ACCOUNTABILITY

Revisiting Mel Wasserman

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The "Parent Choice" industry is looking for a home. Should programs be designed by and overseen by clinicians and monitored by government regulations? On one hand, there is pressure for programs to conform to societies' general acceptance of having clinically trained personnel operate programs for troubled youth. On the other hand, there are a vast number of programs that have been known to be effective with youth and their families without the traditional or accepted, identified agencies or professions. Most notable of course is the CEDU emotional growth model. When CEDU was at the top of the industry, they were operating eight programs and worked with over five hundred youth daily. Numerous other programs were developed from the CEDU model. It is well known that Mel Wasserman, Founder of CEDU, was not a clinician, nor was he particularly supportive of clinicians.

In virtually all programs, accountability is stressed whether the program has been derived from clinical principles, adventure therapy practice or a "mom and pop" program's way of looking at and developing character in their charges. This essay will look at one aspect of programming and accountability from the perspective of Mel Wasserman, a non-clinician.

Over the years, CEDU documented a great deal of their philosophy and this essay examines Mel's thinking on accountability. The following information was obtained primarily from a document that represented training on accountability that Mel conducted with the staff of Rocky Mountain Academy in December of 1990. The essay is also supplemented by other trainings given by Mel over the years.

First off, Mel felt it was important to let the students know that CEDU had something special to give and that they would not receive it unless they followed CEDU's values and agreements. In a sense, he created an aura and a system that would facilitate in students an interest and desire to belong.

Accountability is a cornerstone of CEDU's emotional growth curriculum. While relationships were deemed important by Mel, the focus on relationships should not be mistaken as a "fuzzy" approach. Boundaries need to be absolutely defined and in Mel Wasserman's language,

