



Life and Career Skills Impacting Self-Efficacy and Transition Planning of At-Risk Youth

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Introduction

Literature Review

At-risk Youth:

- Less likely to transition successfully into adulthood due to experiences and risk factors (Grell & Smith, 2022); parental incarceration is the most strongly associated trauma with future criminal justice involvement, while physical abuse, sexual abuse, witnessed violence, and threatened with violence are also strongly associated (Scanlon et al., 2019).

Occupational Therapy's Role:

- Helps empower individuals with independently participating in occupations and transition planning from one stage of life to another for groups and populations is within their scope of practice (AOTA, 2020).

Mentorship Programs:

- Youth had an increase in skills, capabilities, confidence, and life satisfaction after mentoring program (Powers et al., 2018); youth valued self-direction, self-determination, and the importance of quality and consistent support with mentors and peers (Powers et al. 2018); intervention topics of community, self-awareness, cultural celebration, and interpersonal relationships seemed to help participants in self-reflection and consider life skills (Shea & Siu, 2016).



Overview of Study

Purpose:

- Implement a program of life and career skills training for at-risk youth to increase their self-efficacy and transition planning to help them successfully become independent adults.
- *Heroes in the Hood* youth program of Offender Alumni Association (OAA):
- One-year youth initiative program for young men between the ages of 13-18 who are either violence-impacted or justice-impacted; weekly 4-hour mentoring program to empower at-risk youth for independence.

Methods

Steps

1. Create "Mentor Training Manual"
 - Contents of manual incorporated OT concepts, evidence-based practice; informed by mentor experiences and organization's needs
2. Implement training with mentors
3. Implement program with mentees

Discussion Topics

- Selected based on goals of OAA

Data Collection

- Demographic and pre/post self-efficacy surveys for mentor and mentees
 - Pre and post Transition Readiness Assessment Questionnaire and ranking of topics for mentees
 - Assess youth health and healthcare readiness
 - Ranking determined curriculum
 - Post implementation semi-structured interviews for mentors and mentees
- *Unexpected small sample size and delayed start of program effected data retrieval.

Mentor Training Manual, Table of Contents

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Discussion Topics Implemented: Goal Setting, Emotional Regulation, Healthy Leisure Time, Communication, Managing Finances, Write a Letter, Safety, Advocating, and Forgiveness

Results

Mentor Results

5 Participants:

- 100% African-American and male
- 2 = 35-49 years , 3 = >50 years old
- All but 1 were existing mentors with OAA

Mentee Results

5 Participants:

- 100% African-American and male
- 3 = 14 years, 1 = 16 years, 1 = 18 years
- None had previously participated with OAA

Attendance							
Session:	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Topics:	Goal Setting	Emotional Regulation	Healthy Leisure Time & Communication	Managing Finances	Write a Letter & Safety	Advocating & Forgiveness	
Mentor:	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2	x	x		x	x	x
	3	x		x	x	x	x
	4	x	x		x		x
	5	x	x	x			
Mentee:	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2	x	x	x	x	x	x
	3	x	x	x	x	x	x
	4	x		x			x
	5		x		x	x	x

Self-Efficacy:

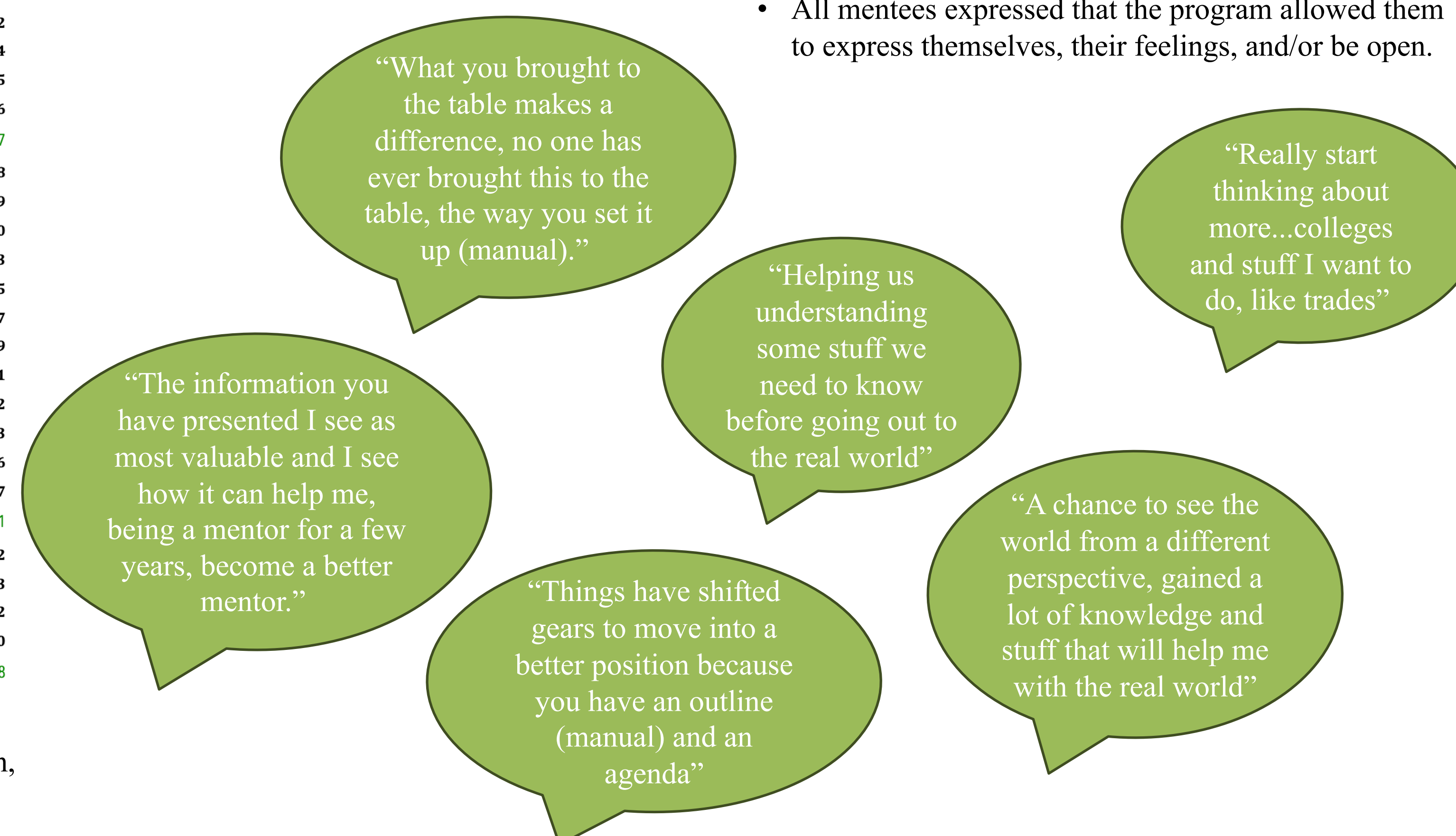
- 2 mentors ranked most items high from beginning.
- 2 mentors reported at least a 2-point improvement on the Likert scale for the items in self-efficacy for teach/training. 1 increased in 12/14 topics, another increased in 10/14 items.
- Overall, the mentors had a mix between improving and declining self-efficacy for varying items.

Interviews:

- All mentors expressed the manual/training was helpful and that they feel confident being a mentor.

Self-Efficacy:

- 1 mentee ranked all items high from beginning
 - 4 mentees had a mix between improving and declining self-efficacy for varying items.
 - There was no significant pattern of increase or decrease of mentees self-efficacy in a particular item.
- Transition Readiness Assessment Questionnaire:**
- All mentees reported a mix of increased and decreased transition readiness in the questionnaire for varying items
- Interviews:**
- All mentees expressed that the program allowed them to express themselves, their feelings, and/or be open.



Discussion

- Survey results give little conclusive data due to the small population size and short-term study, therefore the Likert scale was flawed in qualifying results and limited the number of topics taught.
- Interviews may be a better way to assess self-efficacy and transition readiness with a small population size.
- Topics ranked higher were character developing and life skills, over career readiness.
- Participants may have been over-confident in the pre-surveys, then after being taught the information realize they may not know as much as they initially thought.
- It is difficult to know the endeavor and thoroughness participants used when taking the surveys.
- Results from the surveys and the interview may be misrepresented because participants know the goal of this study and want to appease the researcher.
- Surveys and interviews have conflicting results with these items: emotional regulation & managing finances.
- Based on interview results:
 - It appears that having mentors provide a welcoming and safe space, using trauma-informed care aspects, allows mentees to express their emotions freely
 - Mentees are starting to think and prepare for adulthood because of this mentoring program.
 - A manual may provide more structure to a program and increase the confidence of mentors when teaching mentees topics

Limitations

- Short-term study • Small sample size • Unable to generalize results

Further Research

- Use in depth interviews for small population size to assess self-efficacy and transition readiness.
- Instead of using a Likert scale, change the formative and summative assessments with clarifying questions.
- Complete pre and post survey after each day of the program.
- Gather a larger population size with varying demographics
- Administer post self-efficacy survey after training, assessing both knowledge and confidence of topics.
- Focus on assessing the effectiveness of the mentor training manual and program evaluation.

Conclusion

- Occupational therapy has a role within transitional services for at-risk youth.
- Mentees will express themselves in a safe environment and think about their future with this type of program.
- Having a guide, like the manual, can amplify the confidence of the mentors and provides structure.

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