

https://dspace.org/

Use of a group work programme to improve the educational adjustment of ex-detainees

Decaires-Wagner, Anita Margaret

2015-03-05
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/17159

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

APPENDIX A - PRE-TEST INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

NAME

AGE

SCHOOLS PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED AND PERIODS NOT AT SCHOOL

REASONS FOR LEAVING THE SCHOOL/COMING TO THE TUITION PROJECT

FAMILY'S PLACE OF RESIDENCE

IS THE STUDENT LIVING WITH HIS FAMILY?

IF YES, HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT STUDENT BEING AT THE TUITION PROJECT?

IF NO, WHERE DOES THE STUDENT LIVE?

WHAT ARE THE STUDENT'S DIFFICULTIES WHERE HE/SHE LIVES?

WHAT OTHER DIFFICULTIES DOES THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE?

HOW DOES THE STUDENT USUALLY SOLVE HIS/HER PROBLEMS?

IF THE STUDENT HAS BEEN DETAINED, WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE LIKE FOR HIM?

WHAT PROBLEMS RESULTED FROM THE DETENTION?

HOW HAS THE STUDENT'S FRIENDSHIPS BEEN AFFECTED BY THE DETENTION?

HOW HAVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS BEEN AFFECTED BY THE DETENTION?

WHAT EDUCATIONAL DIFFICULTIES DOES THE STUDENT HAVE?

APPENDIX B - BEHAVIOUR RATING SCALE

Word Meanings	
Find it very difficult to understand word meanings	1
Often misunderstand words	2
Able to understand adequately	3
Understand quite difficult words	4
Understand very difficult, abstract words	5
Instructions	
Become confused, unable to follow instructions	1
Need help to follow simple instructions	2
Can follow instructions if not too difficult	3
Remember and follow detailed instructions	4
Very good at following long instructions	5
Class Discussions	
Not able to follow class discussions, always inattentive	1
Listen but seldom understands well, mind often wanders	2
Listen and follow discussions adequately	3
Understand well, learn from class discussion	4
Become involved, understand very well	5
Information	
Almost total lack of recall, poor memory	1
Remember simple ideas if repeated	2
Remember adequately	3
Remember information well	4
Remember information very well	5
Time	
Find it difficult to be on time, always late or confused	1
Often late	2
Usually on time	3
Late only with a very good reason	4
Seldom late, plan ahead well	5
Vocabulary	
Very poor vocabulary	1
Limited vocabulary	2
Adequate vocabulary	3
Good vocabulary	4
Excellent vocabulary	5

Grammar	
Constant grammar errors	1
Some grammar errors	2
Adequate grammar	3
Above-average grammar	4
Excellent grammar	5
Word Recall	
Can never find the right word to express self	1
Struggle to find right word to express self	2
Sometimes search for the right word	3
Above-average ability to find the right word	4
Excellent ability to find the right word	5
Repeating an Experience	
Cannot tell a story in logical order	1
Struggle to tell a story in logical order	2
Usually able to tell a story in logical order	3
Above-average ability to tell a story in logical order	4
Excellent ability to repeat a story in logical order	5
Ideas	
Unable to link isolated facts	1
Difficulty in linking isolated facts	2
Usually able to link isolated facts	3
Good at linking isolated facts	4
Excellent ability to link isolated facts	5
Co-operation	
Find it difficult to sit quietly in class	1
Need lots of attention from teacher/tutor	2
Can wait my turn	3
Able to be co-operative	4
Very co-operative in class	5
Attention	
Very distractable and inattentive	1
Seldom listen, attention wanders	2
Attention is adequate	3
Attention is above-average	4
Long attention span	5

Organisation	
Very disorganised	1
Often disorganised	2
Average level of organisation	3
Above-average level of organisation	4
Very organised	5
Other students	
Avoid me	1
Tolerate me	2
Like me	3
Like me a lot	4
Look out for me specifically	5
Responsibility	
Never responsible	1
Seldom responsible	2
Usually responsible	3
Always responsible	4
Seek out responsibility	5
Completing Work Assignments	
Never finish	1
Seldom finish	2
Usually finish, with supervision	3
Finish with some reminding	4
Always finish without reminding	5
Tactfulness	
Never consider others' feelings	1
Seldom consider others' feelings	2
Generally consider others' feelings	3
Almost always consider others' feelings	4
Always consider others' feelings	5

APPENDIX C - THE GROUP WORK INTERVENTION

Group work provides a powerful reality based vehicle for making the world come alive in the counselling situation. The counsellor is provided with a clearer picture of the individual's social adjustment and his/her relationships with others. Diagnostic information is therefore increased and a more balanced picture gained regarding each individual. Group work remains a developmentally appropriate method through childhood, adolescence and youth. It is a particularly appropriate method in the South African situation where many young people are actively involved in peer organisations e.g. student movements.

Group work may also provide an entry point for offering help to young people who might otherwise refuse counselling. For politically active young people the group provides an opportunity to operate within a democratic framework whilst both receiving and giving help. Ex-detainees require much emotional nurturance which may be obtained through others in the group who have experienced a similar trauma. Most of these young people fear the possibility of detention while the State of Emergency remains in force. The group may therefore be preventive and promotive in helping members understand the purpose and process of detention, and possible coping strategies.

The role played by the group leader is of significance in all groups but especially so in such a politically sensitive group. It is helpful for the leader to be introduced by somebody whom group members trust; in this instance the co-ordinating teacher. The members needed to have a clear understanding of the political position and involvement of the leader so that they could make active choices regarding whether they would participate. The researcher therefore met with the class in the presence of the co-ordinating teacher. She explained the purpose of the research in terms of both the academic degree she was completing and the potential benefits of the group to members. Her political links were clarified in terms of the organisation to which she belonged.

The different phases of the project were clarified. The first of these was initial information gathering around the life difficulties faced by each student. The researcher explained that she would need to meet with each student individually for about thirty minutes to discuss his/her unique

situation and problems. The second part of the project would be a behaviour rating scale which each student would complete for him or herself. Once this phase was completed the groups would begin. Students would be placed randomly into a group, one of which would begin immediately after the data collection was complete and the other would begin after the July holidays when post-testing was completed. Each of the groups would meet for between ten and fifteen sessions. The content of each group would be negotiated and decided on by group members, but some ideas which the researcher had were listed. These included exercises to improve self understanding and self concept; dealing with stress; being a young adult; knowing your rights; improving relationships with others and developing a support system. The confidentiality of the group was stressed.

Practical details were discussed such as the amount of time the group meetings would take up each week. The students were then invited to ask questions. They asked about the course for which the researcher was studying, whether their family members would/could be involved in any way and how the research data would be fed back to them.

This initial meeting raised some significant issues: the degree to which student took responsibility for their own lives and the extent to which the group leader had to be accountable to them. There was a great deal of interest in the group and the students seemed motivated to begin. All of the students speak English as a second language although all are studying through this medium. The researcher needed to constantly be aware of the language she used to ensure that the students followed the discussion. The co-ordinating teacher's presence was helpful in this regard as she clarified points which the students were uncertain about.

The students were divided into groups randomly although the co-ordinating teacher assisted the researcher in ensuring that each group member had a good relationship with at least one other member and that students who disliked one another intensely were separated if possible. The group composition was heterogeneous in terms of age of members, area of origin, detention experiences and family difficulties. This was deliberate to ensure that the groups were enabled to generate solutions to problems.

The stance adopted by the researcher took into account that a number of the group members had extensive experience of working within organisations.

Participating in group discussions and making decisions were therefore not new activities for them. However, the researcher recognised the central role she had played in bringing members together in this particular constellation. Her task was therefore to facilitate the agreement of goals, maintaining a focus on the tasks and developing new and appropriate ways of communicating (Berkowitz, 1972). This was particularly in response to Straker's (1986) comments that ex-detainees are able to communicate anger but may find it more difficult to express sadness.

The researcher had to make a decision regarding how directive/non-directive she would be. She decided on a non-directive stance.
The major problems faced by students were located in reality therefore it was planned to offer limited interpretations only. No use of the unconscious material was envisaged. The interaction was therefore planned on a behavioural rather than a psycho-analytic basis. It was recognised that each student would have unique and different needs and that the combination of these in the group might require a different approach to the one planned initially. In addition to the specific needs of each member, and the political realities, the developmental life stage of members was of consideration. This was of significance in determining the growth capacity of members.

The group met for a total of thirteen sessions over a period of four months. Each session lasted almost an hour, and all but one meeting was held in the same room. Meetings were held during the lunch break so the researcher provided sandwiches so that members did not spend time buying food. When they were able to members brought and shared their lunch with the remainder of the group. The provision of lunch by the researcher was valuable not only practically but also because of the nurturance students perceived in this. Attendance at group sessions ranged between fifty-eight and ninety per cent with an average attendance of seventy-five per cent.

The first phase of the group concentraded on trust building. This was particularly evident in sessions two and three after a rather unsuccessful initial meeting. The researcher had presumed that as members had been together for some months they knew one another fairly well. This was however inaccurate and members were clearly overwhelmed when expected to share aspects of themselves. During the second session members were asked to evaluate the previous session. They felt that it was important for them

to understand the purpose of the session and the activity. This indicated the need for a clear, simple structure which would facilitate interaction and not overwhelm members with the unknown.

By the end of the second meeting group members had begun speaking about the sadness of the detention experience. Working in sub-groups seemed to facilitate their sense of trust and this sharing allowed for the development of greater unity among members. They sensed that all had experienced sadness and that they would not be rejected by others in the group if they spoke of these feelings. The second session therefore constituted a critical point in the group's development.

By the end of the second meeting members were able to take control and decide on the area they wished to discuss. They wished to discuss the difficulties they experience with their families. Initially members lacked the trust in the group to risk speaking negatively of their families. When one student who was a leader in the group commented on a negative childhood experience with his father this freed the group to share their negative feelings towards parents. Girl friends were often a source of conflict with parents. A number of students shared feelings around the warm and positive relationships they had enjoyed with their grandmothers. It emerged that parents' inability to meet all their financial needs and wants caused much unpleasantness in families particularly if no explanation was given for the parents' inability to do so. Most students stuggled financially and although aware that unemployment was a real problem, needed some practical suggestions to make better use of their very limited resources. They generated ideas to raise funds through work and through conserving their resources by developing improved budgeting skills. Many members found this whole experience extremely frustrating because their reality situations are extremely bleak and hopeless.

Members requested that the group consider the whole area of stress as all experienced significant stressors. This discussion raised the possibility of re-detention which many felt they faced. They were particularly anxious about it for the following reasons: it would prevent them completing their schooling which had been significantly disrupted already, they feared torture and their removal from family members. Many had previously been held in solitary confinement and were unnerved at the possibility of this happening again. One student commented that he had lost so many years of schooling that many of his friends were already at university. For a number of the students,

attendance at the project was their last opportunity to complete matriculation. If they failed to do so now all hope of being educated was lost. Most were not bitter that their political involvement had cost them so much personally. There was, however, a deep sense of loss in speaking of the years spent out of school. This discussion which occurred in the eighth session marked a second turning point in the group. All present, even those not previously detained were deeply moved by the willingness of ex-detainees to share their painful experiences.

One member commented that he felt there was no alternative for him besides constant detention because he could never remove himself from the political struggle he had chosen to engage in. This was despite clear oppositon by his parents. (Within days this student had been re-detained and was held for eight months.) A second student who has suffered much trauma as a result of detention said that if he was re-detained he would simply die. His comment referred perhaps to an emotional rather than a physical death.

In drawing this discussion to a close over the following sessions members generated a wide range of positive and valuable ideas for coping with stress and detention. Some members had trouble sleeping since their detention and a relaxation technique was taught to the group. Freer sharing was clearly evident and members were taking greater risks to say what they really felt.

The next broad area of discussion was around relationship skills. Practical exercises were used to help members become aware of their relationship strengths and difficulties. Skills to improve relationships were discussed. Communication was a major focus as many were unaware of their non-verbal behaviour. Listening skills were practically demonstrated through involving them in an exercise. Their relationships with girls were discussed revealing fascinating perceptions, e.g. that girls spend much time discussing whether a particular boy wishes to marry them. They struggled to come to a clear understanding of what they wanted from their girl friends and recognised that these misunderstandings caused many of the problems. Although the project's philosophy is clearly non-sexist, and theoretically many students subscribe to this they still retain many underlying sexist attitudes. It was however, heartening to see such stressed young people engaged in a discussion which was som completely age appropriate.

The final session centred around an evaluation. Members felt that each session had been too short to allow time for them to discuss issues

adequately. However they recognised that there was no feasible alternative meeting time. The lack of time also sometimes meant we moved on to new areas of discussion before all members felt that the issue was fully resolved. Members who attended less regularly disrupted the flow of the group as they had constantly to be reintegrated. The most valuable areas of discussion were those around family and heterosexual relationships, detention and its consequent problems and the budgeting skills they learned. They expressed sadness at the group ending partly because of the support system the group had become, but also because there were many areas they wished to discuss. They requested that once the control group had completed their group sessions the whole class come together to share their experiences.

Limitations inherent in this group were the venue and the time available. There is very little available space so that the group sessions were often disrupted by noise both outside the room and by people entering the room. A further limitation was the inadequate time available. Students were often frustrated by not having time to adequately work through a topic. These limitations are however not unusual in working in alternative practice settings. The value of the group outweighed these practical difficulties.

APPENDIX D - POST-TEST INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

EVALUATION OF GROUP WORK EXPERIENCE (FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)
COMMENTS ON THE FORTHCOMING GROUP (FOR CONTROL GROUP)

THE DETENTION EXPERIENCE

PRIOR STRESSORS

ARREST

DETENTION CONDITIONS

FEARS DURING DETENTION

COPING STRATEGIES

TORTURE (IF INDICATED)

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT (LENGTH AND FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS)

FEELINGS AND DIFFICULTIES ON RELEASE

CHANGES IN THE POST-DETENTION PERIOD

PHYSICAL

EMOTIONAL

COGNITIVE

APPENDIX E - FINDINGS OBTAINED FROM PRE- AND POST-TEST INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

All students attending the project were aged between eighteen and twenty-four years at the commencement of this research. Students had faced a number of difficulties which had resulted in them missing years of school. These included late entry into school, detention and fear of attending school because of harassment or fear of remaining in the area in which they lived. In some instances the Department of Education and Training expelled or refused to readmit students because of their political involvement or prior detention. Those students who were not detained were also affected by the prevailing unrest conditions and were sometimes unable to write examinations or felt that they were not working to their full capacity.

Table III: Family's area of residence

Area	Ex-detainees	Non-detainees
Cape	-	1
Soweto	-	2
East Rand	2	2
West Rand	3	-
Vaal	4	-
O.F.S.	6	-
Pretoria	1	0

From Table III it is clear that a large percentage of the previously detained students live some distance away from home. While only one of the non-detained students' families live outside of the Reef area almost seventy per cent of the ex-detainees would be unable to live with their families due to the extensive travelling distances. In fact seventy-five per cent of ex-detainees do not live at home although the reason is not always the distance. Some families are hostile and angry because they disapprove of their children's political involvement. In some instances this disapproval has resulted in parents withdrawing all financial and moral support. However, more than half of the students said their parents were pleased that they were able to continue their education. For those students unable to live at home, life tended to be somewhat unsettled. Some had arranged to live locally with relatives while others had arranged to board with non-related families. Many students (both

ex-detainees and non-detainees) experienced difficulty during the year and tuition project staff were forced to intervene and arrange alternative accommodation.

Students experienced a number of difficulties regarding living arrangements. A predominant problem was financial since many families were either unable or unwilling to provide economic assistance. Some students lived in extremely inadequate accommodation resulting in some becoming ill because they did not have adequate heating. Safety was a problem for some students who feared they would be to told to leave if the household found out about their political involvement. Alternatively they feared re-detention if the police became aware of their whereabouts.

When asked about any other difficulties they experienced students listed medical problems; family antagonism; lack of support and the harassment faced by their families on occasion. One third of the students felt that they should be giving their families greater financial support. A number of the students have children and were anxious about their inability to support them.

Some students not previously detained also experienced financial difficulties although few had to contend with hostility from parents. Two out of the five said that they felt they had financial obligations towards their families.

Students described a range of ways in which they traditionally problem-solved. These include discussing the issue with parents or siblings, friends, religious ministers, peers within the political organisations to which they belong, sympathetic non-related adults, medical doctors or counsellors. Some students commented that certain problems had to be ignored as they simply had no solution. Just over one-third of the students had received some form of counselling or therapy on their release from detention. Some had found it helpful in understanding the problem while others experienced no relief after therapy. Some of the students had received medical treatment to cope with the after-effects of detention.

The non-detained students solved problems in a similar manner although they seemed more likely to approach peers and adults, either relatives or older friends - rather than organisations or therapists.

The final questions in the pre-test interview schedule were only directed at previously detained students. This information is co-ordinated with the information obtained from the post-test interview schedule. Half the students had experienced significant stress prior to their detention. This came in the form of police harassment or threats of detention, family opposition to their political involvement as well as difficulties associated with being on the run and unable to maintain regular contact with their families. A few students had been on the run for some months before their detention. In some instances siblings had already been detained. When the detention finally occurred it was in a wide range of circumstances. Some students were taken from their homes (often in the early hours of the morning) while others were detained in public areas or from their hiding places. In a few instances students were detained when they appeared in court while others were taken from their schools or held at border posts. In many instances they were detained at the same time as other members of the organisation to which they belonged.

Some attempt will be made to reflect their experiences in detention although conditions varied considerably and few overall conclusion can be drawn from this small sample.

1. Length of detention

A minority of students were detained for the minimum of two weeks. The remainder were held for periods ranging from four months to a year. A number of students had been detained more than once although on occasion this was for a day or a few hours. Some students were initially detained under Emergency legislation and later under security legislation, e.g. Section 29 of the Internal Security Act. Others became awaiting trial prisoners once charges against them were formulated.

2. Detention conditions

Students were detained in either police station cells or prisons. Some were held exclusively with emergency detainees while others were held with common law prisoners.

It would seem that family visits to the detainee are crucial in helping to keep morale high. Almost every student told the interviewer, often without being asked about the visits which he had received from his

family. In some cases parents were aliegedly not notified about their child's detention. This contributed to some students not receiving visits for months.

Most students remained in one police station or prison for the duration of their detention. However, others were moved up to five times. This also contributed to families being unable to locate and visit them. Even when parents were aware of their child's whereabouts permission to visit was refused in a number of cases.

Interrogation. All the students had been interrogated at least once. This tended to happen most frequently when the student was first detained, in the first hours or days following their 'arrest'. About twenty-five per cent of the students were not interrogated again after this although most were still detained for lengthy periods. Many students were told to write confession statements detailing their activities. Some refused to comply while others wrote such statements either voluntarily or under duress. In some cases students made two statements: the first voluntarily and the second at the insistence of the authorities. Certain students allege violence was used to force them to write statements acceptable to the authorities. This then formed the basis of their defence when they were charged with a variety of crimes in court.

Solitary confinement. Six (38%) of the students were held in solitary confinement for periods ranging from fourteen days to eight months. One student was held alone for twenty months but this was under Security legislation rather than Emergency regulations. Some were held in solitary confinement because they were under eighteen and were therefore separated from the group. Others were seen as leaders and removed. This was a particularly difficult period for all. They felt afraid of their captors and the power they wielded. They reported an increase in obsessive behaviours such as repeatedly washing themselves.

One student described how he sometimes felt as if his whole body was paralysed. This would occur while he was awake and would begin at his head and spread to his feet. He would feel as if he was being suffocated and would struggle to breathe. Most students felt depressed and frightened. Some coped with this by sleeping a great deal. One student described how

for more than three weeks he had no contact with another human being apart from once when he was taken to a doctor. He alleges that the medication prescribed was subsequently not given to him. The remainder of the time his food was pushed under the door and he was given access to neither washing nor exercise facilities. Another student described how difficult he found being unable to look at himself in a mirror.

Three of those held in solitary confinement required medical care during this period.

Torture. Ten (63%) of those interviewed alleged that they were tortured. Some commented that they were just beaten around. They did not equate beatings with torture. As noted in Chapter 3, for the purpose of this study torture has been defined as the deliberate infliction of pain, either physical or psychological so as to intimidate the victim. The range of torture strategies used was extensive. These included beatings with batons; being told that girl friends were being unfaithful; grabbing of hair and pulling it out; being kicked, electric shocks; being prevented from washing; lengthy interrogations; suffocation with a sack; having one's head pushed under water; being forced to lie on the ground while being beaten; being woken at night; having food withdrawn; being exposed to excessive noise; being handcuffed and being provoked by prison wardens. Of those who allege torture, four students received medical treatment for injuries sustained. One interviewee commented that when the police entered his cell it was either to give him his food or torture him. Initially, he alleges he was tortured daily.

In both the pre-test and post-test interview schedules some attempt was made to describe the effects of detention on the student himself and his family and friends. The researcher has noted above that many students were unable to return to their own communities on their release from prison. They therefore suffered the added difficulty of being without a support system at a time when they were both physically and emotionally stressed.

The consequences of detention. Almost every student spoke of their fear of re-detention. Some said they were afraid they would break down under future interrogation and give away information that might harm their

friends or co-workers in organisations. On the other hand a number of those interviewed commented on their enhanced commitment to the political struggle since their detention. Many described vividly how they became startled when they heard a car door slamming outside. They seemed to rarely feel safe and felt that they had changed from the more carefree pre-detention days. One student said his parent had commented that he was a son physically but that his mind was no longer that of a son. For many students the cost of political involvement was high. A significant percentage was refused re-entry into Department of Education and Training schools. Some, unaware of alternative educational resources, wasted precious years without receiving any education.

One student spoke of the deep depression and apathy he felt on his release. He has received both medication and therapeutic help in an attempt to find meaning in life once more. For many students the predominant feeling on their release was fear and anger. In some instances this resulted in family members finding great difficulty reintegrating the ex-detainee into the family. A few students found that their families had become severely divided as a result of their detention. On the other hand a number of families grew to respect their children's political standpoints and became very supportive.

Some students continued to suffer from the injuries sustained during detention or from stress-related illnesses. One student who developed ulcers while in detention was in almost constant pain a year afterwards. Some students felt that their friendships had been seriously affected since their detention. Many had lost their support network as they moved out of the area where they had lived. Others found they were avoided because their friends feared police harassment. For other students whose friends are also in hiding maintaining friendships became problematic. Students who were detained with others in the organisation to which they belonged, seemed to feel less alienated on their release. Some students expressed loneliness as they had been able to make new friends at the tuition project but missed the close friends they had left behind. Several students mentioned the difficulties they had in trusting both friends and girl friends. Some students felt inferior and

shy, thereby limiting the confidence they felt to make new relationships. Others felt unable to speak of what had happened to them in detention, particularly if they had suffered torture. Several students commented that they now became angry more quickly and seem less tolerant than they were in the past.

Students' families seemed either to support their political activity or reject such activity and along with it, the student. Those students whose parents supported them seemed much less anxious and conflicted. Many students received particular support from their mothers. Some of those interviewed expressed much guilt at the pain they caused their parents through their political activity. One mother's job was in danger since she worked for a state department. Her son had hidden his political involvement from her for some time. For those who are unable to live at home the pain is much worse. They longed for the security and comfort of being part of a family. They felt however, that their presence at home made life difficult for the families since it attracted unwanted police attention. Some students never slept at home even when they visited their families. They were simply too afraid of re-detention. One student had lost his mother as an indirect result of a bomb attack on his house. His siblings sometimes blame him for her death.

Half of the students commented that they have difficulty in concentrating. One student described this as the result of a long period during which he did not study while others said they still thought about detention. Another student said he had a good memory prior to his detention and can still remember things that happened then but cannot easily remember events subsequent to the detention. It was a problem to listen when being spoken to and to stay on the issue under discussion.

Many students had difficulty sleeping. Some found that they were afraid and could not therefore sleep restfully while others fell asleep so late at night that they were always late at the tuition project. Some students never felt adequately rested and wanted to sleep all the time.

Others were aware of changes in their personality. They felt they had become impatient and were unable to compromise as they had before. One student commented that his family noticed that he would not listen to their reasonable requests. He said he had a sense of 'declaring war' on

people when they would not listen to him. Students became angry easily, as noted above and felt they lost their tempers and became unsettled.

Many of those detained faced charges when released but in almost all instances charges were subsequently dropped or the student found not guilty. Others were served with restriction orders preventing them from engaging in political activity Many felt that they were still not free even though they were released from detention.

2. Coping Strategies

Students identified a range of coping strategies used in detention. Many recognised the importance of structuring time into periods of rest, education, exercise and relaxation.

Where students were held together they spent much time discussing issues. One student commented that he learned a valuable lesson in dealing with clashes through this. Singing, playing games and drama were favourite methods of coping with the monotony of detention.

Some students felt they had no power in the detention situation and that they could only assert themselves by refusing to eat.

In some instances prison warders acted as a support especially when the detention continued for a lengthy period. Students who were detained more than once commented that they coped better in subsequent detentions because they understood how the system operated and were more able to deal with the police. Students who knew their rights felt more sure of their ability to cope.

Family visits were viewed as a highlight and some students became depressed when family members did not visit and/or send money. Some students kept in touch with family members and fellow church goers by letter.

Students in leadership positions spent much time dealing with fights which arose and helping other students deal with their fears. All detainees who were held in solitary confinement noted that they coped much more easily when turned to the larger group.

3. Fears during detention

The main fears experienced during detention related to personal integrity.

Author Decaires-Wagner A M
Name of thesis Use of a group work programme to improve the educational adjustment of ex-detainees 1989

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.