

**A Study of Adolescents' Reflections on Life Events during
Training to be Peer Helpers**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the nature of adolescents' reflections on life events and identified the factors related to this reflection during peer helping training. Two different training groups were used. The first group of 16 teens were from three high schools in a suburban school district. Following peer helping training teens were involved in the peer helping program in their school. The second training group included 4 teens and 4 young adults (under 23 years of age), from a private agency that offered counselling to teens for drug and alcohol abuse. The agency planned to develop a peer helping program following training. The study used an action research approach and involved participants in defining what they wanted to learn about during training. Data on the reflection on life events was gathered by means of participant observation, videotaped observation, and interviews with trainers and teens. Data analysis was carried out using grounded theory procedures to develop a substantive theory that was grounded in the experience of the research participants. Analysis yielded seven theoretical elements. The theoretical elements are described and then illustrated with six case examples of teens who participated in the training and who had described significant experience with stressful life events.

The study identified the following elements that emerged from participants during the training. Personal reflection on life events appears to

be a crucial experience for teens in peer helping training. Personal reflection is triggered by training activities, and is managed by a strategy which can be called **presentation of the personal self**. This strategy seems to be influenced by the contexts of (a) **trust**, (b) **a support network**, and (c) **the tension between personal development and the development of helping skills**. The **building of a helping persona** may be the outcome of the interaction between the other six theoretical elements. The findings of the study are discussed in relation to other theories and research on self-understanding in at-risk teens and experiential learning. The changes which the trainers made to their practice of peer helping training as a result of participating in this study are discussed. Suggestions are made to the readers of this study on how they can apply the finding of the study to their own practice of peer helping training.

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Dedication

To Iain, Kirstin, Megan and Jay

Thanks for letting me do what I needed to do

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The intent of this study was to investigate the process that occurred when stressful life events were examined and/or disclosed by teens in the course of personal reflection during peer helping training. In this chapter I will introduce the reader to; peer helping, the rationale for the initial research questions, and the research paradigm and methodology. Further detail on these items is set out in the following chapters.

Peer helping

Peer helping is a program which has grown and developed over the last 20 years throughout the school system in Canada and the U.S.A. Programs in public high schools in California were receiving national attention as early as 1972 (Myrick & Folk, 1991). Programs in Canada increased 1000 percent from 1978 to 1986 (de Rosenroll, 1990). While most of the programs occurred in schools, peer helping also occurred in community agencies as early as 1978 (Garbarino, 1978; Sanborn & Myrick, 1983). Peer helpers typically receive training in communication skills so that they can better reach out to and assist peers. They are supervised by professional helpers and do not receive payment for their services therefore they are considered an extension of professional helping.

Peer helpers are selected from a range of sources and may include teens with stressful life events. At times the intent of the peer helping program is to train youth who are troubled or at-risk for deviant behaviour to

help their peers. (See Garbarino, 1978; Gwynn, Meyer & Schaffer, 1988; Jason & Rhodes, 1989; Sanborn & Myrick, 1983; Stewart, Dawson & Bytes, 1976.) More often, the peer helping program operates at school and draws on youth in the school who are natural helpers. Chapter Two reviews the literature on peer helping in detail.

The Rationale for the Study

In my early discussions with peer helping trainers I found that they were concerned about the appropriateness of a teen helping others when the helper has unresolved issues. Some trainers were uncertain about how to deal with the personal issues that arose during training. Other trainers viewed the training as part of a greater process of developing resiliency or assisting teens to cope with their current lives and personal issues.

I learned that funding sources were including in contracts to school boards and social service programs funding for peer helping programs for troubled and at-risk youth (C. Savage, personal communication, May 1993). Federal funding from the 'Stay in School' initiative funded about 200 programs in British Columbia between 1991 and 1994. Peer helping or mentoring was the most common program funded to keep at-risk youth in school (P. Northover, personal communication, April 1994). There was no clear standard for how to do training or run a peer helping program. Approaches to doing peer helping training seemed to vary widely in the extent to which teens were expected to think about and talk about personal experiences and disclosure of

personal experiences was the area creating concern amongst trainers.

Although the literature discussed using peer helping with troubled and at-risk youth, it did not address the issue that was of concern to trainers. The initial research focus was to develop a conceptual understanding of the process that occurs for teens as they reflect on and disclose their life events.

The Research Paradigm and Methodology

Programs were receiving funding for peer helping training targeted at troubled and at-risk youth and trainers were concerned about how to deal with stressful life events during training. As I thought about how to investigate the personal reflection process, several issues emerged:

1. A desire to respond quickly to the needs of practitioners who were engaged in training peer helpers.
2. I wanted to facilitate the confidence and self-empowerment of peer helpers as they learned about helping.
3. I hoped to solidify my own knowledge and practice of peer helping.

Action research is an approach which generates new knowledge at the same time that it creates change in the social world of the participants in the research. The research methodology must encompass action that leads to change or social transformation (Guba, 1990; Lather, 1986). An action research approach seemed most suitable for this study because:

1. Empirical action research with a succession of similar groups leads to more generally valid principles or theories (Adelman, 1993).

2. Action research involves an ongoing cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting which implies a tight link between theory and practice (Adelman, 1993; Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

3. Reciprocity is an important value in peer helping (Myrick & Folk, 1991) and is fundamental to an action research approach (Lather, 1986). Since it is not possible for knowledge about humans to occur separately from the values of the social context (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Guba, 1990; Heron, 1981; Lather, 1986) it seemed essential that the values of the research approach, and the program being studied, match.

4. Carr & Kemmis (1986) argue that educators can and should engage in a process of systematic self-reflective inquiry leading to change in their practice. This study would enable the trainers who participated to do this.

The link between theory and practice is challenging in the design of any action research study which is empirical and examines the understanding of the experiences of the participants (Adelman, 1993).

Sole reliance on the participants' perceptions of their situation is misguided because, as neo-Marxists point out, false consciousness and ideological mystification may be present. A central challenge to the interpretive paradigm is to recognize that reality is more than negotiated accounts - that we are both shaped by and shapers of our world. (Lather, 1986, p. 269)

Within this study, I used the grounded theory methodology to meet this challenge and to develop a conceptual understanding of the phenomena of personal reflection rather than a descriptive presentation of the participants experience.

Grounded theory methodology is a qualitative approach to data gathering and analysis. It generates theory from data by making use of constant comparisons between concepts discovered by the researcher and data generated from the participants. The theory developed can be substantive theory specific to a particular group or a formal theory which explains a phenomenon such as personal reflection for many groups or situations.

The following chapters report on the research process, both the methodology and the analysis of the data, as it evolved throughout the study. I also attempt to help the reader be sensitive to the existing literature that is related to the conceptual understanding of the phenomena of personal reflection. The literature review that occurs in a qualitative study is intended to sensitize the researcher to the issues that may be present and to formulate a general question or purpose to guide the research process. Chapter Two reviews the literature from a general perspective. I summarize the general literature on peer helping as it relates to the training process. Since my interest area was related to those teens who had experienced stressful life events, I also review the literature on life events, trauma, vulnerability, and resiliency, linking it to some of the foundations of peer helping. One of the groups that participated in the study was a substance abuse and treatment program, so I summarize some of the known information about substance abuse as it relates to both resiliency and to peer helping. Chapter Two finishes by discussing the initial research questions for the study.

Chapter Three describes the rationale for choosing an action research paradigm and grounded theory method of analysis. I also outline the specific steps that compromise a grounded theory research study and illustrate those steps with the process that I used to complete this research. Completion of the grounded theory method of analysis results in a dense substantive theory which explains the phenomenon under study. Many researchers, including myself, stop the analysis process and write up the conceptual elements of the theory prior to completing the full analysis. Writing furthers the analysis process. The rationale for writing up this research at the point at which I did is also presented in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four is divided into two major sections. The first is an outline of the theoretical elements that emerged from this study. I cannot say that I have a fully developed theory, so I have chosen to write about the theoretical elements which emerged from the analysis. The second section includes six case illustrations of the theoretical elements which demonstrates the potential relationship between theoretical elements. These six case illustrations were chosen specifically because the teens had all experienced stressful life events, which were presented as part of the reflection process during peer helping training. Three cases are drawn from each of the two training events that formed the substance of the data base. Not all the teens who participated in the study had experienced such stressful life events and the material from their participation is reflected more generally in the theoretical elements.

The discussion in Chapter Five compares the theoretical elements developed in this study with two different existing theoretical areas. This comparison suggests several directions for further theoretical sampling which would continue the development of a conceptual understanding of the factors associated with the phenomena of personal reflection on life events during peer helping training. Theory on the role of self-understanding in adolescents supports the concept of personal reflection on life events, and the factors which influence it. Theory on experiential learning supports the role of presentation of the personal self in building a helping persona, and suggests that learning style may be similar to natural helping style. Chapter Five also reviews how the practice of the trainers who participated in this study changed, and suggests a mechanism for other trainers to incorporate some ideas for change into their practice.

CHAPTER TWO

Peer Helping and Teens Who Have Experienced Stressful Life Events:

A Review of the Literature

The purpose of a literature review in a study using grounded theory methodology is to become sensitive to the literature in the area of interest and to develop a set of initial questions which guide the research inquiry. The nature of these questions changed as I began to collect and analyze data. This chapter presents my perspective as the research began.

This section allows the reader to see the area from the researcher's perspective as the project was begun. The literature review in a grounded theory study neither provides key concepts nor suggests hypothesis as it does in hypothetico-deductive research (May, 1986, p. 149).

I began by exploring the literature on peer helping, and more specifically by examining literature on programs for special populations of teenagers. I became aware of a body of literature on trauma, resiliency, and stressful life events because some of the peer helping literature described programs which were directed towards teens who were described as troubled or at-risk. I explored the empirical literature in the areas of trauma, resiliency and life events to learn more about those teens. As the study progressed and I realized that one of the training groups would be teens with issues surrounding substance abuse, I returned to the literature to look for knowledge on teens and peer helping programs that was specific to the issue of substance abuse.

The chapter begins by exploring the conceptual basis for peer helping models. Following this general review, I explore the nature of stressful life events that teens experience and summarize the literature which examines the outcome of these stressful life events. I then describe how peer helping programs have been applied as a preventative intervention and as a treatment intervention with teens. Finally, I summarize the result of my exploration of the literature which was a set of initial questions to guide my research. Along with these questions, I also developed some tentative ideas about what I might discover in my own inquiry. I summarize these ideas here, rather than in the methodology chapter, because they developed as a result of discrepancies I saw between two different bodies of literature. The description and evaluation of peer helping programs and the empirical literature on the characteristics of teens who have experienced stressful life events present different ways of thinking about resiliency.

Peer Helping Foundations

Peer helping originally developed in high schools as part of the psychological re-education movement of the 1960's (Varenhorst, 1984). The model currently provides the basis for a wide variety of preventative, therapeutic, and even crisis intervention programs. It is an intuitively obvious and attractive idea, as evidenced by the growth of the peer helping movement. In both Canada and the United States there are national networks connecting programs and co-ordinating and publishing information (de Rosenroll, 1990).

Varenhorst (1993) expresses concern that with the growth of the movement, the original identity of the program has become lost.

What is peer helping?

Peer helping literature struggles with problems surrounding the definition of terms.

Peer helping describes those formal and informal situations whereby a group of two or more individuals with mutually-perceived and situationally defined similarities directly or indirectly interact in such a way that at least one of them voluntarily and intentionally helps/assists at least one of the others in the group. (de Rosenroll, personal communication, 1991)

This broad definition includes the applications of peer tutoring, mentoring, buddies, and peer counselling. While it eliminates the controversy that goes with 'counselling' as a label, there are many authors, who use the narrower and more specific focus. Varenhorst (1984) describes peer counselling as "a process in which trained and supervised students perform interpersonal helping tasks that qualify as counselling functions" (p. 717).

Peer counselling includes one to one helping relationships, group leadership, discussion leadership, advisement, tutoring, and all activities of an interpersonal human helping or assisting nature. (Gray and Tindall, 1978, p. 5)

Peer counsellors are clearly not professional counsellors or therapists, yet the helpers receive training. "Peer counselling is a deliberate and systematic form of psychological education" (Carr, 1981, p. 3-4). Whether referred to as counselling, tutoring, helping, facilitating, or supporting there is an action

component to peer helping that includes reaching out to a peer through interpersonal communication to assist them with a problem.

While most of the participants in this study considered themselves peer counsellors, I will use the term peer helpers, since it is the more popular and accepted term in the literature. Using the term peer helpers also reminds me that

young people are inexperienced when it comes to human behaviour and psychological problems. Youth are emotionally vulnerable, and this combined with their desire to be helpful, can result in their being used, or manipulated because they often don't understand the dynamics of a problem, or recognize when a problem is beyond their capabilities. (Varenhorst, 1992, p. 28)

Similarity in peer helping.

Peer helping is an outgrowth of the paraprofessional movement (de Rosenroll, 1990; Myrick & Folk, 1991; Varenhorst, 1984). The paraprofessional movement was "viewed as providing a bridge between programs and clients because they generally shared the same cultural backgrounds and lived in similar neighbourhoods" (Musick and Stott, 1990, p. 652). Teens who function as peer helpers are assumed to provide a bridge between professional helpers and teens who are not willing to make use of available professional resources. Varenhorst (1992) reminds us, "young people record information of what's going on long before problems reach the attention of adults" (p. 28).

It is the principle of similarity among teenagers that provides the foundation for the peer helping programs in schools and community agencies.

Teens seek out other teens to assist them with problem issues in their lives (Varenhorst, 1993). Since peers speak the same language, have similar interests, attitudes, values and personal demands there is a level of trust that encourages them to seek out each other (Myrick & Folk, 1991).

Fink, Grandjean, Martin, & Bertolini (1978) measure the informal component of a peer helping program by recording peer helping contacts made through the social network and comparing those to the contacts made through a formal referral process. The vast majority of contacts for peer counsellors were made through the social network. They conclude that a diverse group of students would make peer counsellors available through the entire sociological structure of the school. They recommend that training more peer counsellors is better than training fewer peer counsellors at a higher level. They specify the need to train troubled teens within the peer helping group.

Characteristics of natural helpers.

Peer helpers should be selected because of their ability to communicate with peers, willingness to reach out to others, ability to empathize with others, flexibility in their approach, and their concern for the needs and problems of others (de Rosenroll, 1990; Myrick & Folk, 1991). Carr, 1988 (as cited in de Rosenroll, 1990) completed a survey of Canadian peer counselling programs and reports that characteristics such as emotional health, representation of a subgroup, benefit to the participant of the training, or group leadership potential are used to select peer helpers. Some teens are recruited for

programs through faculty recommendations, interviews and student volunteers (Myrick & Folk, 1991).

Helpers are those who are caring, supportive and have problem-solving skills or abilities. Reissman (1987) describes informal helpers as more concerned with the person seeking help than with their own feelings. They use their own life experiences as the basis for helping. Mutual helping forms a basis for friendship, helping, caring and support for another. "Experience suggests that there are individuals who appear to be more or less helpful than others" (de Rosenroll, 1990, p. 29).

In spite of the suggestions about the benefit of training teens with a broad representation of different backgrounds, (de Rosenroll, 1990; Fink et al., 1978), it seems that many school programs are hesitant to select teens with stressful life experience. Perhaps they are concerned about how teens with a history of stressful life events would manage as peer helpers. As I spoke to practitioners in the field, some echoed this concern. Others used a broad representation of teens in their peer helping programs, but worried about how to manage the influence of a teen's stressful life experience.

Skill training.

According to Varenhorst, (1993) peer helping programs need to include five components in order to provide a quality service which broadens the impact of professional counsellors:

1. The program must define how peer helpers are used and the issues to be addressed by the service.
2. There must be a significant training component for the peer helpers.
3. After being trained as peer helpers, teens must be provided with opportunities for helping that are legitimate and necessary.
4. Peer helpers must receive appropriate and ongoing supervision to help them with the difficulties that arise as they try to carry out their tasks.
5. The program should complete an annual evaluation to determine its effectiveness.

There are many manuals available to program co-ordinators which describe a variety of training approaches, activities, and in some cases, deal with selection and implementation issues. (See Carr & Saunders, 1979; Davis, Handcock & Hills, 1989; Myrick, & Erney, 1979; Myrick & Folk, 1993; Tindal & Salmon-White, 1990.)

The purpose of training for peer helpers is to develop personal qualities and self-awareness and to develop skills that enable the peer helper to be more effective (Carr, 1981; de Rosenroll, 1990; Tindal & Salmon-White, 1990).

Teens are taught how to manage their own stress, and their natural helping skills are enhanced by training in basic communications skills such as attending, listening, questioning, and empathy. They learn about problem solving, values, and decision making (de Rosenroll, 1990). During peer helping training, teens are actively involved in the process of learning. They

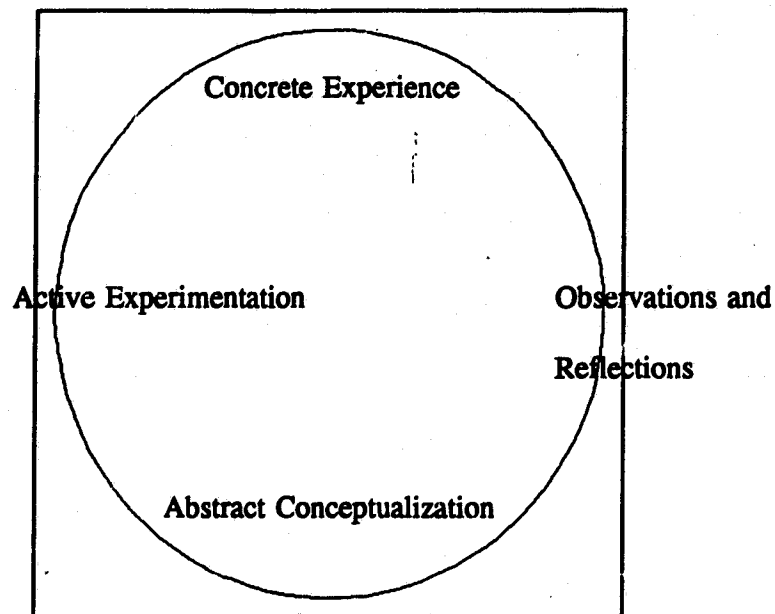
often generate the relevant material to be learned, and talk about their own experiences during the training.

Peer helping training is based on an experiential learning cycle. Teens are actively involved in an experience during training or are asked to recall a previous experience. Content is considered secondary to the personal meaning attached to the subject matter (de Rosenroll, 1990). The experiential component of the training is selected in order to access feelings and thoughts relevant to the conceptual material that the trainer hopes to convey to the group. After the experience, the teens are encouraged to discuss feelings and personal thoughts about the experience. Following this personal discussion, the discussion is moved to a more abstract level in which the experience and personal material is related to concepts that are relevant to peer helping. Teens are then encouraged to discuss and/or apply these new concepts to their roles as peer helpers. "Learning is more efficient when students assist other students and accept more responsibility for creating the learning climate" (Myrick & Erney, 1979, p. 187-188).

Kolb (1984, 1986) describes experiential learning as a cycle of four components, as illustrated by Figure 1. The learner can enter the cycle at any point and achieves optimal learning by going through all four components of the cycle.

Figure 1: The Experiential Learning Cycle

(Kolb, 1984)



Schon (1987) describes the education of reflective practitioners in a variety of fields, illustrating that experiential learning does not need to occur just in the development of helping behaviour, and supporting the assumption that learning can occur through experience. He proposes a reflective model that involves the learners as co-researchers on how to teach or use the model for personal practice. The skills or knowledge must be personalized in a way that makes sense in order for learning and application to occur in the field.

Evaluation of skill training.

Varenhorst (1984) reviews the literature on the effects of training and found varied results. In general, the studies done are not rigorous, and consist

of program evaluation or testimonial reviews. Typically, use of the peer counselling training curriculum is more effective than not training peer counsellors. Pre-tests compared to post-tests indicate that communication skills and the discrimination of effective counselling responses improve. On the other hand, when the effect of a student's psychological maturity level was considered, a student entering training at a more mature level than the typical adolescent did not benefit from training. According to Varenhorst (1984), there is a need to "do more investigation into the relative contribution of factors such as content, methods, and instructional modes in achieving effective peer counsellor preparation" (p. 734). Even though training guides typically contain activities and directions to facilitate learning, the nature of the training still depends on the person conducting the sessions.

de Rosenroll (1990) identifies a number of issues involved in research on peer helping training. Manuals are impossible to compare, since they make use of material from other authors, and encourage trainers to change and adapt the material. This makes the exercises and content subject to the bias of the trainer, and to the preference that a trainer has for a particular style of teaching. de Rosenroll suggests an action research approach may be appropriate to help trainers improve training courses and their own training delivery rather than comparing programs. He states that a focus on the personal meaning of the training experience for the participants could address

questions on the dynamics of the actual training process rather than evaluating the content and effectiveness of a training program.

The role of self-exploration.

Self-exploration during peer helping training has two distinct and different aspects. The first is that training must include a self-exploration component to facilitate generalization of the skills to helping peers.

Peer helper training, therefore, offers skills and awareness so that trainees' natural communication skills are enhanced and augmented to enable them to be more effective when helping their peers (de Rosenroll, 1990, p. 35).

The second is that training is treatment, and that it is essential for helpers to experience self-exploration and use it as a vehicle to explore and resolve their own issues.

Peer helper training is also a vehicle whereby peer helpers can become more conscious of their own day to day interactions and, through the experiential learning format of training, they can use peer helper skills to gain more control and bring about change in their own lives (de Rosenroll, 1990, p.35).

Carr (1981) notes that the skills of helping have been demystified, and that "training itself can also serve as a form of treatment and the peer counsellors enhance their own development and psychological growth" (p. 6).

According to Varenhorst (1984), a substantial data base exists attesting to the benefits of participation in training and service activities to the peer helpers. Most programs focus a major portion of their training on psychological growth and interpersonal relationship skills. Unfortunately, the literature that exists includes primarily anecdotal, survey and attitudinal data,

rather than assessing or describing the specific process of personal growth.

Sprintal, Hal, & Gerler, (1992) systematically investigate the effect of peer helping training on the peer helpers' development of self awareness. Using a rating scale based on Loevinger's theory of ego development (Loevinger & Wesler, 1970 cited in Sprintal et al.), they find that high school teens who participated in training and helping experiences that were focused on interpersonal reflection gained significantly on the scale of ego development in comparison to a control group who were peer helpers but did not focus on interpersonal reflection in training and practice. This study seems to indicate support for the importance of interpersonal reflection. There may have been a selection effect since the teens chose which group they were to help with and the control group chose to assist with physical education classes rather than leading groups on divorce or self-esteem. Reed (1990) finds that the interpersonal process material used in training adult counsellors was of critical importance to them. He states that it did not seem to matter if the content of the process material was self, group or client, it all had an equal impact.

Barkley, Wilborn & Towers (1984) report that data gathered following a peer counsellor training program in a high school clearly indicated that the experiential component of the training had an effect on friendship. Students reported that their relationships and closeness to group members was enhanced. Barkley et al. believe that the process of developing relationships is essential to teens and that the experiential activities facilitate that process even

though the analysis of changes in friendship on a social interest scale was not statistically significant.

Guttman (1985) reports that the majority of teens participating in a peer helping program in a secondary school reported changes in their intrapersonal growth. Written statements were gathered from the teens about the effect of the program on their interpersonal growth. Training had provided them with greater self-confidence, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and communication skills. Training included both a scheduled skills training class and practical, supervised experience in individual and group counselling over a one year period.

While there appears to be some benefit in the use of self-exploration as a component of training, the effects are inconsistent and unclear. There has been no attempt to describe the self-exploration process and to examine how it impacts the way teens manage their personal lives. There is also no evidence to describe how self-exploration relates to generalizing helping skills.

Peer helping program evaluations.

Carty (1989) assesses the effects of participating in peer helping over a six month period. She suggests that peer helping programs "have a positive effect on adolescent stress and social support, and this effect occurs over the long-term" (p. 99). She could not identify what interventions were effective, since it was a complete package of training and participation in the peer helping program.

It is difficult to assess the outcome of peer helping programs since they are not clearly measurable, or the constructs are too general. For example, it is difficult to assess changes in such a global concept as self-esteem. A confounding issue is the nature of the selection process for peer counsellors. Selection often involves choosing students "who were above average in terms of social skills, positive attitudes toward self and others, and psychological maturity. Students who may have had more need of the instruction in relevant skills often were not included" (Varenhorst, 1984, p. 737).

There is some evidence that the social climate of the agency or school within which a program is operating becomes a caring community. Guttman (1985) indicates that 60% of the students in the school program that she evaluated sought out individual contacts with peer helpers, and that 30% had more than five contacts with the peer helpers. Students reported that peer helpers were both effective social leaders and effective group and individual counsellors. When the actual interactions of leaders with group members were systematically rated and compared between peer helpers and professional counsellors, Guttman (1989) finds that professional counsellors lead groups that were more therapeutically oriented, with a focus on more personal topics and more oriented towards taking risks through confrontation and assertive responses by group members.

Grady (1980) reports a strong sense of commitment and school spirit following the implementation of peer counselling in the school. Varenhorst

(1984) also describes incidents within a program with which she was associated where boys in a peer counselling class voluntarily befriended a seventh grade boy with social problems, and the same class voluntarily wanted to continue the following year in the program.

Teens and Stressful Life Events

The literature on teens who have experienced stressful life events is also filled with difficulties in defining terms. I wanted to explore this literature because I was interested in the teens that I perceived as having experienced a known stressful life event such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. I was also interested in those teens who were displaying some deviant behaviour and whom I assumed had a stressful event in their personal background that was related to the acting out behaviour. I knew that there were many teens who did not display deviant behaviour. The empirical literature measures specific variables which are related to the growth and development of teens who have experienced stressful life events. The variables have been defined by different researchers in a variety of ways.

One research concern relates to variables that are correlated with behaviour that is viewed as different from the normal path of development. "At-risk behaviours refer to those activities in which youth engage that increase the likelihood of adverse psychological, social, and health consequences" (Kazdin, 1993, p. 129). At-risk behaviours are different from the conditions to which teens are exposed. Since teens are largely dependent

on the living conditions of their families, there are many factors beyond their control (Kazdin, 1993). A study may take a broad definition and identify the dependent variable as all deviant behaviour, or examine the factors correlated with one type of behaviour such as substance abuse. Risk behaviour in teens defies a simple explanation and research has evolved to "more and more complex explanations implicating multiple interacting domains that now range from biology to the social environment" (Jessor, 1993, P. 119). In these studies, teens who exhibited at-risk behaviour are studied to determine the risk factors which are related to at-risk behaviour. An alternative to studying at-risk behaviour is to follow a group of individuals known to be vulnerable because of social environment are followed over many years to examine the developmental outcome and identify the related protective factors.

A second type of research looks at the life events that are stressors for teens. The assumption behind this research is that stress correlates with adjustment. The definition of social adjustment is based on the absence of maladaptive behaviour. Luthar and Zigler suggest using social competence, including the success of the individual in meeting society's expectations, and aspects of the individual's personal development as the measure for correlating with stress. Social competence as a dependent variable would make comparisons between literature on stressful life events and literature on vulnerability and protective factors less confused by problems of definition.

I reviewed three main areas to gather background, and to consider what characteristics, and factors I might encounter as I explored the personal reflection process with teens who had experienced significantly stressful life events. I summarize each of these areas here, concentrating on reporting the factors that seemed relevant to the peer helping training process and to the concerns related by practitioners in the field. The three areas are the literature on (a) life events and stress in teens, (b) vulnerability and protective factors, and (c) substance abuse and maladjustment.

Life events and stress.

The relationship of stress and life events, and the effect on psychosocial adjustment and physical health has been studied since the late 1960's, with the development of scales to measure adjustment to various life events (Forman, Eidson, & Hagan, 1983). This research confirmed the link between the accumulation of life changes and physical or emotional illness. There are several problems with research on life events and stress.

1. Life event stress scales typically include events that are also indicators of maladjustment (e.g. failing in school) (Johnson, 1986; Luthar & Zigler, 1992).
2. Stressful life events could lead to further negative experiences (e.g. parental restrictions).
3. The correlations between stress and adjustment are significant, but low (Luthar & Zigler, 1993).

4. Life event scales include specific items and are limited to the recent past (Compass, Davis, Forsythe & Wagner, 1987; Johnson, 1986; Luthar & Zigler, 1993). Since life event scales do not measure abuse, neglect, family death, etc. that may have occurred in the more distant past, they assume that these events are no longer contributing to stress or poor social adjustment.

5. Life events do not include minor hassles which can be stressful (Compas et al, 1987).

6. Research was not completed in the adolescent population (Compas et al, 1987).

7. The opinions of others about what events were most stressful were used rather than the use of perceptions of the individual completing the scale (Compas et al, 1987). More recent research has focused on the last three areas.

Forman et al. (1983) report that death (of a parent, friend or sibling), parental divorce or illness, and family difficulty with alcohol, were events perceived as most stressful by adolescents. The scale that they used did not include items such as abuse or suicide attempts, or items dealing with sexuality other than the issues of pregnancy and breaking up with a partner.

Newcomb, Huber, & Bentler, (1986) report similar results. Teens perceived 'getting or giving VD' as the least desirable event. Only 1% had actually ever experienced this event. Other events perceived as least desirable were family death, serious family illness or accident, and 'a gay experience'.

Death in the family had been experienced by 47% and family illness by 48%. Newcomb et al. measure suicidal ideation, (20 % had experienced this and it was perceived as quite undesirable) but they do not investigate experiences of abuse.

Compas, Davis, Forsythe & Wagner, (1987) investigate both major life events and 'daily hassles' using an open ended approach which asked teens to respond to a list of daily events and major events (213 items). Teens identified which items were daily hassles and which were major, and which items were positive and those that were negative. Some items, such as substance use, and arguments between parents were perceived by group members as both daily and major events. Substance use also had a positive valance for some members. Other items, such as death of a friend or relative and abortion, were clearly major negative life events. The scale also does not include any items on abuse or suicide.

None of the studies reviewed so far deal with the effects of these life events on the teen's social adjustment, nor address factors that support teens in dealing with the stress. Daniels & Moos (1990), developed a scale to investigate both the daily life stressors and major events of teens' lives and to assess the social resources available to teens. They compare three groups of teens: healthy teens, teens with depression, and with behavioural problems. Depressed teens reported more stressors and fewer social resources in the areas of parents, extended family, school, and friends. They also experienced

more negative events than healthy teens, but did not differ from the behavioural disordered group except that they had fewer social resources in family and in school.

Studies which examine stressful life events are troubling since they limit themselves largely to events that have occurred in the last 6 to 12 months. They also "failed to demonstrate that life stress is related to later adjustment once initial level of disturbance and social/family variables are partialled out of the equation" (Johnson, 1986, p. 80). The studies on life events seem to indicate that there are multiple factors at work. The perceptions and appraisals of the event, the supportive resources available to the teens, and the overall personality of the teen, all affect the amount of stress teens experience. The literature on resiliency and vulnerability focuses on the various factors involved in mediating the impact of stressful life events.

Vulnerability and resiliency.

Werner (1989) defines vulnerability as "susceptibility to negative developmental outcomes under high risk conditions" and resiliency as "successful adaptation following exposure to stressful life events" (p. 72). She describes risk factors as "biological or psychosocial hazards" (1990, p. 97). Research in the area includes case studies, retrospective and cross-sectional designs and, more recently, prospective longitudinal designs.

Resilient teens are thought to have an internalized set of positive values, to be more appreciative, gentle, nurturing and to be more socially

perceptive than those peers who have trouble coping (Werner, 1990). "They relied on an informal network of kin and neighbours, peers and elders, for counsel and support in times of crisis" (Werner, 1989, p. 74). Werner's findings are based on a longitudinal study of individuals identified at birth as high risk and followed for 30 years, and indicate a complicated web of protective factors, some of which are present as personality characteristics from a very early age.

Rutter, Quinton, & Hill (1990) used a retrospective design to investigate disrupted early parenting through institutional placement during the teen years. Adverse experiences that jeopardize the formation of secure parent-child attachment were associated with poor social adjustment in adulthood. They report that these factors could be moderated by positive school experiences, and personalities that exerted some control over environmental factors.

Salzman (1990) states that individuals traumatized through a major separation or loss may approach relationships in one of three ways, (according to Bowlby): (a) by being clingy, fearful and at the same time full of rage; (b) by evidencing compulsive caregiving to others; and (c) by developing a false self-sufficiency and exaggerated independence. These variants are determined by the quality of prior and ongoing attachments.

In a case study approach to examining the issues surrounding loss and relationship development, Salzman (1990) describes the 'transformation

perspective' on relationships. In this perspective a young woman was able to shift from a view of 'the world according to me' to a view based on both doing the right thing and not sacrificing relationships for doing the right thing. A perspective that includes more than one 'right thing', and preserves the relationship would be an important quality in a peer helper.

Lewis (1989), in a field study of "core kids in an American mall", reports that teens came to the mall to escape problems at home, and relied on the mall atmosphere for social support, and practical financial support through the jobs provided. The teens in this study, most of whom were at-risk, stated that it was important to be able to come to the mall and have their personal pasts excluded and not discussed as part of the mall culture. Thus, while the peer support network was vital, it was a place to escape, not to discuss and resolve problems or issues.

Chess (1989) investigated four individuals who did not follow the typical patterns for at-risk children. Factors such as parental support and respect (in spite of an acting out adolescence), self-respect and basic love and support of family members enable these individuals to achieve a positive outcome. Chess concludes that:

factors that constitute a risk for one kind of individual may not be so for another with differing personal characteristics or differing environmental milieu.... the factors that lead to healthy mastery of particular stresses not only differ from group to group but also from individual to individual. Thus the very same events that had been identified as significant traumas when a population's outcomes as a group are being studied may have heightened power for one person in the group and be given no power at all for another (p. 181).

Werner (1990) summarizes three types of protective factors that emerge as recurrent themes in the literature. Resilience seems to involve: (a) dispositional attributes of the child which elicit positive response from the environment, (b) an affectionate family and practices that encourage trust, autonomy, and initiative, and (c) external support systems that reinforce competence. Reinforcing competence by developing external support systems is the rationale used to justify peer helping as an intervention for developing resiliency. This rationale neglects the interactive nature of the three themes.

Substance use.

Since one of the groups that participated in the study involved teens who were attending a substance use program, it was important to review the literature and determine what the factors associated with at-risk behaviour were.

Bailey (1992) states that it is "important not to only consider those youth who use alcohol and drugs.... Alcohol and other drugs may affect children, adolescents, and families much more pervasively" (p. 1015). He states, for example, that children of alcoholic parents are more prone to adjustment problems including diagnosable psychiatric disorders and low self-esteem, difficulty with interpersonal relationships, and denial of feelings.

Berlin & Davis (1989) investigated the mechanism of adaptive distancing in children of alcoholic families. These children flee the family toward activities and relationships that allow for repair. The oldest child may

put aside his or her own tasks of adaptive distancing to care for others.

Children from alcoholic families facilitate their adaptation through "Groups [which] provide a unique opportunity for members to learn that they are not alone, that it is safe to share their thoughts and feelings with others, and that they no longer have to keep the family secret" (p. 102).

Research on substance abuse by youth is rapidly expanding in child and adolescent psychiatry, but much of it is based on in-patient populations (Bailey, 1992). Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller (1992) in an extensive review of the literature describe the following factors as ones which place teens at risk for substance abuse: (a) laws that are permissive; (b) family predisposition to alcoholism; (c) ongoing use of drugs by family members; (d) family conflict; (e) inconsistent parenting; (f) conduct problems or aggressive behaviour prior to adolescence and associated rejection by peers; (g) association with a peer group that condones drug use.

Brook, Whiteman, & Finch (1993) suggest that a lack of attachment to parents and early childhood aggression leads to unconventional attitudes which are associated with drug use at either the early adolescent stage or in later adolescence if this unconventional attitude persists.

Wills, Vaccaro, & McNamara (1992) examine both life events as stressors and other factors of vulnerability and resilience. They report that major negative life events (as defined by similar scales to those reviewed earlier) were substantially correlated with increased substance use. They also

find that supportive relationships with parents, personal competence in academic performance, and adult relationships were associated with less substance use. This study looks at the interaction effect between vulnerability and resilience and concludes that protective factors were most important for teens with a high level of vulnerability. Supportive peers were not a protective factor in this study.

In contrast to this finding, Windle, Miller-Tutzauer, Barnes, & Welte (1991) report that about 20% of teens would not turn to any adult figure for assistance with a substance abuse problem. They also find that these teens consumed substances either with a peer group or by themselves. There was a distinct group who did not respond to peer influence but actually isolated themselves from peers when engaged in substance abuse.

The literature on substance use and abuse by teenagers appears to draw similar conclusions to the more general literature on resiliency, vulnerability and major life events as factors in stress. There is a complex interplay of factors such as family support, adult relationships, peer relationships, personality characteristics, and biological pre-disposition at play which affects whether a teen is socially adjusted or socially maladjusted at any point in time.

The concern in this empirical research is always with "the hope that the knowledge ultimately gained will advance understanding about adolescent development and suggest to policy makers the social interventions that would enable more disadvantaged youth to traverse adolescence successfully"

(Jessor, 1993, p. 126). Peer helping programs have been advocated as interventions for developing resiliency in teens and preventing teen substance abuse.

Peer Helping with At-Risk Teens

Peer helping originally developed as a service to widen the reach of professional counsellors. The vision was to have lay helpers available as a referral net and a helpful and supportive network for other teens who were not able or willing to talk to adults (Varenhorst, 1984). Advocates for peer helping in the current literature describe it as both a prevention and an intervention strategy. Peer helpers can be used to deliver prevention services such as drug abuse education programs, suicide prevention programs, and stress management (Davis, Handcock, & Hills, 1989; Myrick & Folk, 1991).

Peer helpers can also be the target of an intervention strategy. They benefit by developing social skills, caring attitudes, and leadership skills as they undertake the training and delivery of services to other peers either within their own group or in a broader organizational culture (Davis, Handcock, & Hills, 1989; Tindal, & Salmon-White, 1990; Varenhorst, 1992b). Peer helping is viewed as a social intervention in that it contributes to the creation of a caring and supportive culture within the organization (Benard, 1990, 1992b; Carr, 1981; Tindal, & Salmon-White, 1990; Varenhorst, 1992b).

The idea of developing prevention strategies on a social level is supported in the more general literature on primary prevention programs.

Garland & Zigler (1993) suggest that "schools provide an appropriate setting for potentially useful primary prevention programs, including social competence building programs, problem-solving skills training and basic mental health education" (p. 177). Weissberg, Caplan, & Harwood (1991) propose that prevention programs at the family, school, and community level will be most effective if they both enhance teens' skills and prosocial values as well as create environmental settings and resources to support their development of "positive personal, social, and health behaviour" (p. 836).

Prevention/intervention programs have four different dimensions: (a) reducing the onset of problems vs. reducing severity of problems; (b) developing prosocial competence vs. preventing problems; (c) application to a special group of teens who are at risk vs. application to the whole group; and (d) the setting in which the program operates (Kazdin, 1993).

In the following section I review literature which advocates for peer helping as a means of promoting resiliency through training in prosocial competence. I then discuss what is known about the characteristics of resilient children as these characteristics are relevant to peer helping training.

Resiliency: Developing prosocial competence.

Research in the area of resilient children and adolescents indicates that these teens have qualities of "responsiveness, flexibility, empathy and caring, communication skills, a sense of humour, and many other prosocial behaviours" (Benard, 1991, p. 3). These are the qualities of helpers. Even as

toddlers, resilient children elicit positive attention, have a positive social orientation, and are more advanced communicators (Werner, 1989). Given the evidence of these qualities at such an early age, there are indications of a natural tendency toward helper characteristics in resilient children.

Benard (1992b) is an advocate for peer helping and cooperative learning as a tool for the development of resiliency in teens. "A willingness to share power within a system, to create a system based on reciprocity and sharing rather than control" (p. 19), implicates peer helping in the development of the protective characteristics of support, high expectations and participation. She states that it is only through collaboration among systems that a broad and intense network of protection can be created among family, school and community. The systems and attitudes advocated by peer helping models create an environment where autonomy, competence and independence are valued.

Werner (1990) hypothesizes that the immunity model of resilience predicts that protective factors such as school activities, environmental support, etc. may modulate the impact of stress, but only when stress is evident. The immunity model suggests that if the trauma or difficult family experience is historical, the impact of peer helping training on competence and autonomy may not be as strong.

The resiliency literature indicates that resilient teens are more responsible and achievement oriented with a greater degree of social maturity.

They have an internalized set of positive values and are more appreciative, gentle, nurturing, and socially perceptive. They have a strong sense of responsibility and a belief that they can exert control over their lives, even when faced with great adversity (Werner, 1990). These characteristics seem to indicate both a social and cognitive developmental readiness as well as a contextual readiness for helping others.

Benard (1991) notes that "Beardslee and Poderefsky found that the resilient children they studied were able to distinguish clearly between themselves and their own experiences and their parents' illness and thus realized that they were not the cause and that their future would be different" (p. 7). Resilient teens may have both the social and cognitive readiness required for helping others, with a strong experiential base in adversity that enhances their ability to help others, rather than limiting it.

Peer helping training generally involves teens in examining themselves and developing self-awareness. Within the population of peer helpers who have experienced stressful life events, the process of focusing on the self becomes an important way to "share, integrate and hopefully master painful memories and fears" (Mogtader & Leff, 1986, p. 175). Werner (1989) states that few studies have looked at the manner in which people use reflection on past experiences as a resource to promote later resilience. She states that resilient individuals attribute success to internal factors and are generally more happy and satisfied with life. "There is growing evidence that to some extent

people select and shape their own environments. In so doing, individual characteristics are themselves modified" (Rutter, Quinton, & Hill, 1990, p. 152-153). Hauser, Vieyrs, Jacobson, & Wertlieb (1989) state that teens at risk for psychological disturbance, who do not develop disturbance have superior social skills and coping styles when exposed to stress. They are able to regulate impulsive drives and delay gratification, as well as maintaining a future orientation. These characteristics enable them to cope better with stress. Perhaps in the interaction between the individual and the environment that occurs with resilient teens who train as peer helpers, the self-reflective process of the training furthers the internal awareness and control that the teens require to be resilient.

Elston (1992) describes a program which involved both 'at risk' and 'good kids' in the program. The program documented "significant positive changes in behaviour of a number of 'at risk' students.... Even the 'good kids' in the program demonstrated greater sensitivity and empathy toward others" (p. 23). She identifies one of the advantages of the program as its use as a vehicle for enhancing self-esteem of high risk students through: (a) developing a sense of emotional security within the peer group; (b) developing a sense of identity; (c) developing a sense of belonging; (d) developing a sense of competence; and (e) developing a sense of purpose.

Brendtro (1985) states that teens in a residential treatment program showed a significant improvement in self-esteem and locus of control, as well

as educational achievement as a result of participation in a positive peer culture experience. Stewart et al. (1976) report a significant improvement in a group of 'at risk' girls who participated in a peer support group in their high school, in comparison to a matched group who did not participate. This effect was not observable until a year later, and the study used observational data and opinions of the involved school personnel. They conclude that "peer groups can positively influence the lives of children having difficulty in coping with the demands and behavioural expectations of a high school curriculum" (p. 574).

Jason & Rhodes (1989) review a series of studies that investigate programs using a peer helping approach. The participants ranged widely in terms of background characteristics, and included high risk youngsters. They conclude that

Such programs might be particularly sensitive to child and adolescent developmental issues. Children, and particularly adolescents, are dealing with becoming more autonomous, developing stable identities, maintaining positive self-concepts, and establishing diverse interpersonal competencies. By providing the youngsters with responsible roles in programs that foster autonomy and choice, the children are less likely to reject the messages and intervention processes and more likely to gain a sense of self-acceptance, self-worth, and confidence. (p. 209)

The programs which have made use of peer helping with groups of at-risk youth describe mixed results. The conflict appears to be due to mixed definitions of what constitutes at-risk teens, protective factors and peer helping. None of the studies attempt to describe the role of self-understanding

during training. Werner (1989) seems to believe self-understanding is an important part of developing resilience. It is a component of peer helping training that has not been examined.

In the following section I review literature which focuses more specifically on the problem of substance abuse and the use of peer helping programs.

Substance Abuse and Peer Helping.

Tobler (1993), in a meta-analysis of drug prevention programs aimed at teens, reports that those programs using an interactive approach and focusing on building interpersonal skills for social competence were the most effective approach to prevention of substance abuse. Benard (1992b) makes use of these and results from an earlier meta-analysis to advocate for peer helping programs as a component of substance abuse prevention programs which develop resiliency.

Peer helping programs have been used extensively in prevention and intervention with substance abusers. Alcoholics Anonymous is the classic example. There is not a lot of research that is specific to teens which makes use of peer helping programs to intervene in substance abuse patterns.

Carpenter, Lyons, & Miller (1986) report no significant difference in drinking patterns among three groups of substance abusing teens who participated in a program to reduce their drinking. One of the groups made use of peer helpers who met regularly with members of that group on an individual basis to teach

them about self-monitoring and discuss whether they met their goals for reducing their drinking. The interactive group approach demonstrated by Tobler (1993) to be more effective was not a component of the study by Carpenter et al., perhaps explaining why the involvement of peer helpers did not have a significant effect on drinking patterns.

Foldesi & Soyring (1993) describe a residential treatment program that makes use of positive peer culture, drug education, and alcoholic anonymous groups as an integrated model. This model provides the opportunity for teens to develop social competence and prosocial values, and uses the interactive approach to helping each other and developing skills. Within one year of discharge, 80% of the teens are still in their own communities. The limited empirical literature on peer helping programs with teens who use substances indicates that the interactive component of peer helping training may be important but does not identify how the interactive nature of training contributes to resiliency.

Summary and Initial Research Questions

A review of the foundations of peer helping, the literature on stressful life events and teens at-risk, and the application of peer helping to at-risk teens highlights some issues in peer helping training with teens who are at risk. To date, the nature of these issues has not been investigated in a systematic manner. I will identify and review questions from the preceding literature review which guided the initial investigations of this study.

1. Despite reports in the peer helping literature of programs developed for special populations, including teens who have experienced a variety of major life events, there is no clear indication in the literature of how life events are dealt with during training. Teens may not wish to discuss major life events with their peers. Peer helping assumes that peers seek other peers for support. Teens who have experienced major life events have been labelled as either 'resilient' or 'vulnerable' (at risk). Resilient teens use peers as a supplement to other social supports that they have acquired and developed. At-risk teens, while they 'hang out' with similar peers, prefer not to talk about their problems. Thus, being with peers is a form of escape, not support. What happens to teens during a peer helping training group when the trainers expect them to talk about themselves with their peers?

2. Training is a key procedure in a peer helping program. Peer helping training assumes that natural helping skills are enhanced through training. Helping skills are skills in communication, expression of empathy and problem solving. There is evidence that resilient teens are more socially mature than their peers and already possess these characteristics. There is also evidence that psychologically mature teens do not benefit from peer helping training as much as the average adolescent. What are the helping characteristics of these teens and how do those impact personal reflection during peer helping training?

3. Peer helping training is based on an experiential model which requires participants to examine themselves and to explore life experience as a basis for personal growth as well as enhancement of helping skills. Using their own life experience in training has serious implications for at-risk teens. Since these teens are more emotionally vulnerable, the potential for further crisis to occur during their participation in the program may be greatly enhanced. How will they manage the exploration of their life experience?

4. The process of personal growth is important both in transforming the training experience into applicable helping skills and in managing the stressful life experience so that it does not interfere with the process of helping peers. Self-understanding may be a key process in resilient individuals yet how it operates is unknown. What is the process of self-understanding for teens and how do they manage it during peer helping training?

The appeal of peer helping to the professional as an efficient use of natural helping resources is obvious from the testimonial and anecdotal evidence in the literature. It is essential to find out about the nature of the stressful life events the teens being accepted into peer helping programs have, and to provide professionals with some knowledge about those teens and how they are affected by and how they may effect peer helping training. The focus of this investigation is to identify the factors surrounding the reflection on life events during peer helping training.

Researcher's Bias

My bias on entering the research was that teens who were vulnerable, resilient, at risk, stressed by major life events (whatever the terminology used) were a great resource to trainers and to their fellow teens. Their life experience and the means by which they dealt with their history could be enhanced by entering and participating in training. At the same time, I thought their history could potentially shift the training focus to personal growth only, and could create difficulties for the trainers as they managed the whole process. As groups of teens, some of whom had stressful life histories, interacted to learn how to be peer helpers I expected that they would generate conflict among themselves and within themselves and that dynamic resources would emerge .

The bias that I held about teens as both a resource and a liability had to be managed in some way as I began the systematic research to uncover how the major life events of these teens interacted with the process of becoming a peer helper during training. The action research paradigm and the grounded theory methodology outlined in the next chapter helped me to manage this bias. By using action research I focused on the needs and interests of the trainers, rather than on my own bias. Using grounded theory analysis ensured that the description of the elements involved in the interaction of a stressful life event and becoming a helper was well grounded in the data provided by the teens.

CHAPTER THREE

The Research Paradigm and Methodology

Prior to discussing the means of systematic inquiry into the research question, it is important to understand the rationale for choosing the methodology of inquiry. My choice of an approach was influenced by my personal beliefs about the interaction between knowledge and practice.

Peer helping training is a complex, dynamic process which requires a suitable research approach. After reviewing the values and beliefs contained in the research paradigms of positivism, post positivism, constructivism, and critical theory (Guba, 1990), I chose the action research approach (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Action research is a form of critical theory (Guba, 1990).

This chapter reviews the principles and beliefs of the action research paradigm and describes why the approach was necessary for this study. An overview of grounded theory principles and procedures is provided with examples of the specific procedures that were used in this study, and their relationship to the action research paradigm and grounded theory methodology. The criteria for evaluating the worth of the study is also explored.

The Action Research Approach

According to Guba (1990), the belief system about systematic inquiry and the way in which a researcher generates knowledge, can be centred around three primary questions: What is the nature of knowledge and of the reality in which knowledge is based? What is the nature of the relationship between

knowledge and the person who is inquiring after that knowledge? What method should the person seeking knowledge use?

The action research approach assumes that research is a political act and cannot be value free (Guba, 1990). Action research emphasizes the connection between knowledge and action, and insists that research must be connected to social change. Knowledge is "socially constructed and historically embedded" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 184) in the history of the person(s) possessing the knowledge. Peer helping has a history of empowering teens and trainers to create a collaborative and caring community. Changing training activities and borrowing ideas from others is common (de Rosenroll, 1990). The action research approach is consistent with this fundamental philosophy.

The relationship between the researcher and the knowledge depends upon whether an individual or a group is the focus of study. Action research involves the participation of those who are being studied in determining the questions, reflecting on the answers, and implementing the change (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). According to Adelman (1993), at one end of the research continuum, the focus is on individual reflective practice and systematic inquiry into one's own practice. At the other end of the continuum, research involves working with large groups to help them create social change within their community. In both cases the

way of co-operative inquiry - is for the researcher to interact with the subjects so that they do contribute directly both to hypothesis-making,

to formulating the final conclusion, and to what goes on in between.
(Heron, 1981, p. 19)

This interaction means that new knowledge will be intimately connected to the values of the researcher and those being researched. It was important to have the results of this study reflect the values of the practitioners being researched because the questions about the personal reflection process were identified by practitioners.

Participants in the study determine the actual methodology in cooperation with the researcher. The action research approach does not pre-determine the methods of data collection and analysis, except by insisting that the methodology include action which leads to change in practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Lather, 1986).

In the action research paradigm, we are all co-researchers or co-participants, but for the sake of clarity in communicating about this study, the distinction of researcher and participants will be maintained.

Considerations for determining the methodology.

Lather (1986) suggests that "for researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical research offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that the research process enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations" (p. 261). As the researcher initiating this study I had to ask myself who exactly was going to change?

Carr & Kemmis (1986) argue for systematic self-reflective inquiry. I was not running a program on peer helping so I did not have a regular practice which I could examine as a self-reflective practitioner. According to Adelman (1993), action research also occurs when approached by a disempowered group for assistance in solving a social problem. I had not been approached by an identifiable group so I viewed change as occurring on several different levels. First of all, I changed my practice, although that was not the central focus to the study. Secondly, two different pairs of trainers examined and reflected on their practice and, in one agency, changes were implemented in the peer helping component of the program as a result of the research. Finally, the teens who participated in the study changed as a result of their involvement and had the opportunity to think about and articulate who they were as helpers and how that contributed to their own personal development.

Reciprocity during the conscious use of research to help participants understand and change their situations is important (Lather, 1986). Lather suggests going beyond minimal reciprocity can be accomplished by:

1. Conducting interviews in an interactive manner, requiring self-disclosure on the part of the researcher. I chose to ask the trainers who participated what elements of their practice they wanted to learn about, and I incorporated their interests into the evolving analysis of the data. I asked the trainers to comment on the evolving analysis and the final interpretation of the

data. I shared with them some of my own beliefs about peer helping and participated in the training events with them.

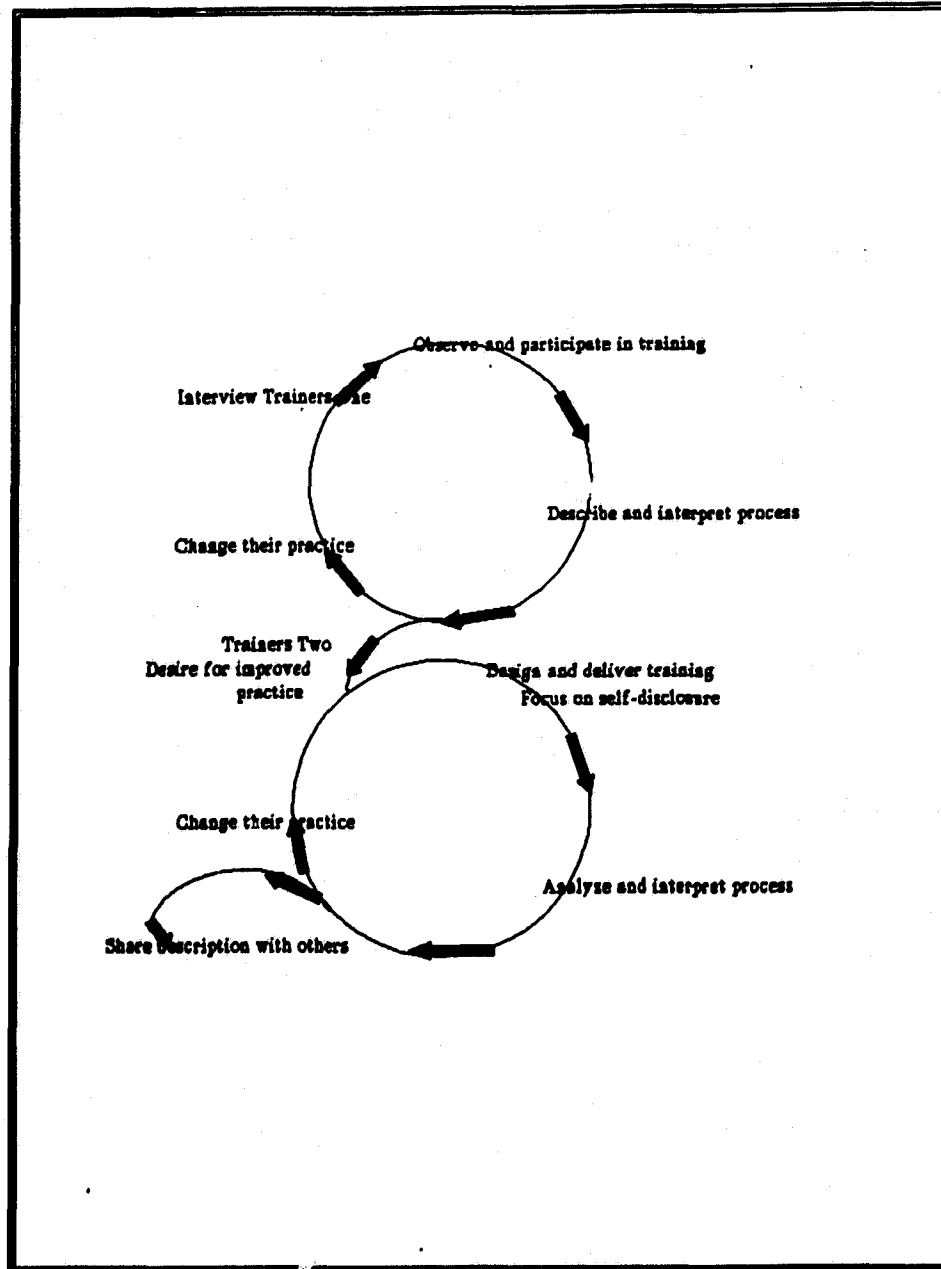
2. Sequential interviews of individuals and groups with a view to collaborating on and probing the research issues. I began the research process with an orientation interview, and continued with participatory observation during the training events, and debriefing after each training to both discuss the learning from the group and to plan and implement any changes.

3. Negotiating the meaning of the analysis by having at least some participants review the emerging theoretical interpretations. My involvement with the trainers is noted above. I also interviewed teens to ask them about their experience and re-interviewed some of them to ask about my interpretation of their experience. Finally, I gave those who were selected as case illustrations a copy of their case illustration to determine if it was an accurate representation of their experience and to enquire about what they learned from my involvement in the peer helping training.

4. Freeing participants to engage in a critique of the ideology underlying the social process. I just touched on this step toward full reciprocity in the action research paradigm. Teens and trainers commented on the different experiences they encountered in peer helping training and on the importance of self-help in the process. I discovered that participants viewed the research role as one that they were hesitant to comment on or accept as part of their role.

The action research cycle illustrated by Figure Two is essential to the methodology (Adelman, 1993; Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Within this study, the cycle began with a discussion with the first pair of trainers about the nature of their training and what they wanted to learn. My involvement in the training helped them describe their practice. The reflection that I did on this event influenced the planning for the next training event with a different pair of trainers. The initial analysis of the data was presented and the second training event was designed to explore this analysis further and improve the practice of the trainers.

Figure 2: The Action Research Cycle



The intent of the study was to develop an understanding of the process of self-reflection on life events during peer helping training. This implies a set of theoretical principles, which closely guide and change practice (Adelman, 1993). Checking back with participants, both trainers and teens, about my understanding and interpretation of their experience built an account which was shaped by all of us and we changed each other in the process.

Since the empirical action research approach dictated a tight link between theory and the practice of the trainers, the grounded theory method of analysis was appropriate. According to Strauss (1987), grounded theory methodology was developed to aid field researchers to attain a "deeper knowledge of social phenomena", (p. 6) and finds its origins in a sociological tradition which "emphasized the necessity for grasping the actors' viewpoints for understanding interaction, process, and social change" (p. 6). Grounded theory methodology provides the structure for understanding complex social phenomena and social change in a systematic and rigorous way, and is not "committed to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests" (p. 5). The following section outlines why grounded theory methodology was appropriate within the action research approach to this study.

How grounded theory methods fit the action research approach.

Grounded theory is a process of qualitative data analysis which generates theory from the data. It makes use of constant comparison between concepts and data, and theoretical sampling which guides the nature of the data

that the researcher gathers. Corbin and Strauss (1990) emphasize the importance of theory as a representation of the constantly changing world of the participants, and the active role that these people have in shaping their world. Data is interpreted to "form a theoretical rendition of reality (a reality that cannot actually be known, but is always interpreted)" (p. 22). This theoretical rendition not only explains, but also provides a framework for, action.

Theory and action in the action research paradigm are very closely related. Theory comes from experience and guides further planning and action. Gorman (1989) states that theory must be tightly related to action since theory which is blindly followed is of no use to educators. Theory is a hunch or hypothesis to deal with a problem and, when found to be successful, it becomes a theory. This action research view of theory is similar to the view of Gilgun (1992) that:

Grounded theory by definition is rooted in data, which in turn is rooted in place and time. Yet, much of our training assumes that high-quality theory is independent of persons, places and time. (p. 30)

Systematic grounded theory methodology, with a focus on substantive theory means that:

The resulting theory emerges as an entirely new way of understanding the observations from which it is generated. It is this understanding that permits the development of relevant interventions in the social environment under consideration. (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 112)

Researchers using grounded theory work through induction, deduction, and verification. Induction is that intuitive process that leads to a hunch, is

converted to a hypothesis, and then verified through observation or intervention in the area being researched (Strauss, 1987).

Relevant interventions are the goal of action research and, as long as the researcher does not distance himself or herself from the participants in the study and encourages them to engage in a critical process, grounded theory method is compatible with the action research approach. Hutchinson (1986) classifies grounded theory research as applied research. Action research is also applied research (Adelman, 1993; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Lather, 1986).

Grounded theory methods are committed to including social context as a component of the theoretical explanation. This is consistent with the focus on social context and its influence on social phenomena that is inherent in the action research approach.

Grounded Theory Principles and Procedures

Grounded theory was first documented as a series of procedures for the analysis of qualitative data in 1967 by Glasser & Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. A series of books written by these authors refined their initial descriptions. Articles by others who have been trained in the procedures were available to guide me as a beginning researcher. Various authors use different terminology, but the essential process of analysis is the same. Grounded theory methods can be explained in a sequential manner but are not sequential. There is no brief way to achieve an understanding. I have chosen to briefly outline the different outcomes of the methodology and to use

Gilgun's (1992) outline of twenty-one steps in the procedure. This outline is illustrated with the steps carried out in this study.

Strauss (1987) makes a distinction between substantive theory and formal theory. Comparative analysis, the methodology of grounded theory, can be used to generate both. Substantive theory is developed for a specific empirical area of inquiry, such as the interaction of life events and learning about helping in peer helping training. Formal theory deals with a conceptual area, such as the development of self-understanding in the helping process.

Since grounded theory is a process of qualitative data analysis which generates theory (thus the name), it can be taken to the very end of the process whereby

the research findings constitute a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation, rather than consisting of a set of numbers, or a group of loosely related themes...the concepts and relationships among them are not only generated but they are also provisionally tested.
(Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 24)

It is not necessary to take the analysis this far in order to report on the results.

The process of grounded theory analysis breaks down data into categories, properties, and theoretical relationships between categories (Swanson, 1986).

The results of analysis can be interesting and useful at a descriptive or conceptual level as well as at a theoretical level.

Many studies which make use of grounded theory methodology and report on a 'conceptually dense' substantive theory take several years and a team of researchers to gather, analyze, and interpret data. As Gilgun (1992)

says, "When do I stop data collection?... I am not sure that I have ever reached an absolute theoretical saturation. I consider my findings forever tentative, open to modification through the findings of other researchers or my own subsequent research" (p. 35). In this study I chose to report on categories and concepts that were generated within the data with some tentative links among concepts.

Gilgun (1992, p. 33-35) outlines 21 steps in qualitative research using grounded theory methods. As a basis for describing the principles and procedures of grounded theory they provide a simple and easy to follow sequence.

1. Develop a general area of inquiry.

Developing a general area of inquiry is based on previous knowledge, personal experience, practice, and ideas which arise from other theory and research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gilgun, 1992). In this study, the general area of inquiry came from my own experience in the practice of child and youth care. I observed the development of the Youth in Care Network, a group of current and former youth under the care of the social service system from 1985 on. As they drew together to advocate for changes in the system and to help other youth, there always seemed to be an enormous amount of personal experience drawn into their meetings and presentations. Practitioners were alternatively amazed and frustrated with the focus on personal stories, but it seemed to serve some purpose for the teens.

When I became aware of the peer helping movement, I began to see some parallels between what happened in the Youth in Care Network and the peer helping programs that were documented in the literature. This seemed to be an interesting area and one that was new and worthwhile investigating.

2. Identify possible research questions.

The main purpose of grounded theory research is to develop a theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

To do this, we need a research question or questions that will give us the flexibility and freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth. Also underlying this approach to qualitative research is the assumption that all of the concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon have not yet been identified, at least not in this population or place; or if so, then the relationships between the concepts are poorly understood or conceptually undeveloped. (p. 37)

I wondered about the peer helping potential of youth who had a wealth of stressful life events, and about the way their life experience influenced their helping and their helping influenced their life. This seemed broad enough to address in the grounded theory manner and the practitioners I spoke to indicated it was certainly an area which was new and poorly understood.

3. Record your own theoretical perspectives and biases.

In any qualitative work which depends upon recording and interpreting the experiences of others, it is essential that the researcher be aware of personal bias and attempt to represent the reality of the participants in the study. It is recognized that the perspective developed cannot be value or bias free, but it must be representative of the multiple realities of the participants.

Researchers must be "fully aware of themselves as instruments for developing that grounded theory" (Strauss, 1987, p. 6).

The assumptions outlined in the previous chapter were recorded prior to the beginning of the study. As well, I encouraged the trainers involved in the study to challenge my assumptions and beliefs as we worked together throughout the project.

4. Review relevant literature.

The literature review in a grounded theory study is meant to sensitize the researcher to the issues in the general area of interest. It is not necessary nor do "we want to be so steeped in the literature as to be constrained and even stifled in terms of creative efforts" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The literature is used in an ongoing manner throughout a grounded theory study. It can also be a source of data, stimulate questions for participants, direct theoretical sampling, and validate the accuracy of findings (Chenitz, 1986; Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

I used the literature on peer helping, stressful life events experienced by teens, and substance abuse and teens to sensitize myself to the issues that might arise in this study. This initial sensitivity is reported in Chapter Two. Other uses of the literature, for guiding further data collections, and discovering support for the theory came later in the process.

5. Formulate a list of questions.

The initial list of questions that is formulated by the researcher is subject to change as the process unfolds. The questions must be open and broad and specify the phenomena to be studied. They do not specify independent and dependent variables, because the researcher is not yet testing hypotheses. Hypotheses are generated out of the initial data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The specific questions which guided the investigation at the beginning were outlined at the end of the previous chapter. They changed as data was collected from the trainers and as the observations of the training events began.

6. Develop the general parameters to your study.

The parameters of the study can be vague or specific, but should deal with the length of time, range of informants, and settings in which the research will be carried out. Many of these decisions are guided by the findings that develop from the study (Gilgun, 1992).

The proposal for this study sets out the following parameters:

1. Gather data from existing peer helping programs with a focus on the training events which use personal reflection as a training technique.
2. A focus on 'at-risk' youth within these existing programs.
3. The use of at least two training events.
4. The use of observational data and interview data.

5. A process of analyzing findings and checking back with the participants in the study about those findings.

6. A one year time frame.

7. Use of AQUAD¹ as a tool for data analysis.

The more specific parameters of study did, in fact, develop as the study progressed. They were recorded in my research log and the rationale for the decisions was noted. The first training event was a summer training event for a suburban school district. It was chosen because the trainers were philosophically committed to personal growth during training and were well respected in the district. They contracted with the district to deliver several training events in the summer and the one from which data was collected was selected because of the diversity of the teens who might be attending. There were sixteen teens who attended and eight were interviewed.

Within this training event the teens that were interviewed first were chosen because they seemed capable of describing their experience. After these initial interviews I used my participation in the training and the trainer's observation and intuition to target teens with some history of stressful life events. Decisions were made based on what the teens talked about during training and some 'intuitive hunches'.

¹ AQUAD is a computer program designed specifically to facilitate qualitative data analysis using grounded theory methods.

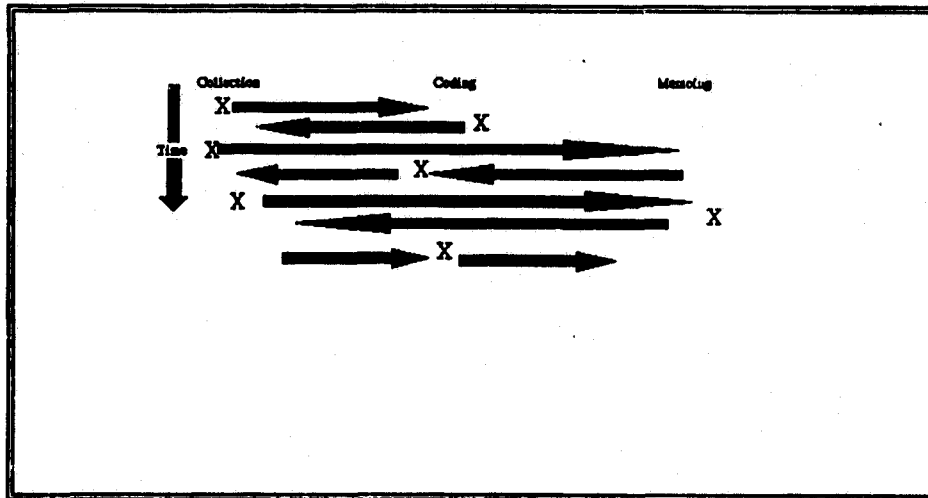
7. Enter the field.

As the researcher enters the field a process of data collection, coding, and memoing begins which forms the core of the grounded theory procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hutchinson, 1986; Strauss, 1987). This is a non-sequential process and involves switching back and forth among the various tasks.

In this study, I began with an initial orientation interview with the trainers for the group that I would be joining. The interview was transcribed and coded. The coding at this time was open coding, which groups the data into discrete parts, examines it, and compares for similarities and differences leading to some tentative discoveries about meaning. This meaning is then used to direct the data gathering at the next step. The next step in this study was to attend and observe the training event. The process of collecting data and interpreting data looked something like Figure 3.

The non-sequential approach to data collection and analysis posed the greatest challenge in the work of this study once I began the training event, because it requires a certain amount of time between observations and interviews to code data, develop memos, and then choose the next 'sample' of data based on theory. The training event ran for four full days on two consecutive weekends, and this time for coding observations and interviews was not available. In order to systematically make use of the computer program AQUAD which facilitated coding, the transcription of interviews was

Figure 3: Phases of Coding and Data Collection



Adapted from Strauss (1987, pg. 19)

necessary. Transcription and coding of the transcripts and observations actually occurred after the training was complete. This limited theoretical sampling to a certain extent, because new concepts that emerged during the coding sessions could not be observed for, or included in informal interviews during the training.

During the observation process and interview process, I recorded thoughts and ideas in the form of memos in my research log. The focus for observations was drawn from the coding that was done on the initial interviews with the trainers, and the focus for the interviews with the teens was drawn from the observations, memos and discussion with the trainers as the training event unfolded.

8. Observe the first case.

At the outset of this study, I defined a 'case' as a training event. This is consistent with the approach to data gathering used by most field researchers who immerse themselves in the environment and use observation to understand and describe the typical social structure and patterns of behaviour in the environment (Hutchinson, 1986). Immersion in the environment requires interpersonal interaction and as I joined the first training group I took on the role of participant observer. At times, I was a student member of the group participating in an exercise, and at other times, I was a trainer member of the group, assisting with the exercises. I did not direct the training at all. In this training event, taking both these roles gave me a broad perspective and understanding of the experience of both trainer and student. The participant observer role is "considered the method par excellence for collecting data for qualitative analysis" (Davis, 1986, p. 55). The challenge that it poses is to minimize the effect of participation and maintain a consciousness that allows the researcher to be aware of the interventions and the results of the interventions in a way that serves the purpose of the research. I managed this awareness by considering what I was doing when I participated in an activity and by recording in a research journal my thoughts and reactions to the interventions that I made in the training event. The use of field notes also helped with this awareness, as I documented my interventions, as well as the trainer's activities and the teen's reactions to the training.

Gilgun (1992) includes both observations and interviews in this step.

Interviews can be formal or informal in nature (Hutchinson, 1986).

Throughout the training event, I asked questions and interacted with both trainers and teens. These were informal interviews and were built into the routine of the training. For example the trainers 'debriefed' each day at the end and we tape recorded these sessions. This is a normal part of their training routine, but my presence allowed me to ask questions about what they were doing and why, which enhanced the observations that were made.

I completed formal interviews using a semi-structured format with a selection of teens in the group. (See Appendix for guiding questions.) This technique is consistent with the "unstructured formal interview" outlined by Swanson (1986, p. 67-76). She suggests the use of interview questions as a guide, which is not rigidly followed, so that the interviewer can pursue areas of interest that arise. The interviews were spaced throughout the ten days which included the two weekends of the training event and occurred in the evenings, or on the days which fell between the two weekends, and were tape recorded with the permission of the teen. The questions were designed to focus on the teen's internal reflection process, and to ask about specific incidents that were observed during training. Questions were initially sequenced in a manner that built up a comfortable relationship with the teen through the interview, placing the more personal questions toward the end. If an interviewee began to answer a question that had not yet been asked, this

was explored at the time, and the question was not asked again later. As noted earlier, interviewees were selected because they were verbal, and able and willing to talk about their experience. As more of their experience was revealed through the training event, the teens that had indicated some stressful life events were selected to be interviewed.

9. Write field notes.

Field notes or observations are descriptive notes about what is happening in the social setting that is of interest to the researcher. I wrote my notes during the lunch hour and after the training was completed. This required tracking a lot of activities and shifts in the training event, and at one point, I requested that the group help me to remember what we had done because I had forgotten the correct sequence. The teens were told from the beginning that I would be making notes and that they were welcome to see them. I wanted to minimize my impact on the training and thought that note taking might interfere both with their activities and my ability to observe their interaction. Asking them to help recall the sequence was both practical (I really could not remember) and a planned intervention. I wondered how important the sequencing was and exactly what they would recall about what we were doing. The impact on training was minimal because it served as a summary for the trainers of the day's activities. I wrote notes on the computer which facilitated speed and detail to my field notes and allowed them to be coded easily and the codes sorted to look for patterns. I recorded separately,

by hand, in a research journal my personal thoughts and feelings about the teens and the training activities, as well as some emerging patterns that I saw in the data that I was collecting. This is the memoing process described by most authors as essential to grounded theory methodology.

The process of attaching codes to both the observations and the interview data occurred at a later time, but the use of ongoing personal reactions was helpful to track the emerging concepts that are part of the creative process outlined by Corbin and Strauss (1990).

Creativity manifests itself in the ability of the researcher to aptly name categories; and also to let the mind wander and make the free associations that are necessary for generating stimulating questions, and for coming up with the comparisons that led to discovery. The comparisons sensitize the researcher, as we shall see later, enabling him or her to recognize potential categories, and identify relevant conditions and consequences when they appear in the data. While creativity is necessary to develop an effective theory, of course, the researcher must always validate any categories and statements of relationships arrived at creatively through the total research process. (p. 27-28)

I accomplished the validation of these early emerging concepts through systematic coding of observations and interview data. The concepts did change and I systematically checked their relationship to each other through the experience of each teen that was interviewed.

10. Write memos in the field notes.

Memos are "written records of analysis related to the formulation of theory" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 197). They are a record of the theory as it develops step by step, and can be tedious and time consuming. There are no

specific rules for writing them and researchers must develop their own style and use memos to their own purpose. Essentially memos record the "continual internal dialogue - for that is, after all, what thinking is" (Strauss, 1987, p. 110) that goes on for the researcher. Memos should be dated, identify the data to which they refer, and must be kept at a conceptual level (Corbin, 1986; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hutchinson, 1986; Strauss, 1987).

On a practical level, memos can be done on computer (AQUAD has a special memo feature), in the research log, or on the edges of transcripts, although the later is not recommended as the memos are then hard to access and separate from the data. Access to all memos and separation of memos from the data allows the researcher to think abstractly about the data and maintain an analytical distance, which is essential to theory development (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Memos formed a significant component of the study and I initially documented them in the research log book. I followed each data collection session by memoing. At first, the memos included practical ideas and directions that guided the data sampling I was doing, questions about tentative abstract concepts, and the record of code symbols and their expanded meaning from the coding done on the interview transcripts. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: An example of a memo

July 15
Review of codes developed from the orientation interviews.
 The codes on trainer philosophy and trainer strategies are too broad and need refining. Eventually these will probably be a category. I need to begin to define properties and dimensions for the categories.
 [trphl-(the code for trainer philosophy
 -nurturing and caring [love
 [accept - acceptance
 (This continues with code definitions.)...
 I get tied up in multiple levels here. The micro of the concepts and the larger categories. I need to break and go back to the trainers with samples of what they said to see if the concepts fit. I also am concerned that because I get fascinated in the first transcript with their philosophy and strategies and the focus then is not the reflection process of the kids but the reflection process of the trainer. Perhaps there is a parallel here. That the reflection process of the trainer will mirror the reflection process - depth and nature - for the kids they train.
 Next step: Print out the info on trainer philosophy and go to the trainers. Philosophy represents an element of their reflections and seems important but I am not sure how. It is also the most frequent category in the transcript.

These memos were documented in a small book. As I began to use the computer program AQUAD for coding, I attempted to use their memo facility. I could not easily access these memos for review and they were then separate from the log, so I returned to using the research log only. Later in the analysis process as I began to detail theoretical concepts, I wrote long theoretical memos using the word processing program so that I was able to print and review them. I then systematically checked with the printed

transcripts and searches of the codes that I had done which identified the location in the data of these particular concepts.

11. Develop initial definitions of concepts.

Entry into the field actually puts the data collection, coding, and memoing sequence into what seems initially to be a jumbled mess.

Developing the initial definitions of emerging concepts and speculating on the connections among concepts is the result of the structured coding process that occurs in grounded theory methodology. Each researcher who describes methodology does so in a different sequence, which affirms the interactive nature of the process (See Corbin, 1986; Corbin & Strauss, 1986; Hutchinson, 1986; Rennie, Philips & Quartaro; 1988; Strauss, 1987; Swanson, 1986).

The heart of conceptual development is coding. The first level of coding is open coding which is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 61). I transcribed all the observational data and interview data into computer files, the lines were sequentially numbered using the AQUAD program and then the transcripts were reviewed one at a time and codes were attached to sections of each transcript. The codes represented a descriptive or conceptual label that summarized a discrete phenomena in the data. At the same time, I made code notes or memos about what the phenomena was and how it might be related to other phenomena.

The next step in open coding is categorizing. Categorizing pulls together the concepts that are similar and seem to represent or are relevant to the same phenomenon. The memo described previously was beginning to pull together the category of trainer philosophy. This step was facilitated by AQUAD. The program was able to provide printouts of all the codes in one file or several files in alphabetical order, as well as to indicate which codes overlapped, and covered the same lines in a transcript. I could then ask myself whether these concepts represented the same phenomenon or a different one and how these phenomena might be related. Throughout the entire process of open coding, I asked questions such as: What does this represent? How is it related to the phenomena of interest? Why is this important? Are these different aspects of the same phenomena? I began to group the concepts and to see properties of categories, and dimensions or continuums through the categories. Using memos, I began to detail and flesh out the categories that developed and the variation among the teens in the study.

As this detail developed, relationships between categories became apparent. These relationships represent the next level of coding:

Axial Coding: A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences. (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 96)

At this point in the data analysis, the relationships were very tentative and I purposely tried not to examine relationships as I was getting ready to

participate with the second training group and did not want to enter that training with more than a very tentative set of conceptual ideas. I used the diagramming technique (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to record these tentative relationships, and to detail the properties and dimensions of each category. I then reviewed this diagram with experienced researchers, the trainers of the first event, and the trainers of the upcoming training. Their feedback assisted me to identify gaps in the analysis, and illustrated areas that were unclear and needed further work.

I re-interviewed six of the teens in the first training group to check out my initial analysis of their interview data. These interviews were transcribed and later coded using the codes that had already emerged. They confirmed the emerging analysis and added some depth to the categories that were unclear. The data from the second interviews helped to focus the study on the personal reflection process and tentatively identify how that process had impacted the teens six months later.

The next coding step in grounded theory is selective coding. At this point in the research sequence, I did not enter into selective coding. The procedures will be described under step 14.

12. Observe the second case using questions from the first.

My involvement in the second case began because of a workshop on peer helping that I presented. One of the members of the workshop was interested in building a peer helping training program specific to the alcohol

and drug treatment program that she worked in. She had some familiarity with peer helping training using role play techniques, disagreed with it, and wanted to address the issue of self-disclosure and how it is used by people in the process of recovery. It took eight months to negotiate my involvement, design the training, and deliver it to a small group of youth involved in the program.

The concept of 'telling others about yourself' or self-disclosure had emerged as an important aspect of the self-reflection process from the data analysis of the first training. Thus, this second case provided the opportunity to examine self-disclosure in detail, since the trainer was most concerned about that aspect. Other questions from the initial case analysis that I focused on centred on the training activities that seemed to be the most powerful triggers of personal reflection in the first training, and the atmosphere of trust that developed in the group. Some of the activities from the first group were repeated in the second training event and others were designed based on the needs of this particular agency and its peer helping program.

The second training group consisted of eight youth (four under 18 years of age and four over 18) who were involved in an outreach treatment and support program for teens involved in substance abuse. Only those under 18 years of age were interviewed in order to maintain the focus on adolescent peer helpers. This presented more opportunity to focus on traumatic life events and the personal reflection process and so questions about these areas

formed the core of the formal interviews that occurred with the four teens in the training.

13. Write field notes.

The trainers involved with this group had not used personal experience as a basis for training peer helpers before and so they looked to myself as a leader in this area. The role that I played as 'researcher' in this training was as a trainer, rather than a participant observer. This is a legitimate role that is used by practitioners engaged in research in clinical settings. (See Chenitz & Swanson, 1986 for examples of practitioner research.) Since I was concerned that it might bias my field notes to focus on trainer issues, I obtained permission to videotape the training, and reviewed the videotapes to complete field notes. This offered a rich additional source of data which enabled me to focus on what and how the teens talked about themselves during the actual training event, as compared to what they thought and felt but did not discuss, which was reported during the interviews.

I continued during the training event and subsequent interviews to use the research log to record conceptual ideas and plans for the direction of the research. The videotapes were reviewed at a later date and notes from them were transcribed directly onto the computer and then analyzed, using AQUAD. The field notes consisted of a combination of actual transcription of the teens' personal disclosures during the training and a description of the activities of the group. These notes and the transcripts from the interviews were coded

using the codes from the previous open coding sessions and any new codes for phenomena that seemed to be important but were not apparent from the first group.

14. Compare patterns between cases.

The development of patterns is the work of axial coding and as the analysis of the interviews from the first group of teens, their follow-up interviews, and the analysis of the interviews from the second group of teens progressed, the patterns that emerged were compared and changed. I began to hypothesize in the memos about relationships, and made use of the coding paradigm developed by Strauss (1987) to examine the conceptual categories for their relationships to each other.

The axial coding paradigm suggests that there are categories which represent a casual condition, a central phenomenon, strategies for managing the central phenomenon and a consequence of that management. There are also contexts which surround all of these categories and influence the way in which they interact together.

Corbin & Strauss (1990) diagram the simplified model as follows:

Figure 5: The Coding Paradigm

(A) causal conditions >> (B) phenomenon >> (C) context >>
 (D) intervening conditions >> (E) action/interaction strategies
 >> (F) consequences.

I identified a **trigger** as the causal category and selected the core category of **personal reflection** to represent the phenomenon. I identified the category of **helping identity** to represent the outcome or consequence, and **telling you about me** which seemed to be a strategy for managing the phenomena of personal reflection. The remaining categories seemed to be ones which influenced the path that each individual teen took through this process. All of these categories were tentative and later changed.

I compared relationships first of all from the data of the first training to the data of the next training. Out of this comparison, I developed a pattern that seemed to be consistent with both trainings. I then turned to examining each individual teen as a case and looked for similarities in the patterns.

At this point in the analysis and as I began to move into the next step, my continual return to the data and grounding in what the teens said in their interviews and what I observed in the training proved useful. It also became apparent that the conceptual and theoretical relationships were very tentative and more data was needed. A systematic review of the transcripts and coding that had been done earlier provided some additional detail. The process of writing detailed and conceptually abstract memos also helped.

15. Change hypothesis to fit both cases.

The process of selective coding, memoing and using diagrams facilitates the development of hypothesis and changing of the hypothesis to fit all cases. Selective coding begins by telling a story (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

From this storyline, the categories are arranged and re-arranged to develop a hypothetical statement regarding relationships among categories. Patterns in these relationships are identified and the data is grouped to specifically represent the different patterns. This is a combination of inductive and deductive thinking, and begins early in the analysis, but comes to the forefront at this point.

I attempted to do selective coding and it became apparent that there was insufficient data. This was not surprising since many grounded theory studies use many years, multiple observation sites, and 20 to 50 formal interviews to develop a substantive theory about their phenomenon. (Swanson, 1986).

After consultation with the literature on grounded theory, and experienced researchers (Daly, personal communication, 1994; Peavy, personal communication, 1994), I decided that writing up the results as they stood, with an emphasis on individual cases and the theoretical concepts related to the phenomena of personal reflection would be a legitimate and manageable task. The analysis did not contain detailed hypotheses about the different intervening conditions and the effect that they had on the phenomena, but it did describe tentative relationships and detailed the conceptual elements that surrounded the phenomena of personal reflection. The concepts were grounded in the data and verified from one training to the next. The individual teens that were selected as examples of the concepts also verified the conceptual relationships.

The diagrams and figures that accompany the next chapter are the results of the selective coding process. They diagram tentative relationships and each case illustration that is presented in the chapter suggests the varying effects of a combination of the different contexts.

16. Continue in this manner.

Continuing in this manner means that the researcher then chooses further cases to explore themes and the relationships between themes, as well as the variation amongst cases. The difficulty in finding training events appropriate to this particular scenario, dictated the need to end the data collection and analysis at this point. The results were enhanced instead by returning to the teens and trainers who participated in the study. I asked them to comment on the theory and the case illustrations and to correct inaccuracies as well as fill in additional details.

17. Review the literature relevant to the findings.

The literature review at this point in a grounded theory study serves to both direct theoretical sampling and to check emerging findings with the literature. I made use of the literature on resilient teens, substance abuse and its relationship to trauma, and self-understanding.

18. Link the literature to the hypothesis.

As I went through the collection of data, and analyzed the emerging findings, I explored some of the literature on self-understanding, substance abuse, and peer helping training programs to check my interpretations and

sensitize myself to additional issues. The relationship between this literature and the concepts that emerge from my analysis is reported in the final chapter.

19. Test the theory on subsequent cases.

This step of the process involves using the hypothesis to predict the patterns that will emerge in a subsequent case. Since I chose to write up the analysis prior to this point, I did not test the theory, except by asking the participants to comment on its accuracy in representing their experience.

20. Change the theoretical formulations based on new empirical findings.

At this stage in a study, the theoretical sampling becomes very deliberate and specific. Cases are chosen which represent the various conditions. The intent is to verify the theory and the relationships between the categories. Testing is actually built into each step of the process, as the researcher compares hypotheses that emerge in memos against the transcribed data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

In this study, I continually compared memos to data, and checked against new data. Checking was facilitated by the use of the program AQIAD, which could quickly and easily provide a printout of all the data that was coded with a particular code. I reviewed data and checked to see if each participant or incident of observation actually was representative of that code. If it was not, it was eliminated from the coding scheme.

I also checked transcripts for incidents that might have been missed as the conceptual meaning of the codes was gradually refined. Variations that did not fit were examined closely to determine why, and lead to the development of some of the tentative relationships amongst codes, and the detail of the dimensions and properties of the various concepts.

21. Continue until findings are linked to phenomena and theory.

Corbin & Strauss (1990) speak of this step as "theoretical saturation" (p. 188). This means that no new data emerges that represents category, the category is well detailed, and the relationships between categories are well established and validated. As I checked and rechecked the data, I thought the categories were well detailed, but the relationships between categories were not well established, as discussed previously.

Evaluating the Worth of A Grounded Theory Study

The step by step process outlined by Gilgun (1992) and related to the procedures followed in this study, is one of the means by which the reader can evaluate the study. To evaluate the study the procedures must be explicit and the research standards that the researcher assumed should be appropriate to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Evaluation of a study which uses grounded theory methodology can be problematic. This is the nature of the methodology. Since the reader may

look for classical hallmarks of scientific rigor, such as randomly selected samples, strict adherence to preplanned research designs and data collection, and coding and analysis in precise order, all of which are inappropriate criteria by which to evaluate grounded theory

research. They may misread the study in question as a purely descriptive one or as an interesting pilot study, thus missing the theory-generating aspect and power of the research. Or they may miss any actual weakness in the study which might limit its strength and usefulness. (May, 1986, p.151)

The procedures used and the rationale for decisions throughout the study have already been outlined. The standards for evaluating a grounded theory study are outlined here, using methodological literature, so that the reader will be prepared to judge the value of the results that are presented in the next chapter.

Validity and reliability.

The concepts of validity and reliability in the traditional sense of the scientific paradigm (post-positivism) are not relevant for either the action research paradigm or the process of grounded theory methodology.

Hutchinson (1986) states that a "substantive theory can be valid only for the studied population." The members of the group that were studied must determine if the results represent their experience, in which case the results are valid for them.

Reliability deals with whether a study can be replicated or not under the same conditions at a later time. In the case of most grounded theory research, the interactive process of researcher and data implies that a different researcher would present different results (Hutchinson, 1986). What is important, then, is whether the results are useful to the group and provide some direction on interventions for that group. The engagement of the

researcher over a period of time in the field, ensures that the data is consistent over time (Hutchinson, 1986). The use of multiple data sources and types of data also ensures consistency in the data as the results are grounded in several different types of information such as observation, interview, and a wide range of participants (May, 1986). The reader should be able to make some judgements about these aspects of the study from the presentation of the methodology used and the results.

Quality of the Theory.

The theory itself must be judged on whether it 'works'. How well it explains and predicts the social interaction surrounding the phenomena is critical (Hutchinson, 1986). It must also be both clear and dense (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hutchinson, 1986; May, 1986). The theory must not simply describe what happened, but it must contain a set of concepts which are grounded in the data. The concepts must be clear, yet there should be sufficient detail for the categories that a variety of properties describe each concept. The concepts must be systematically linked together, and related to the central phenomena.

Theory must be relevant to the readers of the research report (Hutchinson, 1986; May, 1986). The concepts described should seem familiar and, at the same time, provide new insight on possible explanations for the phenomenon or interventions for the group. The theory must explain a variety of conditions and take into account change or movement in conditions and over

time. The theory must not be static (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hutchinson, 1986). It should be flexible to fit a new setting, and able to be modified as new data becomes available.

Finally, the theory must fit with what is already known, both in terms of the personal experience of the reader and in terms of the theoretical literature in the field (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hutchinson, 1986; May, 1986). Those that participated in the study should be able to read the results and recognize the abstract concepts as being true to their world. Those that did not participate should be able to draw on personal experience for recognition and on knowledge of the relevant theoretical literature for connections to the emerging theory.

Usefulness.

A grounded theory study, and in particular, one generated under the commitment to an action research paradigm, must be useful to practitioners in the field. At a minimum, it should suggest new areas of inquiry and it should be relevant to practice in the field (May, 1986). The grounded theory method is flexible and continuous. It can be stopped at certain points, with justifiable rationale and written up for comment and presentation. This in itself can be a useful exercise for both the practitioner and the researcher.

The following chapter is the report on the analysis of data available from the two training groups. It represents data from the observation of both training groups, interviews and discussions with trainers and a total of 12 first

interviews with teens and 6 follow-up interviews to check the data analysis.

The report was read and the analysis confirmed by the trainers and the six teens that were chosen as case illustrations.

At this point the research question had become: What are the factors surrounding the phenomena of personal reflection on life events (during peer helping training)? How are these factors related to the phenomena?

CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical Elements Surrounding the Phenomenon of Personal Reflection on Historical Events

In presenting the results of the grounded theory analysis, I did not think there was sufficient data to present a well-grounded and conceptually dense theory that would fully describe and explain the process of personal reflection. I did think, however, that the analysis went beyond simple description of discreet themes or concepts in the data. In this chapter, I have chosen to present what I term theoretical elements. These are concepts that were evident in the data, with some tentative relationships to each other. With further theoretical sampling they could become a model or theory that explains the cause of personal reflection and how it is influenced by specific contexts and intervening conditions. Analysis of the data shows tentative theoretical relationships between elements but the relationships are not sufficiently grounded in data to be conclusive.

There is a set of elements that emerges during a teen's participation in a peer helping training event. The phenomenon of **personal reflection on life events** is central to the teen's experience. This central phenomenon is **triggered by training activities**. Each teen responds to a unique set of **triggers**. The central phenomenon is managed by a strategy called **presentation of the personal self**. This strategy is influenced by varying **contexts of trust, a support network, and the tension between personal**

development and the development of helping skills. Associated with the phenomenon and the interaction among these various elements is the building of a helping persona. These theoretical elements offer some explanation of the nature of the teen's reflective experience during the training event.

These theoretical elements are described in detail, and, when apparent, the interaction among them is described. I will then illustrate further the nature of the interaction among the elements, and the possible paths that a teen might encounter during a training event by using case illustrations to provide rich and detailed support to the theoretical elements. The case illustrations have been chosen because of the stressful nature of the life events of those particular teens. The teens might be characterized as resilient. Teens with less stressful life events take similar paths through training, yet they offer less drama to the theoretical elements surrounding the phenomenon of personal reflection, and less concern to trainers as they manage the training event.

The Phenomenon of Personal Reflection on Life Events

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events is brought sharply into focus by trainers who are committed to the belief that learning to listen and help others requires that teens explore their own experience, and share it with each other. Trainers with this belief ask teens to talk about their own experience with each other as a way of practising their helping skills. Unless teens talk about their experience, personal reflection remains an internal, non-

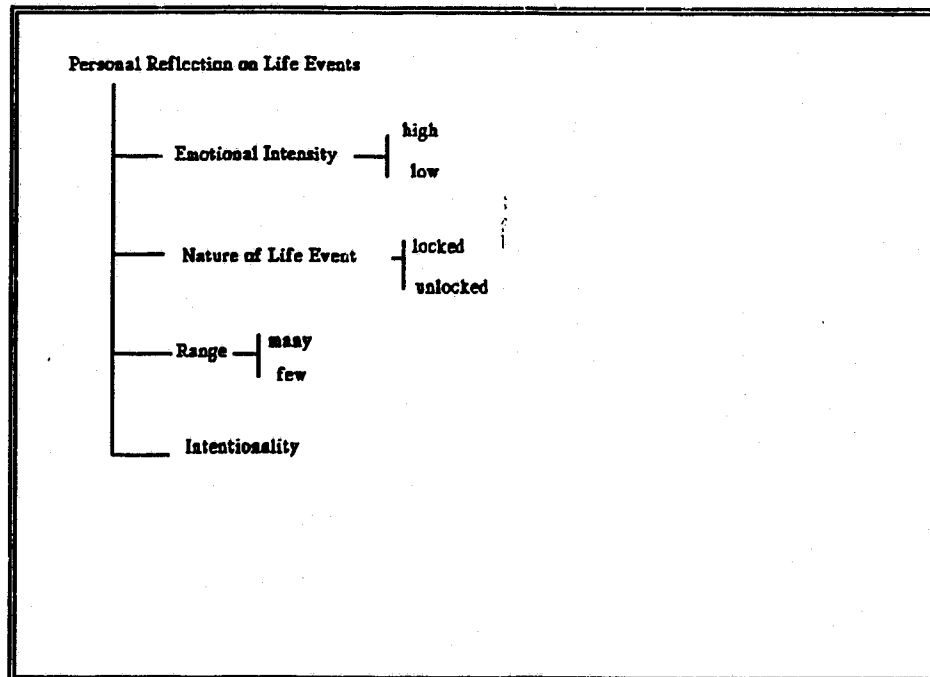
public process that is not talked about during training except as incidental conversation that might normally occur in a social situation.

Teens enter peer helping training with a vast array of prior experience, knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills. During a training event that requires that they explore their own experience, they engage in reflection on many aspects of themselves and on a variety of events.

Life events are incidents that have occurred prior to the training event which directly involved the teen in interaction with other individuals and generated some feelings for the teen at the time that the event was occurring. These events and feelings are maintained in memory and are recalled during training (in response to a trigger). Personal reflection is the mental review of pictures, thoughts, and feelings that are associated with these life events.

The dimensions of Personal Reflection on Life Events are diagramed in Figure 6. The nature of life events can be described along a continuum of light to heavy intensity. The nature of personal reflection can be described in terms of the emotional intensity attached to the recollection of the event.

Figure 6: The Dimensions of Personal Reflection on Life Events



Emotional intensity.

Memory of a life event brings with it an emotion that is felt or recognized in the present moment during a training activity. A high intensity personal reflection is one in which the teen is flooded with feelings and memories of the event. The feelings re-occur in the moment during training and aspects of the event are replayed in the mind of the teen. Feelings are strong, intense and overwhelming.

A low intensity personal reflection contains elements of feeling and memory that are identifiable by the teens but do not overwhelm them in the

moment. It is the current feeling component that is important to intensity, as the same actual event may be recalled during training, at one time, with high intensity and, at another time, with low intensity.

Nature of the event.

The events that teens recall involve an interaction with another person and are characterized by a lack of control over this other person's behaviour. The recollection of the event is unlocked. There are some life events which teens hold in the fringes of their memory during training (and perhaps at other times as well) and these events are not accessed: the door to the memory is pushed shut and locked.

Life events are perceived by the teen as light or heavy. This perception rests within the individual teen and is, in part, characterized by his/her actual life experience. One teen may characterize an event as light, while a different teen may characterize their experience of the same event as heavy. For example, the death of a grandparent, seen as heavy by one teen, would be viewed as light enough to be talked about by another who reflects upon heavier events. The events themselves are ranked within each teen's experience of a variety of events that have actually happened to them, in order to characterize an event as light or heavy. Typical life events reflected on during training include: parents' divorce, death of a relative, pregnancy, sexual assault, parental substance abuse, parent reaction to personal substance abuse, physical abuse, rejection or insult by peers, and family (parent) conflict.

Range of reflection.

The review of life events during one training activity may encompass a range of events that have happened to the teen, or there may be a focus on one event that is reviewed and replayed in depth. In other words, the teen may skim through many events, or recall just one at a particular point in time. Skipping through a series of events is associated with low intensity. Focusing on one event may be associated with either low intensity or high intensity.

Intentionality of reflection.

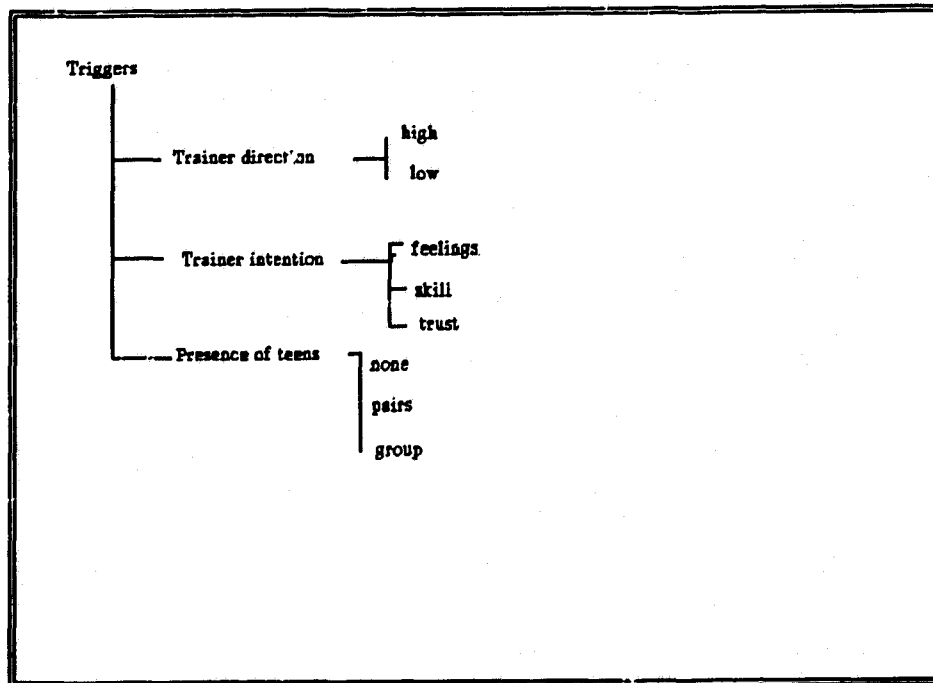
There is a range of intentionality to the reflection process undertaken by the teen. Some events are spontaneously recalled and reviewed. Other events are intentionally chosen or rejected for reflection. Intentional reflection occurs as a means of either understanding the event and its personal meaning, or as a means of understanding another person's experience.

Triggers

During the training event, the trainers facilitate a series of activities which are designed to develop the teen's knowledge, skill and valuing of the helping process. Not all training activities cause teens to engage in the phenomenon of personal reflection on life experience. Those activities that do are termed **triggers**. Triggers are unique for each particular teen, and are significant to the teen, in that triggers are the training activities that are remembered as important events from training that caused the teen to engage in personal reflection.

Triggers vary along several dimensions (see Figure 7): the verbal direction by the trainer to remember and/or discuss an historical event; the trainer's intention or focus for the activity; and the presence of other teens.

Figure 7: The Dimensions of a Trigger



Trainer directions.

Training activities often include a specific direction from the trainer to recall an event or to tell a story about yourself and your experience. Exactly what is asked for varies. Teens may be asked to remember an experience and pay attention to the feelings associated with the experience. They may be asked to choose an issue or a story about themselves to talk about. They may

be asked to say how they are feeling or to think about what they need or want. Most triggers include this specific direction.

Some triggers involve no specific direction from the trainer about remembering events or talking about experiences. Instead, some aspect of the activity is identical in nature to the life event that is reflected upon. These tend to be spontaneous reflections. In the 'trust lift' for example, a teen who was previously dropped while being lifted by a group of friends recalled the event and the associated feelings while being lifted by the training group. The trainer gave no direction to remember such an event and the group was simply engaged in a fun activity.

Trainer intention.

Trainers often have more than one purpose in a training activity, but there is generally a primary purpose in the trainer's mind. Activities that consistently act as triggers include as a primary purpose at least one of the following: (a) developing an awareness of feelings, b) practising helping skills, or (c) facilitating a comfortable trusting environment.

Other purposes, such as fun or knowledge about peer helping are attached to training activities, but these activities rarely act as triggers for personal reflection unless they stimulate for the participant a spontaneous review of an identical experience, as noted above.

Presence of other teens.

Teens engage in the personal reflection on life events by themselves, but there is an expectation from the trainer that the teen will then talk with an individual, small group of peers, and/or in the full training group. Some activities require discussion in all three of these conditions, others use one or two conditions. Triggers tend to encourage more than one opportunity for personal reflection and for discussion. Exactly what teens are directed to talk about varies, and sometimes there is no expectation that they will detail the event or feelings surrounding it. Instead, the expectation for discussion centers on what the teen has learned about peer helping as a result of the activity.

An example.

Formulation of 'group guidelines' is a training activity that triggers personal reflection for most teens and contributes to the trust they must feel to talk about their life events. Instructions for the activity vary slightly depending upon the trainer. The end result is that the large group writes out on flipchart a list of rules or expectations for interpersonal behaviour that will guide their communication throughout the training event. (e.g. We don't talk about issues outside of the group.) To get to this point, they might be asked individually to write out "what you need to feel safe talking in the group when discussing your own personal issues" and to share this with the large group. Alternatively, they might start in small groups discussing and writing out what

they need. The trainer could encourage discussion of past group experiences and concern over specific life events, or keep the discussion quite general about the need for confidentiality and respect.

Presentation of the Personal Self

Talking about the self and about life events and the associated feelings is a strategy used by teens to manage the intensity of their personal reflection and the trainer's directions during a trigger. The strategy involves a review of the life event, editing the reflection in consideration of the conditions of the time (see the following elements on **trust, tension, support network**), and then talking about or presenting the personal self and the event to one or more members of the group. This strategy keeps the emotional intensity of the personal reflection at a level that helps the teens to focus on developing helping skills and responding to the trainer's directions.

Presentation of the personal self seems to occur in four different forms which are related to the intensity of the personal reflection and the trainer's directions surrounding the trigger. (See Figure 8.) These forms are: (a) emotional confusion, (b) safety valve, (c) compressed friendship construction, and (d) getting to know you.

Figure 8: Forms of Presentation of the Personal Self

	Low Intensity	High Intensity
Trainer Direction - Low	Getting To Know You	Safety Valve
Trainer Direction - High	Compressed Friendship Construction	Emotional Confusion

Emotional confusion.

At this time, the emotional intensity of the personal reflection on life events is high and the trainer direction to discuss some aspects of the experience is also high. The discussion is usually directed around some concept related to developing helping skills or knowledge and not surrounding a life event. Discussion is expected by the trainer. A life event has surfaced for the teen which has a current high intensity component to it. There is some editing of the life event by the teen, to try to match what the teen presents to fit what the trainer wishes to discuss.

The presentation of the personal self by the teen begins with some reference to the expected discussion and then shifts to the life event. This presentation continues to focus on the life event until the intensity shifts from high to low. The manner in which this shift occurs depends upon the contexts surrounding the moment, aspects of which are outlined under trust, tension and support network.

Safety valve.

At this time, the personal reflection is of high intensity and there is no direction from the trainer during the trigger to discuss any aspect of the life event. There is an opportunity for discussion, but discussion is focused on knowledge or skill. The life event surfaces in memory (it is unlocked), and the feeling level for the teen is of high intensity. The review of the event and the emotions is extensive and blocks the teens capacity to focus on the aspects of the activity (or trigger) which are intended to build their helping persona.

The teen does not view the life event as suitable to describe to other group members, and there is no direction from the trainer to discuss events. However, there is some aspect of the life event which becomes visible to the group, if the observer or recipient of that aspect knows what sort of meaning to make of the presentation. The presentation of the personal self is a safety valve for the teens, and enables them to re-focus on the knowledge or skills components of the training activity. Presentation of the personal self may involve a single sentence or statement, or a non-verbal action, and reduces the intensity of the reflection for the teen.

Compressed friendship construction.

At this time, the emotional intensity of the personal reflection on life events is low and the trainer direction to discuss some aspects of experience is high. A series of events surface in memory and are reviewed. An event is selected which the teen finds comfortable to describe within the contexts of

that point in time. The contexts, particularly trust, influence which life event is selected.

The teen describes the event and some of the associated feelings. The event has been selected because it does not require editing. This form of presentation of the personal self occurs primarily during partner work as two teens practice their listening skills. A connection is established between the two that is similar to the connection that occurs between friends over a much longer time period. The presentation of the personal self involves describing life events and associated feelings that two teens might participate in and manage together during friendship.

Getting to know you.

At this time, the emotional intensity of the personal reflection on life events is low and the trainer direction to discuss aspects of the experience is low. Teens spontaneously review events, and talk about them with others, if the contexts allow presentation of the personal self. This type of discussion occurs primarily during free time over the training event. At coffee break, lunch, and evening times, conversations occur between new friends as friendships begin.

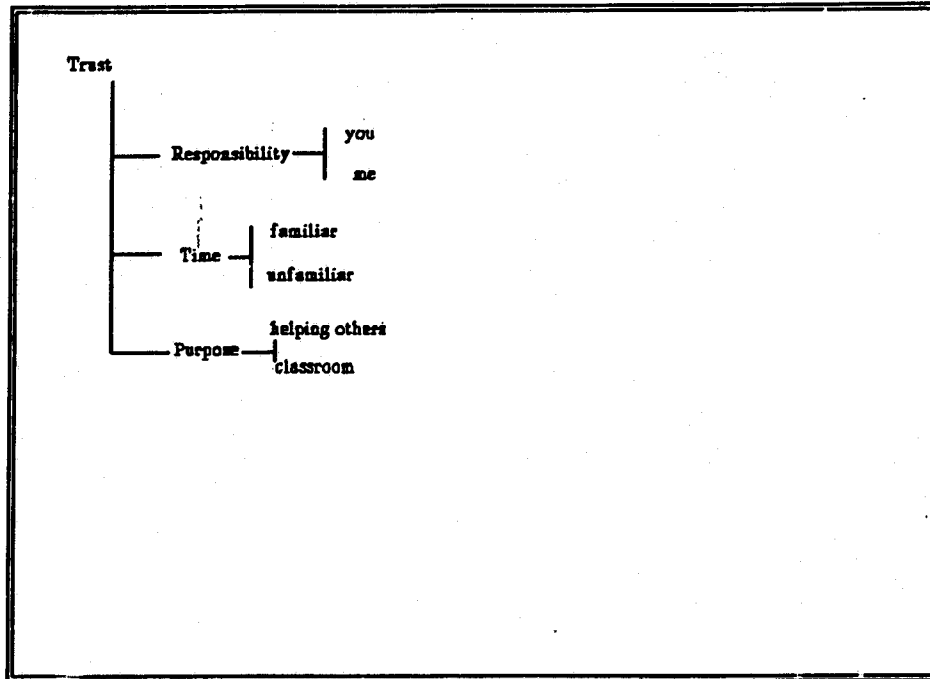
Since it occurs in conjunction with compressed friendship construction, the 'getting to know you' form of presentation of the personal self is enhanced and intensified.

Trust

Trust is a context which surrounds the teen during peer helping training. Trust influences the **presentation of personal self** strategy used to deal with the **personal reflection on life events**. Trust involves 'connecting' with other members of the group. Outside of the training environment, it might be compared to friendship, which has a common history, an emotional bond, and a connecting thread between two teens. Two people just 'match'. Such a match occurs over time, and through interaction during mutual experiences. Time and experiences are not sufficient though, there has to be a fit. Teens refer to "an instant connection" (Jane), "the click kind of thing" (Susan), or "hey, why not, I know you, or I want to know you" (Jarvis). Like matching two puzzle pieces, the edges must snap together.

Trust is essential to the way in which the teen presents themselves to other group members. On the other hand, as they talk about themselves or listen to others talk about themselves, trust and connection are facilitated. 'Friendship' and trust, normally built over a length of time and through common experiences and activities, is compressed during the training event. It is compressed because a common history is constructed as teens tell each other about the self, the events of life, and the emotions of life. Trust is not only a context that mediates presentation of the personal self, it is affected by that same presentation. Trust has several dimensions, (see figure 9), which vary its influence for any particular teen.

Figure 9: The Dimensions of Trust



Responsibility for creating trust.

Teens describe different views of who is responsible for creating the atmosphere of trust in the relationship that they have with other group members. In some cases, the teen sees himself or herself as responsible for trust. When teens are responsible for trust, they trust themselves, and the potential for connection is present. When there is a connection with the other person, teens will present something representative of their personal self.

The view of who is responsible for the creation of trust ranges to the other end of a continuum where the other person is seen as responsible for creating the trust or connection. In this context, teens watch, listen, and wait

for trust to be demonstrated. Trust can be demonstrated in a number of different ways, but generally it involves not telling others outside the group about personal information (gossiping), or not hurting the teen physically or emotionally. When another group member tells the teen something personal about him/herself, trust has been initiated by the other person. Trust is also created by the contract devised during the training activity group guidelines.

Time and trust.

As training progresses, the dimension of trust changes for everyone in the group. Thus, the importance of time as a dimension of trust is evident during the first contact with other teens in the training event. The dimension of time can range from 'a fresh start' to 'knowing you' for a number of years, and anywhere in between.

At the fresh start end of the dimension, there is no prior time spent with other group members and no prior knowledge of them. The teen attends a different school from others in the group, (or in the case of partner work, from that partner). Most teens know at least one other person in the training, although not well. Knowing someone sets an initial expectation that trust is present with that person. Some teens come to training with their best friend, although they may never pair up and work with that person.

Time and responsibility.

The interaction between time and the responsibility for creating trust is an interesting one. If the teen views responsibility for trust as being a part of

himself/herself and the training event as a 'fresh start' where he or she does not know anyone else, then it is easier to be open and talk about the personal self. These teens begin by talking about themselves with partners and in group.

It may be that if there is a fresh start and an internal responsibility for trust, then there is no fear of what others will do with the information.

As these teens present themselves, the trust of those who view the responsibility for creating trust as external to themselves is increased. This encourages other teens to talk about themselves and trust is enhanced further. The opportunity for developing new trust connections is present.

As they work with someone they know, but do not know well, there is less of an expectation that 'gossip' will occur, but there is still some caution. In this instance, presentation of the personal self is limited and as life events are reviewed and edited, those that relate to what the other person is talking about are selected. This requires that the teen be partnered with someone who is willing to talk first and who presents a life event similar to the teen's life experience. Teens then select an event to talk about that they know is similar to the listeners' history. These teens view their partners as responsible for establishing the trust context.

When teens view the responsibility for trust as external to themselves, and do not know anybody upon beginning training, trust is filtered through an expectation that there will be gossip. This expectation is often based on past experience with gossip. The fear of gossip means that the teen listens first to

others' stories about themselves and that trust is gradually established and the expectation of gossip is eliminated or reduced.

Like-minded purpose.

Teens have certain expectations as they enter into the training event about the nature of the event and the sense of trust that such an event inherently has. At one end of the dimension, a typical attitude is:

We were quite open with each other when we first got there, we were not holding back as much as I would have been if I had just walked into a room full of people who were just here for a conference on like potatoes. I could actually relate to the people because I knew that we were all there for the same reasons, to get the same things out of there. I felt real comfortable. (Angie)

This creates a certain sense of trust prior to engaging in discussion about the personal self.

At the other end of the dimension, teens are expecting an atmosphere similar to the school classroom, with limited interaction amongst them. These teens are distrustful of the exercises and interactive nature of the event and, during presentation of the personal self, edit their life events and feelings extensively.

The Tension Between Personal Growth and Development of Helping Skills

There are a number of dimensions that characterize the tension between personal growth and the development of helping skills that influence the presentation of the personal self strategy. (See Figure 10.) In this case, trainers are committed to a philosophy of personal growth that includes

personal reflection and discussion about the self and developing the teen's

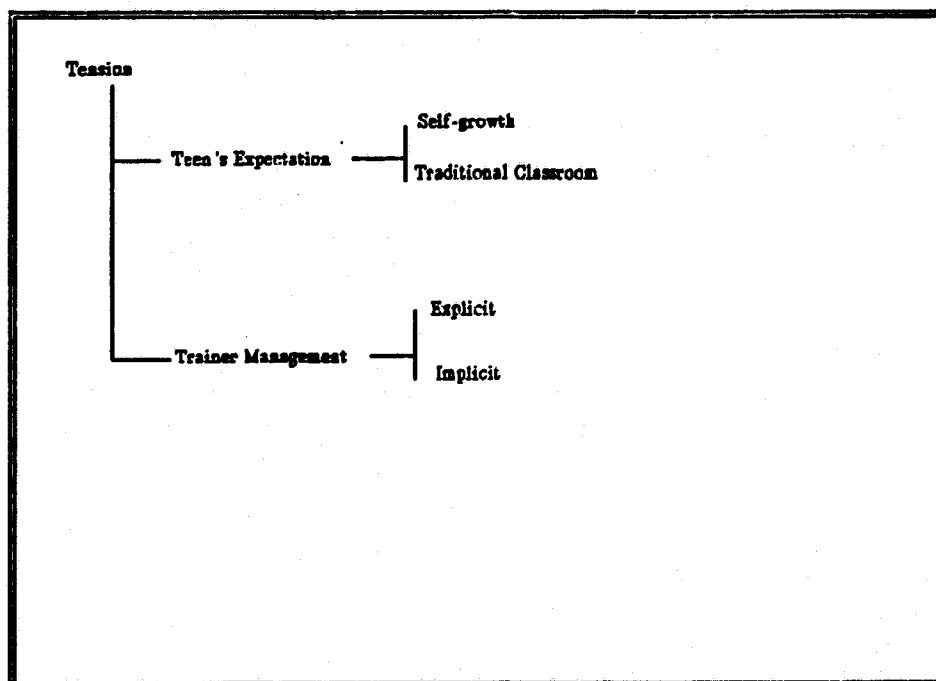
personal responsibility for self:

And it will be about honouring and respecting and risktaking and you know, safety and past experience of not being able to trust or having trust...and we are listening and they are feeling empathically engaged with each other. And so we might identify a few of those components and as we ask them to just sit and listen to each other and we notice that they are asking a lot of questions, we'll say, well you know, "How was it today," those kind of questions, you know. (B.J.)

I think it's very important. I think that one of the skills, which isn't probably usually noted as a skill to develop, is that whole, what's going on with me, catch it before it's out there, now I'm angry, guess what, I'm sounding angry, that recognition of what's going on, and that stop or pause before we decide what message we're giving out. So that's the separation that I see, so that it's not that I'm hearing somebody else disclose abuse and I've been abused and now we're both going to talk like two abused people, but remember to catch that and say that, Oh yeah, that's really hitting me where I live. By the way, how can I be helpful in this situation, knowing and trusting, and I think there's a lot of trust, trusting that I can get my needs met. (Pippi)

Trainers make this philosophy explicit at various points in the training event by discussing it openly with the teens and relating it to the purposes of the various training activities. Trainers also make the philosophy implicit by role modelling and in the way in which they respond to presentation of the self by the teen, or the way they structure the directions for a training activity.

Figure 10: Dimensions of the Tension Between Personal Growth and Development of Helping Skills



Teens' initial expectations.

As noted earlier, teens may come into the training event with the expectation that this will be like school. They are anticipating that knowledge will be delivered to them and that they will be primarily passive recipients. They may be surprised to learn that they are asked to talk about themselves, and resist doing so.

Some teens have previously taken peer helping training, and this prior contact is, in part, the reason for the teens' involvement at this point. Most previous training experience is with training events that involve role-playing

and worksheets. There may have been no expectation of talking about oneself in prior training experiences.

When the training group also meets as a therapy group, the expectation to talk about oneself is strong, but presentation of the personal self is not related (in therapy) to helping others. For these teens, presentation of the personal self is connected in the teen's mind to self-help or therapy and not to learning how to help others.

This range of expectations and prior experience must be managed by the trainers as the event progresses. Some teens are ready and willing to talk about themselves, others are not. Some have many life events to describe, others do not.

Implicit management of the tension by trainers.

Implicit management of the tension between personal growth and the development of helping skills is characterized by several strategies on the part of the trainer. A response that refocuses presentation of the self to the task of developing helping skills or awareness is one strategy. The trainer may listen to presentation of the personal self, acknowledge it through non-verbal attending and then state "I'm going to move on now, OK?" or "What can you learn about helping others from that experience?" The trainer may direct the teens to reflect on personal issues or events and ask about the qualities of helpers that are evidenced in that reflection, thus affording no opportunity for presentation of the personal self.

Another implicit strategy is the use of handouts on helping skills.

When handouts are not reviewed in any specific manner, the message seems to be that, while personal growth is a vital process during training, the outcome of the training event is helping skills and that is what the teen should retain and review.

Trainers may also invite presentation of the personal self by beginning with a 'less threatening' presentation of the self which requests thoughts rather than feelings and events. Later, the trainer may ask for feelings during a check-in, but accept whatever the teen states, even when it is not a feeling.

Explicit management of the tension by trainers.

Explicit management occurs when the issue of personal growth as a component of developing helping skills is specifically addressed by the trainers. The first opportunity for explicitly managing this tension comes from the pre-training meeting with group members to describe the experience and discussion format of the training event. Stating that training is NOT 'school style' and participants will need to talk about themselves highlights the trainer philosophy. Not all teens have the opportunity to attend a pre-training meeting, but those who do develop the expectation that there will be a personal growth component.

When the trainer states, as an introduction to the discussion, that during training teens will be asked to talk about themselves, and that it is always under their control, management of this tension becomes more explicit and the

teens begin to share the responsibility for resolution of that tension. There may be questions from the group members about whether this is a therapy weekend or a learning weekend. The trainer explicitly states that they will be expected to talk about themselves during the learning activities, and that the focus is on learning helping skills. This prompts group members to talk about the need to help oneself in order to help others.

Explicit management of this tension by the trainer is also evident when presentation of the self occurs and the trainer suggests that the discussion be continued between peers at break, or that a particular teen needs others in the group to listen to him or her and this is an opportunity to practice helping skills. The trainer is stating clearly that personal growth is important but the primary focus of the training event is on developing the helping skills and use of presentation of the self is a means of doing that. The tension also becomes shared between the trainers and the teens.

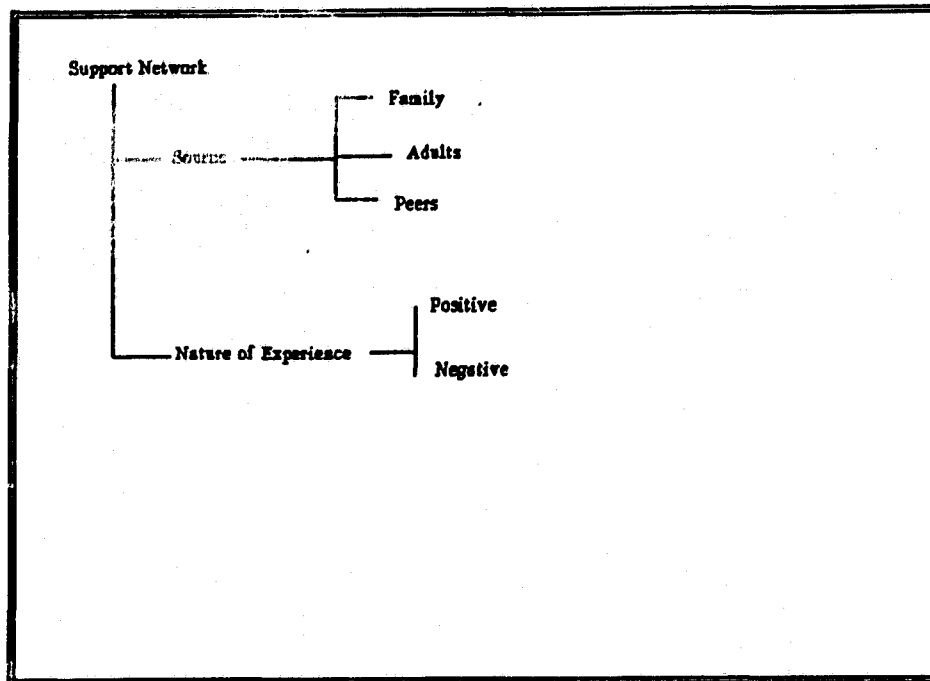
Training activities can be modified to include directions that state that personal growth is essential to developing helping skills. The trigger "think of a secret" becomes "think of the time you first realized you needed help." Discussion around the location of feelings in the body is focused on recognizing these feelings as times when teens start to 'zone out' and are no longer able to listen because they are immersed in personal reflection on life events.

Trainers who choose to make self-disclosure a skill which is taught or practised during the training event are making explicit the difference between presentation of the personal self as a means of personal growth and presentation of the self as a skill which might help others.

Support Network

Teens enter the training event with a variety of experience in receiving support and assistance through their relationships with adults and peers. Within their support network, teens have received a variety of forms of assistance to process issues and solve problems in their lives. Often this assistance has centred on the life events that are reflected on during training. There are a variety of characteristics with different dimensions that apply to the support network that the teen has upon entering training. These characteristics and dimensions are illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Dimensions of the Support Network



Sources of support.

There are three primary sources of support. These are peers, adults in formal or informal helping roles, and family (in particular mothers). One, two or all of these sources of support may be operating for the teen.

Peers are friends of the same age, and form a close circle of support. Friends and the influence of friends are carried into training in a very direct manner. Friends may be present in training, but even if not present in training, the closeness of the teens' support network influences what they will tell peers in training about themselves and life events. If close friends are available in the training group, then they can be used as a safety valve when the teen has a low trust of the entire group. If close friends are not a part of

the group, then the teen engages mostly in compressed friendship construction and getting to know other teens unless he or she views the training time as a time to process those issues and learn about the self.

Peers can also form a loose circle within which the adolescent perceives little support. Teens carry this experience with their peers into training. In a loose circle of supportive peers, teens do not say a lot about themselves or their life experiences and this same presentation is carried into training. These teens are open to developing one close friend with whom some connection is felt, and to engaging in compressed friendship construction.

Supportive adults generally are those in formal helping roles. The experience of most teens with these helping adults is a good one, and those that have had experience with a counsellor, (school counsellor, private agency, teacher) view this in a positive light. Out of this formal helping experience, teens have developed certain limits on talking about their life events. Teens who have not experienced a relationship with an adult in a formal helping role talk about their experience without the same sense of limits on what to include in their presentation of the self, or certain aspects of it. They view the training as a place to discuss issues and concerns. It is as if they are beginning the process of seeking this formal helping atmosphere, acknowledging its importance and discovering how counselling might be helpful to them. They begin to value being heard and recognized.

Informal helping is also available through supportive adults, but is not often experienced by teens. Teens who have experienced such adult relationships limit their presentation of the personal self and life events but are willing to disclose some aspects.

Supportive family members are also available to teens to help with problem solving. In particular, the relationship with mother can be significant for teen girls. The teens' relationships with their mothers seem to function as an additional safety valve outside of the training time, to draw off elements of personal reflection on life events during training that need release or further work. Knowing that supportive family are available after training helps to keep the tension between personal growth and learning helping skills focused on the intent of the training, which is to help others. Girls made active use of their mothers before, during and after training, to process issues that arose during the training time. They engaged in compressed friendship construction for much of the training time.

Supportive family experiences may also be limited for the teen. When combined with an absence of support from the other two sources, presentation of the personal self becomes an important strategy for the teen during the training event as a safety valve, to maintain the focus on helping skills.

The nature of the support experience.

Each source of support for the teen may be experienced as helpful or unhelpful. When the experience is unhelpful, it impacts directly on the

training and on the presentation of personal self. If peers have been unhelpful or gossiped about life events discussed in the past, there is a tendency to expect this during training. If supportive family experiences are absent, or families do not talk about feelings, or events, there is some hesitation to do so in training. Similarly, if an experience with a helpful adult is negative, there is some hesitation to talk about the self and life events.

Cumulative effect.

When there are several sources of support and the experience of support is helpful or positive, presentation of the personal self is more evident with a variety of group members. Those who do not experience this cumulative effect, show hesitation to talk about themselves except with group members whom they know. There is no willingness to risk presentation of the self with 'heavy' issues, if the teen has any.

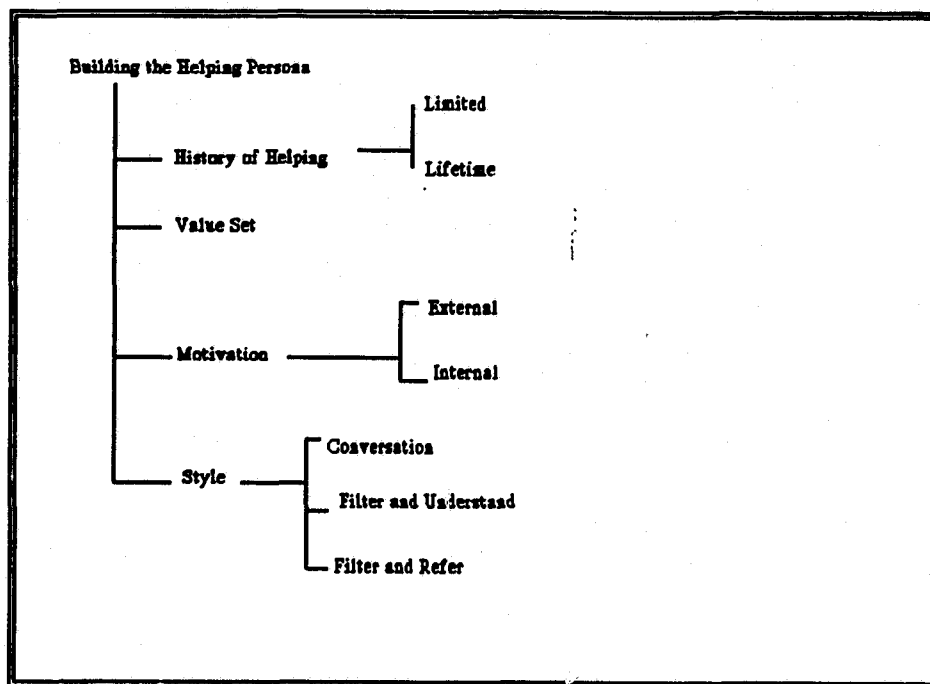
There is an interaction effect between the support network and the teen's life events. If the nature of the teen's life events are major and include emotional betrayal, they are more likely to have gone for formal help and thus experienced the supportive adult in a formal helping role. Angie and Cache are interesting contrasts in that they do not have a positive family or peer component to their support network, have been to counsellors, (a positive experience), and choose to push away their personal reflections on life events during the training event. Both seem to have been placed in the role of helper

(not helpee) in their friend network and, thus, only have the formal helping adult to rely on for themselves.

Building The Helping Persona

Building the helping persona is the natural and expected consequence of the peer helping training event. Teens discover the sense of self that reaches out to and connects with peers to manage pain and problems, and they develop a set of skills that enhances their natural styles as helpers. Teens enter the training event with a natural helping history as part of their life experiences. The consequence of the training event is the building of an understanding of how the self is connected to helping others. Building the helping persona occurs primarily through the training event and includes understanding of the teen's style of interaction as a peer helper. There is a sense of motivation that drives helping. There is a value set around what is helpful described by the teen. All these components (see Figure 12) of the helping persona are built as a consequence of personal reflection on life events and presentation of the personal self as a strategy for managing the personal reflection.

Figure 12: Dimensions of Building the Helping Persona



Natural helping history.

Teens help peers with issues that are similar to their own. Such issues may be 'heavy' or 'the usual'. Heavy issues include suicide, pregnancy, rape, physical abuse, and substance abuse. The usual issues include 'just' boy or girl friend problems, sibling problems, and family conflict. Teens who have experienced one or more of these problems themselves have peers coming to them about these issues. Sometimes their peers are aware of the life events of the peer helper and sometimes they are not aware of the teen's history.

Teens involved in the training event are seen as helpers by others and in many cases have previously attended peer helping courses or participated in programs. There is a cyclical process of peers coming to the teen, of the teen

being noticed by adults and receiving direction or 'teaching' about how to help his/her peers. Teens are relied on by family or parents to 'be there' for others and the teen perceives disappointment in the adult or parents when they are 'not there'.

It is difficult to identify when or where the natural helping history starts but it is interesting to note that all but two of the twelve interviewees were the oldest children in their families. This natural history of helping is reviewed by the teen during the training event, what the teen considers 'mistakes' are discovered and understood, and the importance of this helping role is affirmed as the helping persona is built further.

Value set.

Teens describe a set of values associated with who they are as helpers. These values are components of the teen's helping persona. The value set includes: (a) helping the self and helping others, (b) feelings, and (c) limits/boundaries of responsibility for the self and others.

Teens value being able to understand themselves and understand others. Understanding of the self is expressed through the idea that "it's (training) about me". Some teens believe that by understanding themselves they can better understand others. Other teens simply seek to understand themselves, and separately value the understanding of others. The approaches to self-understanding and the appearance of self-understanding varies amongst individual teens, but valuing it is critical to building the helping persona. For

some teens, the value is expressed as "taking a piece of the self and getting it out, or throwing it away". For others, understanding the self means accepting who they are and acknowledging the goodness of that self. Without adopting this value and acting on it through **presentation of the personal self** or the **personal reflection phenomenon**, teens do not further the building of the helping persona. Teens who lack this value do not continue in the peer helping program for which they are being trained.

Separate from the valuing of self-understanding but related to it, is the valuing of feelings. Teens discover the importance of feelings to themselves or to others. They value their feelings as important, and demonstrate this by working to identify and express their own feelings and the feelings of others.

The third area that some teens indicate as important to the building of their helping persona is the idea that there are limits and boundaries to the responsibility that someone has for talking about themselves and helping themselves. Teens value the idea that speakers set the pace for expressing themselves. Some teens underline the importance of listening only to what other people want to tell them, and telling the other people that they do not have to tell them more than they want to. The pace is set by the speaker. This value is also evident in their own clarity on the issues and concerns that they feel able to listen to. "I don't know what I couldn't handle, like sexual assault, I'd probably take them to someone else, but what if they didn't want to, then I guess I'd try" (Max). Similarly teens may have a clear boundary,

and a rationale for setting limits on their own discussion about themselves. In such cases, they choose not to talk about certain issues because the listener "probably couldn't handle it, and what if they said no, and then I'd be stuck" (Susan). The speaker is seen as capable and responsible for controlling the presentation of the self, both within the training event and in future anticipated interactions as a peer helper.

Motivation for helping.

Teens describe, and see as important to their participation as a peer helper, a motivational set that reinforces or rewards their helping interactions. This motivational set may include external motivation or internal motivation, or in some cases both.

External motivation for helping others is expressed by teens who have career goals in counselling, nursing, or psychology and are building their helping persona now, as a step in that future direction. The other external motivation for helping comes in the form of reinforcement from others. Teachers or other adults comment on the capacity of the teen to help others and the extent to which peers come to the teen for assistance. This is a cyclical process, as those teachers then provide additional support or resources (e.g. peer helping courses) so that the teen is able to help. These comments and recognition are important to the teen and are components of building the helping persona.

Internal motivation for helping others is described by teens as 'the rush' that they get when someone benefits from the help. Some teens help others, or respond to others' pain as a way of feeling better when they themselves are in pain. Reaching out is helpful to themselves, and further builds the helping persona.

Style as a peer helper.

Teens build, and are able to describe, their personal helping styles, or what they do or want to do to help peers. Their idea of style is focused on the interaction between two people during the listening process, and includes three variations:

1. Helping involves conversation with the other person and discussion about a similar problem or feeling as a way of connecting, listening and problem solving.
2. Helping involves filtering the other person's experience through your own experience. This filter involves personal reflection on life events, but not talking about your own experience. It is seen as a way of connecting and understanding the other person's perspective. In this style, the teens do talk about their own experience.
3. Helping involves separating one's own problems and experiences by not engaging in the phenomenon of personal reflection and talking about your own experience. Helping includes advising the person or referring them to another helper (usually a professional) as a way of problem solving.

Teens experiment with and describe their current and/or ideal helping persona in terms of these particular styles.

Summary of Theoretical Elements

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events emerges as a core category of peer helping training when the trainers are committed to a philosophy and training approach that encourages teens to talk about themselves during training. Some tentative relationships between theoretical elements can be diagrammed, as illustrated by Figure 13.

Life events vary in nature from light to heavy, but those that are reflected upon by teens have a dimension of emotional intensity that is high or low during the training event. Personal reflection is triggered by training activities with characteristics that include the trainer's direction to reflect on oneself and the intent of the trainer to focus on feelings or experiences. The presence of other teen's is also a dimension of a trigger.

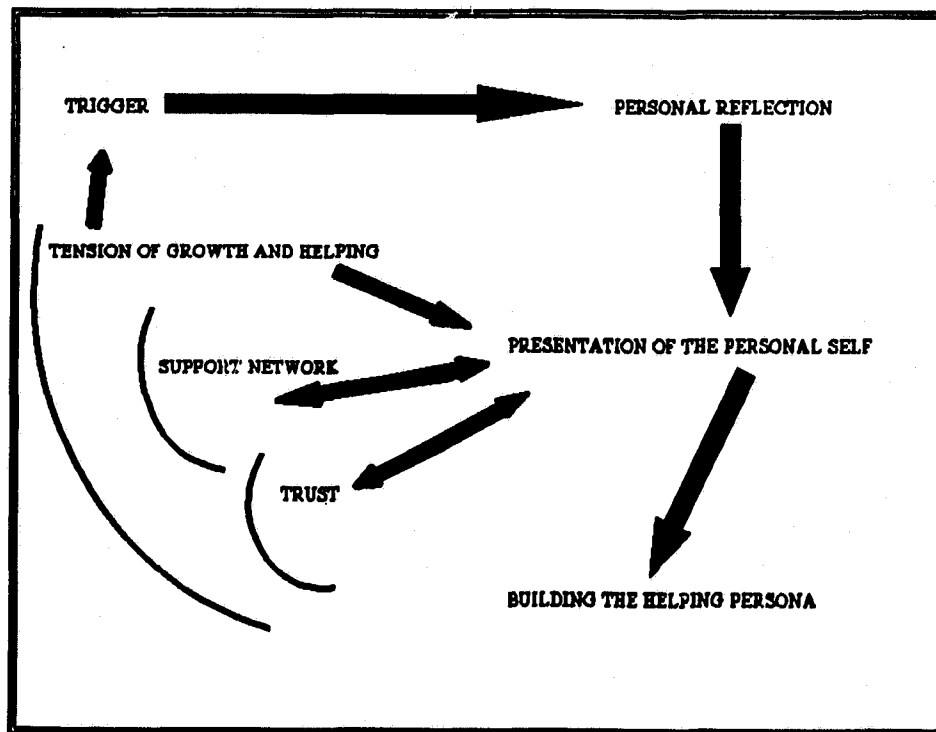
Personal reflection on historical events must be managed in some manner by the teen during the training event. When personal reflection is triggered, the strategy of presentation of the personal self is used to manage the intensity of the reflection and the trainer's directions about what to discuss with group members.

Presentation of the personal self is done with the contexts of trust, as perceived by the teen; the support network available to the teen inside and

outside of the training event; and the tension maintained by the trainers and the teens between personal growth and learning about helping skills.

The consequence of the training event and the use of the presentation of the personal self strategy is the building of a helping persona. The building of this helping persona has often begun well before the training event and continues afterwards. The use of the presentation of the self strategy during the training event contributes to the building process.

Figure 13: Relationships Between the Theoretical Elements



The case illustrations that follow add detail and richness to the nature of the relationships between the theoretical elements just described.

Case Illustration #1: Susan

Susan was 14 and about to enter Grade 10. She was selected for the peer helping program at her high school (to begin the following September) and attended a training event that occurred on two consecutive weekends during the summer. She had received no prior training in peer helping. The training event included teens from all the high schools in the school district.

Susan was sexually assaulted by a family friend when she was nine. She was threatened by the perpetrator and did not disclose the assault until two years later. The perpetrator was jailed, and during training she was anticipating that he might be released soon. Just prior to the training event, she was worried about being pregnant.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Susan reflected on a number of life events during the training, including the sexual assault. She also reflected on her move from a distant city, the death of her cat, and her father's ill health. Her personal reflections were 'unlocked' and she did not attempt to push the memory away. Most of the time, the emotional intensity of her reflection was low.

There were several times when Susan reflected on events related to the sexual assault and the emotional intensity varied each time. 'Think of A Secret' was a trigger for reflecting on events related to the sexual assault.

I wrote down about that one. And I said "Well my best friend came, and she helped me bring all my feelings out and tell people." And then I, like I'm kind of scared still now...I guess I still get spooked because of that.

The emotional intensity of this personal reflection was lower than it was later.

During a discussion about resources available to peer helpers, the intensity of Susan's personal reflection was high.

When they said sexual assault centre I kind of went, "Oh Man, no please don't get into this." Cause sometimes like, when people talk about something like that too much, I have to leave the room cause it really really hurts and I kind of start crying cause it's, you know, upsetting.... I calmed myself down cause I was getting a bit nervous, like I thought I was going to have to leave the room. Cause, I was like "No I can do this", and I just stayed there cause I calmed myself down.

Much of the personal reflection that occurred for Susan was unintentional. It was triggered by another teen's discussion of events in his or her life, or by the trainer's directions, as in the previous examples.

I remember that, some of the keepsakes really hit home to me, they kind of brought back memories.

Triggers.

The training activities which acted as triggers for Susan involved a high degree of direction from the trainer to remember an experience, or consisted of similar stories told by teens in the group. The trainer's intent was an awareness of feelings, practising helping skills, or facilitating a comfortable environment.

During the time when the trainers were reviewing resources for the teens, Susan experienced a personal reflection with a high degree of emotional intensity. Since the trainers had initiated the activity with a direction to remember a time that the teen was "in too deep" and then debriefed the feelings (not the events) of that time, Susan was still focused on the event and

had not talked about her feelings. She is "shy to talk in groups", and, thus, did not have an appropriate safety valve. While the trainer's intent in talking about resources was to provide knowledge, for Susan it triggered further personal reflection which she then had to work very hard to control.

Presentation of the personal self.

Presentation of the personal self is mediated by several contexts. How these influenced Susan's presentation of her personal self will be noted as we examine what she talked about with group members.

Susan used two forms of talking about her personal self as a safety valve and as compressed friendship construction. Her use of these strategies was strongly mediated by her view of trust, and by her support network. For Susan, trusting someone else was her responsibility and involved knowing the other person for several years and listening to his/her stories. Her support network consisted of peers, including a good friend who attended training with her, a strong relationship with her mother, and experience with several professional counsellors at school and in the community.

Susan used the strategy of compressed friendship construction to talk with teens in the group whom she did not know well or at all. When talking to Max, a teen from her school, Susan was willing to speak first, and discussed the death of her cat, a personal reflection with low emotional intensity. Her partner in turn spoke about the death of his dog. Together, they constructed a common bond of friendship around these events. Her prior

knowledge of Max was an important influence. Since she viewed herself as responsible for trust, yet is only comfortable with people she has known over time, she was willing to talk about something of her personal self, and was not concerned about the gossip that might occur. In contrast, when talking with a peer whom she had just met she chose not to speak first and followed Ace's discussion about himself with a story about an identical issue.

I thought, at first, what should I talk about, because I didn't spill my guts, kind of thing, because I don't know if I could trust anyone. I felt kind of uncomfortable with Smokey and Ace, because I didn't really, it just wasn't there, the click kind of thing, but with everyone else there, Norma and Jod and all them, I felt like it did connect, kind of thing, because, even though I didn't know them, they seemed kind of. If they're peer helpers, I guess I can trust them. And I just opened up, like if there were some problems that I had to get off my mind or something, and I only used them, like [the trainer] said, think of something that you want to talk about or whatever, and it could be fake or it could be real. I thought, this is a problem that's been bothering me for a while and I could just pretend it wasn't me, just use different names and see what they would say, and that's what I did.... I was more open with the people I knew than the people I didn't know.

Susan engaged in personal reflection on events surrounding the sexual assault at several times throughout the training activity. At times, when this reflection was of high emotional intensity, she used presentation of her personal self as a safety valve when her best friend was available to her following the "think of a secret" trigger.

I told Norma, she was the girl I came in with to the meetings and that, and I told her, and that was when we had to go out in the hallway kind of thing and talk to each other about it.

This helped her reduce the emotional intensity and focus on the purpose of the training activity which was defining helping qualities.

During the time of emotional confusion when other teens might use presentation of the personal self and edit it to fit the requirements of the exercise but still disclose something of the event, Susan did not speak, she calmed herself down.

Right now, I'm seeing a counsellor in town, at the Women's Sexual Assault Centre, about the date rape and that, that was one of the things on the list, and I thought, "Oh, wow, I don't know, I didn't think they would put something like that on the list", because most people don't stand up and talk out about stuff like that. I thought, maybe they had just put it down because if it does happen.

Susan had three different sources of support and she saw the intent of the training as being to develop her helping skills. She did not believe her peers could help her and, thus, she did not talk about her personal self, in spite of her emotional confusion at the time. She simply did not believe that it was appropriate to do so.

If I told somebody and then they might not have been able to deal with it. They might have said, "Oh, wait, sorry" - like they might not have meant to, but they might have said sorry I can't deal with this. Then I'd be like, "Oh Okay" kind of like hurt, cause I wouldn't be able to talk. But I guess that's why I kind of said no I won't talk about that one cause someone might not want to hear it, they might not want to find out about my past and what happened and all that.

She had clear limits or boundaries on what she saw as appropriate to talk about. She also had a strong relationship with her mother and ongoing counselling.

I tell my mom that because if she knows, like if I have a question and I can tell her what's going on with, like I'll tell the person, I might have to tell my mom this because it's pretty deep and I don't know what to do.

Building the helping persona.

Susan's natural helping history was limited. This was the first contact she had with peer helping training, and she did not have a lot of prior reinforcement from adults or peers for helping. She had, however, dealt with several heavy issues with the assistance of her mother or her school counsellor.

Assault and rape. And um, pregnancy scares, really freak me. And um, boyfriend, girlfriend crisis, you know. Guys forcing himself on his girlfriend, and the girlfriend doesn't want it and then, she comes to me and that's it. Okay, um, tell her I gotta talk to somebody about this, if that's Okay, kind of thing, cause I don't know what to do. Cause it's like never happened to me kind of. So I just go and get a second opinion. I try to do the best I can with what I know. And then if I, if they kind of get confused, I say well if its Okay I'd like to tell Mom about this and then ask her what I should do. And then they say yes, go ahead.

She had already assisted peers with issues similar to her own, and had an established style that involved putting aside her own issues, but using her personal history for a basis of understanding. She provided advice and direction on professional resources that could help her peers.

Susan was more concerned with problem solving rather than understanding of the self. She wanted to 'do' something. She placed a strong value on expressing feelings for both herself and her peers and valued her peers taking responsibility for guiding the discussion.

But I'm like, how could you keep that in for so long, I mean. Cause that's hard, that must be hard to keep feelings like that for so long. Cause it did for me... I just let them tell me whatever they want up until when they want. Its totally up to them, what they want to tell me and what they don't.

Susan held similar values for herself when speaking about her own issues. She chose not to talk about events surrounding the sexual assault except with those friends that were most trusted by her.

Susan's motivation for helping was both internal and external.

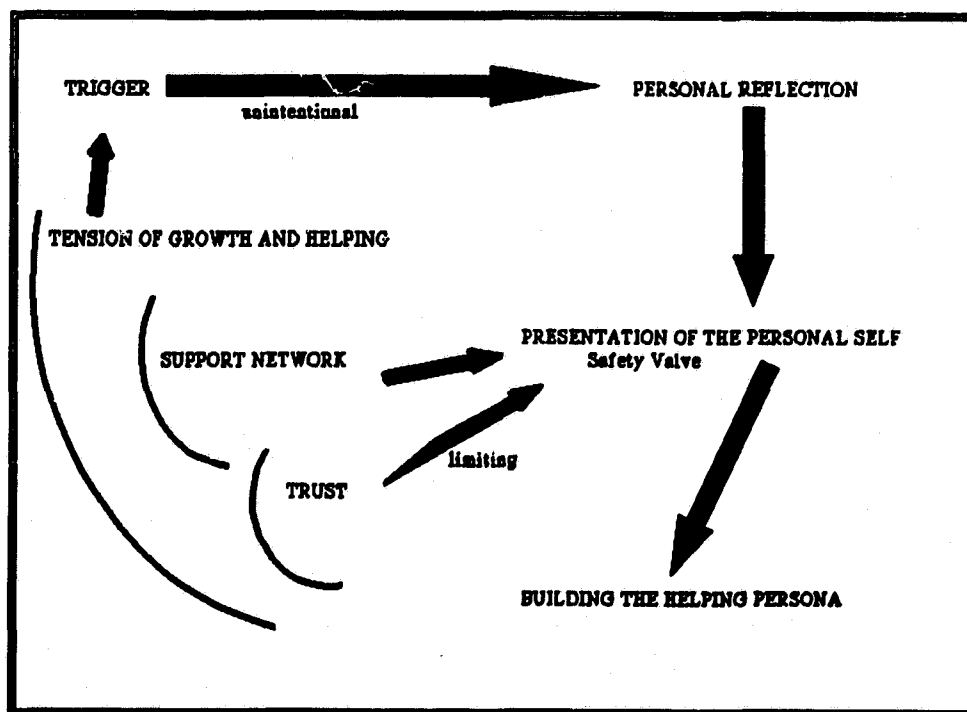
I kind of partly achieved what I want to do when I'm older, because I want to be a school counsellor, now that I have gotten into it more. I want to help people if they're in trouble, because I've been through a lot with my past history, and.... I'm sure I can help people with most things, because I've been through them and I know what it's like but, I'm actually doing something at school that's helpful to the community.... It makes me feel good about myself if I can help someone with a problem that they can't deal with on their own, and that kind of makes me feel better because, I've just helped someone who had a problem and couldn't go to anyone else, or they didn't want to go to someone else, and... I find myself feeling kind of special, because, I guess you could say, they chose me over someone else who they would rather go to, because they wanted to come to me first.

Summary

Susan's path through the training event, as illustrated in Figure 14, began with limited experience with skill training but much personal history with trauma, both hers and her friends. She spent a lot of time during training engaged in the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events. When she used the strategy of presentation of the personal self, she edited her life events and chose issues similar to the ones described by the teens that she interacted with. Even when overwhelmed by emotional intensity, she only used her best friend as a safety valve. Susan was able to contain the emotional intensity because of the extensive support network she had both inside and outside of training.

She came into training with a particular style of helping and was able to build further her helping persona. Susan continued to help friends with issues around rape, sexual assault, and boyfriends problems, following training. Her helping persona included an orientation toward problem solving, a strong valuing of feelings, and the belief that her peers are responsible for deciding what to tell her about their life events. She made use of her own experience for understanding and empathy, but did not talk about herself when listening to her peer's issues. Susan hopes to continue on in a helping professional role. She developed this goal during training and subsequent participation in the peer helping program.

Figure 14: Susan's Path Through Training



Case Illustration #2: Angie

Angie was 17 and entering Grade 12. She is taking the peer helping program for credit next year, but has been involved in peer helping programs in junior high school. She attended a training event held over two consecutive weekends, involving high school teens from all of the schools in the district.

Angie aborted a pregnancy one year previously. A different relationship has involved a boyfriend who had been verbally and physically abusive to her, and she had ended that relationship as well. She lives with her mother and father both of whom have been previously married.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Angie worked hard to NOT engage in personal reflection on life events. She tried to keep the events 'locked' in her mind. This resulted in some confusing reflections as she was not successful in pushing away the associated pictures, thoughts and feelings and was afraid to talk about them.

Well I try not to, I kind of block it out. Cause I'd rather just listen. I mean, like instead of trying to relate it. Cause, I'm really trying to hide it, to relate it, and everything

Most of her personal reflection was of low intensity and very intentional. She scanned her memories of a wide range of life events, (her pregnancy, friend's suicide, an abusive ex-boyfriend).

I was going through all my major secrets I've had and who I'd told and the qualities that they all had, the joint qualities... I think that's what I did. I don't think I just picked one specific time.

Angie deliberately scanned events and made choices about what to reflect on and to present to others.

When she could not keep the memories locked in her mind, and began to reflect on a single event, the reflection moved into high emotional intensity.

I was quite upset during that session, I just kind of said, "Oh no. Well it was bringing back a lot of memories and a lot of things I was trying to keep back, because I don't even know what exactly they were saying, but a lot of it was making me think back, and it was kind of weird. I wasn't too comfortable, at that point. I wanted to, like, be out of there. I was trying to keep away all of those experiences out of my life now, but they brought it all back, so.

Unlike Susan, who already had a strong appreciation of her feelings and the need to reflect on them and express them to others, Angie was relatively unaware and developed some appreciation of feelings. Thus, she learned how to identify and deal with the emotional intensity of her personal reflections.

Just well, I know, that like it's helping me deal with it because I'm realizing my own feelings about it.

It's kind of neat cause like I really thought about that, and when I'm mad, or something, when I'd think about something that made me mad and I'd think about where I'd felt that, you know. It really got me in touch with actually where I did feel things.

Triggers.

The training activities which acted as triggers for Angie involved a high degree of direction from the trainer to remember an experience, or consisted of similar stories told by teens in the group. The trainer's intent in these triggers was an awareness of feelings or practising helping skills. Angie was particularly sensitive to the trainer's directions to share a story about herself, and this prompted her to review a number of life events. The presence of the

teens with whom Angie partnered was an important aspect of a trigger for her. She reflected on life events which were similar in nature to those of the teens with whom she partnered and her reflections were at a low level of intensity. Training activities which focused on feelings were strong triggers which helped Angie to connect feelings to life events and to recognize and reflect upon the associated feelings.

Angie experienced a personal reflection with a high degree of emotional intensity during the time when the trainers were reviewing resources for the teens. Since the trainers had initiated the activity with a direction to remember a time that the teen was 'in too deep' and then debriefed the feelings (not the events) of that time, Angie continued to focus on the life event. She sat biting her lip through the brainstorming of issues that were too heavy and described the suicide that had occurred in her school the previous year. She used this discussion as a safety valve.

Presentation of the personal self.

Angie's discussion of her personal self was most strongly mediated by her view of trust. The tension between personal growth and developing helping skills, and her support network played a role, in mediating her presentation but not to the same extent.

When Angie talked about herself, the trust that she perceived in others tended to be very low. She had experienced a breach of trust when the news of her pregnancy was spread around the school by peers as a result of

overhearing her talking to the school counsellor. She placed the responsibility for trust clearly on the other person.

I have a hard time opening up to people that I don't know. So I probably wouldn't get into like my own personal like real problems with whatever I have, because, like some of those get to be, like hard to... like I wouldn't tell anybody about. Cause I learnt from telling.

This raised a conflict for her because of the trainer expectations that she talk about issues. She wanted to respond to this expectation.

I don't know if I really want to like explain to everybody about my life and me. And to me it's like my personal experiences. I didn't think that I could tolerate not to tell them about it and then just get away with telling them about something stupid that has happened but it's not that important.

Much of Angie's talk about herself consisted of life events that were similar in nature to the partner she was working with, but were not what she termed heavy issues. She listened to Liz talk about a cousin who was very sick with cancer, and then shared her own story of her grandpa's cancer when she was six years old. She spoke about an ex-boyfriend, with Lisa, following Lisa's discussion about her struggles with a boyfriend.

Angie's relationship with Lisa illustrates the impact of both trust and Angie's support network on her presentation of her personal self. Angie did not know anyone as she entered into the training event, and her opinion of her peer support network outside of training was:

Nobody would really help me and so and then they'd just say "Oh guess what blah, blah, blah" and tell somebody else. And then I never got anywhere with them.

She moved gradually over time in the training event to build a relationship with Lisa. One of the factors that was important was that Lisa knew people that Angie knew, even though they had not attended the same school.

Eventually Lisa demonstrated enough trust to Angie, through talking about herself, that Angie was able to talk about herself with Lisa as a safety valve surrounding the events of her pregnancy. She reflected a lot on the pregnancy, trying to lock it out, but only spoke to Lisa.

She got my trust, I didn't bring it [the pregnancy] out, like talk about it, but I said, I know your experience, and she said, "You do?" and I said, "yes." She's like oh, okay. And gradually like more and more was said. This year we talked about it a bit and stuff, but like I talked to her about it.

It took Angie six months of ongoing relationship with Lisa to discuss those heavy issues. For Angie, time for trust, the perception that they were all there for the same reason, and her prior experience with peers gossiping about her, were strong mediators to what she told others about herself during training.

Angie's support network consisted primarily of her peers, she was not particularly confident in their ability to help her. She did not seem to have support from her family, but she did discuss the importance to her of an adult network of professional resources. This network was not as strong as Susan's but definitely influenced Angie's limits on what she talked about to others. She viewed the teacher who helped her with her pregnancy two years ago as supportive and would return to her in a crisis.

I try and find out my best friend, I usually tell her, so we can talk about it. But, I don't know, if it's too hard for her and I'll go to like

this one teacher that I used to like at school. And we're still friends, and like she's kind of like a friend too. Like she helps me with those things.

The gossip experience that went with that time made her cautious about talking about her life events.

So I used to be a blabbermouth and explain it to everybody, and it's like, it got me nowhere.

Thus she was conflicted during training as she tried to manage her personal reflection on life events. She believed in talking about herself and personal growth, but had strong personal limits due to lack of trust, and a limited support network. Thus, there was a lot of editing of her life events and she only talked about events that she had in common with other members of the group.

Building the helping persona.

Angie came into the training event with extensive natural helping history. She had attended a training session before that used role play as a teaching strategy, as well as receiving informal training.

I learned a lot about it too in my last school because the counsellors realized that we both have something unique. And so they started telling me things, they, sort of like, kind of, almost trained me themselves.

Angie described assisting peers with abuse by boyfriends, rape, families who are 'pretty screwed up', alcoholics, and teen pregnancies. She felt limited in her abilities.

It seems to me like everyone's coming to me to be a counsellor and I didn't know what to do about it all.

Angie's style as a peer helper prior to training was to share her own experience (if she felt comfortable) and to connect the person to other resources.

They come to ask you oh well what's happening, with you, and you know where did you go. What happened and to a lot of people I wasn't willing to share my own experience. So I'd say well like, "go talk to the counsellor about it." I'd say go talk to her about it cause she helped me. I'd say go talk, you know, and I'd just try and lead them in the right direction.

This was not a comfortable style for her. During a partner activity in the training event she presented her own experience as a way of letting Liz know that she understood her, and suddenly found herself talking about her own issue. Through training and experience afterwards she was able to modify her style to a more comfortable and confident level.

Now that I've been a helper, I've been able to really see other people's problems and stuff, and kind of learned from their experiences and help people that way. So not just my personal experience but things that I've learned about, and I've also got a few more resources now that we can go there so I can go to other people now... I feel better about giving people advice and stuff. Because now I know more places that I can send them, what is acceptable, what should be reported and stuff, just things that get easier, I feel more confident now.

She moved to a style where she separated her experience and did not discuss it with her peers, but made use of a system of resources to get further help.

Angie's motivation for helping was external. She had been viewed as a resource to peers by her teachers and school counsellors and had been supported to help them. She took the peer helping course for credit during the school year. She intended to go on professionally as a helper.

I'm trying to find out the different options in that area, because I want to get a job that's going to pay really well, but I know that that won't, and I was going to go into social work, but then I know how draining that is, but I feel like what I've been doing now is that I've been helping people for so long, why not, so I'm still kind of exploring, I'm not too sure any more, I'm sure that I want to go into that field, I'm not sure exactly where.

As part of building her helping persona, Angie adopted the values of self-understanding and acknowledging feelings. Through personal reflection on life events with herself, she began to realize the limits that she needed to place on her responsibility for her peers' problems and tried to give them more responsibility.

It's helped me an awful lot. I figured like, I didn't like, I didn't realize like I've been like helping all my friends or whoever with their problems and stuff. And, I didn't realize like some of the things that I was doing wrong. Cause like, well one of the people I know well, my ex-boyfriend, he comes from a family that's just like completely shot. And I was trying to help him with his family and I ended just taking over his decisions for him... but instead of just like trying to get him to do it, I just got totally frustrated and said, "Okay, well fine, you're doing this. And like, I'd give him a suggestion and he'd automatically take it. Knowing that like, you know, it'd probably work but then it just made him come more and more dependent. I noticed it's helping a lot of people getting into themselves and getting into themselves it's making it easier to understand others. And when I talk to, like a lot of people, that it's like that, it makes them understand themselves better, which is, helped them understand others better.

Summary

Angie's path through the training event, as illustrated in Figure 15, began with experience in peer helping training and personal history with trauma, both hers and her friends. She tried not to engage in the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events during training and attempted to lock out

painful events. She was not always successful. She used the strategy of presentation of her personal self with a lot of editing of the events and she chose issues similar to those described by the teens that she interacted with.

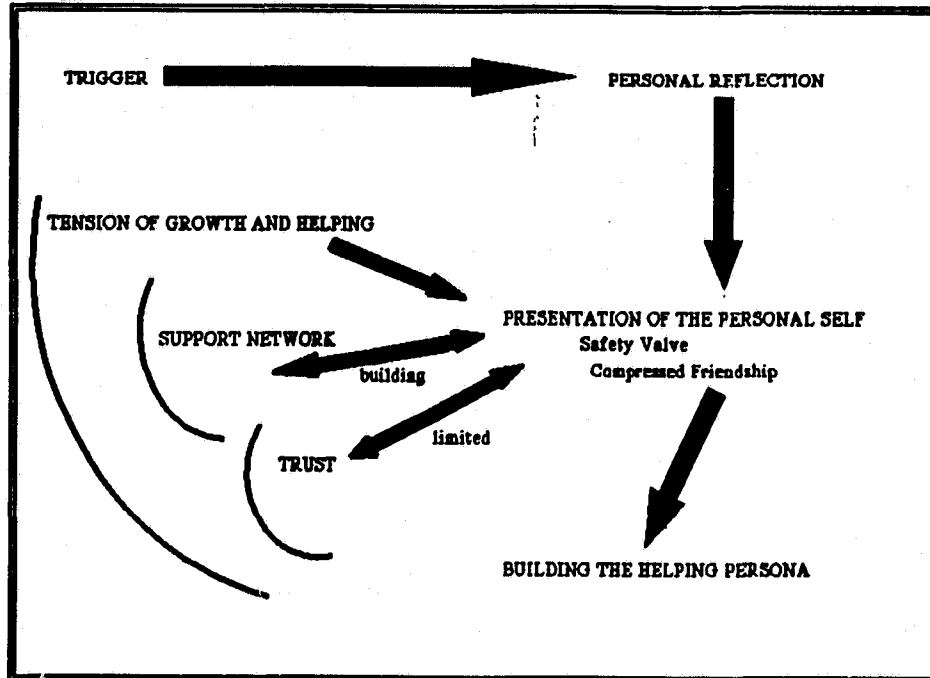
When overwhelmed by emotional intensity, Angie made use of a safety valve by talking with a peer who was connected to her own peer network, to briefly relate something of her experience.

Since Angie had experienced gossip in her support network she carried this expectation into the training event and she limited her presentation of her personal self to what she considered to be light issues. She used compressed friendship construction during training and sought out peers whom she continued to develop a relationship with in the following year.

Angie came into training with a particular style of helping and was able to build her helping persona further. She continued to help friends with issues around rape, physical assault, boyfriend problems, and substance abuse. Her helping persona included an orientation toward referring peers to professional resources, a strong valuing of feelings, and she developed understanding of the importance of her peers' taking responsibility for the discussion and the solution to the issue. Angie developed a different way of using her own life events for understanding and empathy. She felt pressure during training to share her own experience as a way of demonstrating understanding, but changed this style. Angie wants to continue on in a helping professional role,

but has begun to realize the stresses of doing so and is considering other options.

Figure 15: Angie's Path Through Training



Case Illustration #3: Sun

Sun was 15 years old, she dropped out of school at 14 because she thought it interfered with the time she had to do drugs. Shortly thereafter she started hearing voices and became scared. With her mother's support and her counsellor's support, she entered a residential treatment centre. She had been 'clean', at the time of the training, for ten months, and back in school for 6 months trying to catch up.

Sun had been interested in peer helping for some time and wanted to join the school program, but there was no place for it in her schedule since she had to catch up. She intended to join the following year. Sun attended a weekend training retreat, which included accommodation and meals for two days. The training involved teens and young adults from a community (non-residential) program for youth on alcohol and drug treatment. The program included peer helpers as part of the program design and the training group formed the first set of peer helpers.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Sun engaged in personal reflection on many events in her life. She reflected on death, her parents divorce, her own physical aggression, and family conflict. Not only were these life events and associated feelings unlocked, she had linked these events to themes in her life, and was seeking some understanding of some events in relation to those themes.

Well, I always thought that every family's got one, you know, and it never really dawned on me that it was something that bothered me, that

I was the family idiot. I was the dumb one in the family. I'm the one that always screwed up, you know, like I'm the one that gets bad grades in school. I'm the one that smokes, I'm the one that had a problem, that did drugs and drank and had to go away to a \$10,000 treatment centre, and everything like that. I'm the one that was in sports but quit everything when I was using because I just didn't have the time to do both at the same time.

Her personal reflection was intentional and selective. It tended to be of medium to high intensity, and she was comfortable with the medium emotional intensity to her reflection and processed these reflections or talked about them.

I put myself back in [to the experience] and how I felt [about] school, and my grandma's birthday was coming up, and she passed away, in September, and her birthday was coming up and it was in the beginning of December, and my parents were fighting, and me and my brother and me and my dad were fighting, I was trying to get out of a relationship, I didn't want to hurt the other person.

Sun experienced personal reflection at a high emotional intensity on a recent life event which seemed to be unresolved. The emotional intensity increased for her as she interacted with the group. Her reflection was connected to a broader life theme as well as a specific event.

Anger is something I'm having a lot of problems with, and I felt like I needed to talk about it, what happened, like I talked about what had happened with everybody that I talked to. Everybody I talked to it about were friends, were friends of mine, and so, you know, teenage stuff, "Why didn't you fight her, why didn't you fight her?" Well, it's just like, what would that have proven?... and then I would have had to deal with those feelings, and so I hadn't really talked about that situation with people that I knew I could get some positive feedback on.

Much of Sun's personal history was traumatic, and she had often been overloaded with crisis. She had many historical events to reflect on in her life, and these events continued to be dealt with in treatment and ongoing

counselling. Sun had gone beyond simply reflecting on life events and connected similar events and tried to understand their relevance to who she was as a person.

Triggers.

Training activities which acted as triggers for Sun were intended to focus on an awareness of feelings or practising helping skills. She did a lot of personal reflection during drawing activities. When she was directed to consider times or events in which she had felt a feeling specified by the trainer, she reflected on associated events. The triggers for her personal reflection included a variety of directions to discuss the training activity, but no specific expectation to share her life events except during practice with a partner.

The directions associated with the 'feeling bodies' exercise triggered for Sun personal reflection surrounding an unresolved incident with anger. This initial trigger was enhanced as others spoke about their thoughts and experiences with anger during a large group discussion. As the discussion and Sun's reflection on this incident progressed, high emotional intensity occurred. She reflected privately, shared with a partner the feelings located on her drawing (no events), and then had the opportunity to discuss the learning from the exercise. The large group discussion focused on how feelings related to the helpers' own history can divert their attention from helping others. Thus, there were many additional triggers for reflection on the incident.

Presentation of the personal self.

Sun used the strategy of presentation of the personal self to manage her reflections on events and themes in her life. Her use of this strategy was influenced by all three of the contexts surrounding the strategy. The strongest influence was probably her experience in treatment and ongoing counselling. These experiences are woven throughout her perception of the trust in the group, her balance of the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills, and her support network.

Sun's initial trust of the group was limited because she was uncertain about who would be present. Knowing others was important to her.

I was really scared because, I almost didn't go because I didn't know if I was going to know anybody there, and then I talked to Pippi about it and Pippi said, like told me about the people that were going to be there, and I said okay, well, I know some of them, kind of know them but I kind of don't.

The agency arranging the peer helping program was a large component of Sun's support network. Once she established that she knew people, and that there was only one person that she had not met through the program, the like-minded purpose of group members became apparent to her and she was more comfortable talking about herself.

Her discussion of a recent incident in which she struggled to control her anger illustrated the impact of trust, her support network, and the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills.

I don't share in groups very often, if I'm talking one on one with a person, then, I'll tell them whatever they want to know, if they ask, I'll

them, if something's bothering me, I'll talk to them about it, but with groups, I think it's because when I was in treatment, we had group about two times a day and I grew really dependent on the group, I really looked forward to the groups and everything like that, and then when I left, it was like, I'm just going to get used to talking to these people and be able to open up and share and then boom, poof, overnight it's all going to be gone, we're not going to be a group anymore, and I'll be gone, or somebody else will be gone and then a new person will come, so I don't really talk in groups very often... I think [I talked in the group in the weekend] I was just, we were talking about everything and anger is something I'm having a lot of problems with, and I felt like I needed to talk about it... I have a lot of problems with my anger... I was hurt a lot of times, and it was all by the same person, [in the group] and like him and I have been friends, for a while, like we had talked, like we were friends, acquaintances, we saw each other, we talked, but we didn't, like talk to each other on the phone or anything like that, and then it was like every time that I opened my mouth, he'd shoot down my ideas, so I was really hurt by that, because lots of times, I'd feel like nobody will listen to me and what I say doesn't count. Kind of weird, having that happen there, it really hurt me.

Sun withdrew emotionally from the group and did not respond as the emotional intensity of this reflection increased.

I'm out of here, right, and so I shut down, I totally withdraw myself from everyone, I won't let anybody, like if people talk to you, yeah, it goes in one ear, but then it just, poof, comes out the other.

Her impulse was to run out of the room, and she controlled it. As she talked about her anger, using presentation of the personal self as a safety valve, she found that talking was ineffective in reducing the emotional intensity and served to increase it. The trainers implicitly managed the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills by continuing to focus the discussion on individual differences in managing feelings. It was not until Sun 'shut down' that the management of this tension became explicit, when one of

the trainers suggested connecting with her during the evening, and then the trainers pointed out how poorly all group members (including themselves) had done in actually listening to what Sun was saying, as they all had talked about their own experiences.

Another mediating factor as Sun talked about her personal self was the strength and extensiveness of her support network. She was connected to a peer support network, many of whom were present during the training and she was able to deepen this connection. She was connected to an adult support network, again many of whom were present during the training. Finally she has a strong relationship with her mother and was able to go back to her mother and discuss her reflections and come to some further understanding of them.

Since the weekend, me and my mom, we've just like, it's weird, me and my mom have been really close since I moved in with her, just about two years ago, and we've been really close. When I was using, we were really close, but I was really distant, but then when I went over to treatment and I came back, my mom was the only person in my life. I wouldn't let anybody else in, and me and my mom got really, really close, but then when I started going out and making my way into society and everything like that, me and my mom sort of drifted apart and we fought, we got into a lot of arguments, we couldn't agree on anything. But since, and I'd always shut down whenever she tried talking, and now it's like since I've come back from the peer weekend, it's like, she looked at me on the Sunday when we came back, she said, you look really happy, and I said, that's because I am really happy. And we've really gotten close again, and we've talked a lot, since.

Building the helping persona.

Sun came into the training event with a limited natural helping history.

She had a lot of interest and curiosity about helping, but no training, and other

than her family's expectation, she was not sought out by peers on a consistent basis.

Peer helping was something that I was really interested in, I wanted to get in with it in school....

And a lot of expectations are put on me because I'm the oldest, right, I'm the oldest in my whole family, so a lot of expectations were put on me, like the whole family goes into a crisis when I've got to be there to be strong for the boys, like I can't let my feelings show, even though, I'm probably the littlest one, like size-wise, but in age-wise, I'm the oldest, so I've got to be there for them, and I wasn't there for them, and I was using, and it's something that I'll never, I'll never be forgiven for by my parents, because I wasn't there for them when they needed me.

Sun's motivation for helping others was both internal and external, and when she was engaged in a high intensity reflection she calmed herself by helping others.

I want to be a child psychologist when I get finished school and everything and I just... the experience and the way they were talking to people and everything like that....

If I'm really down about something, if I'm really angry or I'm hurt, if my feelings are hurt or something like that, and I'll see somebody else that's upset, too, or hurt, too, I'll just go and I'll just start talking to them, right, and say, you know, do you need somebody to talk to? And if they start talking to me, great, because that makes me feel good about myself, after we've done talking it makes me feel good about myself, that we were talking, and I actually, I helped that person, right, just by sitting there and listening, I helped them.

Sun did not have a style of helping as she entered training. She began to understand and explore her helping style through the training event and as she talked about herself came to understand that her helping style involved conversation and talking about herself as a way of being empathetic.

We didn't really, one of us didn't sit and talk and the other one just sit down and listen, right, we didn't really do it like a counselling thing,

it, we did it like a conversation, right? Like, he'd say something and I'd go whatever, whatever I thought, and tell him, like if it was something that I could relate with, I'd say, yes, I can relate, because I went through the same things and the same things happened to me, and it made me feel really good that I could talk to somebody about stuff that I knew that he could relate on.

Sun did not clearly describe a value set surrounding helping but she did demonstrate values through her actions. She valued understanding herself and this was essential to her helping of others. Even though she struggled with feelings, Sun viewed them as important to the helping process.

I talked about not being able to cry and stuff like that, because, it's hard to explain, I won't let myself express my feelings in front of a group of people, if I'm by myself, then I will, if it's just me and my mom, I will, but, even, I don't even cry very often around my mom.

Sun worked to understand her feelings and was uncomfortable with not expressing them. She was respectful of the other person's limits and desires in the helping relationship.

They'll be spilling their guts to me, and then they'll stop, and I'll say, "Well, do you mind if I give you some whatever," and if they say "Yeah", that's cool, but if they say no, then, that's cool, too, like if they don't need any advice or if they don't need any, like if they don't need to be around to say, then that's okay, but if they do, then all the better, you know.

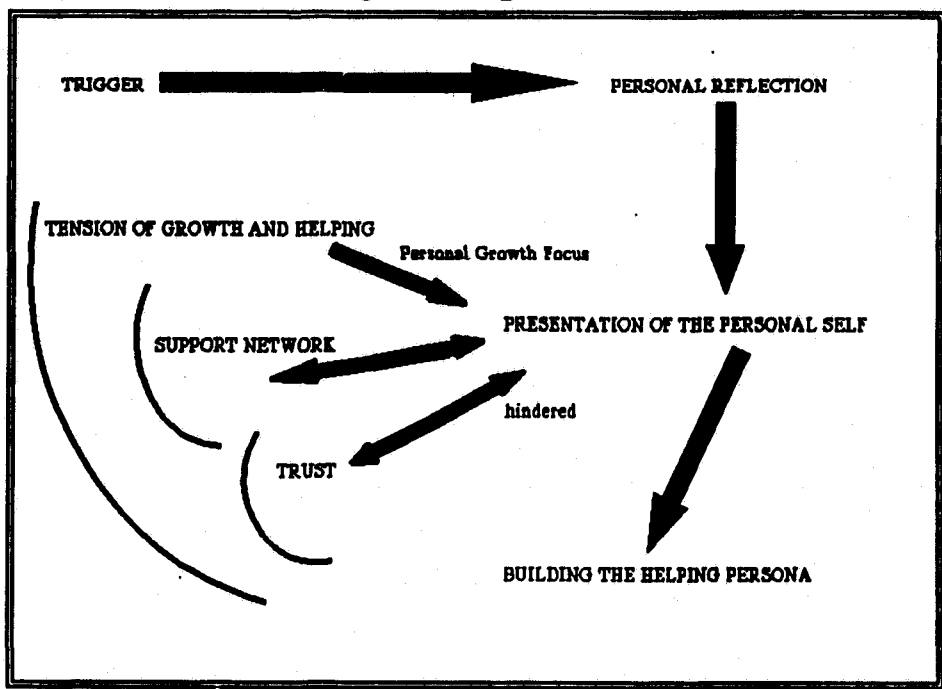
Summary

Sun entered the training event with no prior training in peer helping and not much personal experience in helping others. She had a lot of experience in helping herself, and an extensive support network. Like other teens she spent a lot of time engaged in the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events. She reflected on these events in relation to themes in her life,

and used the strategy of presentation of the personal self to explore, and understand. She also made use of this strategy as compressed friendship construction, to deepen her relationships with members of her support network who attended training with her. She did not do a lot of editing, as she trusted the group and presented more about an event, she moved into high emotional intensity associated with her personal reflection. She 'shut down' or totally edited her experience at the point at which she felt overwhelmed. The tension between personal growth and developing helping skills at that point in time focused on helping skills. This did not match her need at that moment.

Sun was just starting to build her helping persona. She was exploring a conversational style of helping in which she shared her own experience, and provided advice. She valued her own self-understanding, and continued to explore that understanding using a support network which included peers (some of whom attended the training event), professionals, and her family (in particular her mother). Sun was motivated to build her helping persona into that of a child psychologist, but at the same time experienced relief from her own emotions as she helped others. She felt good about her ability to listen to her peers' issues. Her path through training is illustrated by Figure 16.

Figure 16: Sun's Path Through Training



Case Illustration #4: Moche

Moche was 17 and attended school somewhat sporadically. He attended a weekend retreat for peer helpers, and it was the hope of the trainers that he would eventually become a peer helper in the alcohol and drug treatment program which he attended. He had no prior training in peer helping, and his experience with helping peers was within a small group of friends that he hung out with.

Moche attended a month long residential treatment program in his home town about a year prior to the training weekend. He remained clean for four months, but returned to substance abuse about five months prior to training. He had attended the first level of the outreach treatment program twice. He spent the 'weekends' drinking and abusing drugs and Tuesday to Thursday recovering. He arrived on the first morning of the retreat with a substantial hangover and said that he lied to his gang about where he was going for the weekend.

Moche lived with his grandparents at the time, but had spent time living with his Dad, who is alcoholic and abusive. He had also lived 'on his own' for several years.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Moche spent a lot of time engaged in personal reflection on life events throughout the weekend. He talked about himself and those events to manage the intensity of his personal reflections. Much of his personal reflection was

associated with high emotional intensity. Some of this emotional intensity was because he was not abusing any substances during the retreat. As he said during the weekend:

If I start to get clean again and get into normal sleeping patterns then all the raw emotional stuff comes up again, that's what I'm saying and it piss me off, it's easier to not look at it than to look at it....

At the end of the weekend, he thanked everyone for helping him to feel again and said that it was good to do that. He seemed to be constantly flooded with emotional intensity which increased throughout the weekend as he reflected on a variety of events in his life.

Moche focused primarily on the death of his brother and concern for another brother's substance abuse, but he reflected on a variety of other events in his life.

About my Dad, and about sex and stuff like that, I don't really have any healthy relationships, and so when I hear people talking about their ex-boyfriend, and ex-girlfriend and my mom and dad, and the divorce.

Moche did not intentionally recall any of these events, nor did he reject any, but he intentionally engaged in reflecting on and attempting to understand the events and their meaning in his life. He made use of his peers and presentation of his personal self as a means of understanding.

Triggers.

The training activities that acted as triggers for Moche included a lot of direction from the trainers to remember an experience and or to discuss that experience. There were many opportunities for reflection and discussion

within each activity. Moche reflected as an individual, talked with a partner, and talked with the group, both during the actual training and during mealtimes and leisure times.

Moche was triggered into personal reflection by other teens experiences which were similar to his own, as well as by the trainer's direction to remember a particular event or experience. His vulnerability to these triggers was likely affected by his continued substance abuse and his effort to be clean on the training weekend. This heightened his emotional experience.

Presentation of the personal self.

Moche made use of every opportunity to talk about himself and the events of his life. He attempted to edit his presentation of his experiences to match the trainer's intention within the group discussion. His need to focus on personal growth rather than developing helping skills was occasionally in conflict with the way the trainers managed that tension or balance. At other times, he edited his experience and did not talk about it with the teen that he partnered with, as he focused on his helping skills.

I don't mind telling people... I don't have any problems with sharing what I'm feeling ... why not? I don't hurt anybody else and it makes me feel better to talk about it a little bit.

Moche made use of talking about his own experience as a safety valve when he started to feel overwhelmed with emotional intensity. He seemed to have two events that were emotionally intense that recurred in his mind throughout the weekend. Moche spoke about them gradually through the weekend, taking

the time to build trust in his peer group. He already knew many of the teens and had some trust in them, but needed time to trust further. In a group discussion about trust, he stated that he trusts only himself and that he had been let down a number of times. He would however reach out and trust a person when he was scared and they were a friend.

As Moche talked about his concern about his brother and his brother's substance abuse and potential suicide, he appeared to be in a state of emotional confusion. He began the discussion with something relevant to the trainer's intent and continued with his own personal reflections, releasing the emotional intensity, but continuing to talk about the events.

Each time Moche began to discuss his own concerns and events in his life, the trainers were explicit about the tension between personal growth and building helping skills. They responded by acknowledging his feelings and inviting other peers in the group to talk with him during break and listen to what he had to say about his life, and then re-focused on learning about helping skills. Moche too was very clear about this tension in his own mind and with others. One of his personal goals for the weekend was stated to the whole group as "learning to listen and really understand what people are saying and to not slip into my own mind" and his own issues. He recalled times when he had done this. As he developed some trust and confidence in his peers in the group, he talked about the death of his brother, to Bob. Once trust was established he was able to use break time, following a training

activity in which an intense emotional reflection was triggered, to talk to a trusted peer as a safety valve. He returned to training to focus on the helping skills.

Moche did talk about personal reflections with low emotional intensity. He seemed to engage in 'compressed friendship construction' through the partner work. Most of the group were members of his support network for 'clean time', and he established other supports throughout the weekend. As he said after a partner discussion:

I have brain stutter sometimes where I have to organize my thoughts and Ed, he has a hard time to sit still while I do that. This third one was real good cause he touched on something that summed it all up and I was able to really explain how I felt. He really triggered something.

Since Moche was used to talking about himself and events in his life with this peer group and the trainers that were at training, he was comfortable doing so. As he said during the training, "It's safe to go to a counsellor, the label says it's safe." He carried this label into the training event, and it impacted the way he talked about himself throughout the weekend.

Building the helping persona.

Moche came to training with no prior peer helping training and did not perceive himself to be a helper. Although he had lots of experience in his own family and immediate friendship circle with helping, he did not view himself as a helper, and thought of what he did as mutual. As he told the group:

Sometimes, you know, I just think it's important just to be there and to hold his hand. That's what brothers are all about. When your mom's drinking and your Dad's drinking, that's all you've got. So just hold my hand and draw on my strength for a little bit. It's like having half a person, and if you don't have the other half you're running on zero.

After the training, Moche had become motivated to develop his skills and had a different view of himself. He valued personal health and had some initial ideas of his style and approach to helping.

I'd like to go for it, you know, I would, but like I was saying, you know, I'm a bad example, you know what I mean, and so, in order for me to be a good example for other kids that are in trouble, try to make other kids healthy, you've got to be healthy yourself, and I know the tools are there, you know what I mean, like I know they are pretty raw and undeveloped but they could become good if I worked at it, and yeah I want to do it. Just like I said if I look at Bob and he can do it, and see, compared myself, and it gives me hope.

Moche struggled in training with the value of giving the other person responsibility for change, and had not yet adopted it.

When he needs help there are so many signals, and I don't know how to deal with it. He says he's gonna do this and that to himself, then there is the macho thing, I don't want to violate the friendship by talking to his parents. He's spiralling down. He's gonna be a chronic alcoholic or he's gonna die.

He also valued his own personal development. "Helping people is a good way to run away from your own problems. You need to deal with your own problems." His emphasis on feelings was very strong, but a struggle for him. Moche preferred to talk to guys that "have a feeling side to them," and yet he thought guys need to go out and shoot hoops, and get comfortable before they can talk about needing help.

Moche's developing style of helping involved using his own experience to connect to the other person, but not necessarily talking about his own experience.

That weekend kind of really gave that to me, if somebody does tell me anything, not to just shake it off and say, "Hey I don't have that much time" or what ever, like I make time for it now, no matter what it is... because you know they might want to come back when it's a bigger problem or whatever.... I don't shoot my mouth off all the time....

Summary

Moche's path through peer helping training, (see Figure 17), was complicated by his own ongoing needs for treatment of his substance abuse. He engaged in extensive personal reflection on life events throughout the weekend training event. He also made use of the strategy of presentation of the personal self to release the emotional intensity of these events, and come to an understanding of what the events meant for him. He used this strategy with little editing of his personal experience since his support network for working through these issues was present at the training event. He took the time to build further trust in them throughout the weekend. Moche himself was aware of the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills throughout the weekend. The trainers used explicit strategies for managing that tension and their invitation to the group to help manage it impacted the way in which Moche engaged in talking about himself and his issues.

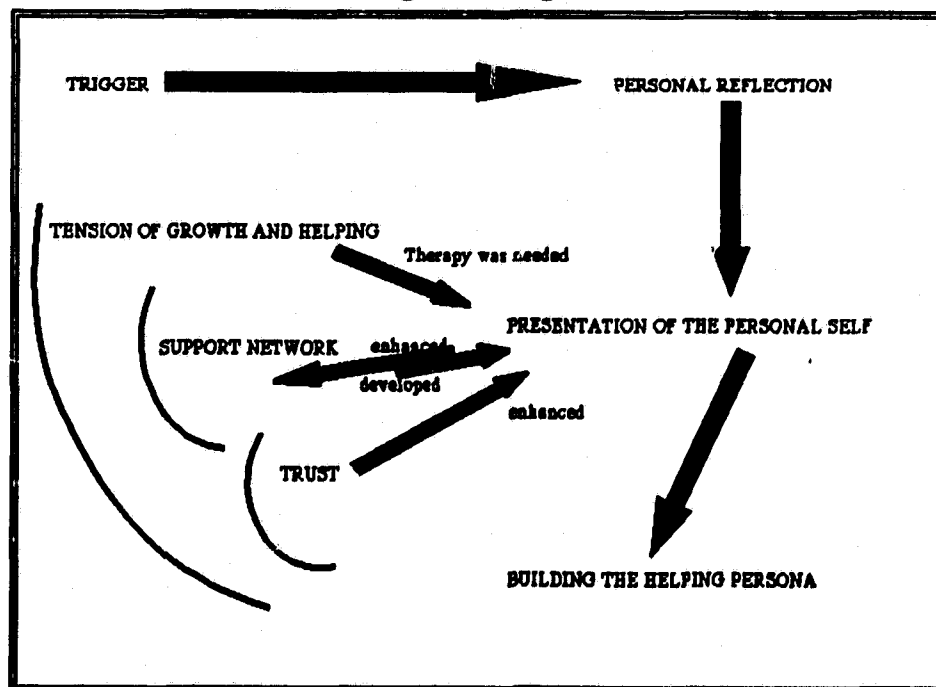
Moche came into training with a limited idea of his helping persona. Through talking about himself and his experience as well as listening to others

he has begun to build a helping persona which involves careful listening to others, use of his own experience and a commitment to manage his own issues in order to act as a role model for others.

The complicating factor in the building of this helping persona was Moche's continued use of substances. He was aware of this factor, but once he left the support network of the training group, his commitment to self growth lagged. As he said:

I don't like doing that [making a commitment to not drink] cause it feels like I'm not myself... everytime I say I'm going to quit drinking, I go back to drinking again. I feel like worse. So now I don't do it. [make the commitment]

Figure 17: Moche's Path Through Training



Case Illustration #5: Cache

Cache was 17 and a peer helper in the program in her high school. She had attended peer helping training that dealt with special issues but had not received any training in helping skills. She attended a weekend training retreat which included meals and accommodations, sponsored by an alcohol and drug prevention and treatment program that Cache attended.

Cache was a member of an immigrant family that moved to Canada 10 years ago.

Where I come from there's no counsellors, like you get beat, well, that's the house rule at home. Nothing can be done about it. But here I guess it's the country, like you're not allowed to do it. My parents never knew that. So they stopped doing it.

When she got to high school, she started drinking and using drugs with friends. During her first year of high school, she attempted suicide and was removed from her family to a foster home because of the extent of the bruising on her body. She quit using substances and returned home afterwards and continues to live at home.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Cache worked hard to push away any personal reflections during the training weekend.

Cause that weekend, I didn't, I just wanted to go, go through the things, the steps and everything, and not have anything on my mind, so there wasn't really too much that I could talk about, and then when people started bringing up their problems or their situations, I started getting into it, but then some things I don't like to talk about it, myself.

She described this process as 'blocking it out' and refused to allow herself to think about any of the events associated with her family or the abuse. These events were locked out of her memory for the weekend.

Cache intentionally kept the emotional intensity of her personal reflections at a low level and focused primarily on recent events in her life that were similar to those discussed by other members of the group. In her mind, these were light issues and covered a wide range of areas such as school courses, future career, the work that she currently did, and the pressure that she felt from peers to drink. She did not want to engage in anything of high emotional intensity.

I get so upset when I think about it, like that's why I don't really open up over my childhood because I don't like to feel upset and shitty about myself

Triggers.

Cache made use of other teens' experiences to trigger her own personal reflections. As group members talked about their experiences she would reflect on the similarity of hers. The training activities that acted as triggers for her included the trainer's specific directions to recall events which were intended by the trainer as times to practice helping skills. An important aspect of a trigger for her was the opportunity to listen to partners talk about themselves.

Presentation of the personal self.

Cache talked about herself and her personal reflections primarily as a means of getting to know other people. Most of this occurred during free-time outside of the actual training event.

The one-on-one, I liked that, there's lots of, well, the night before we left, the girls shared the condo, we all sat there and we totally talked and Moche was in with us, and he said, "Oh my god, I don't want to listen to you girls talk about men and all this." We just like totally had our, not just about counselling but about everything that's in our life that's happening and stuff. I really liked that, too, and what I really enjoyed when everyone came over to our condo and sat there and just kind of talked and had coffee and joked around.

Her use of this strategy for managing her personal reflections was strongly mediated by her view of trust and her support network.

We just sat there and enjoyed ourselves joking around and I really enjoyed that. I'm doing a lot more of that now. Like it's not that I'm not going out with my friends at all, I go out with them but yet, I've got my boundaries that they can't cross, like, have a beer, no I don't want a beer, don't pressure me, now they're getting used to me being that way, they've got respect for me now.

Her support network included two different peer groups. Her school friends did not support her 'clean time'. Her peer group at the agency did support that style of life and were available to her during the retreat, but she did not trust them. Cache also had adult supports available to her to deal with any personal reflections that might arise. Some of her counsellors were present in training, and her strongest ongoing adult support was her school counsellor. Cache's experience with counsellors was positive and she seems to have developed a mechanism for dealing with personal reflections on her own.

I've noticed that lately when I have problems, I meditate, to get through my head. Like I sit there all by myself, peace and quiet, figure out what my problem is, what the solution will be, and like that. And that's why I don't really talk too much, like with other people, sometimes, because I kind of like to deal with it myself.

Cache was open to making use of the support network she had available at training but she did not have sufficient time to develop trust in the group. For her, it took time and some prior knowledge of group members to get rid of a fear that they would gossip about her, so she only talked about light issues.

Cache had some prior peer helping training and her expectations as she entered training were based on this. She was expecting a classroom experience and was pleasantly surprised by the focus on personal aspects and discussion by participants. Her initial expectation carried through the weekend and she focused on her desire to develop her skills at helping. She separated this from the need for personal growth.

With a whole group I get so, like, I don't know, I feel so weird, cause, like, there's a boundary I set, like people that I don't know I'm not going to open up to, and I only knew a couple of people and I didn't want to like let myself out to everyone, that's why, like after the weekend, after we came back, like almost the last day, I felt more comfortable because I got to know everyone, kind of, sitting there talking, I noticed that was the time I kind of opened up a lot more... cause, my boundary is, when I don't know someone, I don't really express myself a lot. So that's why I didn't really say too much.... I feel secure that it'll stay there, what I say.

Building the helping persona.

Cache came to training with quite a bit of natural helping history. She had listened to and helped good friends and peers in her school through the

peer helping program there. Her motivation for helping others was internal and strongly connected to her experience with being helped herself.

The reason that I come to peer helping is to help myself too. To help me with my problems. And so, not to tell them. But for them to have someone for a peer helper like me, I can say I know how you feel. I had something similar to that. Like, tell them it happened to me before too. You don't have to worry about it, it will turn out well. That's the second reason why I want to be a peer helper. The other was because of my counsellor, she totally helped me change. She told me, I know you can do it, she stuck with me and stuff and that's really nice of her.

Cache used a style of helping that made use of her own experience but she did not describe that experience to others. She tried to listen and give some advice or direction. The way in which she listened to her peers was impacted by the training event.

Um, they find that I'm paying more attention. Before, I don't know what to say to them, even though I'm listening, they just keep on talking, "you're not listening to me." I'm like, "Yeah I am." I'll repeat what they said, and they're like, "Okay," but now when they talk, I'm like, so you feel da da da da, sort of thing, but like they said to me, they're like, there's something about you, I go what, I kind of knew what I was doing, it gave them a good feeling that I'm actually listening, that I'm understanding how they feel.

Cache understood and valued feelings. She also believed in understanding herself. Cache strongly believed in the responsibility of the person being helped to manage the changes. During training, she advised Moche of the importance of letting go and having people make their own decisions. At the same time, she struggled with acting on this value herself.

I think that's a lot easier, but then it's really hard when it comes to a really good close friend, it's so hard not to go, "I think you should do this, it's better for you," you know, but if I wanted to, it'd be like, yeah, if it was me I'd do this, but that's only when it's one of my best

friends. Because if I see a best friend stuck in something that's totally wrong, I'm going to say something about it. If she's really close to me, even with other people, but if it's your best friend, it's kind of hard not to go, whoa, let me tell you about if you choose this, and let them have a second thought about it. Because I don't like seeing my friends making mistakes that I did, but they are making the mistakes.

Cache had clear limits and boundaries around talking about herself and tried to let her peers have these boundaries, but struggled with that.

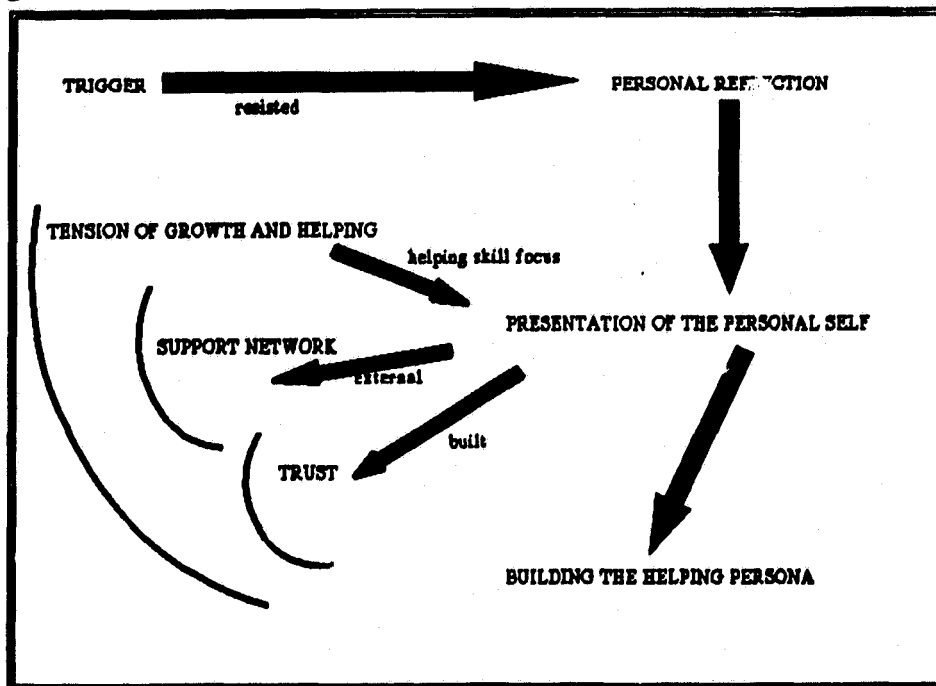
Summary

Cache came into training with extensive personal experience in helping herself and helping others. She had certain expectations about the training that were based on her participation in a school peer helping program. Her path through the training event, as illustrated by Figure 18, was influenced by her expectations surrounding the tension between personal growth and building helping skills, her extensive professional support network, and her perception that trust was built over time. Since she has already spent three years working on her own issues with an adult support network, Cache chose not to reflect on heavy issues and to put them aside and focus on learning helping skills. She made use of the strategy of presentation of the personal self to discuss some of her reflections, as a means of getting to know others and to build her trust in the group. Since the retreat was so short, she was only beginning to feel trust by the end of the training event.

Cache came into training with a particular style of helping which she refined through the process of telling others about herself and learning how to communicate the feelings which she already valued. She continued to struggle

with acting on her values as she listened to her peers. She was motivated by her desire to help herself as well as others and wanted to respond to the faith of her own counsellor who helped her. Cache valued communicating feelings to others, but was hesitant to experience them for herself. She acknowledged that understanding herself was important and used peer helping as a way of doing that. She placed strong limits on her discussion of her own experience and believed in her own ability to help herself. She struggled with letting others be responsible for helping themselves.

Figure 18: Cache's Path Through Training



Case Illustration #6: Sara

Sara was 16 years old and entering grade 11 in a new school. She was selected for the peer helping program (a credit course) in her school, based on her past experience as a peer helper in elementary and junior high school. She attended a training event that occurred on two consecutive weekends during the summer. Sara had attended peer helping training before, but not with the same trainers. The training event included teens from all the high schools in the school district.

Sara was very active in school and the community. She was participating in a community youth council involved in advocating for political change in her community. She lived with her mother, stepfather and step brother and considered her stepfather to be her father, calling him Dad. She has lived with him since she was seven, and did not see her real father. 'Dad' has difficulty with substance abuse and Sara described a lot of conflict in her family.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Sara did a lot of personal reflection during the training event. She did not get into high emotional intensity personal reflection, although the events that she reflected on were heavy issues.

Yeah, and it's not, it kind of drags the life out of a person sometimes, you know, and they fight a lot, too. It's been like that for most of it, and we've gone through a lot of things like, his drug problem and he quit that, and I just, I feel that I've really had to deal with a lot, you know, at a younger age, just, a lot of things that I wouldn't usually, I wouldn't think a kid should have to deal with.

She also reflected upon the death of her grandfather, her best friend moving away, and the friends she had helped in the past.

Sara made an intentional decision not to reflect on highly emotional issues, but to leave those locked away.

Yeah, those things are like in a locked door, kind of a thing. Maybe, you know, sometimes I think that they don't need to be brought up, you know, like, just some things that I just wouldn't talk about, you know, to people.

It was important to her to keep a check on the emotional intensity. "I feel everything usually I do, things usually hit me harder, like you know when I feel love, I feel love and when I'm sad, I really am sad, you know. I guess my feelings are more distinct to me." The importance of this did not become clear until six months following training when she could no longer lock away her reflections.

I was just ready to explode I couldn't pack anymore sadness or feelings in any more. I think after the training, it all just started coming out. It started leaking out slowly and then a whole bunch. That's what I see myself as. It just kept building up and you know to explode and then I couldn't take anymore. That's what happened. I was just so so depressed. It really scared me cause I'm not really always like that I'm not really always depressed.

Sara was suicidal at this point, and made use of the ongoing training support that she had as a safety valve to talk about herself.

Triggers.

Sara's personal reflection on events in her life was triggered by the specific directions of the trainers during activities that involved drawing and/or a focus on feelings and talking about the self. She was very interested in

feelings, and reflected on her feelings and the events associated with them.

The trainer's purpose in these activities was to develop an awareness of feelings and facilitate the comfort level of the group.

Presentation of the personal self.

Sara managed her personal reflection by talking about herself. Her intent was more focused on compressed friendship construction. She spoke about the move of her friend, the death of her grandfather, and issues and concerns that she had about friends. Sara shared her feelings and thoughts in response to the trainers requests during check-in time.

Sara limited what she talked about to events and feelings that she felt others could handle. She viewed the events as light. She had not had enough time with the group to feel comfortable talking to them about heavy issues.

It was a little too heavy, I think, for people to you know, listen to. I don't think they would have taken it in the right way or whatever?

Sara took responsibility for the trust and believed that everyone was there for the same purpose, thus it was important to talk about herself.

I guess, it sort of seemed that everyone was there to listen to you, how were you feeling.... It seemed like being there, I wasn't afraid of showing my more serious side, not so much that, it seemed to be able to come out....

I'd only just met that weekend, so, maybe because I know I was starting fresh, I think in a way everybody there you just knew them, how you knew them from there, I think, from the group, I guess that helped with it, too.

It was very important for her to feel some connection with people and to have the time to get to know them.

There wasn't a trust there to start with, you know, I didn't know her very well, and I think if it was with someone that I knew more, I probably would feel a bit more comfortable with it, but because I didn't really know her very well, I knew her from school, but not, you know, and just I think the whole fact.... If it was someone that I knew or I had an immediate trust, like some people you develop that a lot quicker than other people.

In the training that Sara attended, the tension between personal growth and building helping skills tended to be more balanced toward building helping skills and the importance of personal growth was not explicitly discussed by the group. Sara's initial expectations for the training influenced her discussion of her own issues.

I just sort of thought that it would be like a brush-up kind of course, you know, for counselling. Like maybe, what it would be dealing with, or what you'd be doing over the year at school.

Sara's support network also influenced her choices to talk about herself.

She did not view her peers as particularly supportive.

I guess I call them my friends but, they're not usually there for me, they don't like to hear me talk, they don't think that I should have problems, you know, Sara, she's happy and that's it. She shouldn't show any other emotion, like she shouldn't be depressed or sad or angry or anything. So when I do show them they're shocked, usually, and they don't like me talking about Ryan, partly because they don't have that relationship, either, I guess. They just don't want to hear about it, so I usually don't talk to them about those kinds of things, other than my mom, I talk to her about all those things, but not usually with peers or anything like that.

Sara spoke about her mother as her best friend. She was fighting with her mother during the training event, and so her mother was not available to her to listen at that time. Sara did not have any adult support network, but she did

build one out of the training time and made use of the trainer in the year following to deal with her 'locked issues'.

I think at the training a big issue was at the time my home life, you know, I didn't really get into that too much, not really, with B.J. [trainer], when she's been here, we've all really gotten into a real deep part of our family life, you know, the way, and I've really opened up to the point where, you know, everything was out, and it was really good. So, I know I didn't, at the training, you know, there were a lot of new people there, you know, sure there was a lot of things that you don't always say because there were so many people, you know. I think at the training I shared enough that was me, for me, that I felt like I shared enough of myself, but with B.J. afterwards, now I've shared a lot more.

The shift in emphasis to personal growth, which happened in the follow-up support group, and the time to develop trust within the group were essential for her to unlock those issues and to do less editing of what she talked about with her peers. Sara did develop a state of high intensity reflection before talking about herself, and began the process using the follow-up group as a safety valve.

Building the helping persona.

Sara came into training with a strong natural helping history. She had played that role in her family, and with her friends since grade four.

Some things I've had to deal with, with friends, people that I hardly knew come to me with suicide and pregnancy and things that I never had to deal with, like with myself, and I don't know, what to say or how to react to them, but I try to be there for them, so I guess that's all that matters.

She already had a helping style that used her own experience to understand and empathize, and as a result of presenting some of her own

stories during the training came to believe that she should not talk about her own experience as part of helping.

I found that when I was talking completely, she would start interjecting and start talking and, oh, I know how that is, and that kind of makes me like, I still have something to say and I'd sort of let her say it, and then you know, I found I didn't like that very much, you know, I never do that with people when they talk to me. I let them have their whole side completely....

So I can imagine how you're feeling, you know. I won't exactly say it like that... but I kind of say that to myself. So that I know that this person really must be feeling sad, or how it might be making them feel. I guess I just think that you can use them [experiences] to your advantage.

Sara valued the speaker's taking responsibility for limiting what they tell you, and she made use of this as she talked about herself. She also valued feelings and understanding of her own experience as well as others.

While still being able to take care of other people but don't forget about yourself, sometimes you need to cry or you know, get your feelings....

Sara's motivation for helping was internal. She found the process of sorting out a solution a challenge to herself, and at the same time, helping makes her feel good about herself.

I see certain people and I try to figure them out. It's like a challenge.... I guess I just feel that I'm a pretty good person.... I've been a really good person to a lot of people.

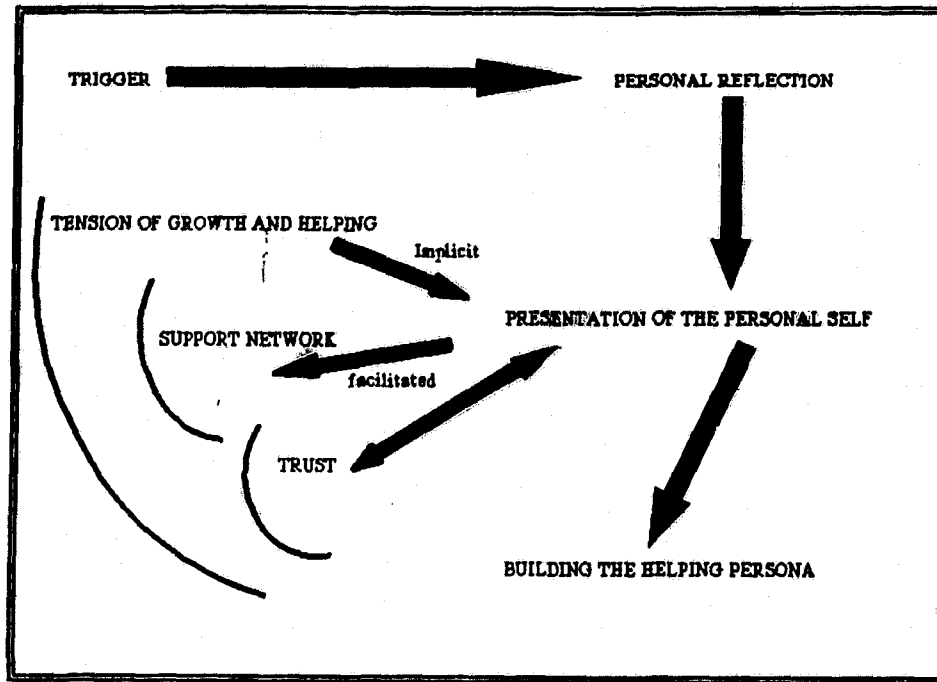
Summary

Sara arrived at training with a lot of experience both in terms of her life history, attending previous training, and helping friends with their problems. Her presentation of herself during training focused on issues that,

to her, were light. To her peers, they seemed heavy. She spent time reflecting on some of her heavier issues but did not talk about them. Sara did not allow herself to unlock any high intensity emotional reflections. She used the training to talk about herself and build a support network of peers that in her mind are caring and supportive and able to listen, something that she had not experienced before. She used the training event as a springboard to continue the phenomenon of personal reflection. As she developed trust in the trainer and the group that continued with her at the school, and the tension shifted toward personal growth, she came to realize how important it was to unlock some issues and she valued the expression of feelings as part of her own helping persona. She unlocked those personal reflections and made use of the group as a safety valve when the intensity overwhelmed her.

Sara's helping persona was motivated by the good feelings she received from helping others and the reinforcement that they gave her for being a good person. She was also challenged to 'figure them out.' She strongly valued a feeling of self-orientation, and understanding herself. She made use of a helping style that used her own experience for empathy, although she did not share her experience. She realized that she could not help everyone and began to refer people to other professional resources and to set limits on her own time to help other people. Her path through training is illustrated in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Sara's Path Through Training



CHAPTER FIVE

Comparing the Theoretical Elements to Existing Theory and Implications of the Study for Practice and Further Research

The theoretical elements revealed by this study were well grounded in the data and conceptually dense, but their relationship to each other was not well developed. Grounded theory methodology makes use of the literature for the purposes of supplementary validation and direction of theoretical sampling for the next phase of data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This chapter reviews the literature to validate the theoretical elements that emerged and summarizes the questions that would direct further data collection in order to specify the relationships between categories and to detail the process surrounding personal reflection on life events.

I outline theoretical perspectives from other authors that support or extend aspects of the theoretical elements developed earlier. The literature reported here makes clearer some of the tentative links between the categories. I chose to stop data collection and write up the results in order to consolidate the findings. The act of writing up the results often illuminates gaps in the data and areas for further data collection (Gilgun, 1992). I suggest some implications for further data collection and analysis to further develop the relationships between categories. I also look at the implications of the study for practitioners, since practitioners may want to further their practice of peer

helping training, by using some of the insights gained about the phenomenon of personal reflection.

Returning to the Literature: Theoretical Support for the Elements Relating to the Phenomenon of Personal Reflection on Life Events

In my original review of the literature on peer helping training, self-exploration and self-awareness were viewed as critical components of training. Two purposes for including self-exploration and self-awareness were described:

1. To improve the adaptive functioning of the peer helpers so that they were more capable and experienced personal growth. This is the 'training as treatment' approach advocated by those that encourage the use of peer helping as a strategy for fostering resiliency in teens. This also includes the use of peer programs to facilitate therapeutic goals with groups of teens that are identified as at-risk.

2. To improve the transfer of helping skills beyond the training situation. In this view, the full use of the experiential learning cycle demands that personal experience and thus, personal reflection be a component of training. The idea is that without the component of past or current experience to relate new learning to, practice of the new knowledge or skills will be lost beyond the training event.

Personal Reflection and Therapeutic Implications.

As I returned to the literature I focused on the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events and its relationship to presentation of the personal self. One of the purposes to self-exploration was the development of more personally capable peer helpers and I had chosen as case illustrations teens who could be deemed at-risk, traumatized, or vulnerable so I examined literature that dealt with these groups of teens. My intent was to find support for the theoretical elements in this study and to discover more about their relationship to each other.

Personal reflection is a component of self-exploration. Davis & Franzoi (1986) describe the relationship of private self-consciousness to self-disclosure with peers. "Private self-consciousness is the dispositional tendency to focus attention on the more private and covert aspects of the self" (p. 596). Their view that private self-consciousness is a dispositional tendency may indicate that the dimension of locked or unlocked memories that emerged as a component of the personal reflection on life events phenomenon is a personality dimension. Perhaps those teens who keep certain issues and memories locked away have an inherent tendency to focus less attention on their private thoughts and feelings.

Beardslee (1990) describes the roles of self-understanding in resilient individuals. Self-understanding is "an internal psychological process through which an individual makes causal connections between experiences in the

world at large and inner feelings.... Self-understanding requires not only the presence of thought and reflection about oneself and events, but also action congruent with such reflection" (p. 54). He conceives of self-understanding as a broader process which includes personal reflection. Elements of his definition relate to the dimensions of emotional intensity and the nature of life events that are associated with the phenomenon of personal reflection. Perhaps emotional intensity is high when those connections are made between the internal and external world and action in the form of presentation of the personal self is limited.

Shorin & Hart (1988) propose a developmental model of self-understanding. Self-understanding is defined as a cognitive developmental model of self-concept that focuses on what the person means by 'my self' rather than how they evaluate the self. In this model, personal reflection is associated with a higher developmental level in late adolescence, in which the teen considers personal thought processes surrounding moral judgements, social interactions, and personality characteristics. These cognitive processes could be related to the dimension that judges the nature of a life event as light or heavy. It may be that considerations around moral issues and social interactions influence the judgements of an event as light or heavy.

The phenomenon of personal reflection on life events clearly has theoretical support in the literature. It seems to be a component of a broader self-understanding, and might be conceived of as a dispositional characteristic.

In exploring and expanding the core phenomenon of personal reflection, I would want to consider the dimension of locked and unlocked memories as a possible personality characteristic related to private self-consciousness. This aspect of personal reflection might potentially describe the path that a teen takes through peer helping training toward understanding of the self as a helper and understanding of personal experience. The ideas on self-understanding, personal reflection, and private self-consciousness are based on a very broad definition of self-understanding, including many components of the self. It would be useful to narrow the focus to understanding of the self as a helper and to specify the dimensions of personal reflection on life events that lead to a clearer concept of the self as a helper, such as locked vs unlocked memories.

The idea of locked and unlocked memories as a dimension of personal reflection receives some support from Bruhn (1990), who suggests that autobiographical memory is that aspect of memory which provides an identity to the self. From his perspective, early memories are clues to how the individual perceives him or herself and the world. They represent schemes or interpretations of the world, not actual fact, and are representative of the issues that the individual is prepared to deal with at this point in their life. These would be the unlocked aspects of life events that peer helpers describe as part of the personal reflection process, and reviewing them develops self-understanding.

Memories that are locked, or repressed and unconscious in Bruhn's (1990) view are kept that way because the individual is unprepared to deal with the material. "Should such material emerge before the individual is emotionally prepared to process it, he may feel upset, overwhelmed and highly anxious.... should growth ensue that would permit exploration of such material, such memories often thrust themselves into awareness" (p. 62). This concept of memory as it relates to readiness to process material suggests a link between the emotional intensity of a personal reflection and the presentation of the personal self in a state of emotional confusion or as a safety valve.

Perhaps in the state of emotional confusion, the locked memory has reached an edge of awareness, but is not ready for processing as a personal reflection or through presentation of the self. Bruhn (1990) suggests that the individual is ready to process only if the memory is readily available to consciousness.

Terr (1991) in a theoretical overview of childhood trauma supports some of the characteristics of the emotional confusion associated with presentation of the personal self. Terr identifies self-hypnosis and dissociation, indifference to pain, avoidance of intimacy, and extremes of rage as characteristics evident in children who have experienced repeated trauma. Some of these characteristics are evident in the emotional confusion associated with presentation of the personal self. Sun withdrew in a state similar to self-hypnosis, when she felt the group was not listening to her. She was speaking

about her anger and rage. Moche describes the sensation of being able to feel again as he attended the weekend retreat. He too spoke about rage and anger as emotions that seemed to be constantly a part of him, and he didn't know when they would come out. Further data collection and analysis of the state of emotional confusion during presentation of the self and how this state relates to the memories (or absence of memories) of life events that might be indicative of childhood trauma would clarify the relationship of presentation of the personal self (as emotional confusion) to the phenomenon of personal reflection.

When using presentation of the self as a safety valve, the memory is unlocked and ready to be processed. This is similar to Bruhn's (1990) concept of childhood memories as an indicator of material that is ready to be examined and understood. The teen's view of the tension between personal growth and development of helping skills, as well as the trainer's explicit or implicit management of the process affects how the teen processes the issue at the time. Shorin & Hart (1988) suggest that in using the developmental model of self-understanding as a therapeutic tool, one should "be pulled toward higher levels of self-understanding, but not necessarily pushed" (p. 183). This suggests an active role on the part of the trainer in using explicit strategies for management, and explains the need for personal reflection and the balance between personal growth and growth in helping skills. The focus on learning

to help others may be an important aspect of 'not pushing' the teen toward a higher developmental level of self-understanding.

Davis & Franzoi (1986) theorize that teens high in private self-consciousness as a trait would be more prone to intimate self-disclosure with peers because they possess the wealth of self-knowledge that is necessary for such self-disclosure. They also theorize that being able to take the other person's perspective would facilitate self-disclosure. There could also be a reverse relationship: talking about the self facilitates private self-consciousness or personal reflection. They additionally postulate a gender difference, whereby girls would be more prone to engage in self-disclosure.

In connection with the theoretical elements described by the current study, Davis & Franzoi offer support for the connection between presentation of the self and personal reflection on life events. Specifically, those teens with events that are locked in memory and not accessible would have trouble with presentation of the self. This is evident in the use of the compressed friendship construction strategy. When teens were not comfortable talking about their own life events, or did not reflect on those events, they took the perspective of the other person and described a similar event.

This study did not identify a gender difference in presentation of the personal self. Davis & Franzoi (1986), in an empirical test of their theory using LISEREL path analysis, also found that a gender difference was not supported. They also found that the reciprocal relationship of presentation of

the self facilitating private self-consciousness was not supported statistically, although there was a trend in that direction. The relationship of private self-consciousness to self-disclosure was supported. Further theoretical sampling in the current study could focus on the interaction between presentation of the personal self and personal reflection. I would want to clarify and detail the relationship between the memory of life events, exploration of them during personal reflection and the use of presentation of the personal self in the form of compressed friendship construction. Perhaps teens who are not inherently likely to do a lot of personal reflection could have that process sparked by presentation of the personal self in the state of compressed friendship construction.

Beardslee (1990) suggests that the ability of individuals to appraise and reflect on their stresses was important to self-understanding. The sense of personal responsibility for their understanding was critical. "The capacity to experience relationships in depth, to have intimate and confiding relationships, evolved over time," (p. 62) and was another critical component. These ideas are similar to the dimension of personal responsibility involved in trust, and the importance of the support network. Both of these seem to be mediating factors in the presentation of the personal self. Further detailing of the relationship between a teen's personal responsibility for trusting a peer, and the role of the support network in mediating how a teen talks about him or herself would be another focus to further collection and analysis of data.

The literature reviewed here on self-understanding and self-exploration in teens at-risk suggests numerous directions for further theoretical sampling. These are summarized in Table 1, by indicating the theoretical category that emerged from this study and, if appropriate, the specific dimensions that are supported by the literature.

Table 1
Summary of the Self-Understanding Literature and Implications for Further Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical Category	Author and Author's Theoretical Concept	Implications for Theoretical Sampling
The Phenomenon of Personal Reflection ●Locked/unlocked event	Davis & Franzoi (1990) Private self-consciousness is a dispositional characteristic Bruhn(1990) (Autobiographical) Memory indicates a readiness to process.	What patterns of personal reflection on life events are found in several different contexts and over lifetime? When have life events been reflected on prior to training, and what personal growth and learning evolves? What further processing of that event goes on after reflection?
The Phenomenon of Personal Reflection ●Emotional Intensity	Bruhn (1990) Upset and anxiety occurs prior to readiness to process a memory. Premature trigger of the memory can be dangerous. Beardslee (1990) Self-understanding involves thought, feelings and action.	Focus on the state of emotional confusion and what actual memories are occurring at that time (if any)? What trigger characteristics might be linked specifically to emotional confusion? How are feeling, thought, action related in reflection phenomenon?

<p>The Phenomenon of Personal Reflection ●Nature of life events</p>	<p>Terr (1991) Characteristics of those with childhood trauma.</p>	<p>What is the traumatic nature of life events?</p>
<p>Presentation of the Personal Self</p>	<p>Beardslee (1990) The action component of self-understanding is essential.</p>	<p>How does personal action follow presentation of the personal self?</p>
<p>Presentation of the Personal Self ●Emotional Confusion</p>	<p>Terr (1991) Characteristics of those with childhood trauma involve rage, self-hypnosis, denial & numbing.</p>	<p>Focus on teens with childhood trauma and the strategy of presentation of the personal self. What characteristics distinguish more clearly the different states and how are those states related to the nature of the life event reflected on?</p>
<p>Presentation of the Personal Self ●Safety Valve</p>	<p>Bruhn (1990) Autobiographical memories are ready to be processed.</p>	<p>How are memories set aside and not processed or how are they processed during the safety valve state?</p>
<p>Presentation of the Personal Self ●Compressed Friendship Construction</p>	<p>Davis & Franzoi (1986) Perspective taking leads to self-disclosure.</p>	<p>What is the decision-making process that happens as teens choose a topic that is similar to their partners?</p>
<p>Personal Reflection is managed by Presentation of the Personal Self</p>	<p>Davis & Franzoi (1986) Private self-consciousness and perspective taking lead to self-disclosure.</p>	<p>How is personal reflection involved in the decision-making process?</p>

The Tension between personal growth and development of helping skills.	Shorin & Hart (1988) Self understanding is a developmental process. Pull (don't push) the teen to understanding.	How are the explicit vs. implicit management strategy used by the trainer and the focus on helping skills connected to personal growth in self-understanding on a hidden level?
Trust ● Personal responsibility	Beardslee (1990) One must take personal responsibility for self-understanding.	How are personal responsibility for trust and interest in or capacity for personal reflection related?
Support Network	Beardslee (1990) Relationship with another person is critical to self-understanding.	What support network relationships are related most specifically to the personal reflection phenomenon and the capacity to engage in it.

Learning through experience and the transfer of skills.

The initial literature that I reviewed on peer helping indicated that experiential learning was essential to the building of new knowledge and the transfer of skills to the helping relationships developed outside of the training event. The concept that emerged from this study was the building of a helping persona, which seems to be a consequence of personal reflection and presentation of the personal self. Building of a helping persona is not specific to skills and knowledge but the literature on experiential learning offers some support, and indicates areas where the concept might be related to the phenomenon of personal reflection and the strategy of presentation of the personal self.

Kolb (1984, 1986) describes the experiential learning cycle, as a cycle of learning that involves a dynamic tension between the learner's modes of apprehending experience and transforming experience into new knowledge. One must first grasp or apprehend an experience either through active participation or reflective observation. This experience must then be transformed into new knowledge either by abstractly thinking about the concepts or through actively experimenting with new ways of behaving.

Grasping experience and understanding experience can be thought of on two levels in this study. The first is the way the peer helper grasps and understands the experience of a peer to whom they are listening. This seems to be expressed in the dimension of style as a peer helper which is a characteristic of building the helping persona. The second level is that on which the peer helper grasps and understands what helping is and how to go about helping another person. The dimensions of a value set about helping, motivation for helping and natural helping history seem to be related to this broader level of understanding what helping is all about.

The way in which the teens describe their styles as peer helpers is an indication of their mode of grasping and understanding experience. This description of style was closely connected to the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events. A helping style that involves connecting with the person and mutual conversation about experience could indicate a mode of understanding experience that involves extension (Kolb, 1984) as the primary

mode of understanding both the self and the other's experience. One's own experience is accommodated by the other's experience, and understanding occurs through action. In this case, action is conversation.

On the other hand, a style of helping that involves reflection on personal experience, but not acting on that reflection by sharing it, indicates that the teen is grasping the other's experience and understanding it through the process of intension. Intension involves assimilating new information into old information (the teen's own experience) and developing new understanding which is communicated to the peer.

The final style of helping described in this study involves the teen separating totally from their experience. In this style, the grasping of the experience occurs on a conceptual level rather than an experience level, and understanding is accomplished through acting or problem solving, the process of extension.

Comparison of the dimension of style as a peer helper to Kolb's (1984, 1986) theoretical concepts on experiential learning suggests that there may be a fourth style as a peer helper, and that further exploration of the use of personal experience, as against a more abstract conceptual way of approaching helping would be worthwhile. Further data collection should include observing peer helping interactions looking for the styles described by the teens. Informally interviewing the peer helpers about those styles as they are observed would

ascertain how personal reflection enters into style and how understanding of the other's experience is achieved and communicated to the peer.

Abbey, Hunt, Weiser (1985) theorize that counsellors and clients have patterns of functioning based on the experiential learning cycle. They suggest that both client and counsellor should work toward balance among all four aspects of the cycle, rather than the imbalance described by the three styles as a peer helper that emerged in this study. By sampling both the description of style and observing the interactions between peer helpers and their clients, the peer helper style dimension of building the helping persona could be developed in more detail. Those teens with stressful life events bring those life events into the training in different ways and specific strategies implemented during training which would assist peer helpers to achieve a balanced use of personal reflection, presentation of the personal self, and conceptual understanding of the helping process as they work with their clients is essential. Prior to designing these strategies, a better understanding of peer helping style and its relationship to building the helping persona is essential.

The natural helping history of the peer helper seemed to play a part in forming the broader understanding of what a peer helper is that was part of building the helping persona. Kolb (1984) specifically relates the process of understanding to Piaget's ideas about accommodation and assimilation and the developmental progression that occurs as children grow older. It is not until the teen years that an individual is capable of abstractly thinking about the

concepts and much of their early learning occurs through active experimentation, or grasping of experience rather than understanding of experience. The teens with a strong natural helping history may build a more abstract understanding of their helping persona and be more able to describe a value base to their helping because they have actively worked with their experience as a helper, early in life. They reflect on and learn from their helping experience with others. The importance of previous history with helping is highlighted by those who describe how they review past mistakes in helping others and the many helping interactions that they have had with peers.

It would be interesting to explore further the building of the helping persona over time. The dimension of time in the building of the helping persona was not well detailed in this study because the primary focus was on the training event. The natural helping history of peer helpers has a time component to it. According to Kolb (1984), those professionals who enter the helping professions such as education, nursing, and social work are more oriented toward grasping experiences in an active and concrete manner. Some teens in this study were motivated to help their peers because of an interest in such careers. Further exploration of the dimension of the natural helping history, and how teens grasp and understand those helping experiences could detail a developmental process in the building of a helping persona which connects this natural helping history and motivation for helping as aspects of one dimension of the helping persona.

Hunt (1992) extends the concept of Kolb's cycle of learning to join the learning cycles of two individuals at the point of abstract conceptualization, and theorizes that the relationship between two individuals at this point as they share their new knowledge or understanding is essential to the component of action. His connection of two people sharing their knowledge and then acting on it, may be the link between the natural helping history and motivation for helping that draws them together as one dimension of the building of the helping persona. Those with a strong natural history of helping, who also described reinforcement from adults for helping others, experienced a mutual sharing of the concept of what a helper is and went on to help their peers further. I could also bring into this exploration the adult support network that the teens experienced as they provided models for helping and help for the teen in relation to their own life events. All of these connections with others, whether the other is a peer who needs help, an adult who is complimenting or reinforcing the teen's helping behaviour or encouraging entry into a helping profession, or an adult who provides support and help with the teen's own life events, are opportunities for sharing with another to continue the cycle of experiencing, building knowledge, sharing it and applying it. This suggests a cyclical, but developmental, process to building the helping persona that requires interaction with another person, but does not specify a role for that other person. I could return to data collection with a focus on looking at the interactions between a variety of individuals in the teen's life and how they

share with each other their knowledge about helping, and then how the teen applies that knowledge.

Hunt (1987) also talks about this sharing process as 'co-creation'.

Sharing is the process of talking with a partner about your images or learning.

This is similar to the concept of presentation of the personal self. Hunt

describes the benefits to this as being: (a) emotional support, (b) confidence,

(c) increased understanding, (d) new perspectives, (e) energy renewal, and (f)

a basis for planning action. There are parallels in the benefits of sharing as

co-creation to the dimensions of the concept of building a helping persona. He

describes the characteristics of sharing as co-creation as (a) good will, (b)

respect, (c) non-judgemental orientation, (d) openness to feelings and (e) trust.

These characteristics are similar to the concepts of trust, the tension between

personal growth and developing helping skills, and the support network which

emerged as important concepts having an impact on the presentation of the

personal self in this study. They also bear some relationship to the ideas of

emotional confusion, safety valve, compressed friendship construction, and

getting to know you as forms of presentation of the personal self. It would be

interesting to detail further the characteristics of each of the forms of

presentation of the personal self in relation to the characteristics of 'sharing as

co-creation' described by Hunt and the concepts of trust, the support network,

and the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills. Table

2 summarizes the literature relevant to several dimensions of the theoretical

category Building the Helping Persona as well as the theoretical category Presentation of the Personal Self and suggests further areas for theoretical sampling .

Table 2
Summary of Experiential Learning Literature and Implications for Further Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical Category	Author and Author's Theoretical Concept	Implications for Theoretical Sampling
Building the Helping Persona ●Helping Style	Kolb (1984, 1986) Experiential Learning. Apprehending and Transforming experience are two processes that combine to guide learning. There are four learning styles. Abbey, Hunt, Weiser (1985) There are patterns of counsellor style that are similar to learning style.	How is helping style expressed verbally and in action? How does the nature of helping style relate to grasping (actively or by personal reflection) and understanding (actively or conceptually)? What patterns are there in helping style that are consistent?

<p>Building the Helping Persona</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Value Set ● Motivation for Helping ● Natural Helping History 	<p>Kolb (1984, 1986) Similar to Piaget's concepts, learning is a developmental process, requiring active experimentation. Certain learning styles are more associated with helping professionals.</p> <p>Hunt (1992) There is a need for the opportunity for sharing and relationship in order for learning to progress.</p>	<p>How does contact and relationship with others in the contexts of (a) helping them, (b) being helped by them, or (c) being encouraged to discuss being a helper, contribute to building the helping persona over time?</p>
<p>Presentation of the Personal Self</p>	<p>Hunt (1992) Sharing one's ideas and images with another results in a process of co-creation of new understanding.</p>	<p>What are the mutual understandings about the helping persona that arise between partners as they talk about their personal reflections.</p>

Implications of this Action Research Study for Peer Helping Trainers

Since the intent of this study was both to generate new knowledge about the personal reflection on life events during peer helping training with teens, and to improve the practice of trainers doing such training, it is important to return to the implications for practice and consider what they are. The knowledge generated is substantive, it is based on the particular settings and participants in this study. I outline the implications of the study for the

practice of those trainers who participated in the study, including myself. I also suggest ways that other practitioners can begin with their own experience, integrate the information from our experience as it is presented here and improve their own practice of peer helping training. I hope that the ideas and process outlined here assist other trainer-researchers to use action research to improve their own practices.

The trainers.

The intent of the first set of trainers in participating in this study was to develop a better understanding of what they do and the key components of their practice. They have stated that as a result of participating in the study, they changed their practice to make the management of the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills more explicit. They now make use of more opportunities for discussion among teens, and ask the teens to be more active in the processing of the personal and skill based material that the trainers use. They have identified that a more integrated learning occurs by first separating and then integrating: (a) knowledge of the self; (b) helping the self; and (c) helping others.

The intent of the second set of trainers was to develop a training program based on a philosophy of personal reflection as a key component. They also wanted to encourage peer helpers to make effective use of self-disclosure rather than simply talking about themselves and their own

experience in response to another person's pain. Pippi reflects on the impact that participating in the research has had on her practice:

The training event has affected how I think of instructing adolescents in a lasting way. Asking the participants to call on their own life experiences in order to bridge concept of effective helping was a new method to me.... What I found during the training weekend was that this method was indeed successful in bridging abstract concepts (i.e. reflective listening) to the concrete (remember a time when you sought out someone to help you). Training adolescents with significant life experience proved to be challenging as the memories that were drawn upon were often traumatic or at least intense and the group was constantly shifting from concept to processing memories and back again. Clearly, this is something that is avoided in traditional didactic methods. The payoff being that given the event had enough counsellors, the learning for the adolescents was intensely significant and real and lasting.... Though time-consuming and potentially 'messy', this has proven itself to be the most effective and longest-lasting approach to use. I have a new understanding of how adolescents can learn in a manner that is contrary to school approaches. I have new ideas of how many counsellors need to be present to ensure a safe training experience. I have a new appreciation of the power that these clients have to use their own difficult life experiences as tools for bettering their future.

The researcher.

The importance of the personal reflection phenomenon as an integrated component of peer helping training was highlighted for me through my participation in this study. Since it was so central to the experience of the teens in this study, I am committed to using training activities that trigger personal reflection on a regular basis. These activities will involve the essential components of a trigger such as: (a) multiple opportunities for reflection and presentation of the personal self; (b) clear directions to access

life events; and (c) a purpose that involves awareness of feelings, practice of skills (to facilitate shared understanding), or development of trust in the group.

This commitment poses a challenge for me as a practitioner because the research undertaken in this study made use of trainers who were committed to that philosophy already and acted on it during their training events. I do not have a set of data or experience that takes a different philosophical approach. I will be open to Hunt's (1992) concept of sharing as co-creation, and talk to other practitioners with different views and try to learn from their experience and images of peer helping training.

As I facilitate a training event, I work with an awareness of the conditions that influence presentation of the personal self. I am aware of the trust that is perceived by participants in the group and encourage its development, at the same time recognizing that it does take time and will be influenced by individual personalities. I explore with group members their support networks, so that I can better understand how that impacts their presentation of the personal self. I make use of primarily explicit ways of managing the tension between personal growth and development of helping skills, and I ask teens about their view of that tension, so that they make it explicit.

The building of the helping persona as a consequence of personal reflection on life events and presentation of the personal self seems to be a developmental process that varies along dimensions such as past experience as

a natural helper, helping style, motivation for helping, and a set of values surrounding helping. While I need to learn more about this, as a research-practitioner I can make use of this initial knowledge to build into my practice mechanisms for learning more. I can discuss with teens their current style as a peer helper, based on the styles identified so far. I can ask about motivation for helping others and past experience in helping others and enquire about how that builds their concept of who they are as a helper. I can look for discrepancies between described style and visible style, and discuss those in a training event. Since personal reflection on life events and presentation of the self are components of the styles described by peer helpers, I can make these ideas a focus for discussion and practice.

The reader.

Hunt (1987) suggests a framework for how your practice (the reader's) of peer helping training may be changed as a result of this new knowledge about the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events during peer helping training for teens. In his book *Beginning with Ourselves*, he uses the idea of 'inside out' research and practice that is fundamental to the paradigm of action research for the individual practitioner.

To begin with, consider your own experience with peer helping training. What do you know about it? What assumptions do you hold about the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events during peer helping training? This is your current theoretical perspective on the phenomenon. You

have just read a collective representation of my experience, the experience of two sets of trainers, and two groups of teens involved in two separate training events. This forms the beginning of a substantive theory of our experience. What aspects of our experience match your experience? How would you explain the differences and similarities? How have your initial assumptions and implicit theories about the phenomenon changed? By answering these questions, we have collaborated on changing your practice, and extending the knowledge generated from this study. What concepts have implications for your practice and how might you implement them? You are now in a position to make those changes and apply your learning to your practice.

Summary

I chose to stop the process of data collection and analysis before coming to a fully developed substantive theory. This chapter contrasts the elements surrounding the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events, with other theoretical perspectives and suggests some avenues for further data collection and analysis. I can continue to develop the elements described here into a substantive theory on the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events during peer helping training with teens as I continue to practice in that area. I also invite other practitioners to share in the process of action research, by taking the elements described here and applying them to their own practice of peer helping.

There is support for the concepts derived in the study of these two training groups. Literature which focuses on the role of personal reflection and self-understanding in developing resiliency suggests that it is a factor in advancing teens' understanding of themselves. Some of the elements described in the literature suggest that the concept of presentation of the personal self is linked to a personality characteristic that would make a teen more prone to personal reflection. The concept of different learning styles as described by Kolb (1984) also supports this idea that there is a tendency to be either reflective or active in one's interaction with the world. Further theoretical sampling to examine these aspects that might predispose a teen to engage in personal reflection would be useful to further detail the nature of the phenomenon of personal reflection on life events.

Just as Shorin & Hart (1988) suggest a developmental progression to self-understanding, there may also be a developmental progression to building the helping persona. The aspects of the experiential learning cycle as described by Kolb and extended by Hunt (1987, 1992) suggest that presentation of the personal self as a strategy for managing personal reflection is critical to the building of that persona. Further theoretical sampling around the management of the tension between personal growth and developing helping skills, and the element of trust in the group, would help to develop further what influences the relationship between presentation of the personal self and building the helping persona. There also needs to be further

theoretical sampling on the support network, the natural helping history of the teen, and how these relate to the teens use of 'co-creation' (Hunt, 1992) in the building of the helping persona over time.

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Appendix One
Consent Forms

PEER HELPER / PARENT CONSENT**THE INTERACTION OF THE PERSONAL REFLECTION PROCESS WITH PERSONAL LIFE EXPERIENCE DURING PEER COUNSELLING TRAINING FOR ADOLESCENTS.****Information**

Carol Stuart, a student at the University of Victoria, is interested in learning about how your life experience influences your learning about how to become a peer helper. She is also interested in learning about the way peer counselling training affects peer helpers.

The staff for the program have helped Carol to decide what aspects of the training it is important to learn about, and have decided with Carol how she will be involved in the training. The training session will be videotaped. The videotape will be reviewed only by Carol in order to complete more detailed observations of the training.

You will be asked to complete a personal interview with Carol. The personal interview will involve questions about your life experience and about what peer counselling and the training program have been like for you. The interview will take no more than 45 minutes, and you can choose not to participate. The interview will be tape recorded. The audiotape will be transcribed and the transcript will be reviewed only by Carol. The videotape, audiotape and the audiotape transcript will be stored in a locked file and will be erased or shredded upon completion of this project. (August 1994)

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You might agree to participate in an interview at the beginning, and decide later that you do not want to, you can change your mind at any time simply by letting the staff know that you do not want to participate. Choosing not to participate in the interview will not affect your participation in the peer counselling training in any way.

By participating in the interview you will be helping Carol and the staff understand how peer counselling training affects you and what it is about the training that is most important. This will help us to better understand peer counselling and the kind of training that is most helpful. We expect to use this information to develop a training program that is specific to this agency. By participating in the interview you will also be able to understand for yourself how the peer counselling training and your life experience are going to work together so that you can better help your peers.

Carol will not be using any names to record information, nor will she be describing any personal information that you disclose in a way that could identify you. Carol will be available to answer any questions that you have. She will also be available at a later date to discuss the information that she learns from participating in the training and interviewing the peer helpers. If you are under the age of 19, please discuss this project with your parents or guardian and then both of you should sign the consent form and return it.

PEER HELPER / PARENT CONSENT**Consent**

Participant ID _____

Parent:

I understand the procedures that will be used in this project, as they are described above. I agree to let my son/daughter participate in the peer counselling training with Carol Stuart as an observer/trainer. I understand that the training will be videotaped. I agree to let my son/daughter be interviewed by Carol, if requested. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and that I may withdraw my permission for the interview at any time by letting the trainers know. I understand that participation in this project is voluntary, and that even if my son/daughter chooses not to participate in the interview Carol will still be observing them, and that they will be videotaped during the ordinary activities of the training. I understand that I may withdraw my son/daughter from the peer counselling training at any time. I understand that confidentiality is ensured by not using the names of the participants, or the agency and by changing any identifying information, that clearly identifies the participants.

DATE:**Name of Participant:****Parent/Guardian signature:****Peer Helper:**

I understand the procedures that will be used in this project, as they are described above. I agree to participate in the peer counselling training with Carol Stuart as an observer/trainer. I understand that the training will be videotaped. I agree to be interviewed by Carol, if requested. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and that I may withdraw my permission for the interview at any time by letting the trainers know. I understand that participation in this project is voluntary, and even if I choose not to participate in an interview that Carol will still be observing, and videotaping my activities during the training. I understand that I may withdraw from the peer counselling training at any time. I understand that confidentiality is ensured by not using the names of the participants, or the agency and by changing any identifying information, that clearly identifies the participants.

DATE:**Participant Signature:**

I would like to meet with Carol and the staff to review the results of this project. **YES** **NO**

STAFF CONSENT

THE INTERACTION OF THE PERSONAL REFLECTION PROCESS WITH PERSONAL LIFE EXPERIENCE DURING PEER COUNSELLING TRAINING FOR ADOLESCENTS.

Information

Carol Stuart, a student at the University of Victoria, is interested in learning about how the life experience of the peer counsellors influences their learning about how to become a peer helper. She is also interested in learning about how peer counselling affects the peer counsellors. The focus within the peer counselling program will be on those adolescents with problematic life experience who might be considered "at risk" themselves.

As the staff for the peer counselling program you will be asked to help Carol to decide what aspects of the program it is important to learn about, and to participate in deciding how Carol will be involved in the peer counselling program. It is hoped that you will be able to identify your own questions of interest that will help you to learn more about the training that you deliver to the adolescents.

Carol will be observing and participating in the program and asking peer helpers to complete a personal interview with her outside of the program's scheduled time. Only those peer helpers who give permission will be interviewed. Carol will also be interviewing yourselves as trainers. These sessions may be tape recorded for the purposes of transcription and the transcripts will only be reviewed by Carol. Audiotapes will be transcribed and the transcript will be reviewed only by Carol. The tape and the transcript will be stored in a locked file and will be erased or shredded upon completion of this project. (August 1994)

By participating in this research you will be helping Carol and yourselves understand how peer counselling training affects peer counsellors with problematic life experience and what it is about the training that is most important. This will help other trainers to better understand peer counselling and the kind of training that is most helpful.

Carol will not be using any names to record information, nor will she be describing any personal information that you disclose in a way that could identify you. You may choose to withdraw from the research at any time by discussing this decision with Carol. The effect of any research procedure (observation, interviews) on the participants in the program will be discussed with you prior to the procedure, and you will have the right to decide not to

proceed. The role of Carol as a participant observer in the peer counselling program will be discussed and agreed to collectively prior to the beginning of the training process.

Carol will be available during the project to answer any questions that you have. She will also be available at a later date to discuss the information that she learns from participating in the training and interviewing the students.

STAFF CONSENT**Consent**

Staff ID _____

I understand the procedures that will be used in this project, as they are described above. I agree to have Carol participate in the peer helping program, and understand that her role as participant observer will be discussed and agreed to with me prior to her participation. I agree to have the interviews with myself tape recorded. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time by discussing this decision with Carol. I understand that confidentiality is ensured by not using the names of the participants, staff, or the agency and by changing any identifying information, that clearly identifies the participants.

DATE:**Name of Trainer:****Trainer signature:**

I would like to meet with Carol to review the results of this project.

YES NO

STUDENT / PARENT CONSENT**THE INTERACTION OF THE PERSONAL REFLECTION PROCESS WITH PERSONAL LIFE EXPERIENCE DURING PEER COUNSELLING TRAINING FOR ADOLESCENTS.****Information**

Carol Stuart, a student at the University of Victoria, will be participating in the peer counselling training program which is occurring date.

Carol is interested in learning about how your life experience influences your learning about how to become a peer helper. She is also interested in learning about the way peer counselling training affects you.

The trainers for the peer counselling training program have helped Carol to decide what aspects of the training it is important to learn about, and have decided with Carol how she will be involved in the training program.

Carol will be observing and participating in the training. Some students may be asked to complete a personal interview with her outside of the training time. The personal interview will involve questions about your life experience and about what peer counselling and the training program have been like for you. The interview will take no more than 30 minutes, and you can choose not to participate. The interview will be tape recorded. The tape will be transcribed and the transcript will be reviewed only by Carol. The tape and the transcript will be stored in a locked file and will be erased or shredded upon completion of this project. (August 1994)

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You might agree to participate in an interview at the beginning, and decide later that you do not want to, you can change your mind at any time simply by letting the trainers know that you do not want to participate. Choosing not to participate in the interview will not affect your participation in the peer counselling training in any way.

By participating in the interview you will be helping Carol and the trainers understand how peer counselling training affects you and what it is about the training that is most important. This will help other trainers to better understand peer counselling and the kind of training that is most helpful. By participating in the interview you will also be able to understand for yourself how the peer counselling training and your life experience are going to work together so that you can better help your peers.

Carol will not be using any names to record information, nor will she be describing any personal information that you disclose in a way that could

identify you. During the peer counselling training the group will develop a Code of confidentiality and Carol will be bound by that code. Carol will be available during the training to answer any questions that you have. She will also be available at a later date to discuss the information that she learns from participating in the training and interviewing the students. Please discuss this project with your parents and then both of you should sign the consent form and return it.

STUDENT / PARENT CONSENT**Consent**

Participant ID# _____:

I understand the procedures that will be used in this project, as they are described above. I agree to let my son/daughter participate in the peer helping training with Carol Stuart as an observer/trainer. I agree to let my son/daughter be interviewed by Carol, if requested. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and that I may withdraw my permission for the interview at any time by letting the trainers know. I understand that participation in this project is voluntary, and that even if my son/daughter chooses not to participate in the interview Carol will still be visually observing them during the ordinary activities of the training group. I understand that I may withdraw my son/daughter from the peer counselling training at any time. I understand that confidentiality is ensured by not using the names of the participants, or their school and by changing any identifying information, that clearly identifies the participants.

DATE:**Name of Participant:****Parent/Guardian signature:**

I understand the procedures that will be used in this project, as they are described above. I agree to participate in the peer helping training with Carol Stuart as an observer/trainer. I agree to be interviewed by Carol, if requested. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and that I may withdraw my permission for the interview at any time by letting the trainers know. I understand that participation in this project is voluntary, and even if I choose not to participate in an interview that Carol will still be visually observing my activities during the training. I understand that I may withdraw from the peer counselling training at any time. I understand that confidentiality is ensured by not using the names of the participants, or their school and by changing any identifying information, that clearly identifies the participants.

DATE:**Participant Signature:**

I would like to meet with Carol and the trainers to review the results of this project.

YES NO

TRAINER CONSENT**THE INTERACTION OF THE PERSONAL REFLECTION PROCESS WITH PERSONAL LIFE EXPERIENCE DURING PEER COUNSELLING TRAINING FOR ADOLESCENTS.****Information**

Carol Stuart, a student at the University of Victoria, will be participating in the peer counselling training program which is occurring date. Carol is interested in learning about how the life experience of the peer counsellors influences their learning about how to become a peer helper. She is also interested in learning about how peer counselling training effects the peer counsellors. The focus within the training event will be on those adolescents with problematic life experience who might be considered "at risk" themselves.

As the trainer for the peer counselling training program you will be asked to help Carol to decide what aspects of the training it is important to learn about, and to participate in deciding how Carol will be involved in the training program. It is hoped that you will be able to identify your own questions of interest that will help you to learn more about the training that you deliver to these adolescents.

Carol will be observing and participating in the training and asking some students to complete a personal interview with her outside of the training time. Only those students who give permission will be interviewed. Carol will also be participating in the debriefing sessions completed by yourselves as trainers. These sessions may be tape recorded for the purposes of transcription and the transcripts will only be reviewed by Carol. Audiotapes will be transcribed and the transcript will be reviewed only by Carol. The tape and the transcript will be stored in a locked file and will be erased or shredded upon completion of this project. (August 1994)

By participating in this research you will be helping Carol and yourselves understand how peer counselling training effects peer counsellors with problematic life experience and what it is about the training that is most important. This will help other trainers to better understand peer counselling and the kind of training that is most helpful.

Carol will not be using any names to record information, nor will she be describing any personal information that you disclose in a way that could identify you. During the peer counselling training the group will develop a Code of confidentiality and Carol will be bound by that code.

You may choose to withdraw from the research at any time by discussing this decision with Carol. The effect of any research procedure (observation, interviews) on the participants in the training will be discussed with you prior to the procedure, and you will have the right to decide not to proceed. The role of Carol as a participant observer in the peer counselling training will be discussed and agreed to collectively prior to the beginning of the training process.

Carol will be available during the training to answer any questions that you have. She will also be available at a later date to discuss the information that she learns from participating in the training and interviewing the students.

TRAINER CONSENT**Consent**

Trainer ID# _____

I understand the procedures that will be used in this project, as they are described above. I agree to have Carol participate in the peer helping training, and understand that her role as participant observer will be discussed and agreed to with me prior to the training series. I agree to have the training debriefing sessions tape recorded. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time by discussing this decision with Carol. I understand that confidentiality is ensured by not using the names of the participants, trainers, or their school and by changing any identifying information, that clearly identifies the participants.

DATE:

Name of Trainer:

Trainer signature:

I would like to meet with Carol to review the results of this project.

YES NO

Appendix Two
Semi-structured Interview Guides

Trainers Group One: Orientation Questions

1. **What do you want to learn from participating in this project?**
2. **What kind of personal support system do you think that the teens have already constructed for themselves?**
3. **Do you have a sense of what it is that attracts them to peer helping?**
4. **Is there a particular group that you find that finds it to be a more intense process or a particular kind of group that's involved that finds that personal reflection to be more intense and surprising that they would have to do it.**
5. **How does the peer counselling support system fit into their regular support system?**
6. **How do you think the common experiences between peer helpers connects the teens to the peer helping program?**
7. **How does the degree in which they are working with those issues, influence the kind of participation that you have, and the way in which those kids are in training?**
8. **What happens when you have a trainer leading a group of kids like that, who doesn't have the same kind of orientation, or philosophy of personal growth as you do?**
9. **In your experience the kids that are coming in that are helpful, that are already out there being natural helpers to their friends, what are the key things that they already have, as they come in?**

**Peer Helper Guiding Interview Questions
Group One**

These questions are a guide only and the format and flow of the interview is largely determined by the content of the discussion that arises between the researcher and the peer helper.

1. **What did you think peer counselling training would be like before you started?**
2. **How do you feel about training now?**
3. **How has training affected your life?**
4. **What kind of previous peer helping training have you had?**
5. **What are some your own personal issues that you have talked about during training? What is the worst personal issue that you could imagine sharing with another peer helper or the staff during training? Is that the most traumatic issue you have experienced? Without sharing the most traumatic experience, how has it influenced your participation in training?**
6. **How does/will your experience as a peer helper and in the training effect your own life experience?**
7. **Review of specific observations that occurred during training with a request for internal thoughts and feelings.**

Group One: Follow-up Interview

1. **What kinds of "helping" have you been doing with the peer helping program in your school since the training? What kinds of other helping where you use the things you learned in training?**
2. **What do you remember about training? What exercises do you remember from training?**
3. **Tell me about friends and family and how they react to your peer helping role? What kinds of things do you tell them about what you do? Who do you go to with problems?**
4. **Review specific triggers for them with reflections and ask for more info.**
5. **Review general triggers of**
 - energy checks and games
 - check-ins
 - group guidelines-How did you feel about them, what did they mean to you? What would have happened without them?
 - think of a secret exercise What did you remember and who did you tell about that?
 - name plates to represent feelings
 - trust walk (if applicable)
 - listening with partners was really important for most people-How did you feel when you were telling your story? How similar were your stories to the other persons? How conversational? (How is it now when you are helping someone with an issue?) How did having a choice or not over your partner effect the story you used?
 - feeling bugs
 - feeling bodies
 - keepsakes
 - welcome wheels (4X)
 - resources that are available-(have any had the need?)
 - breaking confidentiality
 - overall group atmosphere
 - feeling focus
6. **What drove home the idea of listening and of paying attention to feelings?**
7. **What kinds of personal issues did you think about, but not necessarily discuss during training?**

8. Describe their helping ID in training and ask for changes.
As a helper I am...(Remember this was 6 months ago, it may have changed.)
9. Trust means... ...More?

Trainers Group Two: Orientation Questions

1. **When youth come to training, what kind of personal support system do you think they have already? How might this be different for the group we will be training? How does the support system change afterwards?**
2. **The youth that are interested in the program, what has hooked them, what attracts them to being a helper?**
3. **What are you looking for in the "natural helper" the youth that you want to bring in?**
4. **What are your current peer helpers missing? ie. What frustrates you or confuses you about the way in which they approach the helping role?**
5. **What is your core belief about how to train? What are the key elements to a training event? What conditions would maximize learning? What learning is most important to you? (Balance of process and skills?)**
6. **How do youth react to the process of personal reflection? Is there a particular kind of youth that finds it more intense or more surprising?**
7. **How does the training process connect to their "outside of training lives"? (for them?-not your intent)**
8. **How well will the group members know each other? How does that impact the training that we do?**
9. **How do you think their recovery experience influences their role as a helper? And the reverse, the role as a helper influences their recovery experience? How do other experiences influence?**
10. **How does the peer counsellors self-perception change through training?**
11. **What do you want to be better able to understand as a result of this research?**

**Peer Helper Guiding Interview Questions
Group Two**

These questions are a guide only and the format and flow of the interview is largely determined by the content of the discussion that arises between the researcher and the peer helper.

1. What were your initial expectations about what the training would be like?
2. How do you feel about it now?
3. Who did you partner off and work with? What issues did you talk about when the other person was practising listening?
4. What is the most painful issue you can imagine talking about? Did you talk about that?
5. What is the most painful thing that has ever happened to you? How did that affect you during training?
6. How do you imagine or how has training affected your life?
7. What sort of peer helper are you? How do you go about helping others?
8. How does your own life experience "in recovery" affect your experience as a peer helper? When does that experience get triggered and what happens for you when it is triggered?

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Publications:

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