

Introduction

“We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.” This is a quote by Oscar Wilde, from his book: *Lady Windermere's Fan*. This quote accurately describes the motivation behind the Real Girls Program our class put on this semester. Real Girls inspires girls to be true to themselves. We teach the practices of emotional intelligence, assertive self-expression and healthy relationships, giving girls the skills and confidence to live as leaders. We developed and delivered an intensive two-day program designed to meet the unique needs of 40 girls from Marsh Middle School.

This paper is one of a series relating to our case study conducted at Marsh Middle School. It will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the Real Girls program that we put together. The paper begins with an introduction section to familiarize one with the organization of our two day program. The next section includes a description of the methods we used in order to determine whether we created an effective program. This includes surveys we gave to the girls to evaluate our program. The responses from the surveys were entered into Excel and evaluated using SPSS. Next, we evaluated the data and discussed the implications, using charts and graphs. Following the results and discussion section, strengths and weaknesses will be discussed.

Recommendations incorporating the strengths and weaknesses identified will conclude the paper to aid in the success of future programs.

Program Description

Beginning at 8:30 on Monday, October 31 the students of Michael Mann's HCSV 369 class stood waiting to welcome the girls from Marsh Middle School; we had already decorated that morning as to hopefully create a friendly place for the girls to walk into. With balloons,

banners and streamers floating around the room, we had hoped to create an atmosphere that was both fun and receiving for the girls to feel like they could let their guard down and open up to us.

Professor Mann started off the morning by explaining the importance of listening to the leaders and how excited we were to have them. Next, we gave the girls surveys that would later aid us to determine the effectiveness of our program.

To start off the morning, we divided the girls up into three different “teams”. These were chosen at random, based on the shape of their name tags that the girls were given. We used these groups to help control the number of girls that would participate in the small group discussions and lessons. We also felt that a team would help build connections and a good support group for the girls. In these groups, we decorated the name tags, came up with a team cheer and then a name for our individual team. Each team was given the opportunity to cheer their song against the other groups. The girls would spend the next two days rotating to small group lessons within their groups. The objective of dividing the girls was to build a smaller community within the large group and create a sense of belonging for the girls.

We spent a large majority of the first day playing relay games, having girls compete for their teams. This was another way we had hoped to foster a bond between the girls so that they would feel more comfortable in the groups when the time came for having deeper discussions. These games were simple and easy that placed girls in humorous spots. It gave the girls a chance to loosen up and have fun. Some of the games included bobbing for apples, pushing a marshmallow back to their team using only their nose, searching for a piece of candy in a whip cream filled pie tray, and popping a balloon between herself and a team mate using only their bodies. This was to help the girls lose boundary issues they might feel with others as well as encourage the girls to come out of their comfort zone. The core objectives of the games were to

build leadership and team work amongst the girls, as they worked together to accomplish a common goal.

After the games, some of the leaders told stories from their own lives to show the girls that they are not alone in having suffered. We wanted to help inspire the girls, and to let them know that we have had the difficulties in our lives, but those are what made us strong. These stories were personal, which made them more influential to the girls, and it made more of an impact than if we had read stories from girls their own age. We made the situations real and individual, and we explained them in such a way as to show the positive things that have come of them in the aftermath.

The first large group lesson dealt with emotional health. The group emphasized the importance of realizing that we all experience difficult times and that one can make it through the rough patches. For this, we had the girls make survival bracelets out of Para Cord. We walked them through the process of looping and pulling the cords tight. As the girls made their bracelets, we explained that the bracelets were representations of our program and how it would be with them whenever they were facing difficulties. The band could be pulled out and provide them with the support that they needed when things got rough.

The second large group lesson focused on the consequences of our words and actions on our relationships with other people. We portrayed this by giving each girl a paper doll named Ginger. A story was read about Ginger and we asked the girls to tear a piece off of Ginger each time they felt that she was emotionally hurt in the story. After we finished reading the story, we asked the girls to look at their dolls and tell us what they saw. After having this discussion with the girls, we passed out tape and asked the girls to try and repair Ginger as best they could. We then asked them to look at Ginger, and see if she was truly the same as she had started out. This

was to help show that even though we may say we are sorry and that we are nice to them, the emotional scars never heal completely. We wanted to illustrate the concept of how our words may leave permanent wounds.

The last large group we had for the girls was to target the sexual questions that the girls might have. We had asked them to put any questions into a fish bowl the first day of the program for us to answer the next time we met. We breached the subject of STDs and other facts about sexual intercourse by doing an activity of exchanging beads amongst the group. Each girl was handed a handful of multiple colored beads, and told to walk around and simply trade with other girls. They did this for about three minutes then we asked them to have a seat. We had collected statistics, which we had used to consider the amount of each bead we have given the girls. As we called out a color we had the girls who had that color bead stand up, and each color stood for a different outcome that came of intercourse. A few examples would be: a herpes bead, a pregnancy bead, a genital warts etc... As we read out each statistic, all the girls who had the bead being called looked mortified and embarrassed. We also had condom beads that would cancel the other beads girls may have. This exercise emphasized how easily sexual activity can lead to serious consequences. This led us into teaching the girls how to properly put on a condom. We used bananas as dummies, and walked them through inspecting the wrapper, opening it with their hands and then how to pinch and apply it.

Throughout the two days, we had the three groups of girls rotating into small group lessons. One station dealt with emotional health, another dealt with relationships, and the third station dealt with sexual health. The small group activities allowed the leaders to talk more deeply about the topics and teach important lessons. It also gave the girls the chance to talk one on one with the leaders about any questions they might have.

The emotional health group wanted to teach the girls positive ways to express themselves. A discussion was facilitated about different ways to express one self and why it is important. Next, the boost books were introduced as one of many ways. It was explained that the primary objective of the boost book was to reflect on positive things, as well as encourage and uplift the girls. They were told to decorate the books using magazine clippings and fill it with their hopes, dreams, quotes and concerns. After time was given to decorate the books, the girls were told to write on the first page about the status of their lives at that particular moment. Examples included what music they liked, what their best friend's name was and all the stuff that made up who they were. Other sections of the boost book included their own personal strengths and weaknesses and a bucket list.

Another rotation was dedicated to helping the girls work through the relationships in their lives. They had created a series of scenarios that covered interpersonal relationships that the girls might experience. The girls were asked to act out the scenes and how they would try and solve the problems that were encountered. After each skit, the leaders discussed positive ways of handling the situations. This activity taught the girls that our decisions will always affect our relationships with people and that it is important to think about some of the consequences our actions might have.

The third rotation focused on sexual health. The first activity focused on different myths and stories regarding sex. The girls were given paddles to be used to show their opinions on different true or false statements. Red side if the girl thinks it is false or green if they believe it is true. Each opinion is asked why they feel that way, because each statement is very much up to debate. This activity taught girls about some of the myths and false information out there regarding sex. It was important that the girls learned about it since some actions can have serious consequences.

A second activity that this group performed was reading out different scenarios that might place a girl with a sexual encounter. The girls were asked to think about the scenario and what she might do if she were in the scenario. Examples included a girl at a party and a nice guy brings her drinks and then asks if she would like to go find some privacy.. These activities put the girls in real life situations that may come up for a girl. It allows the girls to think about the decisions they make regarding sexual behaviors. It also will prepare the girls if they should ever be in one of those situations.

At the end of the program, we wanted to create a lasting memory for the girls and have them reflect on what they learned during their time with us. We handed out large cut out puzzle pieces to each girl, and asked them to write down one thing they will remember or liked from our program. They then decorated their individual pieces, and one by one stepped up to the front of the group and glued their piece to the provide board. As they glued their piece to the board they had to say something that they had enjoyed about the program. At the end, when everyone had said their piece, we lifted up the board to show them what they had built; a 6' by 5' puzzle collogue dedicated to Real Girls. We told them that even though we are all different, if we come together and help each other than we can build something beautiful.

Description of Methods

To measure outcome evaluation the participants of the Real Girls program were given a survey the morning of the first day and the day after the program ended. The survey consisted of six sections measuring self-confidence, self-esteem, identity, personal support system, mattering and coping. They were asked to rank if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with various statements pertaining to the topics of each section. The surveys taken the morning of the first day were compared to the surveys taken the day after the program ended.

To measure the impact of the Real Girls program, a survey was given to participants two weeks after the last day of the program. This was a youth risk survey, similar to the survey given before the program started. The survey included questions about general health, alcohol consumption, body weight, other drugs, physical activity, sexual behavior, violence, safety and abuse, emotions and suicide, nutrition, and attending Real Girls. Questions also included if participants were less likely to engage in risky behaviors after attending the program. The results of this survey were compared with the results of the survey given prior to the program.

To measure program satisfaction, this survey was given the morning after the last day of the program. They were asked to rank if they strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree with various statements. They were also able to leave comments about how they felt about the program.

The outcome evaluation surveys were given the morning of the last day and the day after the last day of the program. Participants were given the same survey and the differences were measured between the two surveys. There was an increase in all categories of the survey. The significance between the two tests is always .002 or less.

	Pre Test	Post Test	Significance
Self-Confidence	17.24	19.83	.000
Self- Esteem	13.97	16.62	.000
Identity	15.59	17.00	.002
Personal Support System	18.55	21.10	.002
Mattering	16.00	18.97	.000

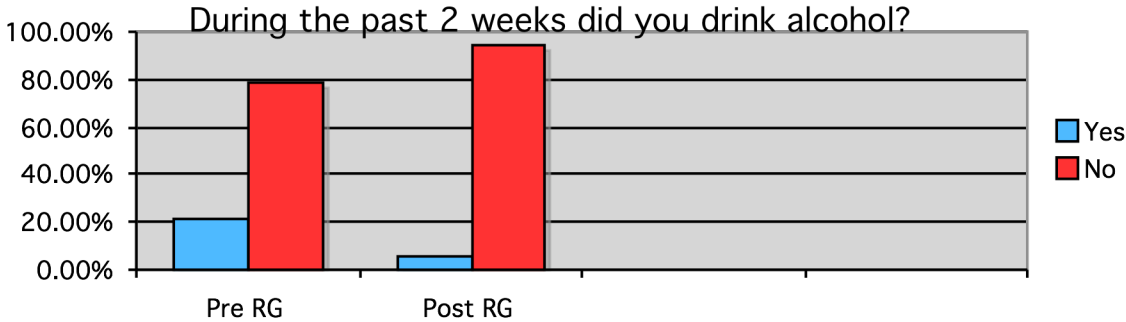
Coping	26.14	29.21	.001
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Participants felt more confident in all of these areas after attending Real Girls.

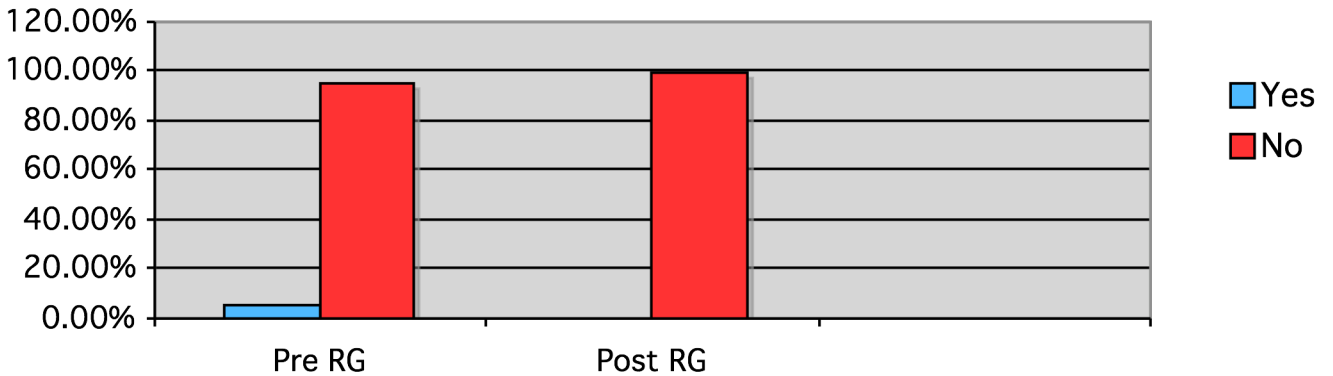
The risk survey given two weeks before the start of Real Girls was compared with a similar risk survey given two weeks after the Real Girls program ended. These were compared to measure the impact of the program. When asked about health in general, 20.7% of girls answered excellent compared to 5% from the pre-survey.

Alcohol

During the two weeks after Real Girls, 96.6% answered no to having consumed alcohol compared to 78.9% in the pre-survey. 100% of girls answered no to consuming alcohol until they were buzzed, tipsy or drunk.



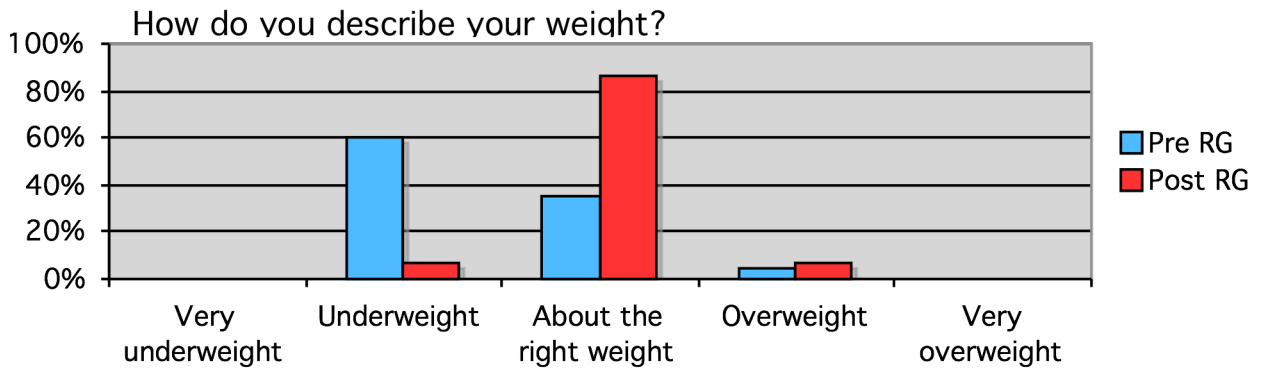
During the past 2 weeks did you drink alcohol until you were buzzed, tipsy or drunk?



There was a significant decrease in alcohol consumption after the Real Girls program.

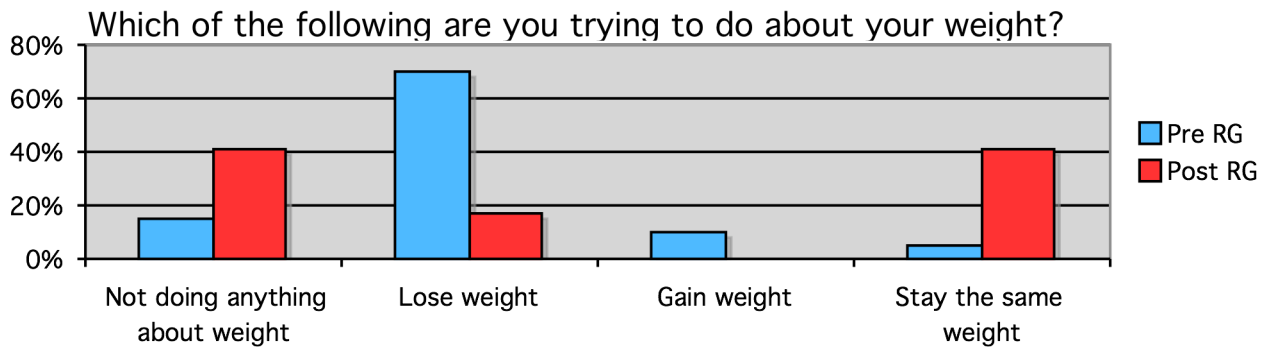
Body Weight

In the post Real Girls survey, 86.2% felt that they are about the right weight compared to 35% in the pre-survey. There was a significant difference between girls feeling underweight when compared to the pre-survey with 60% feeling underweight and 6.9% feeling underweight in the post-survey.



The survey asked if they were trying to do anything about their weight. There was a large increase from pre to post-surveys in participants not trying to do anything about their weight. In the pre-survey only 15% were not doing anything about their weight while 41.4% were not trying to do anything in the post-survey. 70% were trying to lose weight in the pre-survey while 17.2% were trying to lose weight in the post-survey. After the program, 41.4% reported trying to

stay the same weight while only 5% had reported trying to stay the same weight in the pre-survey.

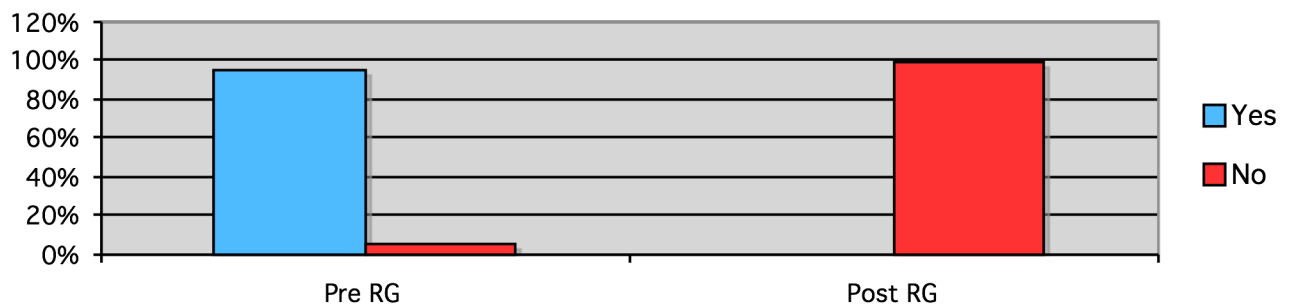


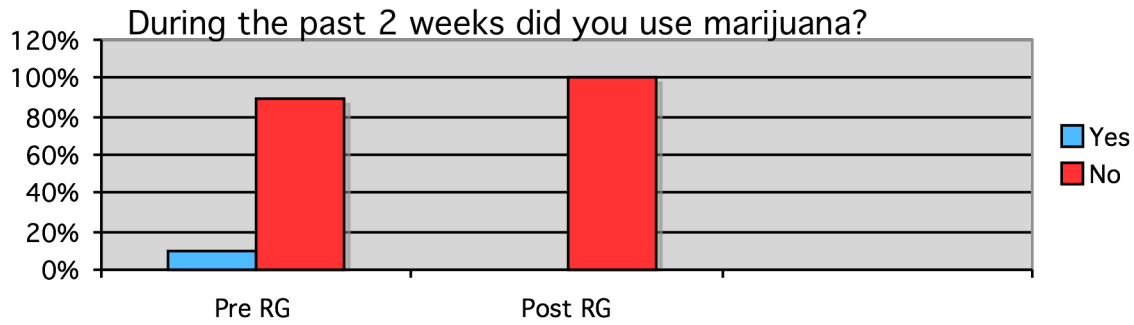
This shows that girls did feel better about their body weight and did not necessarily need to be losing weight. One participant reported that she learned how to “lose weight the healthy way”.

Other Drugs

The post Real Girls survey showed that 100% of participants had not smoked cigarettes, cigars, used chewing tobacco, snuff or dip during the two weeks after the program. It was also reported that 100% had not used marijuana during the two weeks after the program while 10% had used marijuana two weeks before Real Girls. All participants had not used prescription drugs to get high or buzzed post Real Girls while only 95% had not done so pre Real Girls.

During the past 2 weeks did you smoke cigarettes or cigars or used chewing tobacco, snuff or dip?



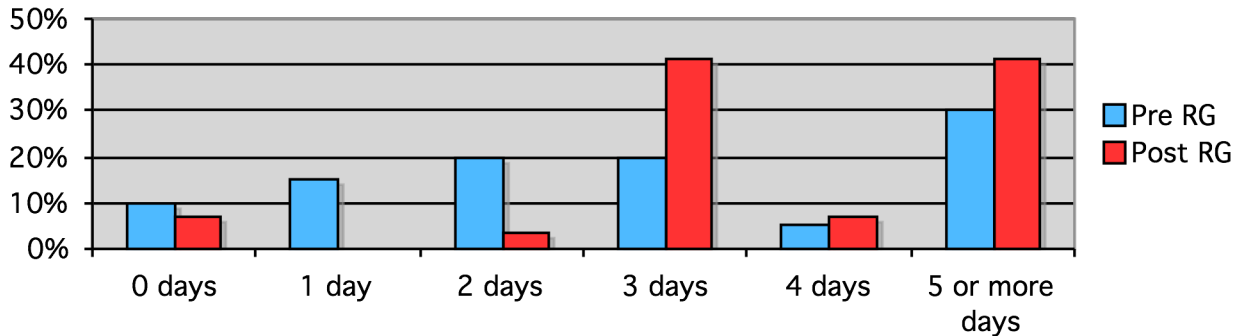


It was also reported that 31% of participants had chosen to use less tobacco, marijuana or other drugs and 37.9% has tried to stop using tobacco, cigarettes, marijuana or other drugs.

Physical Activity

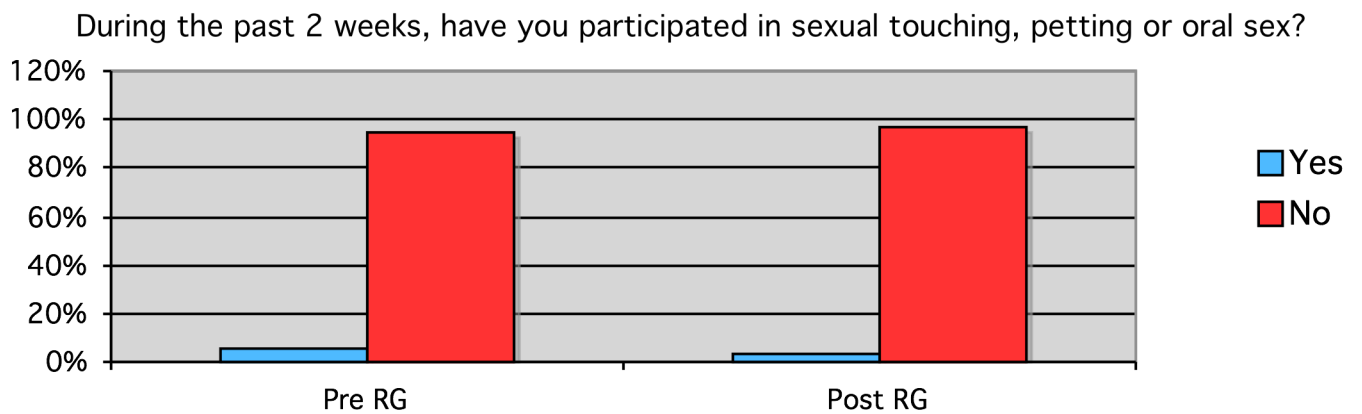
After attending Real Girls, 41.4% of girls reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes for 5 or more days compared with 30% being active 5 or more days before Real Girls. There was an increase in exercising for more days of the week as well. 51.7% of girls also decided that they want to play on a school or community sports team. We did not have information of how many were already on sports teams, which could have contributed to the data.

During the past 7 days, not counting school PE, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day?



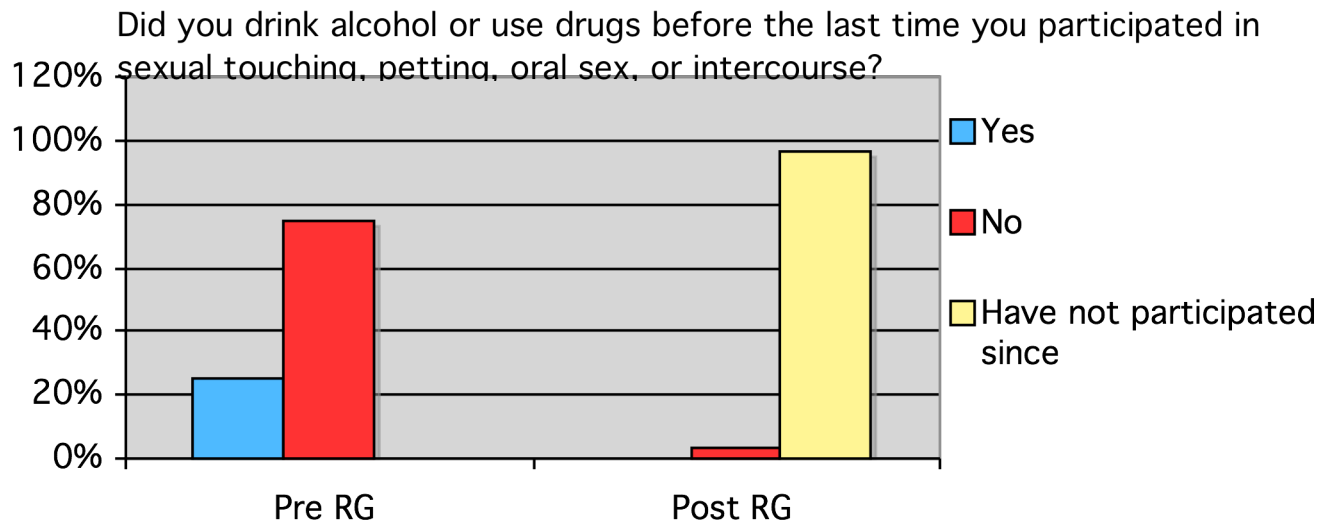
Sexual Behavior

Most participants had not reported in participating in sexual intercourse but 3.4% has participated in sexual touching, petting or oral sex post Real Girls while 5% had participated in these activities pre Real Girls.



There was a significant decrease in the consumption of alcohol and other drugs before participating in sexual touching, petting, oral sex, or intercourse. 25% had drank alcohol or used drugs before participating in these activities according to the pre-survey while only 3.4% had

drank alcohol or used drugs from the post-survey. 96.6% had not participated in any of these activities since Real Girls.

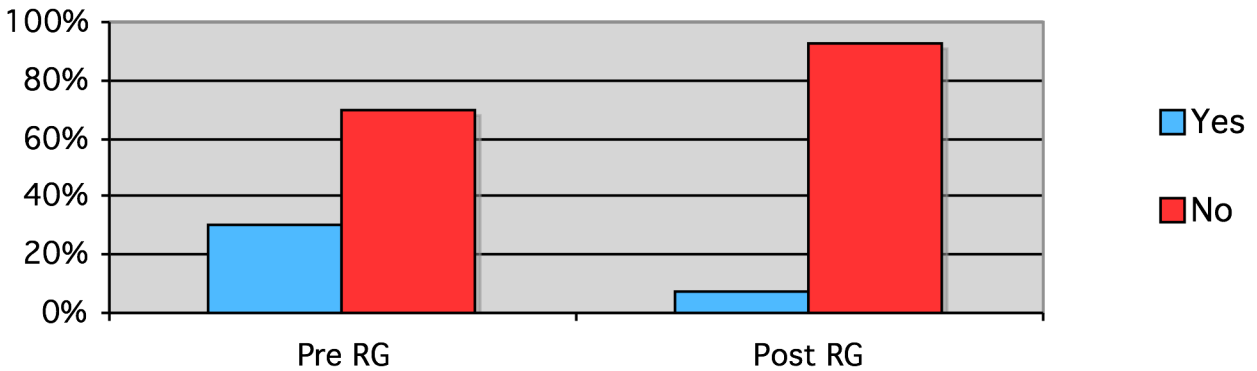


While 100% of participants reported not ever having sexual intercourse, 5% reported having used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. This slightly skews the data because it is not consistent with the questions and results.

Violence, Safety, and Abuse

There was a significant decrease in reporting if violence in the home or the threat of violence had ever made you want to leave home, even for just a short while between the pre and post-surveys. 30% had reported 'yes' to this question in the pre-survey and 6.9% reported 'yes' in the post-survey.

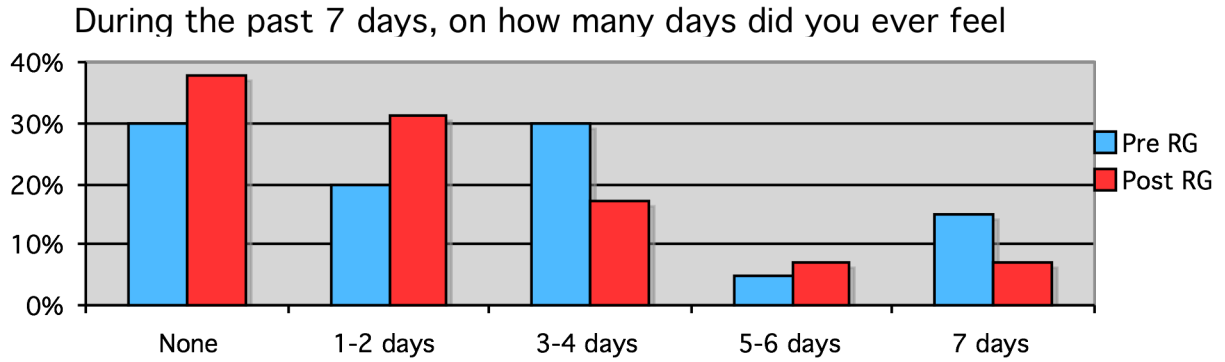
During the past 2 weeks, has violence in your home, or the threat of violence, ever made you want to leave home, even for just a short while?



After attending Real Girls, 37.9% of participants had spoken with a parent, teacher, counselor or other trusted adult about an experience with trauma or abuse. 79.3% of participants reported feeling more prepared to handle the challenges related to violence, safety, and abuse since Real Girls. One participant stated, “They helped me know that someone is there to help you. And that you can talk to some adults when you need to”. This was an important message that we wanted them to learn so they would know they could talk to adults to cope with problems and to know where to get help if necessary.

Emotional Health

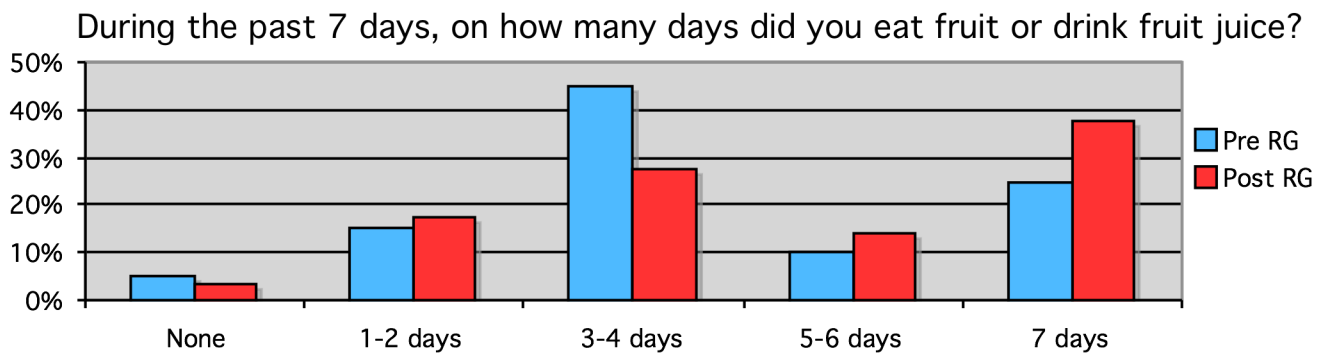
Girls felt stressed or overwhelmed for fewer days two weeks after the program as compared to two weeks before the program. 37.9% of girls did not feel stressed or overwhelmed on any days post Real Girls compared with 30% in the pre-survey. Only 6.9% of girls felt stressed or overwhelmed for seven days post Real Girls compared with 15% before going through the program.



All of the girls reported not seriously considering committing suicide after the program while 5% were considering it before the program. None of the participants reported actually attempting to commit suicide after the program as well.

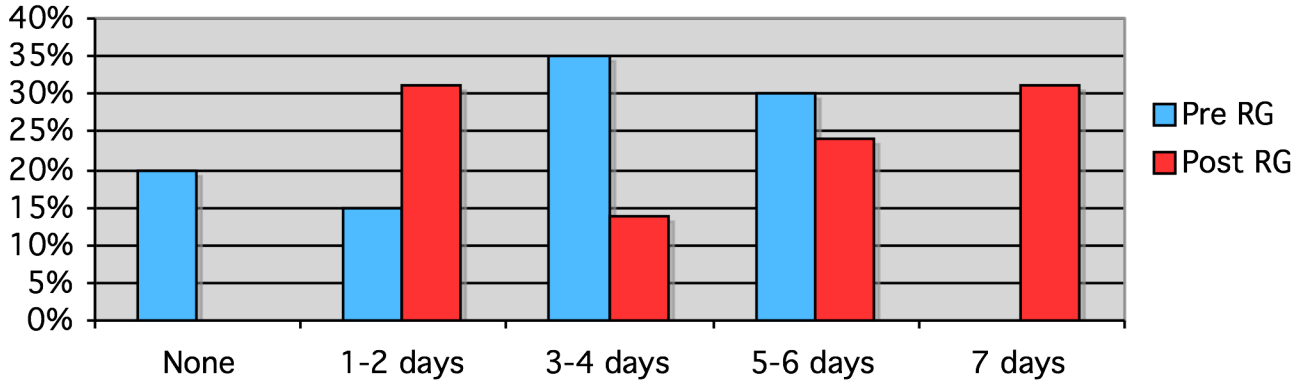
Nutrition

Participants reported eating fruit or drinking fruit juice more days after the program. Only 25% of girls ate fruit or drank fruit juice for seven days before attending the program while 37.9% reported eating fruit or drinking fruit juice for seven days after attending the program.



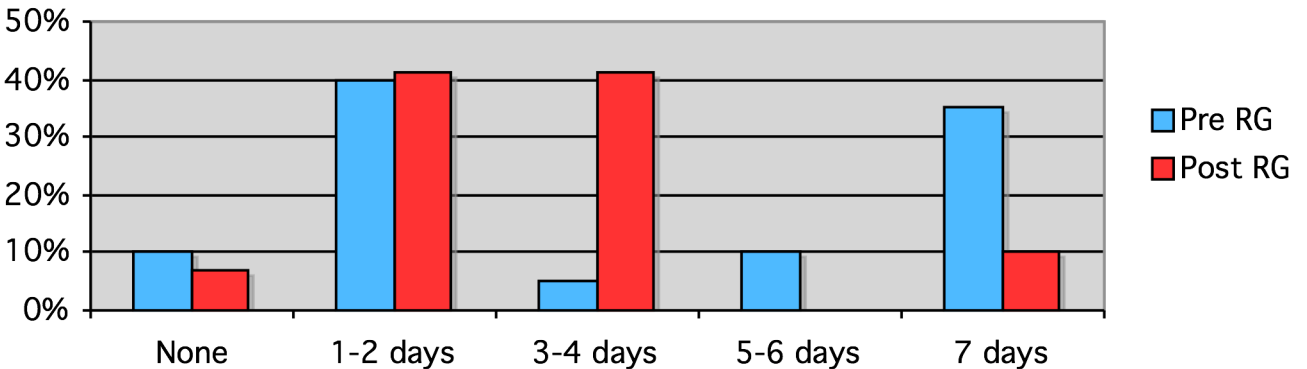
Girls reported eating vegetables or green salad on more days after attending the program compared with before the program. 31% reported eating vegetable or green salad for seven days after the program while 0% reported doing this before the program.

During the past 7 days, on how many days did you eat vegetables or green salad?



Participants reported drinking soda, eating sweets and other junk food on less days after attending the program as compared to before the program. Before the program 35% reported drinking soda, eating sweets and other junk food for seven days while only 10.3% reported doing this for seven days after the program.

During the past 7 days, on how many days did you drink soda or eat sweets or other junk food?



Stressing importance of overall health may have contributed to these results.

Real Girls

After participating in the Real Girls program, 96.6% reported that this helped them make important life decisions or decisions about health and wellbeing while only 3.4% reported that it did not help. Although we would have liked to see that 100% of participants felt that the program

helped them make important life decisions, the data reflects that the program was fairly successful and made a difference in these girls' lives.

Program Satisfaction Evaluation

Almost all of the girls who participated in Real Girls agreed or strongly agreed that the program was helpful.

Real Girls program helped me...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Feel confident and strong	75.9%	20.7%	0%	0%
Get along better with other girls	72.4%	24.1%	0%	0%
Feel closer to people who love me	72.4%	24.1%	0%	0%
Think about being successful	75.9%	20.7%	0%	0%
Set positive goals for my life	82.8%	13.8%	0%	0%
Learn how to deal with	79.3%	13.8%	3.4%	0%

problems				
Learn how to deal with stress	75.9%	20.7%	0%	0%
Answer some questions about my health	69.0%	27.6%	0%	0%
Answer some questions about my life	69.0%	24.1%	3.4%	0%
Overall, I believe the Real Girls program was...				
Helpful	82.8%	13.9%	0%	0%
Fun	93.1%	3.4%	0%	0%
Good for me	96.6%	0%	0%	0%

The only significant difference in the satisfaction report was that 3.4% of participants disagreed that the program helped answer some questions about life. For the most part, the evaluation report indicates that the program was helpful for the girls in regards to emotional health, sexual health and relationships. One participant stated, “Real Girls has helped me learn that I really know what to do. They helped me feel more sure that I was doing right”. Another participant stated, “Real Girls is fun and helpful. It’s not like school. In Real Girls we talked about things

that I care about”. This indicates that our program included topics that are important to middle school girls. One of our primary approaches was to be able to talk to the girls and get them to open up to us. One participant stated, “I really liked how they would sit and talk to you and not just tell you what to do”. Many of the girls were appreciative that we cared enough to spend time with them and were willing to listen to their problems. Our results indicate that our program was successful.

Program Strengths and Weaknesses

When evaluating the effectiveness of a program, it is important to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program. It is important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses so they can be applied to future programs. With any program, the success lies mostly in the energy of the group. The energy that is brought from the group sets the tone for the entire program. We started off with great and powerful energy from the first morning. Our group also created a warm and inviting atmosphere for the girls with decorations and music playing. When the girls from Marsh Junior High arrived at the Chico Women’s Center, they could feel the energy that we brought. When there is good energy, it makes people want to be there and participate in the day’s activities. Without a warm and inviting atmosphere and good energy, it would have been hard for the girls to feel comfortable in such a new setting.

In order for us to talk about deep issues and get the girls to open up, we had to build connections with the girls and get them to trust us. Our program consisted of many activities that allowed us to do so. One of the first things we did was split the girls as well as us into three groups to form teams. We developed team names, team flags, as well as team cheers. The teams and the activities fostered a smaller community within the large group and created a sense of belonging for the girls. The activities also allowed us to talk to the girls and get to know them

better. It was important for us to build real relationships and that each girl received the same amount of attention. With such a large group, it can become difficult to make sure everyone is getting the attention she deserves. However, the big sister little sister assignments ensured that each girl received the individualized and focused attention that she needed. It created a great way for us to get to know the girls better and connect on a deeper level.

When one is going through a difficult time in her life, she most likely feels as if she is the only one going through it and that nobody understands. This makes it challenging for a girl to open up and talk about the issues she is dealing with. During our program, we incorporated our own stories for the girls to hear before each large group lesson. Hearing the stories helped the girls understand that they are not alone with the issues they may have at home or at school. It also allowed the girls to open up to the leaders about some of the problems they are dealing with and realize that there are healthy ways to deal with them and become successful in the future.

Although the Real Girls program we developed and implemented had many strengths and made an impact on the girls, it was also lacking in some areas. Studies show that in order to create a lasting impact on girls, intervention programs should be at least 40 hours long. We only had two days, totaling 12 hours, to implement our program. The degree of our impact would have been strengthened if we had more time with the girls. With more time, we could have built stronger connections with the girls. When connections are stronger, they are more likely to open up and talk about issues with us. Moreover, it takes more time for some girls to feel comfortable and to trust people they viewed as strangers only hours before. As a result, some girls may have been dealing with issues, yet we were not able to help them because they still were not comfortable around the leaders.

A longer program would have also allowed us to go deeper into the topics that we chose to cover during the program. Each lesson was given about an hour to be implemented. For such intensive subjects such as relationships, sexual health, and emotional health, a longer lesson may have helped clarify any questions the girls may have had.

Furthermore, it was difficult at times to get the girls attention when new lessons were being started. We needed to be more firm in telling the girls that it was important for them to end private discussions and listen to whoever was speaking at the time. The beginning of any lesson was always important to be heard because we often addressed the goals and importance of what we were about to do. As a result, many of the core messages that we were trying to teach the girls may have been missed. The main objective of the program was to teach the girls to lead healthy lives. Many may have been engaged in the activities and found Real Girls as an amazing experience, but we may have lost some of our impact if the girls did not learn the significance of the lessons.

Recommendations

A lot of knowledge was gained from the Real Girls experience. It is important to keep a couple of recommendations in mind for future programs in order to ensure a lasting impact in young girls.

Consider beginning the program with light and fun activities. Starting out with small and fun activities shows the girls that exciting activities have been planned for them and allows the girls to become comfortable. It also fosters an honest and safe environment for the girls. This will be important for activities planned later in the program to get the girls to talk about deeper topics. It is also important that the activities planned for the beginning allow the leaders and the girls to connect and build relationships in some way. Before girls can even begin to talk about

personal topics, they need to feel a connection and that they can trust the person or persons that they are confiding the information to. Providing these kinds of activities in the beginning will impact the way the rest of the program will run.

While it is important to have fun with the girls, it is also critical to be assertive with the girls. Leaders should emphasize the significance of giving the speaker or speakers all of their attention because they are trying to teach them important life lessons. Being assertive also reminds the girls that the topics to be discussed are serious and may affect some of the decisions they make in the future.

The most important thing to remember is that many girls need someone in their lives to talk to and someone who will listen to them. If at any way possible, we recommend planning a longer program for girls in order to ensure a significant impact. Our program was only two days long, which made it quite difficult to build deep and stronger connections with the girls. Also, the program only allowed one session where the girls had private and individualized time with their big sisters. For some, this made it quite difficult to open up and talk about problems or questions they may be dealing with. Being able to spend time and have fun with positive people that they look up to plays the most significant factor in impacting young women's lives.

Ensuring that time is available for connections to grow provides the structure for a successful program.