



OVERCOMERS

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The Need for Support Groups

American culture, values, and life style are producing a nation with the highest rate of divorces, poorly parented children with serious emotional problems, high crime rates, etc.

William Bennett, Chairman of the Heritage Foundations stated, "America leads the world in rates of murder, violent crime, juvenile crime, imprisonment, abortion, divorce and single-parent families, production and consumption of pornography, and consumption of cocaine and other drugs. And that's just a partial list. Something is wrong."

Scholars at the National Research Council estimated in 2002, "that at least one of every four adolescents in the US is currently at serious risk of not achieving productive adulthood. Twenty-one percent of US children, ages 9-17 have a diagnosable mental disorder or addiction; 8 percent of the high school students suffer from clinical depression, and 20 percent of students report seriously having considered suicide in the past year. By the 1980s US children, as a group, were reporting more anxiety than did children who were psychiatric patients in the 1950s, according to one study."

Few people realize that support groups are so effective because they deal with our culture of isolation by offering a healthy culture of trusting, open, relationships. Relationships in a sick culture create problems that can best be alleviated by experiencing healthy relationships in an intentionally structured social environment of intimacy.

The cognitive intellectual counseling or teaching cannot deal adequately with behaviors and relationships rooted in a pervasive dysfunctional culture. Support groups are powerful for the healing of relationships, emotions, and addictions through the deep bonding of a group's

members. The sharing guidelines prohibit teaching, counseling, and even intellectual discussions. Reading books on grief recovery or divorce recovery is helpful but not nearly as effective as sharing with other hurting people in a support group.

The Overcomers Ministry is effective and new members are attracted mainly through the testimonies of those who have been helped.

This support group ministry is eager to help other churches and organizations to establish support groups. However, there is a cultural blindness regarding growth and healing primarily through relationships. Teaching and counseling are considered adequate to the times, even though it should be apparent that they are not successful with divorce, children's issues, and other epidemic social problems.

Though A. A. is very respected, it is not generally perceived that its power to help the addicted is primarily through bringing the addicted into a loving family with intimate social interaction. We marvel at children in their support groups, learning to share about personal issues and life problems. Children's potential for sharing with their peers is a powerful resource. That is tragically neglected. The **Confident Kids Curriculum** is used in our children's program and we are continually amazed with the quick progress in hurting children as they share with their peers, and C receive new understanding of family life, their emotions and feeling life, and other areas of life.

Overcomers has a creative ministry directed towards the plight of families. Our **Divorce Recovery Group** is large and well attended. It helps participants deal with the many hurting emotions of grief, anger, and frustration as they share and bond together.

Our new **Marriage Enhancement Group** is for those whose marriages are in trouble. We are using Dr. Phil McGraw's book, "Relationship Rescue" which requires each individual to concentrate on his/her defects and adds the power of a support group for the men, in one group, and the women in another. After several months, the men and women meet together. We have hopes of developing an effective program that will become a new model program for saving marriages. We are very conscious that in helping marriages, we are making a great contribution to children.

The share groups for children meet at the same time as the adult programs, so it is convenient for the entire family to come together on Mondays from 7:30-9: 15 PM. There are occasional

parenting meetings. The **Confident Kids Curriculum** includes instructional materials for these meetings. Parents learn nurturing patterns of family life.

In support groups adults become aware that many difficulties in relationships originate in childhood. This gives them new understanding of the importance of childhood.

The paper entitled "Hardwired to Connect" describes on page 2, 5th paragraph, the necessary characteristics of remedial programs to nurture children.

- 1) a social institution that includes children and youth;
- 2) treat children as ends in themselves;
- 3) a warm and nurturing environment;
- 4) establish clear boundaries and limits;
- 5) defined and guided at least partly by non-specialists;
- 6) it is multigenerational;
- 7) it has a long-term focus;
- 8) encourages spiritual and religious development;
- 9) reflects and transmits a shared understanding of what it means to be a good person;
- 10) it is philosophically oriented to the equal dignity of all persons and to the principle of love of neighbor."

Compare these characteristics with the attached paper on the Confident Kids Program. These characteristics are in this program.

The Overcomers Support Groups attach the root causes of our emotional and relational problems. A profound understanding is offered of our dysfunctional and isolationist culture and the opportunity is offered to experience relationships in a group offering healthy sharing and caring.

The Financial Needs of Overcomers

The principal need of the program of support groups is to renovate the buildings, which are used also by:

- . the Early Learning Center
- . the Community Recreation Program
- . the Scout Program
- . the Tai Kwando Program for children, youth and adults
- . the Vision Youth Program.

Then, there is a need for an outreach specialist who can present our programs to various organizations that could greatly enhance their programs. Some of the targeted organizations are:

- The YMCA and YWCA
- Prisons
- After school programs
- Boys' and Girls' Clubs
- Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Homes
- Apartment and condominium complexes
- Youth Detention Institutions, etc.

The greatest need in all these places is for healthy relationships. The most inexpensive therapy is peer interaction. The Outreach Specialist would present this challenge and would suggest the type of group appropriate to the particular situation. He/she would also offer training and suggest resources.


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