Places for Struggling Teens™

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"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

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Bedside Manners

By: Lon Woodbury



"Bedside Manners" is a term that comes from the medical field from a long gone era. The term brings about images of the "good" old days when General Practice Medical Doctors made house calls, and from being in the home knew how their clients lived, knew the whole family by name and were familiar with most of the life history of everybody in the family. The Doctor would sit by the bedside in the home of a sick patient and mix diagnosis and treatment in with comforting and reassuring talk about personal matters important to the patient. When they had good "bedside manners," the Doctor would be trusted as a friend and confidant as well as a professional.

With the tremendous advances in the life sciences during the last half of the 20th century, the medical profession, along with the mental health profession, began to see themselves as scientists. As a result, many of them adopted an objective perspective toward their clients, that is, they saw people more as patients to be treated by scientific techniques, rather than as humans needing healing. The days of the house call virtually disappeared, and patients started seeing their doctor only in the hospital or in his/her office during a quick session by appointment set long before. The art of the "bedside manner" seemed to be disappearing.

This trend seems to be reversing in the last few years, and I think for two reasons. First, I've seen several reports of studies that indicate Doctors with good "bedside manners" are less likely to be sued by their clients or their client's family. We've all seen anecdotal stories indicating this and it intuitively rings true. When something goes wrong, people are more likely to be hostile to someone they think is arrogant—the cool, distant and objective approach being interpreted as arrogant and uncaring.

Second, the research is clear that a patient's emotional wellbeing has a powerful influence on their overall health and ability to heal. By showing they knew the family and cared about the whole person, those old Doctors with good "bedside manners" knew what they were doing.

Basically, the term "bedside manners" refers to developing good and appropriate personal relationships with clients. It is now clear that success as a General Practice Medical Doctor depends largely on developing good positive relationships or appropriate friendships with their clients. Fortunately, it seems this perspective is making a comeback in the Medical Profession.

This lesson on the importance of personal relationships is one that needs to be learned by all professionals in all

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Kristie Henley, Assistant Director of Woodbury Reports, Inc. (daughter of Lon and Denise Woodbury) and Ron Campbell, IT Specialist for Woodbury Reports, were married January 24, 2009.

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person's integration of newly learned skills and insights into the 'real' world of family, friends and school or work.

Program incompletes

One of the more disheartening and sad experiences of our many years in therapeutic boarding schools was the early departure of students for other than behavioral reasons. It was our experience that the majority of students who left schools and programs before scheduled graduation did so due to parent decision. Exit surveys revealed a number of reasons parents gave for their decision to prematurely terminate their child's experience. Among them, but not predominate, was the lack of additional funding. It is our belief that as the economy stays the same, or worsens, finances will increasingly account for more early departures.

It is becoming more common for schools and programs, therapists and coaches to provide transitional preparation and support for graduating students. There is ample evidence that this 'after-care' is a critical determiner of post-program success for the student and family. However, we would argue that transitional coaching support for parents and students is even more crucial when the young person leaves her program before completion.

A coach who is working with an early departing student and his family can help overcome parental guilt and student apathy or feelings of failure. By facilitating clearly articulated family values, teaching communication skills and coaching all members through the creation and implementation of a Home Contract, the parent and family coach can help turn disappointment into success for the family, former student and program.

VISITS...

PATHWAYS ARGENTINA

Mendoza, Argentina
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Visit by Dr. Mark Burdick November 10-15, 2008.

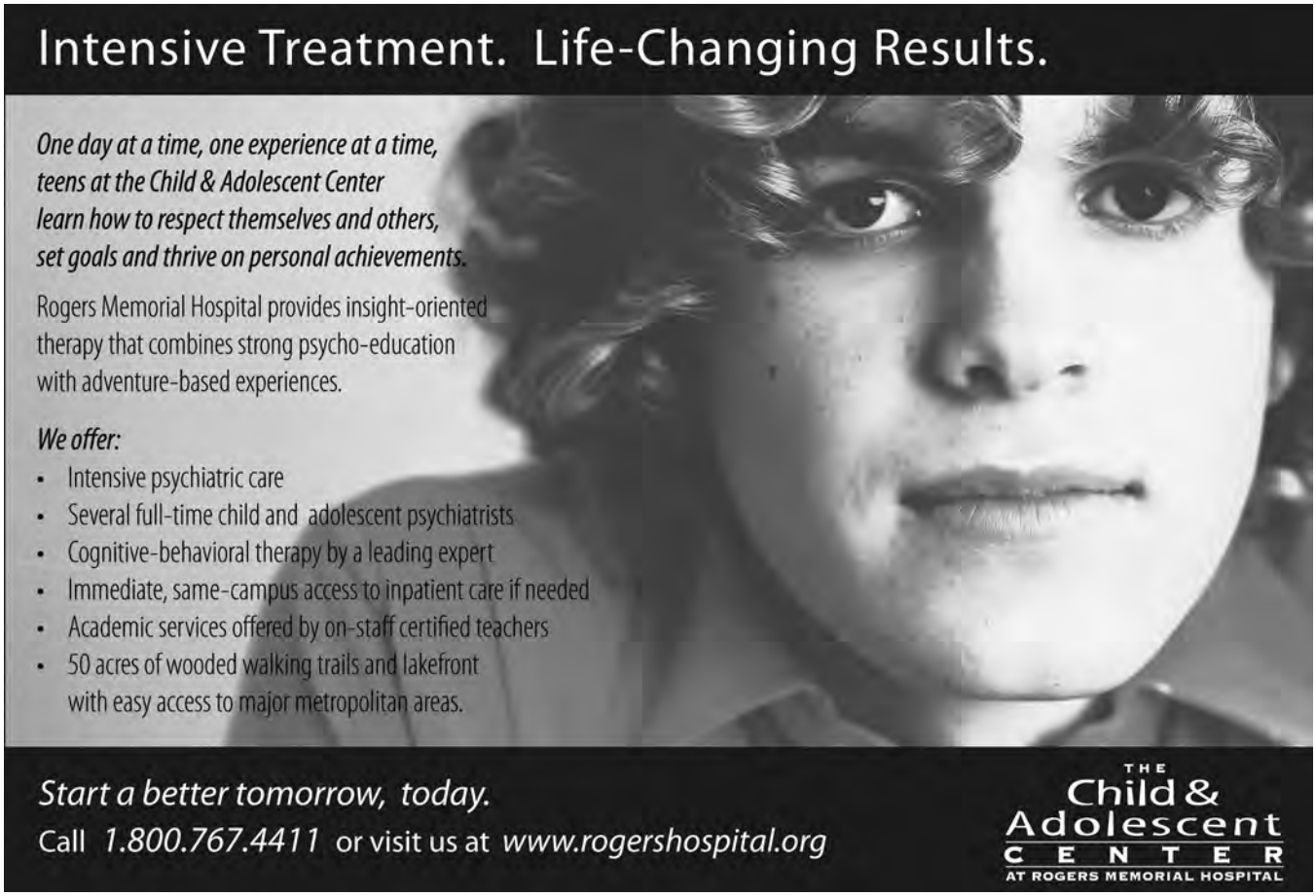
"Hi, would you like to hear my song? I wrote it last week and just finished recording it,"

"Sure." I responded to the red haired 18 year old young man who sat here before me in a recording studio / living room, only two months after having graduated from a premier wilderness program where he did quite well. "Is it an original song?"

"Yes," he states with a broad grin that reveals his pride from ear to ear, "Yes, it is, and I hope you like it."

With that, I proceeded to witness a harvest of sound, a marriage of classic pop meets Argentine tang. This isn't strange, given the fact that I am sitting over 8,000 miles away from my office in California in the South American city of Mendoza, Argentina. What is different and unique at Pathways Argentina is how the program of a small number of young men can produce such positive changes within the foreign community by bringing in American good will, original music and strong stewardship toward others in orphanages and other venues.

Rich and Wendy Simpson are known to our educational community beginnings from the CEDU days of yore when



values were everything and change occurred in youth on a daily basis. Rich and Wendy have worked a strong ethics and trust based system into a home in the well established and lovely fifth section of Mendoza. The purpose is to teach youth how to start living independently through building successful peer and adult relations in another country where life is well, more innocent.

"The boys learn Spanish, and they learn the Tango as they learn respect for themselves and Mendocinos," Rich reports. "Family and music here in Argentina are important parts of Mendocino culture."

Each day the boys participate in a reward based system that encourages individual and team growth. Community based service shows the fruit of their growth and respect for the other culture by learning to speak the indigenous Spanish of Argentina with its own little language variations such as "vos" for "tu" and a melodic sing-song phrasing that reveals a strong Italian influence.

After spending several days at Pathways Argentina, I found it an exciting unique transitional program that encourages a heightened degree of creativity and a broader world perspective. The boys look healthy, their eyes are clear, and their voices sound strong and focused.

Certainly the main drawback is simply the size of the program, but size isn't everything, and not everyone is willing to send youth such a distance. It is not for a complex clinical youth due to lack of therapeutic support. The program is best suited for a young man with adult transitional issues who would profit from experiencing living "the other side" of the equator. That said, it was worth every kilometer traveled to experience something this unique and creative.

Rich let me in on a secret while down in Mendoza. The first Pathways Argentina CD, a compilation of original music will be available complete with a perfect Malbec at IECA San Francisco. Consultants will enjoy learning and experiencing the culture and history of Mendoza, Argentina. We'll see you in San Francisco, Rich and Wendy.

Hasta luego.

Dr. Mark Burdick

***Note**: Dr Mark Burdick is a psychologist and international educational consultant who specializes in "outside the traditional box" options for creative and culturally curious youth. Visit www.worldeducationalconsulting.com or www.drburdick.com for more information on his services.*

> If you get kids into a controlled environment where the expectations are high and there is a lot of adult contact and a lot of adult supervision, guess what? They do pretty good.
>
> ~ Gary Kaplan

