

Healthy Relationships Programme: On behalf of the Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower Trust™ New Zealand

Evaluation



Compiled by Christine Wilson, Ph.D

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INTRODUCTION

Standards and Monitoring Services (SAMS) was employed by the Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower Trust™ New Zealand in 2011 to undertake an evaluation of their online version of the Healthy Relationships Programme. The Healthy Relationships Programme is an interactive online package designed to “build resiliency and to prevent bullying and abuse” (online description). It is particularly relevant to people with intellectual disabilities as the content is topical, easy to use, and was designed for this group in particular.

The Healthy Relationships programme has been developed over a number of years, but has only recently become available online. Earlier work was evaluated by *Clarity Research* (Hamilton and Turner, 2009) and *Impact Research* (Dunbar and Holland, 2011) in New Zealand, the results of which are available on the Kidpower website. Kidpower New Zealand also provided some internal review of the project with a trial of eight young people (13-21 years) with Autism and their primary caregivers. The work by Hamilton and Turner (2009) was qualitative in design and included a literature review of abuse and similar abuse prevention work for people with intellectual disabilities. One of the main themes evident from the literature and the subsequent evaluation of the Healthy Relationships programme by these authors was the difficulties presented when groups of people with intellectual disabilities were expected to grasp concepts that may be initially complex, and then be able to transfer skills to real life situations. Hamilton and Turner (2009) therefore suggested that for the Healthy Relationships programme to be effective the material should be tailored to specific situations or specific individuals.

The evaluation conducted by Dunbar and Holland (2011) was the perception by teachers that the programme had a positive impact on students with observed behaviour changes. Family members by contrast were not uniformly aware the programme was operating and were not therefore able to assist with reinforcing behaviours in the home environment.

The internal review with a focus on eight 13 to 21 year old students with Autism primarily focused on transference of skills to everyday life. The report is full of interview evidence that parents found skills did transfer well.

The online version of the Healthy Relationships programme was funded by the Ministry of Social Development and the Canterbury Community Trust. Early development of the programme was funded by the Ministry of Justice. The programme was informed by a number of professionals in the intellectual disability field including self advocate groups and specialist educators. It provides both “learner” modules and guides for “supporters”. Supporters may sign into the programme using links available through the Kidpower website or by using search engines with the key words “healthy relationships New Zealand”.

In brief the programme consists of 40 animated stories built into three interactive learning phases: (A) being able to identify when something is NOT okay or NOT a

choice, (B) knowing when and how to say 'stop' and listening when others say the same thing, (C) knowing when and how to seek help.

The online programme was completed in 2011 and had only recently been available at the time of this evaluation. This evaluation was aimed toward understanding what people using the new online system thought of the system and its content, and how they tailored the material for their own needs.

The limitation of this work is the low numbers of people who had become familiar with the programme at the time of the evaluation. The online survey had yielded 11 respondents and there were only three groups actively using the system who were available to talk to evaluators. In addition, the system had been personally introduced to three more groups by Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower instructors and the evaluator, who were considering how they could use the material in their work. One major limitation was timing. Many of the people who were connecting online were doing so late in 2011 and the three groups who were actively using the material were pressured to demonstrate or describe their practical use of the material in November or December. At the same time the evaluation report was commissioned for completion in 2011 with a short extension into January 2012. This report therefore is somewhat limited to the amount of material on hand late in 2011 but does provide a surprising amount of detail concerning how each of the people using the material tailored it to their own purposes.

MAIN FINDINGS

- The online registration process is relatively easy to follow
- The programme is user friendly
- The animations while simple, are able to convey complex ideas
- The character development of the online actors was thoughtful and appropriate to New Zealand and Pacific cultures without being exclusive to this region
- The online help system is easy to follow and use
- The scenarios are well constructed, topical, true to life and accessible for both younger people and adults with intellectual impairments
- Use of the system by learners with disabilities will require support as the ideas and skills may be too complex for many learners working alone
- The online programme should not be used as a stand-alone tool and is not designed as such. Rather it should be used in conjunction with role play and appropriate support.
- Programme users have adapted the material successfully to the learner or group of learners they support. In many cases the scenarios chosen relate to what is happening in the individual's/groups own life
- Transference of the skills in different scenarios is suggested by the educational professionals involved in this work, but further research is required to review transference of skills.
- Some of the scenarios are designed for younger people, others for adult situations. Specific selection of scenarios is suggested for many situations.

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

SAMS as an organisation that provides developmental evaluations to a variety of organisations. As an organisation SAMS is highly skilled in the disability sector and provides not only evaluation, but research and training opportunities. Developmental evaluation is a process that involves all stakeholders (in this case teachers, vocational staff, Kidpower personnel and classroom students) typically using in-depth interviewing, observation, review of relevant documentation and in some cases survey material. The process is usually more qualitative in style but quantitative material can be used to add information such as trends or indications of changes over time. When the analysis is complete the evaluators will specifically outline strengths and successes and use these as a foundation for recommendations for future improvements. Recommendations are not prescriptive or directive. They are couched as suggestions based on the material that was available at the time of the evaluation.

METHOD

This work is not a test to see how effective the Healthy Relationships material has been for people using it online system. Rather it is an evaluation of how people are using the material, what they see as its strengths and what issues, if any, they have with the programme. There are four sources of information available, (1) the online programme, (2) the online survey which provides a very basic summary of what eleven people thought of the online programme, (3) classroom observations and interviews with four educational professions who have used either the online version or the previous hardcopy (plus CD-ROM) versions (or both), and (4) interviews with managers and staff of a vocational service who have only just become aware the material is available.

The majority of the reported findings are qualitative as they are based on observations and conversations. Exemplars or quotes from the interviews will be used in this evaluation to highlight particular points.

The online programme

The online programme followed the extensive development of a manual based or hard copy (plus CD-ROM) version of the Healthy Relationships Programme. Both the online and the hard copy/CD-ROM versions are essentially identical in content and in the manner in which they are laid out.

The online programme can be found through the Kidpower New Zealand website or directly using the prompt: www.kidpower.org.nz/hr.

The log in and registration part of the programme is easy to follow and relatively quick. Once logged on the programme presents a menu outlining the three principle parts of the programme labelled as, A (enjoying healthy relationships), B (saying STOP and stopping) and C (getting help). There is also supporters lounge, and three posters relevant to each section (A,B,C) which can be downloaded in pdf format.

The supporters lounge offers three prompts for accessing help or making comments. The first is the forum where comments and suggestions from both the public and the programme developers are lodged for general consumption and response. The second is a link to direct email contact with the developers and a third offers landline or skype options for longer discussions with developers. Also on the supporter page are four boxes with information regarding the “how to practice”, “tips for test users”, “the safety signs”, and the “posters”. The page also provides a space to change passwords if this is needed.

The forum page had 39 posts on 13 topics from a variety of supporters/users and programme developers. The topics include congratulations on getting the programme online, technical questions and suggestions, impressions of the Kiwi (New Zealand) accents used and discussion concerning the scenarios. In the main the discussions have been positive with particular attention being paid to the way the site is unique for New Zealand players (accents and names) and how relevant the scenarios have been for players. The following dialogue is typical of not only what people thought of the scenarios but also how promptly and completely the developers respond to comments in the forum:

[Supporter/user]: The scenarios are really well thought out - they can easily be applied to so many situations

[Developers]: Thanks [X]. The scenarios all come from real life. People in our Kidpower, Teenpower and Fullpower courses have told them.

On the home page of the Healthy Relationships Programme the authors write “many hundreds of students with disabilities around the world helped us develop and tailor the stories and skills”. The relevance of the scenarios will be reviewed throughout this report.

Once a supporter has registered they are free to explore the content of the programme and consider how it can be used for their particular situation or group of

users. There are four main characters within the scenarios who act out particular situations. The characters bring their own personalities and challenges to the scenarios that may have resonance with some players. They include:

Marama: (a person of Maori/Pacific descent) Is smart beautiful and knows it.

Talib: (has a sight impairment and is Maori/pacific descent) is very sensitive and caring.

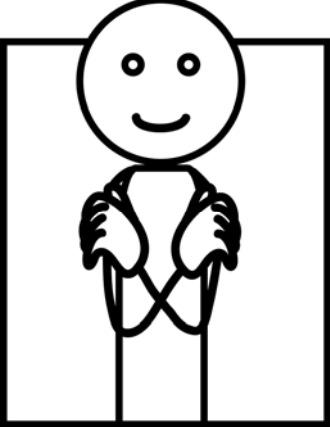
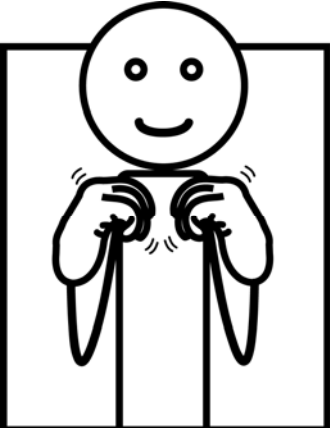
Mei Lin: (is of Asian descent) Is proud of who she is and does not take insults from anybody.

Mike: (uses a wheelchair and is of European descent) wants everyone to like him.

There are 40 scenarios spread between all three of the sections (A,B,C) and among by various actors. Some scenarios are shared between actors, continue between sections and present multiple skills. For example, the “friends at the park” scenario is common to all four actors, while the “Marama wants a backrub” scenario is unique to her and is found sections A and B. The “Marama wants a backrub” scenario in section A indicates that in some situations having a backrub by a friend can be okay if it is wanted (section A) while in some situations it is okay to say “no” (section B). This particular scenario is a good introduction to trickier questions about personal space, touch and intimacy. There are many other situations where similar scenarios are introduced and cover areas where touch is permitted even if it is not wanted (for example visiting a medical professional), where touch is not appropriate (“problems should not be a secret”), and where boy/girl friend situations get more complex (“hugs and kisses”, “too long kisses”, “Adam wants to hold hands” etc).

Multiple skills are taught as the programme progresses, particularly skills such as in the “bullying at work” scenario. In this sequence Talib is being bullied at work. The programme asks, “is this okay with both” people (Talib and the bully) and immediately prompts “no”. It then asks, “is this safe”, and prompts “no”. The learner is then encouraged to run the scenario again and answer the question him/herself. As the scenario progresses it suggests methods of responding to the bully. For example, “use your ‘awareness power’ to stay away”, “use your ‘walk away power’” and “ask your boss for help”. The programme demonstrates each of these “powers” or responses. This scenario is complex inasmuch as it requires a number of skills; beginning with recognition that it is not okay to be bullied at work and there are things one can do about it.

The prompts that are central to the Healthy Relationship Programme are presented as four simple questions in each situation:

 <p data-bbox="395 779 480 808">1. Safe</p>	<p data-bbox="810 271 959 300">Is it safe?</p> <p data-bbox="810 342 1407 891">The figure opposite shows a simple diagram to indicate an emotion. The smile and the crossed arms in the form of a self hug. In the computer programme this diagram is not used but the narrator says, “is it safe?” and the words appear. Before the practice session on a particular scenario the narrator answers the question by ticking if it is safe or placing a cross in the circle if it is not safe. During the practice session the player is asked the same question with a “yes” or “no” circle provided. If they fail to answer correctly the person is asked again.</p>
 <p data-bbox="316 1384 560 1458">2. Okay with Each Person</p>	<p data-bbox="810 898 1241 927">Is it okay with each person?</p> <p data-bbox="810 969 1407 1509">The second question checks that the interaction is okay with all the actors involved and also asks if it is okay for health and safety. Thus, in the “Mei Lin goes to the dentist” scenario she states she does not want the dentist to look in her mouth. The programme indicates that in some situations it is not okay with each person but for health and safety reasons it is sometimes necessary, “it is <i>not</i> her choice”. The “Mei Lin goes to the dentist” and the “Marama goes to the Doctor” scenario both raise tricky issues for people with disabilities as often control is taken away.</p>

The developers have aimed some to the scenarios at users who may be children and who for reasons for health and safety need to do what their parents believe is best. But they are aware of many of the thorny problems associated with presenting these ideas and for these reasons had considered removing the scenarios entirely. For example, in the forum for the programme the developers state:

We have had feedback and recognize that a person with disabilities should have a support person who talks certain things through with them. In A2, we cover when things ARE necessary, even if the student isn't happy with them (although it can NEVER be a secret, etc). It's come to our attention that this teaching could be misused/misunderstood, ie people might use it to justify things that are inappropriate. eg: "you *have to* do this, it's for your health and safety", even though that isn't the case. With the

correct supervision while teaching we believe that this can be taught correctly, but if our audience is using it at home, we can't control this.

One supporter replied:

Hi.. Either change/add a bit or leave as it is.

Rather than worry about how people might misuse the concept, I'd prefer to take the positive approach of trusting that individuals (regardless of age or ability) DO either have some idea of what "health and / or safety" means to THEM or is about, or at very least, will have natural fight or flight responses to any interaction or relationship that is occurs, in which case other skills such as talking / getting help would kick in as nothing that bothers us should ever be a secret, even if that person themselves may have done a 'bad thing' or broken safety rules etc.

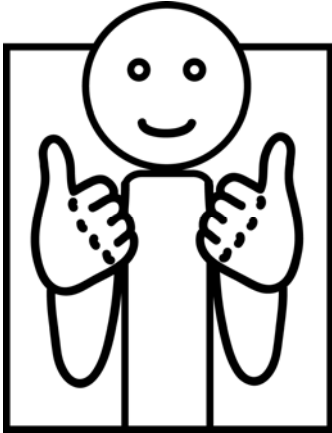
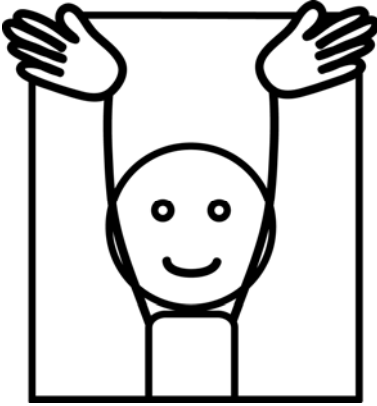
So, one option might be to encourage an exploration of what "health and / or safety" is with some examples, and have the participant make a list of what it means to them.

The debate seems to be in its early stages but it is interesting that the developers had not considered the scenarios from the perspective of "making informed choices" (especially for adults) but rather focused on how the resource could be misused by people attempting to make people do things they do not want to do. The developer responded:

Hi [person named], thanks for the feedback, and the ideas!

Since this resource is for people with disabilities, including social disabilities, I think we have to be careful to make it very clear, and not allow any opportunity for misuse of the resources we have provided. For me it's a worry because in most cases it is someone close to the individual who has stepped past the boundaries of a 'healthy relationship'. It would be a terrible thing if the HR teachings left a 'loophole' that people could exploit.

Although it's probably a very negative way to look at it (and the HR resources will always be positive!), it's this element that makes me worried about this part of the program, the key rules from which are extremely important throughout.

 <p>3. Allowed by the Adults in Charge</p>	<p>Is it allowed?</p> <p>The third question concerned whether the situation described in the scenario is allowed. The diagram opposite asks if it is allowed by adults in charge (as it is developed for schools), but the programme is more general. The more general question is also appropriate since it may be “allowed” according to an individual’s own internal logic or belief structure or it can be taken from the perspective of other actors who may not desire a person to act in a particular way. For example, in the Marama gets a back rub situation, the not being allowed, may mean Marama does not want a back rub today (section B).</p>
 <p>4. Others Can Know</p>	<p>Everyone can know (it is not a secret)?</p> <p>The fourth question asks if everyone can know; it is not a secret. This is an important question when people are in abusive situations and have been warned not to tell anyone else. Many of the scenarios in section C deal with ways of seeking and getting help. They deal with many difficult situations where learners may feel trapped by circumstances and do not know what to do next.</p>

The developers of the Healthy Relationship Programme are involved in Kidpower, Teenpower and Fullpower violence prevention programmes offered to people of varying age groups. They are not necessarily skilled in the disability sector and as such may not yet fully understand the movement toward self direction and the social model of disability. The developers had also worked extensively in school environments and as such their understanding of choice and control issues in the disability sector especially for adults is limited. Thus when the questions ask “is it allowed” or the programme makes assumptions that “it is NOT a choice”, this should be considered flexibly with the target groups using the programme or be avoided if they are likely to cause issues with adult learners. It is healthy that the programme developers have focused on potential sources of misunderstanding and debate in the forum pages. It would be recommended however that, to avoid uninformed

criticism in the future, the authors provide a disclaimer and/or instruction regarding age appropriateness in the supporters lounge

The online survey

At the time of writing this evaluation there were 74 supporters registered with the online version of the programme and 53 learners/users. In addition, there were 30 people/groups who had either bought the hardcopy plus CD-ROM version of the Healthy Relationships Programme or who were in the process of purchasing a copy. The CD-ROM version operates in the same way as the online version of the programme. The developers indicate they receive up to two verbal or email interactions with supporters per month.

The developers of the online programme seemed to heed the suggestions of previous evaluators and developed a survey for people who were using the programme. As incentive people responding to the survey could use the online programme for six months free of charge. To date 11 people have responded to the survey although it is not clear who these people are in terms of what target group they are supporting, how many and where they are geographically. This information may be usefully added into the survey so that reviewers can determine whether they are simply people who support Kidpower internationally, whether they are people researching sites of this type or whether they are serious users of the programme (or both). The survey is divided into eight questions with one divided into six sub questions. All but one question are “tick” which option applies using a likert scale format (e.g. extremely easy, very easy, moderately easy etc). The final question asks for written comments.

Eight (72%) of the 11 respondents indicated that the registration process was very to extremely easy to follow. The remainder indicated that it was moderately easy to follow. The same proportions of respondents likewise found the support information useful.

Seven people (63.6%) believed the layout was very to extremely user friendly and one additional person stated¹:

I really like the way, as a new player, how a pop-up call out offers prompts and feedback during the sign up process. Good one!

Another person stated that the “layout was attractive” but went on to say they had difficulty loading the content. They suggested a “click here to find out more” prompt may have been useful.

Overall it seems that the registration process and support information were acceptable to the majority of people responding to the survey. This information is supported by the evaluators own experiences and those indicated by people writing in the forum.

¹ The survey programme apparently does not allowed a respondent to tick a box on the scale AND provide a written statement.

Six respondents stated they had not yet used the skills, words or actions in the Healthy Relationships Programme or they were not actively working with learners. Of those who had engaged with the exercises in the programme all stated they had used the skills, words or actions ten or more times.

A series of questions asked respondents if the programme had helped learners in various ways. Six people provided responses despite the fact that six also stated they had not yet used the skills, words or actions with learners. Table 1 below indicates that most people believed the programme was moderately to very useful in addressing target outcomes.

The programme helped:	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	A bit	A lot
Ability to get help when needed	1	1	1	2	1
To decrease victimisation	0	1	2	3	0
To decrease the chance of violence committed by students	1	1	2	1	1
The students feel safer	0	0	2	2	2
Me/student feel more capable	0	1	2	1	2
Increased the options of the student to engage in social activities	1	0	3	0	2

Table 1: responses to the question “the programme helped...”. Raw figures only. Six respondents.

The final question indicated that seven people were moderately (25%) or extremely (62.5%) satisfied with the programme (three skipped this question and one was neither satisfied or dissatisfied). Six people said they would be very to extremely (66.7%) likely to recommend the programme to others.

Four people offered suggestions or comment at the end of the survey. Two simply stated they were grateful it was available and two provided the following:

The videos are good but the situations are too simple, especially for the average American teenager, maybe more compromising situations with illegal substances or sexual abuse. The world is not always simple.

The materials look great. The teachers guide has great activities to tie into the website. Now if I could only get the interactivity on the site to work, we'd be good to go!

Overall people who provided responses to the survey following online registration indicated they found the programme generally easy to use and the content useful. Satisfaction with the programme was relatively high and there was a good chance people would recommend it to others. In comments, one person failed to realise the programme was designed for people with intellectual disabilities rather than the

“average American teenager” and the other seemed to be having difficulties making the programme work.

Obviously the number of people using the survey is too small at present to draw strong conclusions from this work. However, indications suggest a degree of satisfaction and interest in the programme. It is also not clear how frequently people experience problems in getting the programme to work. For example, was the person who made comments at the end the same person who indicated problems at the start of the survey and was this the only person who had experienced difficulties.

Classroom observations and interviews

The evaluator visited two different schools where the material in the Healthy Relationships Programme were being used. Both of these schools had previous experience with the material in the hardcopy formats and had contributed either to the development of the online material or subsequent evaluations. It was also evident that the schools had a close relationship with the Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower Trust, and had previous Kidpower programmes operational in the schools.

The evaluator spent approximately one hour in one classroom in each of the schools and had opportunity to interview with two teachers and one administrator. In addition an interview was conducted with one specialist teacher who was working with one student. This teacher had also used the material prior to the launch of the online version of the programme.

The previous involvement by all of the people involved in this part of the evaluation suggests a positive predisposition to the Healthy Relationships material. How each of these schools or individuals worked with the material however, is different depending on the situation.

The first classroom observation was with a special needs unit attached to a mainstream high school. The teacher in this case was previously familiar with both the Healthy Relationships material and Kidpower generally. He had selected one scenario from the online programme and projected it onto an interactive whiteboard. The scenario was of people attending a dance and was topical because the young people in the class were soon to attend the school ball. The students (11) were arranged in a large semi-circle around the whiteboard and the teacher ran the scenario of “Mike likes Dancing”. The prompts, “is it okay?”, “is it safe” etc., were then asked and one person touched the appropriate responses². Then the students practiced the scenario in the classroom. The teacher asked for a volunteer (men first) who approached one of the women and asked her to dance. She was instructed to say “no thank you”. During practice the teacher reinforced that it was okay to say no and the person who receives such an answer should not be too disappointed. It was noted that on one occasion when a woman said no the young man said “orrrr!” and showed he was disappointed. At this point the teacher reinforced that saying no was okay and the person should not take it personally.

² Interactive whiteboards operate the same way as an interactive computer screen.

During this class it was obvious that this scenario had been practiced the year before, again before the school ball and many people were familiar with the routine. Some students were even able to describe the roles they took the year before and were able to model the scenario for others. Following the practice the teacher went back to the four questions, “is it safe?”, “is it okay with both people?”, “is it allowed?” and “is it acceptable?”. Students were able to respond appropriately and were then treated to 10 minutes of music chosen by one of the students and some dancing.

Following the demonstration in class the teacher spent a few minutes with the interviewer describing previous experience with material. He was not convinced the material could be used with his students simply as an online package they could access. Rather the material needed to be tied to tangible experiences both inside and outside the classroom, and the closer to the event the better. Because of the need to link the material to real-life situations the teacher believed that it could be too simple as a stand-alone product, but it does provide a valuable basis from which to work.

The second school was a special needs residential school for young women who were mildly to borderline intellectually challenged. They were more able than the other classroom visited and were able to access online systems with teacher supervision. During the classroom observation the teacher had set up a number of computer work stations for seven young women and had on the previous day told them how to register, log in and then allowed them to explore the website. She noted that one scenario attracted a lot of interest because it involved a young man wanting to kiss a young woman.

[teacher] yeah, yesterday. It was like ‘ew they’re kissing’, you know, and I said well it’s not actually ‘ew’. There will come a time in your life when there will be someone you want to kiss and that’s okay. But right now...

On the day the interviewer visited the classroom the students were allowed to get online again and explore the website further.

[interviewer] [to girl1] cool you’re on. What did you think about it yesterday?

[girl 1] good.

[interviewer] what was good about it?

[girl 1] like you’re learning about saying no and all that stuff.

[teacher] why would you need to be saying no?

[girl 1] because if you don’t want someone to touch you you say “can you please stop it” and that.

It seemed obvious very quickly that the girls in this class were quite able to grasp many of the concepts suggested in the scenarios and moved quite quickly through many of them. It seemed almost as if the scenarios were too simple for this group of students but the teacher disagreed.

[teacher] the needs of our students are that... Like [X name] for example, it's sort of like, oh not [X name], but she could easily be in that sort of situation. She could easily be manipulated.

Someone like [X name] is likely to be running a household at some stage – so for [X] and most learners like her if you can get the actual, that checklist there, you would be achieving a heck of a lot. Cos you could sit down and say, “is it safe?”, “Is it okay with the people in charge?”, ‘What would my Mum think about this?’, you know? “What would somebody who’s close to me think?”

The dialogue the scenarios generated therefore were seen as a useful tool in the teaching environment. The teacher was also pleased with the way the scenarios were presented. It made it safe for her to allow the students to freely explore the material.

[teacher] yeah, what I like about this [the programme] too is it doesn't talk about things as... it's not horror mongering, it's not scary. Everything is quite positive.

Cos a lot of these kids who come here... the negative kind of experiences. So a lot of them know the type of experiences you're talking about....

There were other students however, who had not considered certain situations.

[teacher] We also have a Constable who comes and he's got this DVD that he plays ... it's a babysitting scenario where the Dad comes in and thinks... “oh she's good looking”, and some of them know immediately what he's thinking, what this man is thinking, and others are completely [gestures with hand going over her head] blown out of the water by it. It never occurred to them.

Those kids that are going, “ugh I've never come across this before?” If they can have the list saying... is this okay? “no I don't think this would be okay”. Instead of just going into a blind panic ...

It was clear from talking with the students that many did grasp the concepts being discussed and understood the ramifications of what could happen in some situations as the following dialogue indicates.

[interviewer] which one's that? Ah. Uncomfortable photos. I wonder what that means? Do you think you know what that means?

[student] it's if you don't want to have your photo taken

[interviewer] oh I see... you're right... sending them everywhere... goodness

[interviewer] what is she saying

[student] “stop!”

[interviewer] Stop! She's in her bathrobe isn't she?

[student] It's going to be, it's going to be ...

[interviewer] what's it going to be like?

[student] really embarrassing.

[interviewer] It would be embarrassing wouldn't it?

[student] yes

[interviewer] Is it okay?

[student] No

[interviewer] No.... wow. [responding to dialogue on the scenario] Wow that's pretty assertive isn't it? It takes a lot of courage to tell people to do that.

[... talking about scenario ... hard to hear]

[student] Good

[interviewer] very good

[student] and not good [reference to some other character in scenario]

[interviewer] it's not good is it? No. So did she do the right thing do you think?

[student] yeah

Following exploration with the scenarios the students took a 20 minute break and then returned to watch a practice of a scenario with the teacher taking the part of the inappropriate actor and a student making responses.

[teacher] okay let's do this one.... When and how to say "stop!" ...So we need two people.

[student] I'll go

[teacher] okay, come up then.

[student] [laughing]

[teacher] This is when someone does not notice... okay. Right, 'is it okay for me to actually touch you?' Okay. What's going to happen is, you're going to say to me, "please stop". Okay. First of all I'm going to do that [touches her on shoulder] and you're going to say "please stop".

[student] Please stop

[teacher] yeah. And then I'm going to hold your hand and what would you say?

[student] "I said stop!"

[teacher] and so, what [X] is doing here, when she says stop, she's going to say it with her eyes, her words and her body.

You're going to say with your eyes, your words and your body. So we're talking about here what we learned in Kidpower. What did we learn in Kidpower?

[student] we go [holds up hands] "I said stop!"

[teacher] yeah, make a fence. So ...

[student practices – holds up her hands and looks at person] "I said stop!"

...

[student] “stop, I tell” [reading off a sheet]
[teacher] I’m going to say, “I thought we were friends..”
[student] “I said stop”.
[teacher] “I’ll buy you a present if you let me hold your hand”
[student] “I said stop, I will tell”.
[teacher] “oh. Oh. Okay!” So what I was doing. Was it okay?
[students] no
[teacher] was it safe?
[students] no
[teacher] was it a secret
[students] no

Like the previous school it is obvious that the students had previous experience with Kidpower material, and it seems, had input from a Community Constable. For this group of young women what the school was attempting to teach is to equip them to survive in social situations once they were on their own. The online material created dialogue between the students and between the students and the teacher, and the scenarios could then be selected to practice in role plays. Transference of this material to the real world could however be a more demanding enterprise and while the teachers believe the students were becoming more articulate or assertive in some areas it remains to be seen whether these skills will transfer to life outside the school.

In terms of the complexity of the material for this group of 11 and 12 year old girls it seems it is both too simple as a stand-alone tool but potentially too complex for situations that resonate with or surprise some students or which require multiple skills. The Principal of this school described the material in terms of it being too simple as a stand-alone product, but the classroom teacher could see its usefulness in terms of the issues it raised and the questions it asked.

The third situation where the material was with a specialist teacher who acted as an advisor to schools. In this capacity the teacher worked with a 13 year old Autistic student who was preparing to go to high school in 2012. The teacher began using the Healthy Relationships material with this student in the previous year and was pleased with the accessibility of the online material.

[interviewer] how does he relate to... what’s his favourite bits in it. What does he relate to?

[teacher] he loves the characters. He’s renamed them ‘The Alliance’. Just because. He loves their voices and can imitate their voices perfectly. Just like he will imitate my American accent sometimes. There are a few that are his favourites like – in scenario “Mike has to go to the toilet” – he likes that one. He thinks it’s absolutely hilarious. He just loves the cartoony bits of it. Cos he’s very visual. And the other part is, if you do something and it says ‘well done’ it goes “whooh hoo!” He LOVES that. So there is an incentive right there to get

it right. Tick all the right boxes. ‘Yes he’s done it’ “whoop hoo!”. That “whoop hoo!” on the end, he just loves it. Yeah very visual.

This is a student who found the material engaging but the teacher believed he needed to work only with scenarios that were appropriate to his circumstances.

[interviewer] so do you explore it with him?

[teacher] I do it with him... there are some other things on the programme that it’s not appropriate for him yet. Um there’s a few. The drunks “on the bus”. Um inappropriate touching. He’s not there yet. So I’ve catered to what I know his needs are. Which is good you can do that on the program. But you also need to sit with him.

[interviewer] and can you see it being used for other kids?

[teacher] oh definitely! Definitely. You’ve got to pick the right age group though. You don’t want it too young. And I can see adults using this.

The reference to adults using this material is of interest as although some of the material is aimed toward children or high school students there are a number of scenarios that also relate to adults. For example “a bully at work”, “getting help on a bus”, “Marama gets a back rub”, “too long kisses” and so on. This idea draws back to the question regarding whether the programme is too simple.

[interviewer] what do you think of it for the target group. Is it too simple, or is it too complex? What’s your thoughts around that?

[teacher] um for the group that I, for this particular student, um its perfect, because of the visuals. And the positive reinforcement that you get. And the way that its coached. That you use the coaching. Role playing is very important with these kids – hugely important.

He’ll actually say can I actually go back to some of his favourites and ask me to role play it again. And sometimes he will actually say, “can I have a small group” and do it with a small group. Cos I do a small group thing with them as well. A social group. And sometimes he will ask to do that in his social group. Which is quite good.

[interviewer] It is good. Very positive. The graphics. What do you think of the graphics? I know it’s very visual but what do you think of the graphics?

[teacher] they’re great because they’re not over the top. For kids with autism if you put too much on them then they’re going to lose the lesson.

[teacher] Tick the boxes is huge with this population. That is what they need to see. They need to see that visual ... it’s so much better to have a tick in the box with the voice, together that was great. Because you’ve got the visual and you’ve got the auditory, you know, you’ve got both. So it’s perfect.

It was interesting in this dialogue that the teacher referred to transferring the skills learned in the programme to role playing in front of peers. The teacher notes that she always takes the role of the protagonist or the “baddie” as to do otherwise may be counterproductive for this student, but transferring to role play was an easy step. The teacher then offered:

[teacher] yeah. It has been very successful with him. He’s used it out in the environment.

[interviewer] So does it transfer well from the computer into real life?

[teacher] yeah.

Conclusion: the three learning situations

The question of transference to real life situations is critical for people with learning disabilities. The progression from animated scenarios, to role plays and onward to observations of the skills being used in real life situations is the aim of the programme developers. The first school was using one scenario to highlight appropriate behaviour for the upcoming school dance. The teacher only touched on the online material briefly before moving onto role plays in the classroom. Discussion of dance the previous year reinforced links between the lessons learned from the material at that time and what happened at the dance. Revisiting the material indicated that people who attended the dance in the previous year, and who had practiced the material at that time, had good retention. Thus while this teacher believed the material was too limiting as a stand-alone product he did demonstrate that in combination with role play and practice for a real situation, the actions and behaviour demonstrated in the scenarios was of use.

The first school had older students (18 plus) than the other two examples provided in this work. But the group had students of mixed ability, from moderate to severe learning disabilities. Access to the online programme directly by students in this class would be limited to a few people, if any, so support from someone else working with selected scenarios was required.

The second school was a residential school for younger students (11-13 years) who were able to access the material directly and explore with teacher supervision. The dialogue generated from the online exploration of the material provided useful clues as to what could be actively pursued in the classroom. Like the previous school, this one had extensive involvement with the hard copy (plus CD-ROM) Healthy Relationships material and had utilised Kidpower training opportunities in the past. The girls school, in particular, saw that a large part of their role was preparing their students for life outside the school. For this to occur successfully the students needed to understand how to experience Healthy Relationships and know how to seek assistance if this was required. The classroom teacher reported that some transference and skills were noted in the school environment and many girls were becoming more assertive. It is yet to be seen how well these skills then transfer into the world outside the school.

The third situation involved a young man preparing to enter the complex social environment of high school. The teacher in this case carefully chose the scenarios

to fit the needs the young man currently had and will face in the months and years ahead. There were other scenarios the teacher believed would be too complex at this stage. The young student enjoyed the material and liked to interact with the characters online. He also liked to transfer the skills learned online into role plays. The teacher reports that transference to real life situations does occur.

All three teaching situations have views on the complexity of the online material. It has been noted that the ability of the learners is important in ascertaining how much or how little of the material they were exposed to at a particular point in time. There is a belief that relating the material to real life situations was important as this would make the material more relevant and therefore aid retention. From this point of view the ideas and concepts portrayed in the material are complex and can easily resonate with different people at different stages of their life.

On the other hand the animations are simple and once understood do require practice in role play situations. This is explained by the programme developers in the “supporter lounge”. Practice aids retention and “where appropriate role play each scenario”. Simply watching and interacting with the online characters is insufficient for learning to become embedded.

The way each of the teachers used the material was reflective of the creative ways the material could be used. For some, reference to the material may only be brief, but the scenarios, ideas and skills portrayed provide a rich foundation from which to develop programmes of learning depending on the needs of a particular individual or group.

The teachers were all impressed with the four questions (the tick boxes) and although there may be some debate about their use in one or two situations (for example “going to the Doctor”), the ideas being conveyed are simple and easily understood. Ticking the “wrong” answer asks the user to try again and provides grounds for asking why it is not the correct response. Ticking a box that indicates a correct response is reinforcing, as the student experiences both visual and auditory congratulations. Again guidance would be needed with some students. For example, some of the girls at the residential school skipped through the scenarios and tick boxes very fast and there was plenty of scope for *not* questioning why the programme wanted the alternate answer. Careful observation by the classroom teacher is needed to review and explain, to slow down perhaps and think.

The graphics in the program were seen by both learners and teachers as clear and unambiguous. The dialogue is simple and the matching of written words to auditory words is helpful for people following both. The accents are distinct for New Zealand and South Pacific audiences, but is probably accessible to overseas English speakers. Finally, providing each actor with a personality and identity that may relate to a wide variety of learners is helpful. It was noted for instance, that many of the girls who were exploring the programme had their favourite actors.

Where to next: introducing adult learners

The specialist teacher in the section above stated that the material would be useful for adults with learning / social disabilities in a variety of situations. After reviewing the online material this observation is quickly reinforced. For this reason the

evaluator and programme developer approached two vocational centres for adults with intellectual disabilities and introduced them to the material. We left the material with one of these vocational centres and returned a month later to see what they thought.

[interviewer] I just wanted to get your impressions.

[Manager 3] For me I just wanted to run it as a group next year. You know, maybe four people. These are people who, their relationships are... they don't always know the appropriateness around relationships.

So I thought that would be a good start. What's appropriate in a relationship and what's not. And it's okay to say 'no', you know? You can't always get what you want... yeah.

The idea here was to focus on a group of people who had identifiable needs in a particular area. For example, the thorny issue of relationships and to use the material to explore appropriate behaviours and perhaps go on from there. There is a wide range of people who use vocational or day centres for people with intellectual disabilities. Many people have quite severe intellectual/social and physical disabilities while others have more moderate or mild impairments. Often the people who are more able also have jobs, are able to move around their community independently and are often flatting with minimal outside support. For this group the possibility of exploitation, bullying and abuse is high. Exposure to courses such as Kidpower Teenpower and Fullpower for these people has also been minimal, unless they are younger people newly emerging from the school system. In the main this group of people are highly vulnerable and often ill equipped for acting assertively and keeping themselves safe.

[interviewer] you've just been looking at the books.

[manager 1] yeah

[interviewer] that's all right. They will probably give you enough information.

[manager 1] yeah. So just going through them I thought we can adapt them just a little bit to make the age appropriate.

[interviewer] [asked other manager if he had looked on line]

[manager 2] yeah. I looked online I thought this would be quite a lot of work to run with the guys because of the levels of literacy we have. So I do agree with [other manager] we do need to run it as a group because it could take up to 15 weeks to get four people through that.

[interviewer] Yeah. You don't have to go through everything of course. But yes, okay. ...Is it too complex for them or too simple?

[manager 2] too complex.

At this stage the evaluator talked with the managers about how the material was being used in the school system. This discussion did generate further interest and the evaluator talked about research possibilities where the people using the material could lead the research process:

[evaluator] This is really good material to work with in a small group of people who are interested in working with it. And really making it their own rather than us running it. So they can get used to the material and where they are going to go with it after that and what are they going to do with it. And then just to explore the journey with them over the months ahead.

[manager 2] yeah. There is quite good potential for that to be pulled off here actually.

[manager 1] yeah. Cos role play works really well here. Really well here. And it's like ... yeah,

[manager 2] and it does fit in with what we are trying to do downstairs. The guys taking more ownership of the services, with the guys being more active in running the service.

With many things when they are introduced for the first time the people concerned can find it difficult to see how the material could be worked with effectively for the group of people they support. For instance, just looking at the animations and scenarios online would be too difficult for many people, but aligning the material with real situations people encounter in life and role playing situations with careful guidance could have dramatic results. Thus, while the managers of the vocational service could not initially see the potential of the material, providing some examples of how the material was being used energised them into thinking in terms of the people they support.

Discussion

The evaluation of the online version of the Healthy Relationships Programme was limited due to the amount of time the programme had been available online. Three educational situations did however make themselves available to discuss and review their use of the material. Furthermore, the evaluator had access to the online forum where people discussed ideas and issues regarding the programme and the small number of survey's some online users had completed. From this information we can draw the following conclusions:

- The online registration process is relatively easy to follow
- The programme is user friendly
- The animations while simple, are able to convey complex ideas
- The character development of the online actors was thoughtful and appropriate to New Zealand and Pacific cultures without being exclusive to this region
- The online help system is easy to follow and use
- The scenarios are well constructed, topical, true to life and accessible for both younger people and adults with intellectual impairments
- Use of the system by learners with disabilities will require support as the ideas and skills may be too complex for many learners working alone
- The online programme should not be used as a stand-alone tool and is not designed as such. Rather it should be used in conjunction with role play and appropriate support.
- Programme users have adapted the material successfully to the learner or group of learners they support. In many cases the scenarios chosen relate to what is happening in the individual's/groups own life
- Transference of the skills in different scenarios is suggested by the educational professionals involved in this work, but further research is required to review transference of skills.
- Some of the scenarios are designed for younger people, others for adult situations. Specific selection of scenarios is suggested for many situations.

There is potential for a wide range of applications for the online Healthy Relationships material. Providing examples of how the work is being used by a variety of individuals and/or groups may expand the number of people or groups using the material. The focus of examples is not instructions of how to but rather what is possible. If future users are able to expand the potential of how they can adapt the material to a variety of situations then the need for online support and use of the forum to discuss ideas will also grow. Furthermore, variety also means that there is a need to keep control of the material inasmuch as programme organisers would need to be clear how to conduct role plays, and what the pitfalls may be. The supporter's lounge goes a long way toward providing that support.

The online survey currently offers six months free use of the online system if supporters complete the survey. There may be two problems with this offer. First, some people may gain all they want from the six months free usage and not thereafter purchase the programme. Secondly, people completing the survey may be doing so prior to using the programme with learners and can therefore

not provide the depth of responses being sought. Other adaptations to the survey should include a demographic section outlining who the supporter are; gender, age, location, reason for interest (e.g school, social group, parent, researcher, vocational provider etc) and whether they have a learner or a group of learners they aim to support.

Finally, the forum is a valuable resource to discuss ideas and share examples of how the material is being used. It is also a place to talk about controversial issues, such as the right to choose and the duty of risk versus duty of care debate. This is in particularly the case for adults who may be using the system. The email, telephone or skype help system is also a valuable source of information and the reviewer suggests that the help desk keep copies of emails or provide contact notes following verbal contact with users.

There is ample scope for further evaluation and research using the tools provided by the Healthy Relationships Programme. In their brief literature review Hamilton and Turner (2009) indicated the potential and real abuse that occurs within the disabled community. The review however focused mainly on sexual abuse, which is topical but really only a part of a much wider problem of abuse and exploitation of disabled people. The reason why the vocational services were immediately interested in the material presented by the Healthy Relationships programme is the general awareness of the variety and scope of abuse directed at disabled people. This awareness is perhaps rarely talked about in the disabled community and very rarely researched, with the exception of sexual abuse. The Healthy Relationships programme offers a tool that can open the doors to good research that involves participants at every stage of the research process and is ideally owned by them.

Recommendations

- The developers consider the literature on the social model of disability and the various arguments concerning choice and control issues in the disability sector and provide informed comment in the supporter lounge and forum for the programme. It could be useful for example to explain that in some scenarios options that suggest “it is NOT a choice”, should be considered in the context of children and not people able to make informed choices.
- Provide a demographic section at the start of the survey to ascertain who the respondents were and what they were doing with the material.
- Review the six month offer so that people would respond after some experience using the programme and not take advantage of the offer merely to get the free use.
- Continue to develop and use the forum for learned comment and observations.
- Keep contact notes for people who directly contact developers to log the type of questions being asked. Retain email comments for the same purpose.
- Continue to review how skills learned in the Healthy Relationships Programme are transferred to real life situations. Include in such reviews the observations of the individuals concerned and their primary supporters (e.g. family members, advocates, support workers, vocational or educational staff etc).
- Developers include in the supporters lounge brief descriptions of how the material has been used with different groups.

References

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