

'Intentional self-harm and suicidal behaviour in children'

BACKGROUND

Sabine Beecher USyd, AASW(Acc), AARC, counselling social worker in private practice and author, has worked in family services and the Family Court, and has devised 'health promotion' courses for community groups. For over 30 years she has worked with men and women of all ages, and with youth and children, on personal and relationship problems. Experience showed her that most of these problems were either self-made or self-worsened, and were brought about by 'low self esteem'. *[The notions of 'self esteem' and 'personal worth' became popular in the late 1970's. Their problems are at last recognised!]*

RATIONALE

Back in 1976 Sabine, passionate about 'Prevention', became convinced that *everyone* had the right to be taught practical, easy self esteem skills so that the lack of fundamental knowledge could never again be a source of problems for themselves and those around them. Her colleagues agreed and gave her lots of encouragement. Soon Sabine's long journey began and led her in an unexpected direction .. not to 'self esteem' but to 'self acceptance' (see *Publications*).

Publications

- 2010** Teaching Pack for *Teaching Self Acceptance Skills*
- 1992** 'Teaching Inner Confidence' in Primary Education Vol 23, No 5, pp.29-31
- 1988** Self help book *Happiness – It's Up To You! Easy Steps to Self Acceptance and good relationships (CollinsDove/Boolarong Press)* Sabine is delighted to receive many messages from people of all ages (boys and girls, youth, adults including seniors, couples and singles), who found answers to a great variety of questions in the book.
- 1984-5** Audio tapes *Feeling Good and Talking with People*
- 1981** Audio tapes commissioned by SHARE Health (*for community education*)
- 1980** *Leader Training Manual* commissioned by the Health Department of NSW for community groups
- 1977** 'Self Confidence and Self Esteem' in Inside Education, Journal of the NSW Department of Education, Vol 71, No 3, pp 27-31
- 1976** 'Report on special programme teaching personal and interpersonal skills at McKellar Girls High School', Education Today, Vol 4, No 7.

KEY CONCEPTS

– Self esteem

From the few self-help books then available, Sabine selected Dr Albert Ellis' evidence-based cognitive Rational Emotive Therapy. She studied his 'Guide to Rational Living' (he used 'self esteem'), tested it on herself, lost shyness, gained confidence, did more teaching than counselling – clients were soon thinking more clearly. She shaped its life-principles into 10 practical, definite life-skills with the help of enthusiastic learners.

– Self acceptance

– Self management

– Self confidence

In his revised 'New Guide to Rational Living' Dr Albert Ellis strongly recommends a complete switch away from 'self esteem' to 'self acceptance'. His message:

Do away with 'self esteem' because it makes you dependent on others for how you feel about yourself. You're insecure.

Accept yourself totally, as you are, be self-reliant and secure.

You become independent of what others think, are confident and can 'be Yourself'.

At first Sabine was doubtful about the switch, but she became convinced when the people she was teaching insisted that she totally replace 'self esteem' [*it's too remote and unattainable*] with 'self acceptance' [*I can do that! Tell me how.*].

To be effective, the notions of self esteem and personal worth must be TOTALLY eliminated and replaced with Self Acceptance. No exceptions.

Clients much prefer to be taught correct thinking skills to being counselled. So many have exclaimed, *Why didn't I learn this at school – I wouldn't have got myself into this mess!!*

10 common thinking mistakes (or 'logical missteps')

Sabine went on to identify 10 little-known thinking mistakes (or 'logical missteps') that are often made: *I failed to and that makes me a failure* is generally thought to be true, a fact, but it's not. The common thinking mistakes can make people feel bad, worth less, depressed.

Sabine believes that young children generally learn 'how to combine words' by copying what they hear all around and absorbing the mistakes into their thinking. Since they are mostly **left uncorrected**, the 10 all-too-common thinking mistakes can make children vulnerable to painful feelings of worthlessness, anxiety, desperately low self esteem. When emotional pain becomes unbearable, children may look for a desperate way out with – 'intentional self-harm and suicidal behaviour'.

There *is* a way out. A self-management way that leads to self acceptance, confidence, emotional wellbeing:

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

The Self-Management course which I propose is designed to develop the following skills:

- 1. Understanding Self Acceptance***
 - 2. Managing Labels and Self-labels***
 - 3. Accepting Yourself***
 - 4. Managing Expectations***
 - 5. Undoing painful Emotions – by going back to the root source!***
 - 6. Managing Blame and Self-blame***
 - 7. Taking responsibility for own Encouragement***
 - 8. Taking responsibility for own Praise***
 - 9. Balancing own needs and wants with those of others***
 - 10. Recharging emotional batteries and managing Stress***
- Staff too can gain benefits, eg. minimising stress, preventing burnout.*

Sabine is delighted that this set of self management skills is easy to learn, teach and do, that it is effective for Prevention and Early Intervention, and that professional educators have recommended that it be a core subject in primary school.