- Excitement to tell own stories, wanting to continue process

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Sexual Harassment and Abuse



- Community-wide project to raise awareness of risk and factors of abuse
- Three-pronged approach, with the training of staff, parents, and children
- Stella Gallegos, from NM Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, trainer

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Sexual Abuse: Training

- First staff in-service to verify buy-in: Essential
- Next parent night to educate about disclosure
- Last all-day program at each elementary school
- Truancy Grant funded food & childcare for parent night, & incentive (banana split party) to raise parent attendance
- 50% increase over past parent events



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Sexual Abuse Training: Outcomes

- Parent and educator interest strong
- Children focused, if not uncomfortable about directness of cluster-appropriate films
- Six weeks after program, children still remembered mantra "Say No, Get Away, Tell Someone, If They Don't Believe, Tell Another!"
- More child disclosure and parent questioning

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Llama Deara Ranch Educational Enrichment Program



- Field trips to local llama ranch
- Student participation in observation and trust-building games
- Scientist, Dylan Spaulding, funded through Truancy grant

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LDR: Interaction with Llamas

- **Premise:** Company and investigation of other animals help us to empathize and welcome differences and diversity
- **Goal:** Enlarge view of world and develop acceptance and investigative abilities



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LDR: Trust Activities

- **Car-Car:** Developed by Findhorn's David Earl Platts
- Exercise of self-discovery
- Students gauge level of trust and comfort with control
- **Log Navigation:** Game of cooperation
- **Play/physical activity:** Reduction of anger, anxiety, and depression



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LDR: Bosque Games

- **Bird's/Bug's Eye View of Bosque:** Explore habitats in riparian forest and ID creature needs: habitat, food, water, and energy
- **Interdependencies in Nature:** Gently identify relations among all species & how choices/changes affect all



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LDR: Outcomes

- **Improved empathy:** For selves and others through interaction with different species
- **Increased trust:** Through welcoming parents and students to counselor's home
- **Return to Nature:** Antidote to modernization



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Creating Caring Community (CCC)

- Project seeded by Bully Proofing Your School grant
- Cadre of principal, school board president, two parents, 2nd-grade teacher, counselor
- Emphasizes kindness & respect



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CCC: Training



- Trained by State of NM and independent consultant
- Training based on Colorado program to address dynamics of Columbine tragedy

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CCC: 2005-2006 Rollout

- Continued building of staff who believe change is possible (year by year with consistency)
- Counselor classroom education
- Peer support, both adult and student
- Collaboration with all staff, parents, & students
- Positive Behavior Support trainings through 2005-2006 grants for both elementary schools
- More self reflection and collaboration time for staff to assess their own level of caring

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Synergy Holistic Healing

- Collaboration of homeopath MD, Kit Keith, with student & parent OK
- Work on depression, hypochondria, psychosis, and harassment
- School counselor also LMFT at this center
- Collaboration/roles with different entities builds trust, both in people & in options to world situation



Las Clinicas Del Norte

- Three-clinic medical organization in Northern New Mexico
- CEO Andy Lopez also serves as school board president
- Director of Counseling & Community Services, Patricia Brescia, provides school-based services and collaboration



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Wellness Center

- Psychologist John Lang provides collaboration in IEPs, testing, and assessments
- Psychotherapist Ana Guldán shares innovations in play therapy and child self-regulation



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Outcomes of Programs

- **Processing of Loss and Trauma:** Tears, affection, and compassion of students and colleagues forming alliances
- **Friendlier Connections:** Participants in LDR field trips into nature and counselor's home are less reserved and seek me out to connect.



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Outcomes Continued

- **Community building:** Bit by bit
- **Improved Collaboration:** Monthly collaborative meetings among ancillary staff from LCDN, Wellness Center, and principals/counselors
- **Cohesive formulation of student plans:** Involves all educators and therapists
- **Staff integration into programs/services:** Through surveys and cross-pollination

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Challenges: Personal/Professional

- Frustration/patience
- Lack of physical help
- Physical/legal threats
- Magnitude of task
- Limited staff and parent investment, due to overwhelm
- Mistrust of different approach
- Enforcing rules/needs through expediency of aggression and intimidation



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Challenges: Solutions



- **Persistence:** Express what you want
- **Continued grace:** Adults and kids soften with invites to home and with recognition
- **Consistency:** Staff begins to know what to expect

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Challenges: Continued Solutions

- **Initiatives to address resistance to collaboration:** Lead professionals carrying on one-on-one meetings until colleagues buy-in fully
- **Threats of law suits:** Continue to address threatening person with love
- **Frustration:** Speak once anger is contained, thus avoiding foot-in-mouth syndrome
- **Exclusion:** Keep including, smiling, greeting

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Challenges: Solutions Continued

- **Lack of cultural competence:** Consider selves world citizens or children of Divine
- **Staff buy-in:** Build slowly, respectfully, and consistently



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Challenges: Lessons Learned

- Invite stakeholders into home
- Exchange physical affection often
- Recognize others
- Walk our beliefs over and over again, teaching from example
- Remember the children are watching

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Self-Care of Practitioners



- **Understanding:** Why we do our work; identify own metaphor
- **Love:** Practitioner begins to love self and then can love others more
- **Affection:** To and from children and colleagues
- **Laughter and play:** With staff and students, and in personal life

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Self Care Continued

- **Human alliances:** At work and personally
- **Spiritual Connection:** Regularly with Divine, which then infuses Divine in work
- **Transformations:** Of aggression and intimidation through empathy, compassion, and acceptance of selves—Love one another and self
- **Ongoing self assessment:** Gauge burn-out & correct in nature, bodywork, friends, breaks
- **Planned sabbaticals:** Rejuvenate exhausted souls

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Spiritual Connection



- Prayer and meditation
- Infuse Divine in heart and soul regularly
- Talk and walk with Divine
- Let Divine do our work
- Reflect love back to Divine and to community
- Watch thoughts and change as necessary
- Know how we ourselves are growing

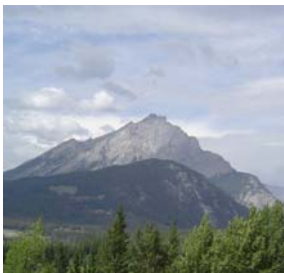
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Consider Own Definitions

- **Prayer and intention:** Attitude of heart, more in being than doing; communication with Absolute
- **Love:** Personal, political, and spiritual act that redeems world
- **Metaphor:** Formed by commitments and beliefs, e.g., metaphor of mutual healing

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Future Plans



- **Green Dragon project:** Grow school garden, connecting to cycles in emotional terms; include diet & community service
- **Staff Inspiration Days**
- **Obesity Grant:** Add activity to curriculum to improve physical robustness and emotional factors related to trauma
- **LDR Empathy Research**

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Future Plans (continued)

- **Brain Gym:** Include stakeholders in whole-brain learning, improving academic performance & resolving trauma thru group bilateral movement
- **Theraplay:** Work in classrooms & parent workshops to enhance play with movement, touch, and food to resolve attachment patterns weakened from trauma and loss
- **Child Safety:** Longitudinal studies of Sexual Harassment and Abuse program show yearly repetition of training decreases incidence of sexual harassment/abuse in school community

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Contacting Presenter

- Write to Hannah-Leigh Bull at hlb@llamadeara.com
- Visit Llama Deara Ranch web site www.llamadeara.com
- Call Hannah-Leigh in New Mexico at 505-685-9416

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