

**LEARNER'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A PEER-COUNSELLING TRAINING  
PROGRAMME.**

by

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## ABSTRACT

As the intensity and magnitude of the social and emotional issues that adolescents face begins to mount, therapists, counsellors and educators are faced with a number of challenges in terms of the provision of the professional service of counselling in schools. In the South African context the provision of support services in education has been divided along racial and class lines, thereby making access to these services the domain of a privileged few. The training of peer-counsellors in schools is a deliberate attempt to broaden the access to support services across communities. This type of training is however intensive, as it involves activities that challenge the adolescent participant on a personal, social and emotional level. This study focuses on the personal experience of 9 learners on a peer-counsellor training course in a school. A qualitative research methodology was used to extract raw data from various sources. The raw data was derived from a document analysis of intake forms, feedback forms and interview transcripts. Categories were identified in the raw data through open coding, and themes then named. The theme of empowerment emerged from the data as the primary positive outcome of the training course along with increased levels of social and emotional awareness, and a desire to provide a service. It is evident from this study that participation in a peer-counsellor training group is a worthwhile experience for adolescents. Training gaps were also identified. Emotional barriers were identified which raised concern over the selection process of participants for the course, the lack of debriefing after the course, as well as the level of emotional maturity of some of the participants for such an intensive training programme. It is recommended that the selection of participants be done with stricter criteria and that the contents and demands of the course be made known to all prospective participants in advance. The expectations of the participants are to be noted and not overlooked through the duration of the course. By documenting the experiences of learners in a peer-counsellor training course, insight has been gained, that will direct future planning with regard to the training, and use of peer-counsellors in the school setting.

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This mini-dissertation and the effort it involved is dedicated to all these influential people in my life.

## DECLARATION

I, Gregory Neil Crighton, declare that the work depicted in this mini-dissertation is original (except where citations and acknowledgements indicate otherwise). No part of this work has been, or will be, submitted in any form as part of another degree at this, or any other University.



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# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION TO THE INQUIRY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The successful implementation of support services at all levels of society, and particularly at grass roots level will play an important role in transforming society. This study aims to focus on the personal experience of the learners on completion of a peer-counsellor training course.

Peer counsellor training is intense training, particularly for an adolescent, taking into account the challenges and issues they face on a daily basis. This study aims to investigate peer counsellor's personal experience of such intensive training and accelerated personal growth. The training of peer counsellors in the South African school system could address two areas. The first being the shortage of trained professionals to provide the support service of counselling and the resultant lack of service delivery and access to this service for the large majority of South African learners. The second area is the personal growth and challenges that these individuals will face in this type of training.

### 1.2 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

The following terminology will be used frequently in this study:

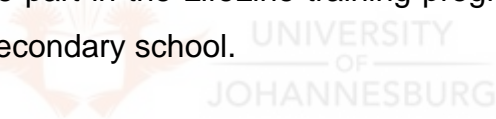
**Support Services** are services rendered by trained professionals at all levels of the education system to support and assist learners, educators and families in order to meet the challenges of social, emotional, physical, scholastic, and economic problems. These services can include school health, school guidance and counselling, and special education (NEPI, 1992, p.13).

**Support Services Personnel** as discussed in this document include administrators at a national, regional and district level, educational psychologists, social workers, special needs educators, occupational therapists, speech and hearing therapists, Life Orientation educators, and educators (NEPI, 1992, p.14-15).

**Peer counselling** within the context of this inquiry is simply learners helping other learners. When people experience frustrations, worries, concerns, and other life events, they typically turn to their friends, not professionals, for help, advice, practical assistance, and support. While peer helping can include a variety of approaches, it is different from peer groups and self-help or support groups. According to De Rosenroll (1989), peer counselling is typically characterised by the following components:

- Peers are self-nominated or selected by members of their peer group(s);
- Peers are volunteers, but may receive some type of compensation for their involvement;
- The peer volunteers receive need-based, goal-directed and experiential skill training from a qualified peer trainer;
- The peer volunteers are supervised on a regular basis; and
- The more experience the peers have, the more they are involved in the selection, training, and supervision of other peers.

**Peer counsellor.** In this study the peer counsellors that are referred to are the learners who have volunteered to take part in the LifeLine training programme. These learners are from the senior grades of a secondary school.



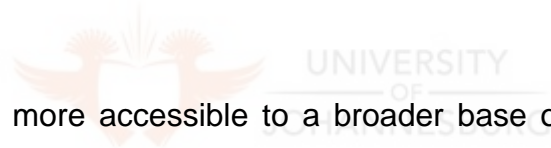
### 1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

According to the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) of 1992 support services, such as counselling and therapy, in the South African education system have in the past, lacked focus, and for many, these services have been marginalised and fragmented (NEPI, 1992, p.1). In South Africa, the unequal distribution of resources forced policy makers to rethink how educators and education can support the development of the youth. The NEPI document highlighted a number of key areas where school-going children will most likely experience difficulties and therefore would need support. The areas identified by the NEPI (1992, p.2) document are as follows:

- Special academic and learning problems;
- Physical health problems;
- Emotional concerns;
- Career education needs;

- Lifeskills; and
- Poverty related problems.

Support services in South Africa have tended to combine a preventative and curative approach when addressing the needs of learners. The focus has however, been on individual interventions and little was done to address the shortcomings of the system in terms of its ability to broaden its focus to the group. This was only addressed with the new curriculum, which was only implemented as policy and practice more than ten years later. What happened in the interim was that support services such as counselling and therapy became the domain of a select few. The racial and class discrimination that defined South African society in the past was replicated in the provision of services and resources in education. As a result of this, support services in the classroom and in the school setting were inaccessible to most. With the changes in the curriculum, these support services became increasingly marginalised. Most importantly however, for the purposes of this study, is the fact that the number of qualified, experienced and trained professionals in the education system, who were able to provide this specialised service, diminished rapidly (NEPI, 1992).



Support services can be more accessible to a broader base of people by training those very people at a grass roots level and empowering them to help not only themselves but also each other. Counselling, guidance and therapy will have to become more easily accessible to learners in order for education to fully support the development of youth. Peer counsellors, if suitably trained can be utilised to provide this service that has for many been lacking for a considerable period of time. Psychologists, counsellors, educators, and learners will benefit from the assistance of peer counsellors in schools.

A preliminary review of older literature suggests that peer-counselling is a branch of the support services in education that has in the past been underutilised (Mitchum, 1983, p.146-149; Hudson & Sparks, 1984, p. 22:3; McDowell & McKee, 1982). It also indicates that there is a worldwide movement to broaden the access to support services. This is happening in counselling through the training of peer-counsellors. In South Africa, this is particularly significant because of the limited resources we have in the educational sphere. Psychological services are not readily available due to the lack of funds, shortage of qualified professionals, language barriers, geographical distance, stigmas attached to these services, and cultural traditions. Van Niekerk and Prins (2002) refer to a changing

world that faces the youth of today. Besides the general changes in the world, the South African youth has had to deal with issues of violence, rape, poverty, psychological problems and transformation. This is one of the reasons why the need for peer-counselling in South Africa has greatly increased. The importance of peer-counsellor training is demonstrated by the peer-counsellor training courses that have been introduced by the Student Services of many universities under the auspices of the Mandela University and the Society for Student Counsellors in Southern Africa (De Jager, 1998).

LifeLine have similarly developed courses which are specifically for the youth. Youthline is the division of LifeLine that is dedicated to the training of the youth as peer-counsellors. LifeLine has also recognised the fact that South Africans live in a highly stressed society and without access to support services it can be assumed that anxiety levels will rise even higher leading to increases in alcoholism, rape, drug abuse, crime and violence, and in turn to the breakdown of the family unit as described by Van Niekerk and Prins (2002). All of these problems are an enormous drain on the already over-stretched welfare and health services in South Africa. Through the training of peer-counsellors, LifeLine provides trained “counsellors” to support those in need of counselling.

Research in the past has focused on the development of training courses (Campbell, 1983, p.118-123; Allan, 1978, p.301-309) that have been used in the educational sphere to train these counsellors, and also on the effect that these counsellors have in terms of the provision of a professional service (Canning, 1983, p.124-129). There has been very little research worldwide in the field of peer-counsellor training since the 1980's and this is particularly so in South Africa. One of the studies which will be referred to in this literature is a recently completed study by Lautenbach (2005). The research done in the 1980's on peer counsellor training has not been followed through, as evidenced by the lack of published studies beyond the late 1980's. It seems as if there is a gap in the research with regard to the experience of the learners who undergo the training. The question is, “are adolescents equipped with the maturity, self-confidence and lifeskills to handle such intensive training and accelerated personal growth?” This study aims to focus on the personal experience of the learners while in the LifeLine training course for peer-counsellors, and not on the design of the course or the effect that the counsellors may have in their schools.

Psychological services in South Africa have, like in other parts of the world, become a product of global capitalism (Painter & Terreblanche, 2004). The consequence of this is that psychological services that were once central to the service provision of the various education departments are now privatised and decentralised, thereby making access to psychological services the domain of a privileged few. As a result of the racially divided past of South Africa, the development, definition, and provision of psychological services have been defined by race and class (Painter & Terreblanche, 2004). In the past, research that has focused on a careful and critical deconstruction of the provision of psychological services has shown that the issue of race is central to the domains of counselling and clinical psychology (Dawes, 1985; Turton, 1986), industrial psychology (Nzimande, 1984; Fullager & Paizis, 1986; Hayes, 1987), educational psychology (Whitaker, 1991), cultural and cross-cultural psychology (Miller, 1989), the phenomenological and humanist movements (Ivey, 1986; Swartz, 1986) and the psychometric testing industry (Sehlapelo & Terreblanche, 1996).

Psychological services in South Africa are also restricted due to the number of qualified professionals that are working in the field of psychological service provision. Louw (2002) states that there are a mere eight thousand psychologists practising in South Africa, less than a thousand of which are educational psychologists, compared to the quarter of a million therapists in the United States. For this reason the training of lay counsellors and peer-counsellors has become integral to the provision of psychological services in the educational sphere in South Africa.

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) of 1992 indicated that support services, such as counselling and therapy, in the South African education system have in the past been marginalised and fragmented. The unequal distribution of resources forced policy makers to rethink how educators, and education, can support the development of the youth. Psychological and therapeutic interventions have in the past focused on individual interventions whereas the need is now for the provision of psychological services to be broadened. The provision of support services in education has been defined along racial and class lines and as a result, access to specialised support services in education was limited to a select few. The number of experienced and qualified professionals in the field also diminished rapidly (NEPI, 1992).

The training of people at a grass roots level is aimed to empower not only individuals, but also groups and communities. Should this be successful in the educational sphere, then counselling will become a powerful tool in support of the development of youth in this country.

It was stated in the introduction to this study that peer-counsellors can be utilised to provide psychological support services at a grass-roots level where this type of specialist support has been lacking for so long. A holistic and eco-systemic approach to the provision of support services in education requires that there be a shift in emphasis from the specialists at the top, to the broader base of individuals in the peer-group and in the schools. This broad base has in the past, been grossly under-utilised (Mitchum, 1983, p.146-149; Hudson & Sparks, 1984, p.22; McDowell, 1982) and the lack of recent research in this area indicates that this trend has not changed at present.

#### **1.4 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

This study focuses on the experience of learners in a peer counsellor training programme in a school in Johannesburg, South Africa. In a society where support services are severely limited and restricted to the privileged few, peer-counselling programmes in schools can offer significant levels of support to children with difficulties. According to Sherry (1999), effective counselling programmes offered by the peer-group can be effective sources of support, enabling learners to function effectively.

According to Blumenbach (2002) educational institutions have the task and responsibility of initiating and conducting counselling programmes. The counselling programme in a school should be a collaboration between children, parents, experts and the school. Effective counselling and interventions through the peer-group can be an effective source of support for learners, enabling them to function effectively, access the curriculum, and engage purposefully in education and school life (Sherry, 1999).

As noted by Hyland (2006, p. 199), the concept of 'therapeutic education' is being increasingly used to reach objectives linked to the acquisition of personal and social skills, emotional intelligence and in the building of self-esteem. Peer-counselling in schools is an effective educational tool which can be used to assist individuals, as it allows each individual to focus on their immediate concerns while at the same time it improves their

understanding of the social situation or context in which the difficulty has arisen. Peer-counselling is effective as an early intervention and preventive strategy in the management of emotional and behavioural problems of the youth (Sherry, 1999).

The influence of peers on the development of the child is well documented (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwala, 2001, p. 149; Shaffer, 1996, p. 682; Sokatch, 2006; Boyer, 2006). Research has indicated that the peer-group is central to the individual's development and acquisition of values and behaviours (Topping, 1996; Shaffer, 1996, p. 682) and this is particularly so during the period of adolescence (Donald et al., 2001, p. 190), thereby making the study of peer-counselling in the secondary phase of their schooling particularly significant.

As previously discussed, the access of South African learners to psychological support services is limited by a number of historical, economic and social factors, thereby making the adoption of intervention strategies using the peer-group, more important and necessary. It must be said at the outset that the influence and work of the peer-group in the provision of psychological support services should never replace the interventions of qualified professionals, but instead should be used to supplement and support the work of those professionals to increase the impact and efficiency of professional counselling when it is accessible (Gazda, 1989, p. 216; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2004, p. 282; Donald et al., 2001, p. 190).

In South Africa the use of peers as a resource in therapeutic and counselling interventions has been underutilised (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2000, p. 239). The peer group is a strong force with regard to social reinforcement and the learning of new and more appropriate behaviour patterns over time (Shaffer, 1996, p. 683). Froh (2004, p. 3157) found that learners seek help from peers before going to adults. The unique South African context that is characterised by social disadvantage and a disparity in the access to support services, has created a scenario where peer support and peer 'helping' are more necessary as the social support offered by the peer-group will have to make up for the lack of other forms of support (Donald et al., 2001, p. 149).

Traditionally research into the issue of peer-counselling in, not only educational institutions, but also in the workplace, has focused on the development and design of training courses (Campbell, 1983, p. 118-123; Allan, 1978, p. 301-309) for counsellors and also on the



effect that these counsellors have in terms of the provision of a professional support service (Canning, 1983, p. 124-129). In a doctoral dissertation, Aaby (1987) conducted an analysis and historical perspective of peer helpers, in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the peer programme. The initiation and operation of effective peer-counselling programmes has been investigated in the past by a number of researchers such as Townsend (1992), Lupton-Smith, Carruthers, Flythe, Goettee. and Modest (1996), Corn and Moore (1992), and Foster and Tindall (1992), but has more recently been ignored.

With regard to the effectiveness of peer-counsellor programmes, much of the research has focused on the social issues of violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. Mitchell (1991) conducted a study to investigate positive peer influence with the intention of reducing substance abuse in the school setting. The study revealed that the peer-counsellor programme was highly successful and that the peer helper model offers significant benefits to the learners in the school setting. Dwyer (1996, p. 21, 50-56, 109) states that peer mediation is one of the innovations that is being used effectively to deal with the difficulties faced by educators and students. Bogner (2005, p. 3-11) states that peer-helping programmes intensify the positive characteristics of participants with regard to their own empowerment.

Peer-counsellor training and the effect of such training was well researched in the 1980's and 1990's but since then there has been very little research into such programmes. This is particularly so in South Africa where the research done in this time has not been followed through as evidenced by the lack of published studies since then.

## 1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As a result of the shortage of experienced personnel and the limited access to services that most learners are confronted with in the South African context, peer counsellors have an important role to play in the provision of support services in schools in South Africa. This is acknowledged through the training of peer counsellors. The question then arises: **How do learners, who are themselves adolescents, experience a peer-counsellor training course?** This study focuses on the personal experience of the learners in a peer-counsellor training course.

## **1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INQUIRY**

The aim of this inquiry is to determine and document the experience of learners in a peer-counsellor training course presented by Lifeline, with specific reference to their own development and the challenges they face with such intensive training in order to make recommendations about peer counsellor training in schools.

In order to achieve the main aim of the study it is necessary to state the following objectives, which will determine the process and methodology of the study:

- Firstly to elaborate the contextualisation of support services delivery within the unique and developing local milieu by also referring to the available literature.
- To determine by means of the empirical component of this inquiry the actual experiences of the peer counsellors during a peer counsellor training course.
- To explore the emerging themes through the use of a literature control.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding peer counsellor training in line with the findings that emerged from the themes of this study.

## **1.7 RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The study was done through a qualitative paradigm in the form of a phenomenological study. Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and asks questions about the structure and essence of the experience of the phenomenon, which is the participant's experience of peer-counsellor training (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004).

### **1.7.1 Sample**

The participants in the study include nine adolescents from Grades 11 and 12 in a Johannesburg school. The participants took part voluntarily. The sample used in this study is a mixed purposeful sample, which combines various sampling strategies to achieve the desired sample. This helps in triangulation, allows for flexibility, and meets multiple interests and needs (Patton, 1990, p. 186). The peer-counsellor training course presented by LifeLine ran for eight sessions over eight weeks.

### **1.7.2 Methods of Data Collection**

When the constructs referenced in the research question had been operationally defined and the design of the study determined, the process of data collection could then begin. The learners who underwent the counsellor training completed feedback forms on their personal experience of the course, and a feedback form on the actual content and presentation of the course. The registration form for the course asks about the participant's expectations of the course. The participants completed a course evaluation form midway through the course and then again at the end of the course. On completion of the course the participants gave feedback in the form of a reflection on their experience. For the purpose of this study the personal feedback form was used to collect the data for this inquiry. The data was further investigated in individual interviews after the completion of the training programme.

The methodology of this study includes document analysis of course registration and evaluation forms as provided by LifeLine. This was supplemented by individual interviews with all participants from the sample group in order to get thick descriptions of the participants' experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) of the peer-counsellor training course. An interview is an effective method to collect data in a phenomenological design (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Henning, et al., (2004, p. 37) say that "the phenomenological researcher believes that the participants can give their experience best when asked to do so in their own words, in lengthy individual reflective interviews and in observing the context in which some of this experience has been played out." The interviews and reflections were completed by all the participants during the course of the training and at the end of the eight-week period.

The methodology of data collection through observation, interviews and reflective journal descriptions are methods that should give valid answers on the research question. Validity was ensured by checking, questioning and interpreting the findings through triangulation of data from the different sources (Henning, et al., 2004; Flick, 1998, Merriam, 2002).

### **1.7.3 Methods of Data Analysis**

One of the difficulties in analysing qualitative data is the decoding of the messages in the written information. Once data has been collected it is worthless until sense can be made

of what was collected. Data is summarised and analysed with the express purpose of exploring the research question or hypothesis (Heppner, Kivlighan & Wampold, 1999, p. 41) and it is therefore essential that the analysis of the data be done without losing sight of the original question.

For the purposes of this inquiry a number of qualitative methods of data analysis were used. Interpreting words that may have multiple meanings is one of the difficulties of qualitative research. In this study the comments of participants, as given on the feedback forms and in the individual interviews, were analysed using a method known as 'open coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding is a method that was developed specifically for the content analysis of data. The data analysis method of open coding involves the breaking down and division of the data text into categories. This is a method that has been used by Strauss and Corbin, (1998), LeCompte and Preissle, (1993), and Babbie and Mouton, (2001).

All the data from the observation and field notes, the interview transcriptions and the reflections underwent a detailed content analysis. Segments of meaning were coded where after the codes were categorised in groups (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thematic patterns were identified and categorised according to the description of qualitative content analysis as described by Henning, et al. (2004).

This triangulation of data was done through the constant comparative method. Merriam (1998) says that the constant comparative method of data analysis is used widely in all kinds of qualitative studies to improve validity and trustworthiness.

## **1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

The trustworthiness of this study is based on two factors. The first is the constructed knowledge of the participants as recorded in the personal reflections and feedback, and in the individual interviews. The second is in the writing up of the study where coherence will be ensured by synchronising the methodology and methods. Trustworthiness is therefore established through the accurate and unbiased recording, analysis and presentation of data. In this study there was a prolonged and varied engagement with the raw data from

different sources which allowed for the checking of perspectives, thereby ensuring validity and reliability. A detailed discussion of this process is presented in section 2.8.

## **1.9 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY**

The ethical requirements of this study have been defined by the ethics policy of the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg. Permission has been obtained from LifeLine to use the feedback forms that they have in their database from the course they have run at the selected school and consent forms highlighting the various ethical issues will be obtained from the participants in the individual interviews (Appendix B). The findings of the inquiry will be made available to LifeLine for further comment. The participants in the peer counsellor training courses will have access to the findings through their continued interaction with the organisation LifeLine. Based on ethics policy of the Faculty of Education the objectivity and integrity of the study will be ensured by adhering to the following:

- i. Acknowledging any shortcomings in the study by reporting on this aspect in the final chapter.
- ii. Reporting fully on the findings in chapter four of this inquiry.
- iii. Ensuring the just and accurate presentation of data in chapter three.
- iv. Participants in the focus group interviews will be fully informed about the research process and purposes. Feedback forms and reflections will be analysed without reference to the identity of the writer and will be stored in a locked facility at all times.
- v. Audio tapes will be kept under lock and key and destroyed on completion of the study.
- vi. Participants will take part in the study voluntarily.
- vii. Participants in the study will be at liberty to withdraw their comments from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons and without penalty.
- viii. Participants will not be exposed to any form of detriment by partaking in this study. Their identities will be protected at all times and any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential.
- ix. Participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

There are a number of fundamental ethical principles which relate to both the practice of educational psychology (Heppner, Kivlighan & Wampold, 1999) and to the issue of ethical research which will be adhered to. These include:

- i. Nonmaleficence: that no participant be harmed in any way by participating in the research. This complies with the principle of safety in participation; that human respondents should not be placed at risk or harm of any kind.
- ii. Beneficence: contributing to the health and welfare of others by having an active, altruistic, community oriented approach that gives back to the participants and the community.
- iii. Autonomy: the liberty to choose ones own course of action, including aspects such as voluntary participation and informed consent.
- iv. Justice: participant will be treated as equals.
- v. Fidelity: faithfulness, keeping of agreements and loyalty in interpersonal relationships are central to the reputation of the researcher and individual counsellors.

## **1.10 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**



Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the study, highlighting the context and rationale to the problem to be investigated. It presents the problem statement, aims and objective of the inquiry, as well as the outlay of the research process that will be followed. The ethical guidelines and measures conclude chapter 1.

Chapter 2 presents a detailed description of the research paradigm, design and methodology that will be applied to this study.

In Chapter 3 the data collected about the experiences of learners in a peer counsellor training course is recorded and presented. The raw data is presented in tables, then using open coding, categories and themes are identified and discussed.

Chapter 4 is a literature control study of the themes that emerged from the raw data with regard to the experiences of learners in a peer counsellor training programme

In chapter 5, the empirical findings of the inquiry are analysed. Conclusions and recommendations are put forward.

### **1.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter provides a general orientation to the study as well as a systemic framework for the study. It has been suggested that support services, such as counselling and therapy, in the South African education system have in the past, lacked focus, and for many, these services have been marginalised and fragmented (NEPI, 1992, p. 1).

This study of the personal experiences of these learners who undergo peer counsellor training will provide researchers with invaluable insight into how South Africa can maximise the potential and the benefit of this type of support service in the educational sphere, thereby assisting in the development of a strategy to address the shortage of support services, particularly psychological services in our educational and societal context.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

When conducting qualitative research it is important to determine the focus for the inquiry before the collection of data begins. This has been outlined in Chapter 1. The research paradigm and design must then be determined, followed by a decision as to where and from whom the data will be collected. The data collection and methods of recording that data, as well as data analysis, must be planned. All of this must take place with due consideration being given to the trustworthiness of the study (Krefting, 1991, p. 214; Kvale, 2002). All of these issues will be explained in this chapter. It will describe the research design that was followed to gather, record and analyse data, in order to answer the research question identified in Chapter 1.

#### **2.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the research is to document the experience of learners in a peer-counsellor training programme, in order to identify emergent themes. This will be done in order to make recommendations regarding the training of peer-counsellors in schools.

#### **2.3 SAMPLE**

The sample is a set of participants selected from a larger population for the purpose of a study. The sample used in this study is a mixed purposeful sample. This sample was chosen as it allows for flexibility, and meets multiple interests and needs (Patton, 1990, p. 186). Purposeful sampling has been used in this study as it provides information rich cases, which then allows for an in-depth study of the participants experience. The size of the sample (nine participants) was predetermined by the number of participants on the course from the chosen school, which was determined through convenience. The biographical details of the participants are set out in the table below:



Table 2.1: Biographical details of sample

|                      | <b>AGE</b> | <b>GENDER</b> | <b>RACE</b> | <b>GRADE</b> |
|----------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Participant 1</b> | 18         | Female        | Indian      | 12           |
| <b>Participant 2</b> | 17         | Female        | White       | 11           |
| <b>Participant 3</b> | 17         | Female        | White       | 11           |
| <b>Participant 4</b> | 17         | Female        | White       | 11           |
| <b>Participant 5</b> | 17         | Female        | Indian      | 11           |
| <b>Participant 6</b> | 17         | Female        | White       | 12           |
| <b>Participant 7</b> | 17         | Female        | Indian      | 12           |
| <b>Participant 8</b> | 16         | Female        | White       | 11           |
| <b>Participant 9</b> | 16         | Female        | White       | 11           |

## 2.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

All research (whether quantitative or qualitative) is based on some underlying assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research methods are appropriate for the study of any particular phenomenon (Pring, 2000). Research has traditionally involved the gathering of statistical data, but data is not inherently quantitative, and can be bits and pieces of almost anything. Data does not necessarily have to be expressed in numbers. Data can be qualitative in the form of words, images, impressions, gestures, or tones, which represent real events or reality as it is seen symbolically or sociologically (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.17). Where quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalisation of findings, qualitative researchers seek, instead, illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. Qualitative analysis results in a different type of knowledge than does quantitative inquiry. Eisner, (1991) points out that all knowledge, including that gained through quantitative research, is referenced in qualities, and that there are many ways to represent our understanding of the world. Qualitative research reports are therefore rich in detail and allow the researcher greater insight into the

experiences of the participants, and according to Stake (2003), they, "may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus more meaningful" .

The South African context is unique and as a result of this it is important that research methodologies are developed to suit not only the needs and aims of the researcher but also the context within which the research is being done. In South Africa, methodologies are being adapted to suit the unique context (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995; Mouton, 1996; Mouton, 2001; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Henning, et al., 2004). South African society and the local communities within it are diverse in not only their racial composition, but also their cultural, religious and ethnic make-up. In order to conduct meaningful research within such a broad diversity of people it is appropriate that qualitative methods are used. These qualitative methods help the researcher and the reader to better understand the social phenomena which they are studying, since qualitative methods are most suitable to the study of human behaviour and behaviour changes. Social change and the resulting diversification of life worlds are increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives (Flick, 1998, p. 2). Moreover, complex behaviour and human experiences are not well captured by quantitative techniques (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 1). Qualitative methods help you study the variations of complex, human behaviour in a given context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Boje, 2001). Qualitative research methods can be used to find patterns within the participants' behaviours and responses to research questions, thereby making the participant's perspective the focus of the research.

Before conducting a qualitative study it is important that the researcher ensures what Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998) refer to as "theoretical sensitivity of the researcher". This is a useful concept with which to evaluate a researcher's skill and readiness to attempt a qualitative inquiry. Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher and the attribute of "having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). Strauss and Corbin believe that theoretical sensitivity comes from a number of sources, including professional literature, professional experiences, and personal experiences. The credibility of a qualitative research report relies heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher's ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field (Eisner, 1991; Patton, 1990, Merriam, 1998).

In qualitative research, the conceptual framework arises from the data rather than from preconceived hypotheses (Stevens, 2006). The openness of qualitative research can generate new theories and recognise phenomena that may have been ignored by most or all previous researchers and literature, as is the case with this study. This qualitative study attempts to assist the reader in seeing the world-view of the participants, *their* categories, rather than imposing categories, and in so doing the study details their experience of the course. In avoiding pre-judgments the goal is to try to capture what is happening without being judgmental. A lot of information can be acquired through description and hypothetical constructs and can then be investigated further through other means.

## **2.5 RESEARCH DESIGN: PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

The research design in this study is a phenomenological study. It is concerned with essence or basic structure of a phenomenon as experienced by the participants – participants' lived experience. This type of research is based on "the assumption that *there is an essence or essences to shared experience*" (Patton, 1990, p. 70; Merriam, 1998). This qualitative phenomenological design is used to obtain information concerning the current status of how learners experience peer counsellor training. Phenomenological research designs describe behaviours and do not necessarily look for specific relationships between variables (Merriam, 1998). This research design will provide the researcher with detailed and accurate information regarding the experience of learners in a peer-counsellor training programme.

The method used to gather data in this study is the individual interview. The techniques used within that method are listening skills, paraphrasing, responding, the use of silence, and eye-contact. The instrument used in this regard is the interview schedule and checklist. These research tools that will be used within this qualitative phenomenological research paradigm will now be discussed.

## **2.6 DATA COLLECTION**

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that the data is usually gathered using less structured research instruments (Creswell, 2005). One of the benefits of this is that the results usually provide much more detail on behaviour, attitudes and motivation. The research is also more intensive and most often more flexible, allowing the researcher

to probe, having been given greater latitude to do so. The most common qualitative research methods include; in-depth interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003), focus groups (Morgan, 1997), projective methods, and case studies (Stake, 2003; Merriam, 1998), but the two prevailing forms of data collection associated with qualitative inquiry are interviews and observation. The researcher may also combine the use of two or more data gathering.

The researcher is highly involved in the collecting and analysing of the data in qualitative research. The data collection in this study has been specifically designed and aimed at the purposeful selection of research participants (Merriam, 1998) and documents that will provide the information needed to address the research question raised in Chapter 1. Data collection and analysis are often conducted together, rather than as distinct and separate phases of a research project (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

The basic data in this study consists of words. The information and data have been collected in this study through the use of the following:

- Questionnaires completed by participants at the beginning and end of the peer-counsellor training course. The questionnaires allowed the participants to describe their expectations of the course initially, as well as their experience of it at the end (see Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix H).
- Individual semi-structured interviews after the completion of the course with all the participants. Through the individual interviews the researcher was able to enrich the broad but shallow data obtained from the questionnaires (see Appendix G).

These methods of data collection will be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### **2.6.1 Questionnaires**

Qualitative methods use words to describe and categorise experiences. In this study the documents that were used to collect data were written documents in the form of intake questionnaires and reflections upon completion of the peer-counsellor training programme. Documents are a valuable source of information as they reveal what people do or did, and what they value (Hardy, M. & Bryman, 2004). The behaviours and experiences that are described in the documents (described in paragraph 2.4 above) occurred in a natural

setting and therefore the documents and the data contained therein have strong validity. (For examples of the documents used see Appendix E and Appendix F).

### **2.6.2 Individual Semi-Structured Interviews**

Qualitative interviews are often used in conjunction with observation, document analysis, and other methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Qualitative interviewing utilises open-ended questions that allow for individual variations. Patton (1990) writes about three types of qualitative interviewing: 1) informal, conversational interviews; 2) semi-structured interviews; and 3) standardised, open-ended interviews. For the purposes of this study, informal individual interviews have been used.

Kreuger (1988) suggests that there are doubts about the accuracy of traditional information gathering methods. This leads to a more non-directive approach to interviewing where the emphasis has shifted from the interviewer to the interviewee (Chase, 2003, p. 274). An interview can be seen as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (Kreuger, 1988, p. 18).



For the purposes of this study the interview constituted a list of general topics that the researcher wanted to explore with the participants. Although the list was prepared beforehand the interviewer was still free to probe and explore within those predetermined inquiry areas. Interview guides ensure good use of limited interview time; they make interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive; and they help to keep interactions focused. In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, interview guides can be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or to exclude questions the researcher has found to be unproductive for the goals of the research (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Atkinson, 2002). Unstructured, open-ended questions allow respondents to answer from a variety of dimensions. Questions must be carefully selected and phrased in advance to elicit maximum responses by all participants.

Interviews are an important part of any research project as they provide the opportunity for the researcher to investigate further, to solve problems and to gather data, which could not have been obtained in other ways (Cunningham, 1993, p. 93; Atkinson, 2002). Stringer (1996, p. 62) states that if interviewing is used as a method of data collection in a

qualitative inquiry then it must be guided by open-ended questions in order to attain the most unbiased information possible. For this reason the interviews in this study were open-ended, informal and conversational.

Before going into the interview process the researcher must decide how to record the interview data. Whether one relies on written notes or an audio or video recorder appears to be largely a matter of personal preference. Patton says that a tape recorder is "indispensable" (1990, p. 348), Recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes might, and can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview. For this reason audio-tape recordings were used in this study.

The entire sample group was interviewed using an open-ended conversational interview of predetermined focal areas. Audio-tape recordings of the interviews were made and then transcribed for further analysis.

## **2.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Although a clear distinction between data gathering and data analysis is commonly made in quantitative research, such a distinction does not always exist in qualitative research (Silverman, 1993). When analysing a written source of data, as in this study, it is assumed that the researcher's presuppositions affect the gathering of the data as the questions posed to the participants largely determine what the researcher is going to find out.

In contrast to Silverman (1993), Myers (1997, p. 241) speaks of "modes of analysis" rather than "data analysis" in qualitative research. These modes of analysis are different approaches to gathering, analysing and interpreting qualitative data. What they have in common is that all qualitative modes of analysis are concerned primarily with the analysis of written and spoken texts. These various methods and forms of analysis, each of which requires some kind of input from the researcher, differ in their categorisation of data. The result of this is that nearly as many analysis strategies exist as qualitative researchers (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 17). Qualitative studies typically produce large amounts of data which means that it can take the researcher considerable time to meaningfully interpret the data. As a result of this categorisations have been developed to assist discussions of analysis (Tesch, 1990; Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Maxwell, 1996). The choice of analysis strategies depends upon the research question, on what is already known about the topic

of interest, and on the methods of data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Merriam 1998).

Essentially the data that has been gathered in the research needs to be broken down into manageable units and searching for patterns in the data which can then be reported on in the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2002, p. 684). The challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories, then to examine those categories in a holistic fashion and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to the reader (Henning et al., 2004).

In this study the analysis was done by identifying themes from close examination of the raw data, a process sometimes referred to as 'open coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 and 1998). In order to use open coding in research, the researcher must be able to identify and name the conceptual categories into which the phenomena will be grouped. By creating these descriptive multi-dimensional categories the researcher was able to form a preliminary framework for analysis. Statements made by the participants in both the questionnaires and the individual interviews, which appeared to be similar, were grouped in the same category. A category is a group of words with similar meaning or connotations (Weber, 1990, p. 37; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2002). These categories can be modified as the analysis of the data proceeds. The categories will be continually re-examined in order to make links between them so as to obtain a holistic view of the 'bigger picture' (Henning et al., 2004).

In the last step the researcher translates this 'bigger picture' into a story line that will be read by others. Ideally, the research report will be a rich, tightly woven account that "closely approximates the reality it represents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). These stages of analysis may appear linear as they are described here but in practice they may occur simultaneously and repeatedly.

In this study the chosen 'mode of analysis' is the use of open coding to conduct a content analysis of raw data so that the researcher can make sense of the emerging stories (Riessman, 2002, p. 701). By looking at documents, text and speech the researcher will see what themes emerge, as well as how those themes relate to each other (Charmaz, 2002, p. 684). By analysing the data in this fashion the raw data becomes particularly rich and meaningful (Henning et al., 2004).



## 2.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Trustworthiness is established through a synchronisation of the constructed knowledge of the participants and the recording of that information by the researcher. This synchronisation has been referred to as 'good craft' by Henning et al (2004, p. 151) and Kvale, (2002). It is therefore important to ensure that the inquiry employs research methods that allow for the accurate construction of a social reality in the data. Kvale (2002, p. 307) states that "knowledge is no longer the mere reflection of an objective reality, but the construction of a social reality". Trustworthiness is therefore established through the accurate and unbiased recording, analysis and presentation of data.

When referring to the trustworthiness, validity and reliability of research, qualitative research is often evaluated unfairly according to criteria that are more appropriate to quantitative research (Krefting 1991, p. 214). In order to ensure that the findings of qualitative research are trustworthy they must be evaluated against the criteria of truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality as identified by Guba's model cited in Krefting (1991, p. 215). Truth-value and applicability refer to the internal and external validity of the research and findings, and consistency relates to the reliability of the findings. The trustworthiness of the study therefore refers to the existence of these factors with regard to the research process and findings. The trustworthiness of this study is based on the strategies described in the paragraphs below.

Credibility refers to the extent to which the data is believable and trustworthy. This was ensured in this study through a prolonged and varied engagement with the raw data, as it was collated, categorised and coded, from various sources and at various stages of the study. This allowed for the checking of perspectives. Triangulation was used in this study to enhance the credibility of the research as the raw data became a construction of a social reality. Flick (1998, p. 231) describes triangulation as an alternative to validation in a multi-method inquiry which increases scope, depth and consistency in methodological proceedings. By comparing data from various sources, such as intake forms, feedback forms and interviews, the researcher was able to identify common patterns and the credibility of the research was therefore enhanced (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 48). Credibility was further enhanced through the interview techniques employed. By using open-ended conversational interviews, the researcher was able to enhance and support previous findings by using the interviewing techniques of repetition and reframing. This was



done by having identified categories on the written intake and feedback forms and then asking about these issues in the interview through repetition and reframing of statements made by the participants in the interview.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research (see chapter 2). The person who wishes to "transfer" the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer is.

Dependability of the study was ensured by using different sources of data, such as intake forms, feedback forms and interview transcripts.. Findings from the various sources were compared and any possible weakness of a particular method of data collecting was compensated for by the use of triangulation as described earlier. Chapter 2 describes the methodology used in this inquiry. These descriptions serve to ensure the dependability of the study in terms of how repeatable it may be with regard to the consistency of the findings (Krefting, 1991:221).

In conclusion, the confirmability of the findings of this study has been ensured through the use of multiple sources of data. By using more than one source, the researcher is able to ensure that the data supports the analysis and interpretations of the findings (Krefting, 1991:221).

## **2.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

In this chapter the research paradigm and design used in this inquiry was discussed. The characteristics and principles of qualitative research were discussed, as it is applicable to this study. The chapter took into account the research context, the sampling procedures, the methods used in data collection as well as how the data was analysed. In Chapter 3 the data collected will be presented, as well as the analysis of the data, and the descriptions of the findings.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study focused on the personal experience of learners involved in a peer-counsellor training course and investigated how they experienced such intensive training and accelerated personal growth. The aim of the inquiry was to determine the experience of learners in a peer-counsellor training course with specific reference to their own development and the challenges they face with such intensive training.

#### **3.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Data collection and analysis were done by using various sources of data, which were analysed through content analysis as discussed in the methodology in Chapter 2.7.

##### **3.2.1 INTAKE FORMS**

The intake form was completed by participants at the beginning of the peer-counsellor training course. The intake form is an administrative form that collected biographical details of the participants (see Appendix H). The intake form served to give information of the dates of the course and it also required parental consent in the form of a signature thereby fulfilling the ethical requirements in the running of such a course. The reason the intake form was used as a source of data in this study is that it asked the participants the following question, "Why do you want to do the course?" This allowed the researcher some insight into the expectations of the participants and their motivation for doing the course.

##### **3.2.1.1 Data collected from intake forms**

The table below contains the responses of all 9 participants to the question that was put to them on the intake form. That question asked, "Why do you want to do the course?"

Table 3.1: Responses from the intake form

|    | Raw Data  |
|----|---|
| P1 | To become a person that people will turn to for support and help. I would like to become more approachable.       |
| P2 | To learn to help people. To learn to help people the right way.   |
| P3 | To make a difference in someone's life.   |
| P4 | I wanted to help people and that's always been like a passion of mine. Learn the skills necessary to help people. |
| P5 | To become a better person.  |
| P6 | I would like to become more extroverted.  |
| P7 | To gain experience.   |
| P8 | Help myself to be a better person. To be able to deal with my own issues.   |
| P9 | I want to make a difference in people's life. To look for the best in those around me.                            |

### 3.2.1.2 Analysis of data from intake forms

The responses of the participants as reported in table 3.1 have been analysed for possible categories that construct themes that will be used in the discussion of this inquiry.

Table 3.2: Construction of raw data from intake forms into categories

| Why do you want to do the course? |   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|
|                                   | Raw Data  | Code   | Category   |
| P1                                | To become a person that people will turn to for support and help. I would like to become more approachable. | become a person<br>support and help<br>more approachable | Personal growth.<br>Helping others.<br>Accessible. |
| P2                                | To learn to help people. To learn to help people the right way.   | learn to help people                                     | Skills acquisition.                                |
| P3                                | To make a difference in someone's life.   | make a difference  | Helping others.                                    |
| P4                                | I wanted to help people and that's always   | help people  | Helping others.                                    |

|    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
|    | been like a passion of mine. Learn the skills necessary to help people.                   | Learn the skills help people                 | Skills acquisition. Helping others.                            |
| P5 | To become a better person.  | better person                                | Personal growth.   |
| P6 | I would like to become more extroverted.  | more extroverted                             | Personal growth.   |
| P7 | To gain experience.   | gain experience                              | Personal growth.   |
| P8 | Help myself to be a better person.<br>To be able to deal with my own issues.              | a better person<br>deal with my own issues   | Personal growth.<br>Personal growth.                           |
| P9 | I want to make a difference in people's life.<br>To look for the best in those around me. | make a difference<br>best in those around me | Helping others.<br>Skills acquisition.<br>Emotional awareness. |

By identifying these descriptive multi-dimensional categories the researcher has created a preliminary framework for analysis. Statements made by the participants on the intake forms have been grouped according to existing similarities. These broad categories have been continually re-examined in order to make links between them in order to identify broader themes that have emerged from the data. This process has allowed the researcher to identify the broader themes that have emerged from the data. The preliminary categories that have emerged from the expectations of the participants are i) personal growth, ii) helping others, iii) skills acquisition, and iv) emotional awareness.

### 3.2.2 FEEDBACK FORMS

The data that was collected from the feedback forms came from two different forms that were presented to the participants at two different stages of the course. The first form was titled "Kia Ora - Goodbye – Termination". This form was completed by participants at the end of the first part of the LifeLine course, which was half-way through the course as a whole. The first part of the course entails a detailed self-awareness program and at the end the participants were afforded the opportunity to reflect on the intensive self-awareness activities. The form asked the participants to reflect on their feelings at that point of the course, as well as the regrets that they may have had. Participants were asked to identify the most meaningful aspect of the course thus far and then comment on which personal aspect they would still like to work on with regard to their growth in the course. (See Appendix E).

The second form was titled “Course Evaluation Form”, and was presented to the participants during the last session of the course. The participants were afforded the opportunity to reflect on their experience on the course and were asked to complete the form without consulting the other participants. The course evaluation form asked the participants to reflect on 3 key areas of the course; i) their experience of the course, ii) their interaction with the facilitators of the course, and iii) their opinion on the course material. From these comments the researcher was able to gain rich data which described the participant’s experience of the course (See Appendix F).

### 3.2.2.1 Data collected from feedback forms

The data that was collected from the feedback forms was grouped into broad categories, from which both positive and negative themes were identified. The complete data from both feedback forms is presented in Appendix C and Appendix D. The data presented in the next section is a selection from the complete raw data tables that illustrates the coding process and the identification of categories.

### 3.2.2.2 Analysis of data from feedback forms

Responses of participants as captured in the feedback forms have been analysed for possible categories that construct themes that will be used in the discussion of this inquiry.

Table 3.3: Construction of raw data from feedback forms into categories

|    | Raw Data   | Code  | Category  |
|----|--|---|---|
| P1 | <p>I got to know who I am and how to deal with people and their emotions. I feel confident.</p> <p>They helped me know myself and know others.</p> <p>I learnt a lot about who I am and how other people feel and act.</p> <p>Helps you be the best person that I can be.</p> <p>It was not what I thought it was going to be.</p> <p>I learnt about myself and other people’s feelings.</p> <p>I regret not opening up at the beginning of the course.</p> <p>I would like to work on my self-confidence.</p> | <p>know who I am<br/>deal with people<br/>feel confident<br/>know myself<br/>know others<br/>who I am<br/>how other people feel<br/>be the best</p> <p>not what I thought</p> <p>learnt about myself<br/>people’s feelings<br/>not opening up</p> <p>work on my self-confidence</p> | <p>Self-awareness<br/>Social awareness<br/>Self-esteem<br/>Self-awareness<br/>Social awareness<br/>Self-awareness<br/>Emotional awareness<br/>Personal growth</p> <p>Inaccurate expectations</p> <p>Self-awareness<br/>Emotional awareness<br/>Inhibition</p> <p>Emotional Immaturity</p> |
| P2 | <p>It completely changed my outlook on life.</p> <p>I now know myself.</p>   | <p>changed my outlook<br/>know myself</p>   | <p>Personal growth<br/>Self-awareness</p>   |

|    |   |  |   |
|----|---|--|---|
|    | It was an amazing <b>enriching experience</b> .<br><b>Informative</b> once-off experience.<br>There's <b>room for growth</b> .  | enriching experience<br>Informative<br>room for growth   | Personal growth<br>Skills acquisition<br>Unfulfilled expectations   |
| P3 | I have <b>people to talk to</b> with my problems.<br>(I learnt) excellent skills.<br><b>We must be.....open</b> and assertive.<br>To <b>work through your problems</b> before<br>you can <b>help people</b> with theirs.<br><br>Not being judgemental and <b>being</b><br><b>assertive</b> .  | people to talk to<br>excellent skills<br>We must be.....open<br>work through your<br>problems<br>help people<br>being assertive                      | Support system<br>Skills acquisition<br>Inhibition<br>Personal growth<br><br>Helping others<br>Personal growth  |
| P4 | I learned to not only <b>help others</b> but also<br>to <b>help myself</b> .<br>The course taught me a lot of <b>new things</b> .<br>Was helpful for <b>self-growth and</b><br><b>confidence</b> .<br>I would like to work on being <b>more open</b><br>and <b>expressing my feelings</b> .   | help others<br>help myself<br>new things<br>self-growth and<br>confidence.<br>more open<br>expressing my<br>feelings                                 | Helping others<br>Personal growth<br>Skills acquisition<br>Personal growth<br><br>Inhibition<br>Emotional preparedness  |
| P5 | I <b>learned</b> the true power of listening to<br>someone and how you can get someone<br>to open up and get them to resolve their<br>own problems.<br>I got to <b>know people</b> that I would never<br>have spoken to before and <b>learning about</b><br><b>myself</b> .   | Learned<br><br>know people<br>learning about myself  | Skills acquisition<br><br>Social awareness<br>Self-awareness  |
| P6 | It was good to <b>learn experiences</b> and how<br>to <b>deal with situations</b> constructively.<br>I learnt to <b>accept situations</b> , <b>deal with</b><br><b>change</b> .<br><b>Listening</b> and communication.<br><b>Made us think</b> about situations.<br><b>I want to learn</b> to worry less.   | learn experiences<br>deal with situations<br>accept situations<br>deal with change<br>Listening<br>Made us think<br>I want to learn                  | Personal growth<br>Skills acquisition<br>Social awareness<br>Personal growth<br>Skills acquisition<br>Social awareness<br>Unfulfilled expectations  |
| P7 | I <b>experienced emotions</b> I never believed in<br>... crying and expressing myself like the<br>way I could.<br>It was <b>challenging</b> in the sense I had to<br><b>open my feelings</b> .<br>It was <b>threatening</b> at first and I was <b>not</b><br><b>ready</b> to reveal too much about myself.<br>Helped me <b>not to be frightened</b> or<br>intimidated by the people around me.<br>They made me realise that no problem is<br>too small/big to handle and <b>overcome</b> .<br>They <b>still didn't help</b> me unravel the<br>mysteries of my life. | experienced emotions<br><br>challenging<br>open my feelings<br>threatening<br>not ready<br>not to be frightened<br><br>overcome<br>still didn't help | Emotional awareness<br><br>Emotional preparedness<br>Inhibition<br>Emotional preparedness<br>Emotional preparedness<br>Personal growth<br><br>Personal growth<br>Unfulfilled expectations |
| P8 | <b>Explained</b> all the reasons why I don't<br>always help my friends.<br>It's so <b>helpful</b> and relaxing.<br>I <b>learnt</b> a lot.<br>Indirectly <b>helped you through your</b><br><b>problems</b> so that you can <b>help others</b> later<br>on.<br>There should be <b>support groups</b> for<br>people after the course is over.<br>I <b>cleared up so many issues</b> in my own  | Explained<br><br>helpful<br>learnt<br>helped you<br>help others<br><br>support groups<br><br>cleared up so many                                      | Personal growth<br><br>Personal growth<br>Personal growth<br>Personal growth<br>Helping others<br><br>Insufficient support<br><br>Personal growth   |

|    | life.   | issues   |  |
|----|---|--|--|
| P9 | <p>Taught me a lot about myself.</p> <p>Helped me to help others.</p> <p>Eye-opening experience, helped me to realise things about my life.</p> <p>The group think that I wasn't open.</p> <p>I'd like to work on my self-esteem and my listening skills.</p> | <p>a lot about myself</p> <p>help others</p> <p>Eye-opening</p> <p>realise things</p><br><p>work on my self-esteem and my listening skills</p> | <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Helping others</p> <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Self-awareness</p><br><p>Emotional Immaturity</p> <p>Unfulfilled expectations</p> |

Statements made by participants on both feedback forms were grouped into similar categories. The categories were identified and named by the researcher. This open coding of data, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998), allows for a phenomenological analysis of the raw data in order to make the data particularly rich and meaningful (Henning et al., 2004).

This process of data analysis resulted in seven positive categories and five negative categories of data being formulated. The seven positive categories that were identified are i) personal growth, ii) increased self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-esteem, iii) acceptance by peers and the recognition of a support system, iv) increased emotional awareness, v) broader understanding and acceptance of others and heightened social awareness, vi) a desire to help others, and vii) skills acquisition. The sorting of raw data into these positive categories can be viewed in Appendix C. The negative categories that emerged from the data are i) Unfulfilled and Inaccurate Expectations, ii) Inhibition and an inability to trust, iii) Insufficient debriefing, follow-up and support, iv) Emotional Sensitivity, Emotional Preparedness, Emotional Immaturity, insufficient emotional awareness, and v) Ulterior motives. The sorting of raw data into these negative categories can be viewed in Appendix D. See Paragraph 3.3 for further discussion of these categories.

### 3.2.3 INTERVIEWS

The interviews as described in Chapter 2 (see 2.4.2) were conducted on a one-on-one basis and took the form of semi-structured conversational interviews. This allowed the researcher to investigate the issues raised in the intake and feedback forms. The interviews allowed the researcher to collect data in an open-ended, informal and conversational manner.



### 3.2.3.1 Data collected from interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with all nine participants. Transcripts were made of all the interviews so that categories and themes could be further identified and refined from the transcripts. The researcher had made initial findings and groupings of categories into themes based on the intake forms and feedback forms, thereby being afforded the opportunity of exploring these themes further in the semi-structured individual interviews. By doing this, the researcher was able to thicken and verify the data from the initial findings.

The following table is a presentation of a section of a transcript from one of the interviews (Participant 6) (See Appendix G for full transcript).

Table 3.4 Example of interview transcript (Participant 6)

|               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
| Researcher    | All right. This statement is very interesting for me, you said I'm so happy that I got to know people that I've never spoken to before.  | 51<br>52                                     |
| Participant 6 | Ja, umm, the reason why I said that was because you walk past people every day, those are people that I might have seen before but I never like took notice of them and you actually realise, you know like get to know people and everyone's has their stories and their own set of problems and their certain talents and everyone is just like, everyone goes through certain things and you just see, you see them, you don't get to know people like on your every day basis and you would actually get along with so many people if you just got to know them. | 53<br>54<br>55<br>56<br>57<br>58<br>59<br>60 |
| Researcher    | While you were on the course, did you know the people on the course before?  | 61   |
| Participant 6 | Yes, most of them were my friends.   | 62   |
| Researcher    | Okay, now observing other people on the course do you think there was anyone there who didn't enjoy it?  | 63<br>64                                     |
| Participant 6 | Umm I think the first part of dealing with yourself, most people were very interested in that, umm and I think, I think a lot of the people were very like excited to do like, you know like, do stuff about themselves, but I also think that a lot of the people were doing it for the wrong reasons and then when they found out like, on the second part of the course, actually learning facts and learning properly how to deal with, they didn't really care about that.  | 65<br>66<br>67<br>68<br>69<br>70             |
| Researcher    | Okay you said some of them were doing it for the wrong reasons?  | 71   |
| Participant 6 | Yes.   | 72   |
| Researcher    | What were their reasons for doing it?  | 73   |
| Participant 6 | I don't know what their reasons were, but I just think that you, I just think that, not so much the wrong reasons I think everyone who did it wanted to help people, but I think it was kind of in the wrong, like they didn't realise to what extent you'll gonna have to help people. Like they just thought okay it's like it goes into your like CV and I'll just look for it and do it. I just don't think people who were there were really committed and I can like see now afterwards that they like not that committed and stuff.                           | 74<br>75<br>76<br>77<br>78<br>79<br>80       |
| Researcher    | Okay. So what are the right reasons for doing the course?  | 81   |
| Participant 6 | I think if you have a true passion for helping people and you, you, you really you have a full understanding of what like helping people is, it's not just going okay umm I'm listening to you and then like or like stuff like that. I just think that you have, if your passion is really truly to help people and stuff like that   | 82<br>83<br>84<br>85                         |



|               |   |                |
|---------------|---|----------------|
| Researcher    | then.<br>Okay. What was the toughest part of the course for you? What was really difficult for you? | 86<br>87<br>88 |
| Participant 6 | Umm I think opening up to strangers and it was just ja, ja that was difficult.                      | 89<br>90       |

### 3.2.3.2 Analysis of data from interviews

Comments that were made by the participants were highlighted in the interview transcripts and then tabled, so that they could be coded into categories and thereafter linked into themes. The responses listed in the table below are a sample of responses used to illustrate the analysis of the data and the identification of the emerging categories. The full transcripts from all the participants are too lengthy to present in this forum.

Table 3.5: Data analysis of interview responses

|    | Raw Data   | Code   | Category                               |
|----|--|--|--|
| R  | <b>One of the other things you said is that the course helps you to be the best person you can be. Tell me a little bit about that.</b>  |  |  |
| P1 | I have learnt to be more open and in touch with my feelings. (P1;l)  | learnt to be more open in touch with my feelings | Personal growth<br>Emotional awareness |
| R  | <b>One of the comments that you wrote was that the course was “not what I thought it would be”. Tell me a little bit about that.</b>   |  |  |
| P1 | I never knew it was about dealing with your own issues first before you can deal with other people’s. (P1;l:25-27)   | dealing with your own issues                     | Personal growth                        |
| R  | <b>What would you warn them about?</b>   |  |  |
| P2 | There were a couple of things that weren’t answered and properly elaborated on. (P2;l)   | were’n’t answered                                | Unfulfilled expectations               |
| R  | <b>You said you were a little bit unsure at first, what tell me a little about that you were unsure about.</b>   |  |  |
| P2 | Because they only told us that it was, they didn’t tell us what it was about, they just said that it is a course were you are going to learn how to help other people. They didn’t give us any information about what they were going to do, anything like that, so. (P2;1:8-11) | they didn’t tell us what it was about            | Inaccurate expectations                |
| R  | <b>So you had to reveal things about yourself and your life. How was that for you? Were you comfortable with it or not?</b>  |  |  |
| P2 | I am not a very open person, but it was part of the process and like they told us, what ever you put in you’ll get out of the course. (P2;1:61-62)   | not a very open person                           | Inhibition                             |
| R  | <b>Tell me about the course</b>  |  |  |

|    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
| P3 | I <b>learned</b> a lot <b>about myself</b> , and umm it did help me to grow personally, because I opened up a lot, because normally I keep all my feelings inside, and Life Line gave me the chance to <b>tell someone how I felt</b> (P3;1:3-5)  | learned about myself<br>help me to grow<br><br>tell someone how I felt                           | Self-awareness<br>Personal growth<br><br>Emotional awareness |
| R  | <b>Was there anything that you still felt wasn't covered properly?</b>  |  |  |
| P3 | When I did the course it <b>wasn't exactly how we expected it</b> to go, you know, cause you have to, you can't ask direct questions and stuff like that. So it was very different to the way, what I expected. (P3;1:16-19)  | wasn't exactly how we expected it  | Inaccurate expectations                                      |
| R  | <b>One of the comments you wrote was I learned a lot about myself. Tell me a little bit about that.</b>   |  |  |
| P3 | <b>I didn't know</b> if you know <b>I could go out and trust those people.</b> (P3;1:34-35)   | didn't know if I could.... trust those people  | Inhibition and Trust   |
| R  | <b>You said there that you feel more confident now</b>  |  |  |
| P4 | Before the course there was issues that you know, not issues that I personally had, but there was just <b>issues that I would not like to talk about.</b> (P4;1:22-23)  | issues that I would not like to talk about   | Inhibition and Trust<br>Emotional preparedness               |
| R  | <b>Convince them to do the course. What are you going to say to them?</b>   |  |  |
| P4 | It will help them <b>gain self-confidence</b> to learn how to <b>deal with their own issues.</b> (P4;1:64-65)   | gain self-confidence<br>deal with their own issues   | Personal growth<br>Personal growth                           |
| R  | <b>You said that the course made you feel more at ease with yourself. How did that happen?</b>  |  |  |
| P5 | It just made me <b>realise things about myself</b> , maybe more aware of who I was and how I should, how I deal with more, how I deal with it and things. And also a lot of the <b>techniques we used or learned</b> can be like used by yourself to help you like <b>figure out your own problems</b> and stuff like that. (P5;1:41-44)          | realise things about myself<br><br>techniques we used or learned<br>figure out your own problems | Self-awareness<br><br>Skills acquisition<br>Personal growth  |
| R  | <b>How do you use them (skills) now?</b>  |  |  |
| P5 | It's easier to just help them, like <b>take a step back and look at the whole situation</b> and look what you doing how it affects other people, and how it affects you, and stuff like that. (P5;1:51-53)  | take a step back and look at the whole situation   | Social awareness   |
| R  | <b>On the course, did you feel people were judging you?</b>   |  |  |
| P6 | I think on the course you don't know those people very well, so <b>you don't know if they will judge you or not.</b> So going to a situation where you have to <b>tell them things that are very personal</b> that you wouldn't, that you wouldn't just tell anyone, you scared that they'll, it's a fear that they will judge you (P6;1:103-105) | you don't know if they will judge you or not to tell them things that are very personal          | Trust<br>Inhibition  |

|    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
| R  | <b>What was the toughest part of the course for you? What was really difficult for you?</b>   |  |  |
| P6 | I did (open up) with most things, some things it was kind of like <b>I had to keep it to myself I wasn't ready</b> . Having to come to terms with my own issues (was difficult). Coming to let people know the pains out there, but because I mean everyone has there own issues. So it was just, <b>it was just hard to let it come out</b> . (P6;l:62-63) | I had to keep it to myself I wasn't ready<br><br>it was just hard to let it come out | Inhibition and Trust<br>Emotional preparedness<br><br>Inhibition and Trust |
| R  | <b>What was the best thing?</b>   |  |  |
| P7 | I was actually <b>glad we interacted</b> , me I'm kind of like I don't really like doing this, but I was kind of glad, so I was and <b>I got friends from there</b> and stuff so. (P7;l:70-72)  | glad we interacted<br><br>I got friends from there                                   | Social awareness<br><br>Acceptance by peers                                |
| R  | <b>Okay and your expectations of it, when you went there what were you hoping to achieve?</b>   |  |  |
| P7 | I wanted to come out there <b>being able to help people</b> . (P7;l:17-18)  | being able to help people  | Helping others   |
| R  | <b>Was there anything that you wanted them to do that they didn't do?</b>   |  |  |
| P7 | We did stuff on rape and suicide and all that, but I know that the biggest problem in our school is discrimination and we, I <b>wanted to learn</b> how to help people to over come that and to see that it's okay. (P7;l:26-29)  | wanted to learn  | Unfulfilled expectations   |
| R  | <b>What are you going to say to them (prospective participants)?</b>  |  |  |
| P7 | It will <b>make you a better person</b> . (P7;l:101-102)  | make you a better person   | Personal growth  |
| R  | <b>Tell me about your experience on the course.</b>   |  |  |
| P8 | In that way it was good and you also just you kind of realise that <b>you are not the only one with problems</b> and your problem isn't as bad as you think it is, because other people also has problems type of thing. So I thought it was a good experience. (P8;1:8-11)   | you are not the only one with problems   | Social awareness   |
| R  | <b>How did you expect it to be?</b>   |  |  |
| P8 | I also expected that straight after once we get our certificate we can go straight into that counselling people, you know and what ever, <b>but that didn't exactly happen</b> ... so in that way it <b>was I expected more</b> . (P8;1:16-20)  | that didn't exactly happen..... I expected more                                      | Unfulfilled and Inaccurate Expectations                                    |
| R  | <b>What was the toughest thing about the course for you?</b>  |  |  |
| P8 | At first <b>opening up to people</b> I didn't really know. I don't know I didn't really mind because I like being with people and like finding out what's people's problems and try and figure it out you know. (P8;1:35-   | opening up to people   | Inhibition   |

|    |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|
|    | 37)   |   |   |
| R  | <b>What are you going to say to them (prospective participants)?</b>  |   |   |
| P9 | Is a chance to learn about yourself and grow personally, you can help other people through all your experiences, and that's basically it, experience. I've always wanted to help people, all the time and actually its a skill that I had, the skills are there you just need to develop it. (P9;l:65-67) | learn about yourself<br>grow personally<br>help other people<br>always wanted to help people<br>skills are there you just need to develop | Self-awareness<br>Personal growth<br>Helping others<br>Helping others<br><br>Skills acquisition |
| R  | <b>How are you using that (new-found extroversion) now?</b>   |   |   |
| P9 | I think it is easier for people to come up to me, talk to me. I find it easier to go and talk to different people that I don't normally talk to. (P9;l:112-113)   | easier to go and talk to different people   | Being more accessible<br>Acceptance of others   |

The interviews were used to further explore and enrich the data from the intake and feedback forms. The categories that were identified from the analysis of the intake and feedback forms were verified and enriched by the data from the interviews, after the same process of open coding was used to analyse the data.

The positive categories that were initially identified and then verified are i) personal growth, ii) increased self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-esteem, iii) acceptance by peers and recognition of a support system, iv) increased emotional awareness, v) broader understanding and acceptance of others and heightened social awareness, vi) a desire to help others, and vii) skills acquisition. The negative categories that emerged from the data in the feedback forms were also verified and enriched in the analysis of the interview transcripts. These categories are i) Unfulfilled and Inaccurate Expectations, ii) Inhibition and an inability to trust, iii) Insufficient debriefing, follow-up, and support, iv) Emotional Sensitivity, Emotional Preparedness, Emotional Immaturity, insufficient emotional awareness, and v) Ulterior motives. The remainder of this chapter is a discussion of these themes which have been substantiated by referring to the raw data. Where possible, the source of the data has been indicated, but in some cases no reference has been given as the forms were completed anonymously.

### 3.3 DISCUSSION OF POSITIVE CATEGORIES

The experiences of adolescents in a peer-counsellor training programme have been categorised into both positive and negative categories. This was done according to the research methods described in Chapter 2. These categories were identified through basic

content analysis of intake forms, feedback forms, reflections and interview transcripts. Repetitive patterns emerged from this content analysis.

### 3.3.1 PERSONAL GROWTH

Personal growth emerged from the data in this study as the primary positive outcome in the experience of learners in the peer counsellor training course. The LifeLine course that the learners undertook is described by the organisation as a 'course for personal empowerment'. The learners that completed the peer counsellor training course stated at the outset that one of their expectations was to achieve some degree of personal growth. **"I am doing the courses for personal growth"** and **"I would like to gain experience"** and **"to help myself"** are examples of this.

The participants indicated in their comments that personal growth had taken place for them as is evident in the following quotes, **"to learn how to help other people with their problems, it also helps you to deal with your problems and by you dealing with your problems, you can help other people deal with their problems"** (P3;l:83-85) and **"Is a chance to learn about yourself and grow personally, you can help other people through all your experiences, and that's basically it"** (P9;l:65-67). The theme of 'helping others while helping yourself' was a recurring theme throughout the comments of the participants. **"I learnt not only to help others but also to help myself."** The learners who underwent the training had a similar vision in terms of using their own personal growth to help others to achieve a similar transformation. **"It has helped me and it has helped me to help others."** Personal growth happens through learning how to tune into, and value, who we are in this moment; and implementing that in our world. **"I think it helped me to mature a lot, you know with regard to other people and other people's situations and not just you know sit there and think there is only one reason, you know with my way of thinking. I think I've matured in that way"** (P8;l:79-81). This concept is further highlighted in the following comments of the participants; **"It allowed us to talk about ourselves and face the problems we had been hiding away"** and **"It will be very helpful in everything I do, say, think, and act"** as well as it **"Indirectly helped me through my problems so I can help others later on."**

The course was described by many of the participants as a 'life-changing' experience and many of them expressed how the course had made them come to some kind of realisation

that they could not quite define. **“It was an eye-opening experience”** and **“It has helped me realise things about me and my life”**. This realisation seems to have been a very positive learning and growth experience for them as they expressed a recognition of the fact that something in their life had changed. **“For me the course was totally life changing, as in who I am now”** (P1;l:2) and **“Mind opening, life-changing experience that has enlightened me”** and **“This course has opened my eyes”**.

### 3.3.2 SELF-AWARENESS

The majority of participants on the course indicated that the self-awareness component of the course was significant for them, as indicated in the following comments, **“I learnt so much and I cleared up so many issues in my own life”** and **“I feel more informed about myself and other people around me.”** In the peer counsellor training the participants indicated a recognition, and development of self-awareness. **“I have learnt a lot about myself”** and **“It has helped me realise things about me and my life. I learnt more about myself and the kind of person I am.”** Some of the participants described the self-awareness aspect of their experience as definitive to their present adolescent state of being. **“I found who I was at the end of the course, and I learned a lot about myself as a person. So it just like it made me who I am now”** (P1;l:113-114).

Some of the participants were able to recognise self-awareness as a personal attribute integral to the helping of others. **“It made you ask questions about yourself and it made you very comfortable with yourself and it made you really define what you wanted in life before you can help other people. It was very good”** (P2;l:2-4).

The recognition and development of self-awareness is central to the developmental process of self-acceptance and self-esteem. Participants on the course indicated in the feedback and interviews that the intensive self-awareness part of the course afforded them the opportunity to gather information about the nature of their personal self, and as a result were able to develop a concept of who and what they are. The development of the self-concept was initiated by interaction with, and feedback from others. **“I enjoyed the feedback I got from others about myself and the way I behave.”** A participant in the peer-counsellor training said, **“I have learnt to accept situations and deal with change.”** A number of participants commented on the issue of confidence and assertiveness, **“I was amazed by our openness and confidence.”** and **“I feel more confident now.”**



There is overwhelming evidence that the participants in the peer-counsellor training course appear to have experienced a shift in terms of their own perceptions of self. In their comments they have made reference to previous states of being that have been altered during the course. **“Made me feel more at ease with myself”** and **“It allowed us to talk about ourselves and face the problems we had been hiding away.”** One of the participants said, **“I think I’ve learned like, I evaluated myself a lot and I got everything out”** (P6;l:49-50).

### **3.3.3 ACCEPTANCE BY PEERS AND THE RECOGNITION OF A SUPPORT GROUP**

For many of the participants the course was an opportunity to meet new people and to get to know some of their peers that perhaps they had had very little interaction with before. A number of participants expressed great satisfaction at having been given this opportunity but there was also some concern raised by the participants with the issues of openness and trust which will be discussed later in this section (see 3.4.2).

The participants in the course indicated that their participation in the activities on the course afforded them the opportunity to interact with others and thereby provided a wide range of learning and developmental opportunities for them, particularly the development of social competence. **“I am so happy that I got to know people that I have never spoken to before”** (P6;l:51-52) and **“I enjoyed getting to know people that are in my school”** (P5;l:110) and **“I enjoyed sharing with the group, knowing that you can trust them and knowing you are not alone.”**

Many of the participants expressed enormous satisfaction at the opportunities they were afforded on the peer-counsellor training course to get to know their peer group better and in so doing become more accepted by individuals and groups who had perhaps ignored or marginalised them previously. This is evident in the following comments by participants. **“I had a feeling of belonging and I felt appreciated”** and **“It was good, I think, to learn about yourself was really important and it was really nice to get to know the people that you were in a group, like doing the course with”** (P5;l:2-3) and **“I think it is easier for people to come up to me, talk to me. I find it easier to go and talk to different people that I don’t normally talk to”** (P9;l:112-113).

The participants have indicated that acceptance by the peer group, and the creation of opportunities for social interaction, has enabled many of them to develop a raised level of emotional awareness. This raised level of emotional awareness is prominent in the feedback from the participants and will be discussed further in the next section.

### **3.3.4 EMOTIONAL AWARENESS**

The participants in the study showed, without exception, an increased level of emotional awareness. Emotional awareness for the purposes of this study is a broad concept which incorporates recognition of emotion in both the self and others, naming of emotions, and the ability to respond appropriately to any given emotion. This process is a challenging one and concerns are noted as a result of the fact that many participants indicated in their feedback forms that they were not expecting this. Once the participants became more comfortable with the process and their fellow participants it appears as though the process of intense emotional awareness benefited them. This is evident in comments like; **“I learnt a lot about myself and other people’s feelings”** and **“It was challenging in the sense that I had to open my feelings”** and **“They helped me to know myself and to know others. I got to know who I am.”**

One of the mental processes of emotional intelligence is the appraisal and expression of emotion in the self. This was illustrated by the participants in the study in the following comments; **“I experienced emotions I never believed in, like crying”** and **“I expressed myself like I never thought I could”** and **“The course left me feeling very happy.”** and **“I have learnt to be more open and in touch with my feelings.”** Some of the comments made by a participant showed that there was a real progression in terms of the level of emotional maturity after having completed the course, and this participant showed that they had developed problem-solving skills directly linked to their own emotions. **“It just it really made you think, it made you like really think deeply and then once you exposed like the truth, about whatever you feeling, it taught you how to deal with it and how to find solutions and stuff”** (P2;l:32-34) and **“I have greater insight of how to deal with problems.”**

The focus of this chapter now turns to the issues of understanding others, acceptance of others, and helping.



### 3.3.5 SOCIAL AWARENESS

When categorising the data for this study it became clear that there was evidence of the acquisition of skills with regard to understanding and an awareness of the emotions of others which, for the purposes of this study, has been classified as social awareness. The concept of social awareness was illustrated on many occasions in the comments made by participants in the peer-counsellor training course. **“I have come to a realisation of the workings of the world around me”** and **“I have learnt how people’s lives are so different. This has helped me understand life and other people much better”** and **“I learnt that other people have problems in life. I realised that I am not the only person in the world that’s going through what I’m going through, you know there are other people that also go through what I go through”** (P3;l:37-38).

It became evident that having developed this social awareness and the awareness of difference, participants were able to view people and situations from a more mature cognitive and emotional perspective. This is evident in comments such as; **“I feel more informed about myself and other people around me”** and **“I have been made to think more about situations”** and **“I could say I am more objective now in the way I think and I’m not, I tend to listen to what people have to say and .... I’m a good listener”** (P1;l:20-22) and **“I have learnt not to be judgemental”** and **“I have greater knowledge of human ways and psychology”**.

It is evident in the data that many of the participants were able to move to a higher level of empathic understanding through heightened social awareness, having undergone the peer-counsellor training. Comments such as **“I learnt how to deal with people and their emotions. I want to make a difference in people’s life”** and **“I learnt to give to people what I would like to receive”** suggest a definite shift in the level of empathic behaviour.

The heightened awareness of other people’s problems is illustrated in the comments **“I realised that everyone has problems”** and **“I learned the power of listening to someone. Love helping people”** and **“I learnt that other people have problems in life”** and **“I learnt a lot about myself and other people’s feelings”**. Along with a heightened sense of awareness of other people’s problems came a definite connection with others which manifests as an acceptance of people who were previously unfamiliar, as well as a

definite need to help them. **“I am now more sensitive towards others”** and **“To make a difference in someone’s life. To help others who need it”**.

Developing a heightened sense of social awareness, and an empathic nature can only occur in mutuality with others and therefore the next section turns to the acceptance of others.

### **3.3.6 ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS**

During the course of the peer-counsellor training, many of the participants expressed that the training was an ‘eye-opening’ experience, and this indicates that there was a definite progression in terms of their acceptance and understanding of other participants in the group. The first level of this progression was the exposure to difference, as highlighted by the following comments; **“I learnt more about other people”** and **“I am so happy that I got to know people that I have never spoken to”** and **“...breaking the conceptions I’ve had of those other people. Umm they weren’t really as like my first impressions, those changed”** (P9;l:31-32).

This heightened awareness of others then led to an acceptance of them as indicated by the following comments which all make reference to the issue of not being judgemental; **“I learnt not to be judgemental”** and **“It was meaningful that we were not being judgemental and we were encouraged to be assertive”** (P3;l:56-57). and **“I’ve stopped judging people (laugh), I use to be really bad with that, you know ‘she’s like being such a cow’ you know just whatever and then you know after that I realised people have their bad days and people are going through different things and you just have to leave them to get past it”** (P8;l:190-193).

With this awareness and acceptance, as indicated by a non-judgemental attitude, came a shift in perspective with regard to acceptance. Some of the participants indicated that the peer-counsellor training course has allowed them to mix with larger groups, and to get on with new individuals that they previously did not know or did not accept. They indicated that there was a real connection with people that they had perceived as distant or different. This is indicated in the comments; **“It has changed my whole outlook on life and you realise like, also with sharing, other people sharing problems, you realise that you are not the only one who has problems.”** (P2;l:89-93) and **“if they like helping out**

**people and stuff, it will make it so much easier to chat with people and learn more about them and get to know their problems and help them deal with it” (P4;l:65-67).**

Having made this connection and having accepted difference, the participants were empowered with the need and the desire to help. This is perhaps one of the highest levels of empathic behaviour.

### **3.3.7 HELPING OTHERS**

The willingness and need to help others was a category that was very prominent in the raw data. It can be said that the nature of the peer-counsellor training course should attract, and appeal to, individuals who have an intrinsic altruistic desire, and therefore this finding should be expected. What was significant was the ability of the participants to re-evaluate their life philosophies by incorporating and living the ideal of helping others.

The primary response given to the question of why the participants chose to go on the peer-counsellor training course was that they wanted to help others. This is illustrated in the following comments; **“To learn to help people the right way”** and **“To make a difference in someone’s life”** and **“I wanted to help people and that’s always been like a passion of mine, even before this thing came to our school”** (P6;l:31-33) and **“To help others who need it I’ve always wanted to help people, all the time and actually it’s a skill that I had, the skills are there you just need to develop it”** (P2;l:17-19).

The desire to help came out prominent in the adolescents that made up the group of participants in this study. **“It’s a very helpful thing to have in life and to be able to help people is a really good thing, it makes you feel good inside to be able to know you can help somebody, if they need your help”** (P5;l:87-89) and **“Lots of people really need help and umm has issues, has been through a lot and there’s other people who has also been through it, so I want to help them from my own experiences”** (P9;l:40-42) and **“I want to make a difference in people’s life”** and **“I enjoy helping people and listening”** and **“I always thought that I could help people in some way”** and **“I think everyone who did it wanted to help people”** (P6;l:74).

What became evident from the findings is that the participants expressed a need and a desire to help, but almost all of them felt that they were unable to do so because of a lack

of knowledge, skills and self-confidence. The likelihood of a person helping someone else depends largely on these factors. Training programmes such as the LifeLine peer-counsellor training course are specifically designed to address the areas of skills and confidence. The next section focuses on the acquisition of skills in the training programme.

### **3.3.8 SKILLS ACQUISITION**

The LifeLine course that the participants completed does not have information acquisition as its primary objective but instead the focus is on the acquisition of interpersonal and psycho-social skills such as assertion, negotiation, decision making, empathy building, values clarification, and stress and coping skills. Participants expressed that the acquisition of skills was integral to their better understanding of others and their improved social interactions. **“You learn to understand yourself and you know, you learn to deal with, when you come about problems, you learn how to deal with them”** (P1;l:39-40).

Participants in the study indicated that the greatest barrier to helping that existed at the start of the course was the lack of skills as indicated by the following comments; **“I still need to work on my self-esteem and my listening skills”** and **“I would like to work on my listening skills”** and **“I’ve always wanted to help people, all the time and actually it’s a skill that I had, the skills are there you just need to develop it”** (P2;l:17-19). The participants indicated that they wanted to help others but lacked the skills to do so. **“I wanted to learn the skills necessary to help people”**.

It became evident that this group of participants had not shied away from helping others by saying that they were unable to do so, or they lacked the skills to do so, but instead they were proactive in moving their good intentions to good deeds. The participants empowered themselves by learning the skills they were lacking. This empowerment and acquisition of skills is evident in the following statements made by participants at the end of the course; **“I learnt to listen and to communicate”** and **“They helped me learn about the skills I need”** and **“I learnt how to deal with people and their emotions”** and **“I know that I have some skills to take with me, even after out of school, like in dealing with other people’s problems”** (P6;l:35-37) and **“I have learnt excellent skills”** and **“I learnt how to deal with situations constructively”**.

The number of positive categories that emerged from the data in this study clearly indicates the value of a course such as the LifeLine peer-counsellor training course in terms of the

social and emotional awareness, the acquisition of skills and the personal growth of the participants.

### **3.4 DISCUSSION OF NEGATIVE CATEGORIES**

It is important to note the shortcomings of the course, as indicated by the negative categories that emerged from the data, as this will serve to refine and adapt not only the course, but also the selection of participants in the future so that these areas are addressed. The areas of concern are threefold; firstly the choice of participants before the course begins, as at present there are no selection criteria for the course, secondly the issue of unfulfilled expectations and inhibition/trust issues during the course, and finally the issue of insufficient debriefing, follow-up and support after the course had ended. These issues will now be discussed.

#### **3.4.1 UNFULFILLED AND INACCURATE EXPECTATIONS**

It appears as though the participants on the course did not know what to expect from the course and many of them went into the course blindly. It is not clear how the course was sold to the participants initially but the comments on the intake forms indicate definite expectations of the course. The following comments from participants after completing the course indicate that these expectations were at times inaccurate and in some instances, unfulfilled. **“I didn’t get a lot of information before”** (P2;l:112-113) and **“It just wasn’t what I expected”** (P4;l:15) and **“Honestly when I did the course it wasn’t exactly how we expected it to go, you know, cause you have to, you can’t ask direct questions and stuff like that. So it was very different to the way, what I expected”** (P3;l:16-19) and **“At first I was unsure about how it was going to be like”** (P2;l:2) and **“It was not what I thought it would be”** and **“They didn’t tell us what it was about, they just said that it is a course where you are going to learn how to help other people. They didn’t give us any information about what they were going to do, anything like that”** (P2;l:8-10).

The data from the intake forms indicated that there was an expectation that the course would be only about counselling and more specifically the practical task of counselling within a school. The participants were not expecting to take part in a lengthy self-awareness programme, which appears to have been quite challenging for many of the participants. **“I expected more of giving people advice and like using like your own experiences to help people and I also expected that we wouldn’t be looking at**

ourselves, we would just be focusing on people's, other people's problems and how to deal with it" (P6;l:10-13) and "I didn't expect everyone to, like with your big personal lives and say what affected them, you know I didn't really think that it would be us, I thought we would just get straight into the course and learn how to counsel people, that kind of thing. I didn't realise it was a whole healing process of ourselves before we get to other people" (P8;l:26-29) and "I never knew it was about dealing with your own issues first before you can deal with other people's, you know, sort of. So that to me was a bit of a shocker" (P1;l:26-28) and "I didn't think it would be so much involved with me, like you know like, with the first half it was just about us. I thought it would be more a skills thing, than sorting out your own problems in the beginning, but that's basically it, I thought it would be more skills based than it was" (P5;l:61-64).

The last issue with regard to the expectations of the participants was the fact that there were certain existing expectations of the course that were not fulfilled. Some of these expectations were outlined in the intake form and were known to the presenters, and others were not. "Discriminations in school, how do we go handle that, because we did, we did stuff on rape and suicide and all that, but I know that the biggest problem in our school is discrimination and we, I wanted to learn how to help people to overcome that and to see that it's okay" (P7;l:26-29) and "There were a couple of things that weren't answered and properly elaborated on".

It has been suggested in the comments from the participants that some of these issues were overlooked due to insufficient time allocated to their completion. "I think it was kind of rushed at the end.....how to deal with stuff like aids, rape, suicide and that was kind of rushed because it was kind of like a separate thing and I think that even if they make the course longer. So that was kind of like wishy-washy" (P6;l:135-145) and "I expected to learn more about how to deal with issues, like more how to get to know a person, not, without them telling me about themselves, you know just reading in how they acting and you know" (P4;l:17-19).

Some participants felt that they did not learn that much and what they did learn they have not been able to use. "I also expected that straight after once we get our certificate we can go straight into that counselling people, you know and what ever, but that didn't exactly happen. I don't know, well I have but that's my friends, but it hasn't really

been outsiders or anything in the school yet, so in that way it was I expected more” (P8;l:16-20) and “I don’t think that it was something that I could take and you know say I’ve learned so much about this and I know how to deal with this issue” (P4;l:6-8).

A final expectation that was held by some of the participants was that there would be some kind of follow-up or continued support from the course presenters or some other qualified person within the school, but this did not happen “**We should meet on a weekly basis and get counselling**”. This was also indicated by a participant who expressed a need for support after the intensive part of the self-awareness programme was over “**There should be support groups for the people after the personal side of the course is over**”.

What became evident from these statements is that in some cases the expectations of individuals were not fulfilled largely due to their own inhibitions and issues of trust in the challenging self-awareness component of the course. This will now be discussed further.

### 3.4.2 INHIBITION AND THE INABILITY TO TRUST

The participants in the LifeLine peer-counsellor training course were all adolescents. One of the focal points of the course was to create opportunities for non-threatening social interaction. The participants were provided with opportunities to interact in smaller groups and in one-on-one situations with individuals that they were not familiar with in terms of their natural social groupings. “**I was a little bit nervous and I was kind of like wary to do stuff like that, cause I didn’t want to, cause it was kind of strangers that you were like, people that you are going to see everyday, like kind of open up to them. So that was a little bit weird**” (P6;l:23-26). It emerged in the data from the feedback forms that many of the participants experienced some kind of difficulty and uneasiness with this process, although in many cases it was only initially that it was applicable. “**(The hardest part) is probably opening up right in the beginning, in front of everyone, I didn’t know anyone and they were asking all these questions**” (P4;l:41-42).

The issues of shyness and inhibition are critical issues in a peer-counsellor training programme as it has the potential to cause problems for the participants, the course presenters, the process, and will ultimately affect the outcomes of the course. Many of the participants in the course expressed a wish that they were able to be more open in order to



have gained more from the intensive self-awareness component of the course. **“I regret that I did not have the strength to reveal myself a bit more. I regret that I did not open up more in the beginning of the course”** and **“It was weird you know, you don’t know whether to go there, because some people were very to themselves, you know they didn’t really want you to hug them or whatever. They just want to tell you and then you had to leave them alone you know. So it was kind of, it was a bit tense at first you know and then people started crying and you know everybody started hugging everyone and you know and it wasn’t that bad, it was just weird”** (P8;l:175-180) and **“I would like to be more open about everything and everyone. I am not a very open person, but it was part of the process and like they told us, what ever you put in you’ll get out of the course. So you had to like really commit yourself fully and tell everyone everything in order to get that back”** (P2;l:61-63).

One of the main reasons that participants cited as the cause of them not opening up as much as they would have liked to, be it initially or throughout the course, was the issue of trust. Most of the participants indicated that they did not know the other participants that well before the course began and as a result had difficulty trusting them during the intensive self-awareness activities and exercises of the first half of the course. Some of the participants expressed that they would not recommend the course to someone who has issues with trust. **“If you are a very selfish person, it wouldn’t help you to do the course, because you wouldn’t use it and also if you have a lot of trust problems, because it is probably the secret, you have to be able to keep it all the time, not tell everybody else’s problems to the world”** (P5;l:100-103).

Participants also expressed that the main reason for them not being able to open up to the rest of the group and share personal information during the self-awareness exercises was that they did not know if the group could be trusted with that information. **“That it is an intense course, you have to be willing to be open and share your, your life basically with people and it’s gonna be, if you have the trust issue it will be hard for you, because you have to trust people that you are working with to be able to get through this course”** (P5;l:93-96). A fear existed that the information would be leaked outside of the group, even though each participant had signed a confidentiality clause. **“I couldn’t really tell people things and, because one of the things was trust, and I didn’t know, even though everyone said okay it was confidential and it will stay in the group and what ever. I didn’t know if you know I could go out and trust those people”** (P3;l:32-



35) and **“I had such an issue with trust, because I’ve experienced where you know I trusted someone and they’ve completely just betrayed me. You know I think that is one of the hugest things, because you tell someone in confidence and they just go and share it with everyone, you know there wasn’t a point in telling them in the first place, you could of just kept it to yourself”** (P3;l:124-128) and **“We did it with people from our school, there was always that element of, someone can decide to say something that you said, even though they signed that confidentiality form whatever. It’s, it was always, we always had that you know, it was more you didn’t know, they couldn’t really say anything, but it was all people from the same school, and just now they just let something slip that really was personal, you know”** (P2;l:68-73).

Upon the completion of the course some of the participants expressed regret in not opening up and reflected that they would have gained more from the experience had they been more open. It appears as though there was a realisation that their initial fears and issues of trust that inhibited them did not play out as they had expected and in retrospect the majority of the participants regret not opening up as much as they could have. **“I felt that I did not open up as much as I would have liked to”**. It can be assumed that some of the participants were not emotionally ready for such intensive training.

### **3.4.3 EMOTIONAL SENSITIVITY, PREPAREDNESS, AND IMMATURITY**

The peer-counsellor training course involved an intensive self-awareness section to it. This took place during the first half of the course and took a number of sessions to complete. It appears as though this part of the course was quite difficult for many of the participants for the following reasons; they were not expecting it; they found the disclosure of personal information in a group quite threatening due to issues of trust; and some of the participants felt they were not ready to disclose some of the information that was asked of them at that point. This kind of subjective reframing appeared to be an intensely threatening emotional experience.

Some of the participants indicated an emotional sensitivity that was not in line with the tasks that were being presented. They were unable to relate to the emotional experiences of others and as a result of this they felt alienated and out of sync with the rest of the group. **“Tough in a way that, you there and you, you not gonna, not gonna like cry with them, you not going to fall to pieces with them. I mean you are going to be emotional, you got to have empathy with them, understand it and, and that sort of**

**thing, but you got to be tough on yourself practically, not like on your, your counselees but on like yourself” (P7;l:109-113).**

It is evident from the data that some of the participants in the peer-counsellor training programme were not yet at an appropriate stage of emotional development to participate constructively and comfortably in the activities, and as a result had some difficulty with the activities that they were required to complete during the course of the training. **“You might find out things about yourself that you don’t want to, but if you are not a strong person, then you shouldn’t do it, because it’s dealing with real life issues” (P2;l:117-118)** and **“That it is an intense course, you have to be willing to be open and share your, your life basically with people and it’s gonna be, if you have the trust issue it will be hard for you, because you have to trust people that you are working with to be able to get through this course” (P5;l:93-96).** This emotional preparedness was significant in its absence with some of the participants. **“I did (open up) with most things, some things it was kind of like I had to keep it to myself I wasn’t ready” (P7;l:62-63).**

#### **3.4.4 ULTERIOR MOTIVES**

Having ulterior motives was not a common category in the data but it did appear in the feedback from two participants and as a result will be included in the findings of this study. It was suggested by some of the participants that there were certain individuals who were signed up for the peer-counsellor training course for the wrong reasons and they were only doing so to achieve some other aim. **“I think a lot of the people were very like excited to do like, you know like, do stuff about themselves, but I also think that a lot of the people were doing it for the wrong reasons and then when they found out like, on the second part of the course, actually learning facts and learning properly how to deal with, they didn’t really care about that” (P6;l:65-69).** The feedback that was given also indicated that perhaps the intention of some of the participants was good but they perhaps did not consider the long-term implications of completing the course. **“I think everyone who did it wanted to help people, but I think it was kind of in the wrong, like they didn’t realise to what extent you’ll gonna have to help people. I just don’t think people who were there were really committed” (P6;l:74-78).**

#### **3.5 CLASSIFICATION OF CATEGORIES INTO EMERGENT THEMES**

The categories that emerged from the raw data in this study are closely linked theoretical concepts with regard to the personal growth, and the social and emotional awareness of

the participants. The categories also identified training gaps with regard to the training of counsellors in schools. The desire to help others and acquire the skills to do so was prominent. There were however a number of emotional barriers that affected the participants' experience of the counsellor training. The categories are *not mutually exclusive* as illustrated by Table 3.6. The categories and themes will be more closely examined in Chapter 4.

Table 3.6: Classification of categories into themes.

| <b>CATEGORIES</b>   |                | <b>THEMES</b>                  |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Personal Growth<br>(Heightened) Self-Awareness<br>Self-Acceptance<br>Self-Esteem<br>(Increased) Emotional Awareness<br>Skills Acquisition   | <b>Theme 1</b> | Empowerment                    |
| Helping Others<br>Acceptance by peers<br>Broader Understanding of Others<br>Acceptance of Others<br>(Heightened) Social Awareness<br>(Learning to) Trust<br>Being more accessible | <b>Theme 2</b> | Social and Emotional Awareness |
| Helping Others<br>Skills Acquisition<br>Being more accessible   | <b>Theme 3</b> | The need to provide a service  |
| Unfulfilled Expectations<br>Inaccurate Expectations<br>Insufficient Debriefing, Follow-Up and Support   | <b>Theme 4</b> | Gaps in the training           |
| Inhibition<br>Inability to trust<br>Emotional Sensitivity<br>Emotional Unpreparedness (Immaturity)<br>Insufficient Emotional Awareness<br>Ulterior Motives                        | <b>Theme 5</b> | Emotional Barriers             |

The theme of empowerment emerged quite strongly in the data through the categories of personal growth, heightened self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-esteem. This had the positive effect of increased emotional awareness. Along with increased emotional awareness came increased social awareness which manifested as a desire to help others, an acceptance of and by others, a broader understanding of others, and the desire to more accessible to others thereby indicated the willingness to trust others. One of the most prominent categories that emerged was the desire to help others and to be more accessible to others but this was noted with the recognition of the need for the

development and acquisition of the necessary skills to help others. The participants in the course identified training gaps in the form of unfulfilled and inaccurate expectations, and insufficient debriefing, follow-up and the lack of support. The final grouping of categories was that of emotional barriers that were identified. These emotional barriers were emotional areas which affected the participants' experience of the peer-counsellor training and included the issues of inhibition and the inability to trust, emotional sensitivity, unpreparedness, immaturity and ulterior motives for doing the course. These themes will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

### **3.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The positive themes that emerged from the data in this study indicate that there are numerous advantages in taking part in a peer-counsellor training programme. The adolescent will be exposed to and afforded the opportunity to benefit from a number of positive themes in terms of their personal growth, skills acquisition, and sense of community and helping others. The negative themes that emerged from the data indicate that there needs to be some adjustment to the process involved in the presentation of the course, as well as a stricter criteria-based selection process being instituted to select participants. The consequences of all the intensive self-awareness and role-play activities of the LifeLine course need to be considered through the use of feedback forms and checklists. This was done in the LifeLine peer-counsellor training programme but the implementation of these procedures needs to be reworked as a result of the participants not seeing the presenters again after the feedback forms had been completed. The debriefing should serve to facilitate the access to further support services for those in need. These findings have been discussed in detail in this chapter and they are supported by quotations from the intake forms, feedback forms, and individual interviews.

Chapter 4 will present a discussion of the theoretical nature of the themes that emerged from the data in this study. Included in this discussion will be a closer look at the literature on the categories that make up the emergent themes. This discussion will take the form of a literature control to detail what has been written about these categories and themes in previous research.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **LEARNER'S EXPERIENCE OF PEER-COUNSELLOR TRAINING**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge of theories allows the researcher to establish a perspective which assists in making sense of the findings that emerged from the data in the study. The concept of theory is defined by LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 120) as human constructions derived from information which people collect by seeing, hearing, touching, sensing, smelling, and feeling. This information is then put together into formal or informal theories by means of cognitive processes, or thinking. With regard to this study, the theoretical frameworks that have been developed in the fields of education and psychology, have allowed the researcher to make sense of the data that has emerged in the findings. The theoretical framework will be discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PEER-COUNSELLOR TRAINING**

##### **4.2.1 THE ECO-SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE**

The provision of support services in the educational sphere in South Africa at present has become decentralised and privatised. The lack of resources and the shortage of qualified professionals has meant that the intervention strategies developed in schools, and particularly in the therapeutic and counselling spheres, have had to become holistic and eco-systemic in order to make best use of the limited, and sometimes severely restricted, resources.

The eco-systemic approach to the educational and human sciences originated in the natural sciences with systems theory and ecological theory. Ecological theory suggests that all individuals are part of a larger system and no individual exists in isolation. Therefore one cannot be studied, examined or understood in isolation but rather as a functioning unit of a greater system (Donald et al, 2001, p. 45). Systems theory states that there are a number of sub-systems that operate within any system, and these sub-systems interact with each other in such a way as to influence the functioning of the system as a whole. In systems theory the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between all parts of the system (Donald et al, 2001, p. 47).

In terms of psychological support in the educational sphere, the eco-systemic perspective is very significant in terms of how a therapist goes about planning a programme of support and a course of action with regard to a therapeutic intervention.

One of the leading theorists in the applicability of eco-systems theory to child development and educational psychology is Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1989). In his theory of child development, he identified a number of different dimensions which must be taken into consideration when studying the eco-system of a child and the influence of that eco-system on development and learning. The four levels that are referred to in relation to the different systems of the individual's existence, are the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem*, and the *macrosystem*. All of these systems are influenced by, and operate within the *chronosystem*, of time.

The Microsystems in which the child operates are all of the systems that involve face-to-face interaction with significant others. These interactions take place in the daily routines of the child and include the interactions with the family, the school, and the peer group (Donald et al, 2001, p. 51). This system is central to the learner's experience in a peer-counsellor training programme. The Mesosystem refers to the interactions that take place between the different elements of the Microsystem, for example the interactions between the family and the school or the peers and the family. What is significant to the educational psychologist is the influence that the different elements of the Microsystem will have on the child's functioning and emotional development within any of the other systems (Donald et al, 2001, p. 52). The exosystem is the level of the eco-systemic theory that refers to the systems in which the child has no direct involvement, but the influence of these systems can still be of great significance due to the 'proximal relationships' of other people within the Microsystem (Donald et al, 2001, p. 52). This level of the eco-system will refer to things such as the place of work of the parents, the peer group of siblings, or local community organisations. The last, and broadest, level of the eco-system is the Macrosystem which refers to the structures of society that will have an influence on the functioning and well-being of the child. This includes, not only societal structures, but also beliefs and values of the social system as a whole.

The eco-systemic approach as a broad theoretical framework for examining the experiences of learners in a peer-counsellor training programme is therefore of vital

importance to this study as it defines and clarifies the various functional relationships that exist in the experience of the learners who underwent the training in this study.

#### **4.2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Constructivism developed out of the need to move away from the reductionist approach to learning that many educational and training institutions have adopted. The principle behind reductionist thinking is that knowledge is best acquired when things are broken down into the smaller parts that make up the whole, as the Modernist paradigm proposed. However, in most fields of study, especially where people and societies are involved, the whole is made up of much more than the sum of the parts (Donald et al, 2001). It is therefore important to take into account the experiences of learners and use those experiences in the construction of new understandings of knowledge. This is where the focus of this study lies, in the experience of learners and not on learning content.

Constructivism therefore involves taking the individual's experiences and understanding of the world in which he/she lives and using them to construct new knowledge and new understandings of existing knowledge thus allowing the learner to be actively involved in their learning and the constructive and progressive implementation and initiation of change in their lives. Education and training in the modern world should help learners to become proactive where they are responsible for the creation of the educational processes that will help them develop into competent and socially responsible people (Dovey & De Jong, 1990). Learners should not be reactive, where they make no attempt to influence what happens to them.

Constructivism is a philosophy founded on the premise that, by reflecting on experience, a person is able to construct their own understanding of the world they live in. Each person generates their own "rules" and "mental models," which they then use to make sense of their experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting one's mental models to accommodate new experiences. Where behaviourism emphasises observable, external behaviours and, as such, avoids reference to meaning, representation and thought, constructivism takes a more cognitive approach. Vygotsky (1978) explored the field of human interest and the issue of motivation in a search for meaning in one's existence. He concluded that the social situation in which a person lives is a function of their motivation, affect, cognition and physical development. The social situation will define



the meaning one generates from it, and therefore will define their form of social existence (Vygotsky, 1978).

It is from the study of the individual's experience in the social situation of a peer-counsellor training course that the categories and themes were identified.

### **4.3 EMERGING THEMES**

#### **4.3.1 EMPOWERMENT**

As indicated in the data of Chapter 3, personal growth emerged as the primary positive outcome in the experience of learners in the peer counsellor training course. Empowerment means to devise ways to allow all of us, regardless of ability, to take more responsibility over our lives. Empowerment means to help and teach each other through peer counselling, the skills and competencies required to control our own lives (Hopson & Scally, 1981, p. 57; 1992; 1994; Delp, 2005). The theme of 'helping others while helping yourself' was a recurring theme in the comments of the participants. The learners who underwent the training had a similar vision in terms of using their own personal growth to help others to achieve a similar transformation.

Empowerment in education is the outcome of a pedagogy known as 'liberatory education' first identified and named by Freire (1970b). This is particularly pertinent in the South African context as education and training is now seen as a means of equalisation in South Africa, as opposed to its function of subordination and discrimination in the past. Freire concluded that education is the decisive factor in restructuring the nature of our communities and our society in order to empower individuals so that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to create a society based on the values of equity and unity (Porr, Drummond & Richter, 2006; Bergsma, 2004; Shrestha, 2003; Morsillo, 2003).

As early as 1970, Freire defined the concept of transformative learning as that which involves using the experiences of others to make decisions of our own, resulting from the insight gained from others, thereby allowing individuals greater control over their own lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers. Self esteem, personal growth, and empowerment happen through learning how to tune into and value who we are in this moment; and implementing that in our world. In studies conducted by Thompson (1996) and Bogner (2005) it was documented that peer mediation can be used to promote a positive school climate, student empowerment and responsibility, school safety, and



increase self-esteem, learn effective communication skills, and to reduce discipline referrals. Hackbarth (1997) states that empowerment is a significant pillar in the confluence of any educational strategy where the intended outcome of the process is the deliberate and purposeful evocation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and feelings that flow together to produce wholeness in the person and in society. This concept of 'wholeness of the person' through peer-mediation is the primary outcome of personal growth and empowerment. This process cannot be initiated without intensive self-awareness activities.

The concept of self-awareness is one that has been central to the study of human behaviour (Leary, Adams & Tate, 2006). The reason for this is that human beings are the only species that can systematically study their own thought processes. The concept of an independent self is a relatively new idea and it is now assumed that the modern person is able to know him/herself well enough to determine the course of their own lives. In short, self-awareness or knowing oneself, is required in order to set life goals and to self-actualise (Vrey, 1992).

The concept of self-awareness is therefore one of the necessary pre-conditions for personal growth and the development of the self-concept and self-esteem (Slaski, Olaf & Piotr, 2006). Kehayan (1990) concluded that the personal and social development of learners is facilitated by increased self-awareness, which allows for the development of self-esteem and improved social interactions. Knowing your own strengths and limitations and understanding how they impact on your own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others is an important part of self-awareness and personal growth.

Self-awareness allows a person to learn from their mistakes and misjudgements. It is in this recognition of one's own strengths and limitations that a person is able to empower others and in so doing allows for the development of the self and others (Scaffidi, Isgrò, Wicklund & Boca, 2006).

According to Henderson, Dakof, Schwartz & Liddle (2006), a person needs to have a well-developed sense of self through the acquisition of self-knowledge in order for that person to develop what is known as the self-concept. Fitzpatrick (2006, p. 23) states that self-assessment is a means of encouraging learners to develop critical thinking skills, and that social interaction and engagement enhances a learner's emotional development. A person's knowledge, feelings and assumptions about him/herself define their self-concept (Seta, Schmidt & Bookhout, 2006). Each person's self-concept is different from all others.

But, surprisingly, there is no general agreement about the general structure or content of the self-concept. What is agreed upon is the fact that the self-concept is probably primarily learned or acquired from one's interactions with others and interactions with the world around them (Aaker, 2006). Goethe said, "If you want to know yourself, observe what your neighbour is doing. If you want to understand others, probe within yourself" (in Stephenson, 1995). Self-awareness and self-understanding therefore helps us understand others.

Once an individual has gathered information about the nature of their personal self, they are then able to develop a concept of who, and what they are. This self-concept is formed by interacting with, and receiving feedback from others. If the extent to which, and ways in which people view themselves is attributed value and worth then the self-concept can be described in terms of self-esteem (Seta, Schmidt & Bookhout, 2006). This is an important concept in the development of young individuals because self-esteem ultimately affects a person's behaviour and achievements (MacInnes, 2006, p. 483).

Self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. Having self-esteem is about developing the confidence in the efficacy of our mind and in our ability to think. It is also therefore, confidence in our ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions, and manage change (Hardy, 1996).

Bednar and Peterson (1995) state that the concept of good self-esteem becomes clearer, if it is considered as having two parts: (1) a generally positive but realistic self-evaluation and (2) the generally positive belief that one can handle life's problems. This is particularly relevant in the educational sphere as self-esteem can be both cause and consequence of undesirable behaviour as illustrated by numerous studies (Neff & Hoppe, 1991; Davies, 1996; Frisbee, 1997; Kramer, 1999; Aurelio, 2004). What is of great importance to this study is the finding by Steinem (1992) that a poor self-concept and low self-esteem can be addressed by learning new skills such as assertiveness, and by changing one's thinking in order to reach an empowered position. MacInnes (2006) concluded that self-acceptance is closely associated with general psychological well-being, which is an important factor with regard to the individual's ability to be proactive and to become empowered.

The challenge to reach a position of empowerment cannot be decontextualised and emphasis should be placed on the context or environment in which freedom is sought. For

many young South Africans that environment is the school. The transformation of this society needs to begin in schools and in the classroom where the focus is on the acquisition of life skills (NEPI, 1992). Many people in the South African context have become 'depowered' through the structures of the Apartheid system and through an ineffective education system (Donald et al., 2001).

The acquisition of lifeskills requires the individual to have first reached a level of self-awareness through which they can become aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, values, limitations and potential. Through the development and understanding of this self-awareness the individual should be able to set realistic and personal goals for themselves from within their own value system. "Self-empowerment derives from operating through growth needs rather than deficiency needs." (Maslow, 1968 in Hopson & Scally 1981; 1992; 1994).

#### **4.3.2 SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL AWARENESS**

Peer acceptance is the degree to which a child or adolescent is socially accepted by their peers. It includes the level of peer popularity and the ease with which a child or adolescent can initiate and maintain satisfactory peer relationships. This process is an integral part of a child's social and emotional development. The influence of social competence and social relations on school achievement and peer-acceptance was investigated by Henricsson and Rydell (2006) and it was concluded that the level of achievement at school was higher for the group that scored highest on the peer-acceptance scale. Peer-acceptance affects the levels of motivation of the person as documented by Smith, Ullrich-French, Walker and Hurley (2006, p. 362). Peer-acceptance is an important part of social competence.

Environmental factors play an important role in the development of a child's social competence. For many children, the quantity and quality of social interactions with different types of peers are only truly established during the school years. In school-aged children, the degree of social acceptance and competence is affected by a broad diversity of factors such as physical attractiveness, cultural traits, fields of interest, and disabilities. Peer groups are often defined by, and based on, athletic, social, or academic interests and abilities; on distinctions of race, ethnicity, and social class (Lubbers, Van Der Werf, Kuyper & Offringa, 2006). For many adolescents it is difficult to cross these divides yet the experience of the peer-counsellor training course seems to have enabled some of the

learners to break those barriers that existed between them and their peers that they did not interact with before. A child's degree of social competence is often the best predictor of peer-acceptance (Fox & Boulton, 2006). It has been shown by Hughes, Zhang & Hill (2006, p. 447) that peer-acceptance is closely linked to classroom engagement and therefore to growth.

Research has shown that peer-accepted children tend to be able to function on a more advanced emotional level than those that struggle to be accepted into the peer group (Perren, Von Wyl, Stadelman, Burging & Von Klitzing, 2006, p. 867-876). Adolescents accepted into the peer group are more likely to correctly interpret other children's body language and tone of voice and are better equipped to distinguish subtleties in emotions. As a result of this they are able to respond more appropriately to the emotions of other children. They can cooperate with, show tact towards, and compromise with other children, demonstrating the willingness to modify behaviour and opinions in the interests of others. These emotional skills are crucial in initiating and maintaining relationships and in resolving conflicts (Fox & Boulton, 2006, p. 110).

Emotional awareness is one of the key concepts of emotional intelligence. The concept of emotional intelligence is a relatively new concept by name, but the reality is that it has existed, as a concept, for some time in the field of psychology (Spearman, 1927; Piaget, 1970; Thurstone, 1938; Coles, 1997; Hass, 1998; Das, Naglieri, and Kirby, 1994; Wagner, 2000 *quoted in* Sattler, 2001). Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 433), attempted to develop a scientific way of measuring different individuals' emotional abilities, such as identifying their own feelings, identifying those of others and solving emotional problems, and in 1990, 'Emotional Intelligence' was presented as *"a type of social intelligence, which involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among these emotions and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions"*.

In his seminal work, Gardner (1983a) proposed that Emotional Intelligence has five principal features: i) being aware of one's own emotions, ii) being able to manage one's own emotions, iii) being sensitive to the emotions of others, iv) being able to respond to and negotiate with other people emotionally, and v) being able to use one's own emotions to motivate oneself. Murphy (2006, p. 14) describes how emotions inform behaviour and 'turns' clients with regard to their own personal growth. Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham and

Frederickson (2006) concluded that emotional intelligence is a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions that influences children's peer-relations at school. According to Pellitteri, Dealy, Fasano and Kugler, (2006), the construct of emotional intelligence provides a framework for understanding the emotional processes of learners as they relate to cognition, motivation, and social functioning.

When categorising the raw data as presented in Chapter 3, it became evident that there was a significant acquisition of skills with regard to understanding and awareness of the emotions of others. The concept of emotional intelligence isolates a specific set of skills embedded within the abilities that are broadly encompassed by the notion of social intelligence (Grewal & Salovey, 2005, p. 330). Social intelligence and empathic understanding in counselling and therapy requires a high level of sensitivity to, not only the individual, but also the social milieu in which the therapeutic encounter takes place.

The environment in which every person lives and functions is one of relationships (Donald, 2001). In spite of this fact, many people are not able to understand others because of the great diversity that exists in human nature. Having a highly developed sense of self-awareness and having an awareness of difference, is fundamental to one's understanding of others (Shah, 2004). This understanding of difference can only be developed through a greater and broadened awareness of what is happening around us in everyday life.

Empathic behaviour starts in childhood and is carried throughout the course of a person's life (Keen, 2006). An empathic person is someone who is sensitive enough to read the emotions of other people. This sensitivity can sometimes be overwhelming. According to Breen (2006), empathy has many different levels and it is those levels that will ultimately determine the ability of the individual to become a counsellor.

At its lowest level, empathy is the ability of a person to sense that they are being influenced by emotions that are not their own but they are unable to identify the source or nature of those feelings. The next level of empathy is where the individual is able to identify the emotions that are being felt, but they are still unable to identify the source of the emotion without obvious visual clues. With a heightened level of emotional awareness comes the ability to accurately identify an emotion and its source within groups of people both small and large. At its highest level empathy is all of the above abilities as well as an intricate understanding of the reason for the emotion (Breen, 2006). In a study by Wynn and Wynn (2006) it was revealed that cognitive empathy and affective empathy are higher level

conversational resources that build on the more basic resources and skills of counselling, like questioning and assertions, as well as non-verbal behaviours.

These levels of empathic behaviour are not clear-cut but the acquisition of the skills and behaviours appears to be progressive and as a result of this the individual is able to move between different levels depending on the context and the company they are in. It is evident in the data presented in Chapter 3 that many of the participants were able to move to a higher level of empathic understanding having undergone the peer-counsellor training.

In a study conducted by Findlay, Girardi and Coplan (2006), it was reported that more empathic children exhibited greater pro-social behaviour and less aggression and social-withdrawal in the school setting and it can therefore be concluded that the empathic children are more socially sensitive, both in terms of their social understanding of others as well as their own social behaviours. According to Breen (2006), the key issue is for the individual to reach a level of “comfort, control, focus, and acceptance” of their empathic nature since personal freedom and the development of individuals can only occur in mutuality with others.

Due to the extremity to which individuality extends, it is impossible not to differ from others in terms of beliefs; however, acceptance is essential when complete understanding is expected (Edwards, Armstrong & Miller, 2001). The attitudes and beliefs of others do not necessarily have to be accepted, but it is important that a person understands the reason for such a belief or attitude in order to work as a counsellor. This genuineness, sensitivity, and understanding of others, is the only way in which one can be free from bias and prejudice and is thereby empowered with the need and the desire to help. This is perhaps one of the highest levels of empathic behaviour.

### **4.3.3 THE NEED TO PROVIDE A SERVICE**

*“By helping oneself one helps others, and by helping others one helps oneself”*

- Traditional Buddhist saying-

The philosophy of helping others by helping oneself and vice versa is an age old philosophy that is evident in many religious teachings. Tucker-Ladd (2006) questions the rationale behind this age-old philosophy. He proposes that when people are taught to constantly focus on helping their own lives, they are encouraged to view themselves as



constantly deprived of something, deprived of reading ability, deprived of math ability, deprived of friends, or deprived of talent. He argues that implicit in the urge to help oneself is an acknowledgement of the fact that one does not yet have enough, or one is not satisfied with their own life, or even an admission that one is not happy. So in contrast to this is the rationale that the act of helping others is a statement that other people may have bigger problems and the individual has gifts and talents that can be shared (Tucker-Ladd, 2006).

It is in this assumption of Tucker-Ladd's that one of the great findings of this study lies. The willingness and need to help others was the most prominent theme that emerged from the data of all the participants. The modern world is one where the need to help oneself is fast becoming the primary goal and function of people. Personally caring for others is a value and behaviour that is becoming less and less prominent in a world where that value is increasingly needed to address the social issues that are destroying people, families, and communities (Quigley, 2004, p. 134). Helping, should come naturally to most humans, and this desire was prominent in the group of participants in this study. Bogner (2005, p. 3) states that peer-helping programmes and peer-empowerment programmes intensify the positive characteristics of the helpers.

It can be assumed that participants taking part in a peer-counsellor training course have a need and a desire to help others but in most cases lack the ability to do so because of a lack of knowledge, skills and self-confidence. The likelihood of a person helping someone else depends largely on these factors. Training programmes such as the LifeLine peer-counsellor training course are specifically designed to address the areas of skills and confidence.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) website, life skills as a teaching-learning approach is specifically designed to enhance efforts to positively develop or change behaviour, especially related to well being and healthy functioning in society. This focus on behaviour change as a primary objective distinguishes life skills from other approaches, such as information only approaches which are used for simple information acquisition but are not generally effective in making an impact on behaviour (UNICEF, 2001).

The LifeLine course that the participants completed does not have information acquisition as its primary objective but instead the focus is on the acquisition of interpersonal and

psycho-social skills such as assertion, negotiation, decision making, empathy building, values clarification, and stress and coping skills. Research into peer-helping has shown that the acquisition of skills is the most effective peer-helping tool in building resiliency to environmental and social factors, as well as in increasing assertiveness and thereby leading to empowerment (Bogner, 2005; Blackwell, 2005; Varenhorst, 2005)

According to Hopson and Scally (1981, p. 53 and 1992 and 1994) many people restrict their own growth and development because they 'depower' themselves through the process of not acquiring appropriate life skills. In order to have more control over what happens to them, to have greater self-direction, and more flexibility, they need to become proactive by acquiring and developing the skills to become self-empowered. According to UNICEF (2001) these empowering life skills include empathy building, active listening, giving and receiving feedback, assertive skills, communication skills, cooperation and teamwork, and relationship and community building skills. It can be assumed that the greater the range of life skills a person possesses, the greater the range of alternatives available to them to use in their daily encounters with others.

An altruistic life philosophy is merely a statement of valued intentions or hopes until it is turned into a plan of action built around these newly acquired helping skills. With a plan of action and the necessary skills, any individual can start living the altruistic values they have prioritised in their life philosophy

#### **4.3.4 TRAINING GAPS**

The issues that were identified from the raw data in Chapter 3, that include unfulfilled expectations, inaccurate expectations, and insufficient debriefing and follow-up can be grouped together and labelled as training gaps. It became obvious in the comments of the participants that they were able to identify the training gaps of the course.

The peer-counsellor training course involved an intensive self-awareness section to it. This kind of subjective reframing can be an intensely threatening emotional experience. Some of the participants indicated an emotional sensitivity that was not in line with the tasks that were being presented. They were unable to relate to the emotional experiences of others and as a result of this they felt alienated and out of sync with the rest of the group.



A person who has some resistance to self-discovery cannot claim to have 'emotional honesty' and therefore cannot experience the full value of the self-awareness component of the peer-counsellor training because they are hiding or suppressing feelings that need to be experienced honestly at his point of emotional maturity (FitzMaurice, 1989). Part of achieving this, is the ability to identify with other individuals and locate others with whom one can share their emotional experiences.

This emotional openness, and a person's willingness and skills in sharing their feelings, is known as self-disclosure (Egan, 2002). The skill of getting others to disclose information is a fundamental skill as a counsellor and some of the participants in the training course were unable to do this as they were not ready themselves. Positive self-expression is the key to assertiveness (Hopson & Scally, 1985; 1992; 1994) and it is one of the primary goals of the LifeLine peer-counsellor training course as it defines a person's ability to ask for and receive the nurturing that a person in counselling needs and wants. Some of the participants had some difficulty in disclosing information to the group as they had issues with trust and inhibition. Deniz, Hamarta, and Ari (2005), studied the social skills of students and found that the emotional expressivity levels of girls were higher than boys but so were the emotional sensitivity levels. They also found that the emotional control levels of male students was significantly higher than those of female students. In a study conducted by Marra (2005) it was concluded that emotional sensitivity was the single most important factor causing mental health disorders. The emotional sensitivity of some of the participants in this study is therefore a matter to be duly considered with regard to recommendations from this study.

A significant component of nurturing in a counselling context is the provision of psychological debriefing, which is broadly defined as a set of procedures including counselling and the sharing of information aimed specifically at preventing psychological trauma and aiding recovery after an event (Kenardy & Carr, 1996). In the case of a peer-counsellor training programme, debriefing can be seen as the activities at the end of the course that bring some closure to the intensive emotional and personal insight activities that have taken place during the course. Kenardy & Carr (1996) described this type of debriefing as procedures that are applied after an event that normalise emotional expression.

The issue of psychological debriefing has been under the spotlight as it has been suggested by some studies that compulsory debriefing should cease as negative outcomes may be associated with debriefing (Small, Lumley, Donohue, Potter & Waldenstrom, 2000, p. 1043; Lewis, 2002; Tennyson, 2003; Wessely, Rose and Bisson, 2001). These randomised trials have, however, used broad definitions of debriefing and the negative outcomes could be as a result of an inappropriate form of debriefing being used. The type of debriefing used in a peer-counsellor training programme should be specifically designed to address the emotional issues that have been raised during the course of the training programme. Debriefing procedures should take cognisance of the emotional reactions of participants to the activities of the training programme which will then guide the presenters in terms of further intervention and direction. The consequences of all activities need to be considered through the use of feedback forms and checklists. To be effective, the debriefing must take into account the personal variables of the participants, the training and experience of the facilitators as well as long term follow-ups using consistent methods.

Debriefing at the end of a peer-counsellor training course can give the participants direction in terms of where, when and how the skills they have learnt can be applied and used in the real world setting of their lives, in other words, the debriefing must serve to facilitate the access to further support services for those in need.

#### **4.3.5 EMOTIONAL BARRIERS**

The theme of 'emotional barriers' is a term that encompasses a number of emotional experiences of the participants. These emotional barriers are categories such as inhibition, the inability to trust, emotional sensitivity, emotional immaturity, emotional unpreparedness, insufficient emotional awareness and having ulterior motives. One of the focal points of the peer-counsellor training course was to create opportunities for non-threatening social interaction. It emerged in the data that many of the participants experienced some kind of difficulty and uneasiness with this process, although in many cases it was only initially that it was applicable.

Revelle (1995) states that shyness may be defined experientially as, "discomfort and/or inhibition in interpersonal situations that interferes with pursuing one's interpersonal or professional goals. It is a form of excessive self-focus, a preoccupation with one's thoughts,

feelings and physical reactions. It may vary from mild social awkwardness to totally inhibiting social phobia.”

It can be argued that the issues of shyness and inhibition are critical issues in a peer-counsellor training programme as it has the potential to cause problems for the participants, the course presenters, the process, and will ultimately affect the outcomes of the course. People who are inhibited in a group situation don't take advantage of social situations and are less expressive verbally and nonverbally. According to Revelle (1995) inhibited individuals are frequently painfully self-conscious, and report more negative thoughts about themselves and others in social interactions, seeing themselves as inhibited, awkward, unfriendly and incompetent, all of which would seriously detract from the proposed outcomes and goals of a peer-counsellor training course. Inhibition affects the individual's ability to enact social and interpersonal behaviours, which would then lower self-confidence in their abilities (Knyazev & Slobodskaya, 2006).

The issue of trust is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as, “Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing” (Allen, 1990, p. 1312). Some of the participants expressed that they would not recommend the course to someone who has issues with trust. Carney and Harrigan (2003) write about ‘interpersonal sensitivity’ and how it is influenced by the issue of trust. Marchand and Vonk (2005) researched the process of becoming suspicious and focused on the issue of ulterior motives. The participants in the LifeLine course were suspicious of each other and felt that they could not trust some group members because of the suspicion that they had ulterior motives for doing the course.

A person's emotional intelligence and their handling of the relationships in their life are integral to a concept known as ‘emotional maturity’. Carruthers (2002) suggests that every relationship is a hologram of a person's life, as it reveals a person's self-awareness, maturity, self-control, commitment and integrity, as well as the person's ability to listen, communicate, initiate change, and to deal with problems. The concept of emotional maturity is therefore particularly relevant to a counsellor as these are the skills that a counsellor must learn and use (Egan, 2002). It can be assumed that an adolescent that is going to be trained as a peer-counsellor should therefore be someone who has a well-developed emotional maturity, or someone who has shown that they are able to develop

their emotional maturity through the peer-counsellor training course (Hernon & Rossiter, 2006).

According to Erikson's eight stages of social and emotional development, the adolescent should be in the fifth stage of development, namely the 'Learning Identity vs Identity Diffusion' stage (Erikson, 1959). At this point the adolescent should have reached a high level of self-awareness and as a result self-certainty as opposed to self-consciousness. The adolescent who successfully negotiates this stage of development experiments with constructive roles and anticipates achievement rather than being paralysed by feelings of inferiority (Erikson, 1959). It is evident from the data that some of the participants in the peer-counsellor training programme were not yet at this stage of development, and as a result had some difficulty with the activities that they were required to complete during the course of the training.

Ownership of feelings is an important part of emotional maturity and forms an integral part of what can be called 'emotional preparedness' for the intensive training that is part of a peer-counsellor training course (Pellitteri, Dealy, Fasano, & Kugler, 2006). An emotionally mature person should have a basic emotional responsibility which allowed them to identify their own emotions and recognise that they were responsible for their own feelings and not external forces. Murray, Halligan, Adams, Patterson and Goodyer (2006) examined the impact of socio-emotional development on adolescent functioning. In this study the level of emotional sensitivity and maturity of the participants was measured and it was concluded that high emotional sensitivity was linked to the raised awareness of the emotional components of relationships, and more importantly that higher social maturity was associated with overall good adjustment.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The theoretical nature of the categories and themes that emerged from the data in this study were discussed with references made to existing literature and previous research. The themes that emerged form a loosely connected continuum of self-empowerment, with the only obstacles being those of trust and inhibition. The importance of all the themes have been confirmed by the literature and need to be taken into account when designing and presenting peer-counsellor training programmes.

Chapter 5 will present an overview of this inquiry in which, final conclusions will be drawn, and deficiencies in the research and recommendations for further research will be discussed.



## CHAPTER 5

### OVERVIEW, LIMITATIONS, AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 reference was made to the fact that the access to support services in the South African education system is ineffective as a result of a number of factors; namely the marginalisation of a broad sector of this society by the former government, the lack of resources within the current educational structures, the serious shortage of trained professionals relative to the requirements and demands that exist within a society plagued by intolerance, HIV/AIDS, crime, unemployment, and poverty.

Much has been written about peer-counsellor training courses with particular emphasis being placed on the composition, content and structure of these courses, as well as the effectiveness of these courses within the communities they are presented in, but there is, to the knowledge of the researcher, no documented study that details the experience of the adolescents on the peer-counsellor training course. The research question of this inquiry was therefore stated as: **How do learners, who are themselves adolescents, experience a peer-counsellor training course?**

This final chapter provides an overview of the inquiry, a discussion of the findings, limitations of the inquiry, and recommendations for further research in the field of peer-counsellor training in schools in South Africa.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The empirical component of this inquiry produced 5 themes, which emerged from the descriptions of the participants experience on a peer-counsellor training course. It is important to note that some of the responses that were given by participants did not always fit into a specific category, or on many occasions, just one category, and for this reason these themes cannot be seen as mutually exclusive but rather as overlapping thematic ideals that reflect the personal experiences of the participants in a peer counselling training programme. These themes will be presented in a summarised form below.

- **Empowerment**

The theme of empowerment emerged from the data as the primary positive outcome of the training course. The participants expressed a general consensus that the course had helped them to grow personally and had enabled them to be empowered as they had become better equipped to 'help themselves' while helping others. Participants unanimously expressed that they were equipped with a range of skills that they did not possess before the course. This 'empowerment' was initiated through intensive self-awareness activities. Self-awareness has been widely recognised as a pre-condition for personal growth and it is for this reason that the course had within it, a large self-awareness component. The participants expressed that they benefited enormously from this intensive self-awareness study, despite having some doubt about it at the start. The participants felt as though they were forced to look at certain aspects of themselves that they had previously taken for granted. Central to the self-awareness component of the course was the sharing of these personal details with the rest of the group, and through this process of sharing, the group members were able to receive feedback from others regarding their personal uniqueness. Many participants expressed that this had been very rewarding for them and that there was a positive shift in terms of their perceptions of self which resulted in improved self-esteem. This study has therefore shown that peer-counsellor training is an effective tool for the empowerment of learners.

- **Social and Emotional Awareness**

What followed on from the improved self-esteem and acceptance of the self, was a closer connection with the other group members who, in many instances, were strangers at the start of the course. The participants expressed that they were able to develop the ability to interact with more members of the peer group and that they felt as though they were now accepted by people who they did not interact with before. It became evident from the data that the participants reported an increased sensitivity to the feelings of others and a heightened awareness of the social milieu in which they lived. This increased social awareness allowed participants to initiate and maintain relationships and allowed the participants to develop an increased sensitivity to the feelings of others which allowed them to move to a new level of empathic understanding. Participants became more aware of their own empathic nature and were given the skills to express and use that empathic understanding correctly and appropriately. By learning the basic counselling skills of reflection, unconditional acceptance and empathic understanding, the participants were able to accept people, and warm to people, that previously they would have ignored. Some



of the participants expressed that there were people in the group that they did not like and did not socialise with before they undertook the peer-counsellor training, but now they are very close to them. All of the participants indicated that they had reached an increased level of emotional awareness with regard to their own feelings and the feelings of those around them. This was largely due to the intensive self-awareness activities and the sharing of personal information, as well as the role play activities that formed an integral part of the counsellor training.

- **The Need to Provide a Service**

All the participants stated at the outset that they had a desire to help others, but in many instances felt that they did not have the skills to do so. While training as peer-counsellors, the participants were exposed to some of the issues that this society is facing at present. It was here that participants expressed that they had gained skills in dealing with these issues that they did not have before. Having completed the course the participants expressed increased confidence in their ability to help others due to the acquisition of skills. The participants were able to fulfil their expectations of being empowered to help not only themselves, but also others, as they were equipped with the necessary skills to do this.

- **Gaps in the Training**

The information gathered from the data clearly indicates that a large portion of the participants did not know what to expect on the course and as a result of this the expectations that they did have were mostly inaccurate and in many instances were left unfulfilled. Some of the participants felt that they were not given any support after the course had been completed. It was suggested that because of the fact that the course included such an intensive examination of some very personal and emotional issues, they should be given the opportunity to attend some kind of support group or that some kind of follow-up should be done.

There was an opinion expressed by two of the participants, that there were certain individuals on the course for the wrong reasons. It was suggested that some people go on the course because they simply want to credit themselves with having done the course instead of putting it to good use to help others. Some participants indicated that the long term consequences of being a peer-counsellor were not taken into consideration when signing up for the course. This evidence shows a need for a revision of selection criteria for such a training course.

- **Emotional Barriers**

For some of the participants, the intensive self-awareness activities that were done during the course were very threatening emotional experiences and they felt very uncomfortable taking part in those activities. Virtually all the participants expressed a regret that they had not used the self-awareness component of the course to open up more to the group. This was a common regret of all the participants. Their primary reasons given for this was that they felt inhibited at first in a group of relatively unknown people, and secondly that they had issues of trust with the group, even though they had signed a confidentiality clause. Some participants expressed that they had not opened up as much as they would have liked to because they feared that what was said in the group would leak to the broader school community. The study has therefore shown that some participants were not at an appropriate level of emotional preparedness or maturity to benefit fully from the training programme.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is evident from this study that, although there are gaps in the training, participation in a peer-counsellor training programme is a worthwhile experience for adolescents. The course helped the participants to make a real shift in terms of their personal growth and empowerment. They were given the skills to help others, to work with people, and to get to know others better. For many the course was a personal journey of growth and maturity. However, according to the findings of this study a number of recommendations can be made in order to improve the quality of the peer-counsellor training and the participants' experience of that training.

#### **5.3.1 Improving the training**

- More information should be given to participants during the promotion of the training course.
- Expectations of the participants should be clarified before enrolling or before the commencement of the training.
- Initial introductory activities should be included to build trust and to prepare participants emotionally before moving to emotionally intensive parts of the training.
- A post-training support system as well as a follow-up and debriefing session should be introduced.

### 5.3.2 Selection of participants

- Selection criteria for the course should be decided upon in consultation with a school representative who knows the potential participants well.
- A screening process should be conducted before training begins.
- Minimum age limits should be considered for participation in the course.

### 5.3.3 Creating opportunities at school to use new-found skills

- Create working space for the counselling team at the school.
- Provide resources for the counselling team to market themselves to the school community.
- Devote class time to peer-counsellors to address social issues that have arisen in the school.

As with most inquiries and particularly qualitative studies of this nature, there are a few limitations that must be addressed.

## 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS INQUIRY

It is generally agreed upon that one of the most important limitations of qualitative research is the fact that the findings cannot be directly generalised to the larger population being studied or for whom the findings will be of interest. The apparent limitation of this study exists in the fact that focus groups or interviews with just a few members of a target audience, the population of which numbers in the thousands or more, cannot meet the statistical assumptions to project the results accurately or reliably to the total audience. This is, however not a limitation of this study as the aim of the inquiry, at the outset, was to document the experiences of a select group of individuals and not a broader population group. It is for this reason that the sample group was kept relatively small. This allowed the researcher to focus intensively on the experience of those individuals. Even though some of the data became saturated a larger sample group would have provided richer data.

The limitation of group size was a direct result of a second limitation to the study, namely time. The peer-counsellor training course is run over two 4 week sessions totalling 8 weeks. The time constraints of the study did not allow a larger sample group to be used.

The most prominent limitation of this study, however, was the expressive abilities of the participants. The methods of data collection required them to have a great deal of insight into their experience and also required that they have the ability to express their experience in writing and in words. Some of the participants were able to speak very openly about the experience while others were quite limited in their expression. It is the opinion of the researcher that this may have affected the data since a larger proportion of the data came from the few individuals who were able to express themselves openly and easily both in writing and verbally. It could be suggested that some of the participants who had more intensive emotional experiences on the course were perhaps more limited in their ability to express it.

Some of the participants tended to express views that are consistent with social standards and tried not to present themselves negatively. This social desirability bias may have led respondents to self-censor their actual views.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

A number of issues emerged from both the positive and negative themes of the data that would require further research. The most prominent finding of this study was the fact that the participants, without exception, found that they had experienced an enormous amount of personal growth and empowerment in the course. Further research could investigate and refine the areas in which this growth took place, as well as how this personal growth and empowerment has affected their functioning in their daily lives.

Further research could also investigate the extent to which their social functioning had changed and developed in their school. All participants expressed a marked increase in social interactions with people they did not previously associate with. Research could be conducted into the reasons for this and the results of these increased social interactions.

This proposition in terms of further research could be applied to all the positive themes that emerged from the data, but can perhaps be summarised in the following statement. How did the acquisition of skills affect the participants functioning as peer-counsellors within their schools and communities? Research could be directed at the effectiveness of peer-counsellors in schools and communities in South Africa where the access to support services is severely restricted.

Further research should be conducted on the issues of inhibition and trust in adolescent social groupings. These issues emerged from the data as having been influential on the participant's ability to disclose on the course. The 8 week timeframe of the course may have been too little as longer time is needed for building rapport and trust, as well as for the development of communication skills. Extra time is also needed to inform and orientate the participants towards the course.

The issue of 'follow-up and debriefing' needs to be investigated further. It must be determined why the participants needed further debriefing as well as what kind of debriefing and follow-up they would need. To streamline the course, different follow-up and debriefing options should be implemented and investigated.

## **5.6 SUMMARY**

This study examined the process of peer-counsellor training in a South African school setting and described the experience of learners while on such training. It is evident from this study that participation in a peer-counsellor training group is a worthwhile experience for adolescents. The course helped the participants to make a real shift in terms of their personal growth and empowerment. They were given the skills to help others, to work with people and to get to know others better. For many the course was a personal journey of growth and maturity. It was evident that some of the candidates were not ready for such intensive self-examination and found the emotional component of the course too much to handle. The issues of emotional sensitivity and emotional maturity were prominent in the data and should be taken into consideration when selecting the candidates for the course in the future.

By documenting the experiences of learners in a peer-counsellor training course, insight has been gained, that will direct future planning with regard to the training and use of peer-counsellors in the school setting. Information has been provided that will allow for the refinement and moderation of training programmes to ensure limited time is used effectively to reach training goals and to meet the expectations and needs of the course participants. The findings also emphasised the need for more careful selection of candidates for the training.

The investigation and findings answered the research question and provided valuable insight into the experiences of adolescents on a peer-counsellor training programme. The findings led to recommendations regarding the improvement of the training programme, selection of the participants, and the way forward to implement and initiate peer-counselling services in the school where the acquired skills can be applied. It also led to recommendations regarding further research.



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## Appendix A: Consent Letter -



### FACULTY OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

The Headmaster  
(name removed) High School

Dear Mr (name removed)

The final part of my Masters Degree studies in Educational Psychology is the research and dissertation component. It is my intention to research and document the experience of learners who have been trained as peer-counsellors in the school context. In order to achieve the main aim of the study as stated above, it is necessary to state the following objectives:

- To do an extensive literature review in order to reveal the theoretical perspectives that inform educational psychology in general and, hence, the training of peer counsellors.
- To further highlight the role of the educational psychologist in the support of learners being trained as peer counsellors.
- To determine by means of the empirical component of this inquiry how learners experience the training programme, as well as how they cope with the intensive demands of the programme.

It is my understanding that the learners at (name removed) High School have formed very close relationships with their peers and rely on each other for support to a great extent. Many of these learners have not had access to support services in terms of therapy and counselling until recently. Society looks to schools to provide a secure environment for children in order to foster appropriate learning experiences and to attend to learning and emotional problems. The role of the school in the lives of individuals in all their diversity is critical. The therapist has a responsibility to consider peers in understanding and undertaking any interventions with young people. Peers can, and will, play a major role in meeting the needs of all adolescents.

My research aims to document the experience of learners who have been trained as peer-counsellors in order to examine their response to this type of training, which in the long term will be critically decisive in whether or not the school chooses to train peer-counsellors, and if so, who to train and how to train them.

Arising from the need to research the situation, I would like to inform you of the procedure to be followed in this inquiry. Learners who are selected for this training and consent to being part of the study, will be informed of the intention of the study. They will be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without pressure to provide reasons. I will also undertake all possible means to ensure that participants are not caused any detriment by taking part in this study and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity at all times. Being indirectly involved in this inquiry you will be privy to the outcomes of the research as they emerge.

Accordingly, I hereby request that you sign this document below, in order to indicate that you agree to the conditions stated above and that you are aware of the research taking place within this school. The signing and dating of this letter forms part of the requirements for ethical research as mandated by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg.

Thanking you in anticipation.



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**Greg Crighton**  
Educational Psychologist  
HPCSA Reg. No. PSIN 0094609

I, the undersigned, do hereby indicate that I have read and understood the aim and reasons for undertaking the above-mentioned research as contained in the attached letter. I hereby give my written consent to Mr G. Crighton to continue with the inquiry.

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**Mr (name removed) (Principal)**

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**Date**

## Appendix B: Consent Form - Participants

### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS PARTAKING IN RESEARCH TO DETERMINE THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS IN A PEER COUNSELLOR TRAINING COURSE.

I, the undersigned (participant), ....., do hereby indicate that I have read and understood the conditions for participation in the above-mentioned research as contained in this letter. I hereby give my written consent that I am willing to be interviewed by *Mr G. Crighton*, noting the conditions below that:

- the interview will be recorded on tape and that the researcher undertakes to store the tape/s of the interview in a locked facility.
- participants will not be harmed in any way by participating in the research.
- participants will be afforded the opportunity to comment on the findings from the interview.
- participants will at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes.
- participants will be at liberty to withdraw their information from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons.
- all possible means will be undertaken to ensure that participants are not caused any detriment by partaking in this study and the research will be conducted under complete anonymity to protect identities and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential.
- participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.
- faithfulness, keeping of agreements and loyalty in interpersonal relationships are central to the reputation of the researcher and individual participants.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C: Raw Data – Positive Categories

### Self-Awareness.

Taught me a lot about myself.

**It has explained all the reasons why I don't always help my friends.**

Is a chance to learn about yourself and grow personally, you can help other people through all your experiences, and that's basically it, experience.

**I have learnt a lot about myself.**

It was an eye-opening experience.

**To become a person that people will turn to for support and help.**

They helped me to know myself and to know others.

**It made you ask questions about yourself and it made you very comfortable with yourself and ja it made you really define what you wanted in life before you can help other people. It was very good.**

For self-awareness.

It has helped me realise things about me and my life.

**Helped me learn about the skills I need.**

**I learnt a lot about myself.**

I learnt about myself.

**I experienced emotions I never believed in like crying.**

I think it was very important to learn how to help yourself before you can help other people.

You learn to understand yourself and you know, you learn to deal with, when you come about problems, you learn how to deal with them.

**I learnt more about myself and the kind of person I am.**

It was good I think to learn about yourself was really important and it was really nice to get to know the people that you were in a group, like doing the course with.

**I now know more about myself.**

**It allowed us to talk about ourselves and face the problems we had been hiding away.**

I got to know who I am.

**I learnt so much and I cleared up so many issues in my own life.**

**I learned a lot about myself, and umm it did help me to grow personally**

**I feel more informed about myself and other people around me.**

**I have learnt more about myself.**

I learnt a lot about myself and other people's feelings.

I found who I was at the end of the course, and I learned a lot about myself as a person. So it just like it made me who I am now.

**Probably learning how to deal with my own issues, ja and not just keeping it all down inside.**

It just made me realise things about myself, maybe more aware of who I was and how I should, how I deal with more, how I deal with it and things. And also a lot of the techniques we used or learned can be like used by yourself to help you like figure out your own problems and stuff like that.

### Self-Acceptance / Self-Esteem

Made me feel more at ease with myself.

The course left me feeling inspired.

I enjoyed the feedback I got from others about myself and the way I behave.

I feel more confident now.

Left feeling positive and very happy that I attended the course.

I still need to work on my self-esteem and my listening skills.

It allowed us to talk about ourselves and face the problems we had been hiding away.

I think I've learned like, I evaluated myself a lot and I got everything out.

The course left me feeling very happy.

I was amazed by our openness and confidence.

It was a very fulfilling experience.

I have learnt to accept situations and deal with change.

Self-growth and self-confidence.

Being in the course and what ever, helped me, it changed my perspective on things.

The course helps you to be the best person I can be

It made you ask questions about yourself and it made you very comfortable with yourself and ja it made you really define what you wanted in life before you can help other people. It was very good.

It's a very umm helpful thing to have in life and to be able to help people is a really good thing, it makes you feel good inside to be able to know you can help somebody, if they need your help

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### Acceptance by Peers / Collaboration.

To become a person that people will turn to for support and help.

The activities that we did, was also very nice, it was good to see how it really work, you know like when we did like the practice interviews or helping people and then also with the trust, we did a lot of trust exercises that was really cool.

Like our first few days were when everybody spoke about their feelings and what bugged them and whatever, and that was good because some of the things you never really get a chance to think about it, or get other peoples opinion about how you feel

I found it rather insightful. Umm it taught me a lot about life in general and about the, the needs that people need, I mean not like only your normal basic needs, but I mean people to listen and to understand and for people to be there.

I enjoyed the feedback I got from others about myself and the way I behave.

I enjoyed sharing with the group, knowing that you can trust them and knowing you are not alone.

People are very understanding, I realised that they were very understanding and they all gave me like a lot of support and ja they were very like encouraging

We learnt to work together.

Half the people I didn't really know, in the group you know, but after a while you know getting to know everyone and after I realised everyone was like telling everyone about their problems.

I think it is easier for people to come up to me, talk to me. I find it easier to go and

talk to different people that I don't normally (R: Okay) talk to.

I was actually glad we interacted, me I'm kind of like I don't really like doing this, but I was kind of glad, so I was and I got friends from there and stuff so.

I had a feeling of belonging and I felt appreciated.

I enjoyed getting to know people that are in my school.

I regret that it took me so long to get to know everyone in the group.

I was able to share my problems.

I am so happy that I got to know people that I have never spoken to before.

I now have people I can talk to with my problems.

The only thing I've done in the school, the only involvement I've done is Life Line, and so it enabled me to get comfortable with my surroundings

I would like to become more approachable.

When I went on the course it just, it kind of, it made me realise that I was right in what I was doing, that trust is very, very important, you know. Whatever anyone tells you, even if they say just keep it between us you know, I would still not go and tell anybody else.

It was good I think to learn about yourself was really important and it was really nice to get to know the people that you were in a group, like doing the course with.

### Helping Others.

To learn to help people the right way.

To learn to help people.

Lots of people really need help and umm has issues, has been through a lot and there's other people who has also been through it, so I want to help them from my own experiences.

I want to make a difference in people's life.

I found it rather insightful. Umm it taught me a lot about life in general and about the, the needs that people need, I mean not like only your normal basic needs, but I mean people to listen and to understand and for people to be there.

Is a chance to learn about yourself and grow personally, you can help other people through all your experiences, and that's basically it, experience.

And also it umm you know, if they like helping out people and stuff, it will make it so much easier to chat with people and learn more about them and get to know their problems and help them deal with it.

To help people.

I have learnt to help other people. It has helped me and it has helped me to help others.

I learnt not only to help others but also to help myself.

To make a difference in someone's life.

I enjoy helping people and listening.

I learnt how to get someone to open up and to get them to resolve their own problems.

Learn to help people in need.

I always thought that I could umm help people in some way

I wanted to help people and that's always been like a passion of mine, even before



this thing came like to our school.

To help others who need it.

I could say I am more objective now in the way I think and I'm not, I tend to listen to what people have to say and ja, basically ja, I'm a good listener.

Learn to help others.

Love helping people.

To be able to help people in need.

I have learnt to work through my problems and to help people with theirs.

I've always wanted to help people, all the time and actually its a skill that I had, the skills are there you just need to develop it.

It's a very umm helpful thing to have in life and to be able to help people is a really good thing, it makes you feel good inside to be able to know you can help somebody, if they need your help.

I think everyone who did it wanted to help people

Learn to give to people what I would like to receive.

Learn the skills necessary to help people.

Umm I learned to be more, like non-aggressive. I learned to listen to people more Indirectly helped me through my problems so I can help others later on.

It just made you think about your actions and how the smallest things, like your body language and things, affect other people.

I didn't do it just for personal growth obviously, I did it to try and help other people.

I learnt how to deal with people and their emotions.



### Personal Growth / Empowerment

To learn to help people the right way.

To become a better person.

I think it made me more confident

LifeLine is skills to learn how to help other people with their problems, it also helps you to deal with your problems and by you dealing with your problems, you can help other people deal with their problems

It will be very helpful in everything I do, say, think, and act.

It has helped me and it has helped me to help others.

I learnt to listen and to communicate.

For personal growth.

Is a chance to learn about yourself and grow personally, you can help other people through all your experiences, and that's basically it, experience.

I learnt so much and I cleared up so many issues in my own life.

It was meaningful that we were not being judgemental and we were encouraged to be assertive.

There was also sort of a state were you kind of had found more self confidence within yourself you know and also in a way the course sort of showed you how to reflect on a situation differently and not just make judgment

It was an enriching experience.

It was an eye-opening experience.

I would like to become more extroverted.

I have learnt to worry less.

The course helps you to be the best person I can be

It has helped me realise things about me and my life.

It is not just a chance to learn how to deal other people's issues it is also for themselves, like I said you know, it will help them grow within themselves. It will help them gain self-confidence to learn how to deal with their own issues.

To help myself.

I learnt a lot that will help me throughout my life.

I learnt not only to help others but also to help myself.

I have learnt to accept situations and deal with change.

This has helped me understand life and other people much better.

Indirectly helped me through my problems so I can help others later on.

Mind opening, life-changing experience that has enlightened me.

I learned the power of listening to someone.

To gain experience.

It changed me as a person.

It has had a positive influence on my choices.

Self-growth and self-confidence.

I found who I was at the end of the course, and I learned a lot about myself as a person. So it just like it made me who I am now.

I have learnt to work through my problems and to help people with theirs.

I expressed myself like I never thought I could.

I was amazed by our openness and confidence.

It allowed us to talk about ourselves and face the problems we had been hiding away.

It has empowered me.

Help myself to be a better person.

I feel more confident now.

You learn to understand yourself and you know, you learn to deal with, when you come about problems, you learn how to deal with them

I learnt a lot in general.

It was a very fulfilling experience.

I learnt how to deal with situations constructively.

The course has helped me get over my own unresolved problems.

I think by doing this you know you kind of find that line or you kind of, you know as a teenager you are not too old and you are not too young you caught in the middle and the way you reflect on things is very different to the way other people see it and I think we kind of can reflect on you know different people's issues and understand were they coming from and you know.

To be able to deal with my own issues.

It opened my eyes.

It has helped me become more assertive.

It completely changed my outlook on life.

To learn new experiences.

This experience has been a real eye-opener for me.

I realised that no problem is too big or too small to handle and overcome.

I have learnt to be open and assertive.

This course has opened my eyes.

For me the course was totally life changing, as in who I am now.

I thought it was a good experience So it was good because you know the whole thing is that you have to heal yourself before you can heal others.

I learned a lot about myself, and umm it did help me to grow personally

I was happy with it, I thought it was good, the approach and everything was good, the material, everything. It made a lot of sense, even now umm I realise the techniques, once I was exposed to the techniques I realised how important it is and so..

I think it helped me to mature a lot, you know with regard to other people and other people's situations and not just you know sit there and think there is only one reason, you know with my way of thinking. I think I've matured in that way.

Before the course there was issues that you know, not issues that I personally had, but there was just issues that I would not like to talk about and deal with, I just keep it aside and then when we did the course, before you know we could actually learn about somebody, they helped us deal with our issues. So in a way like overcoming that issue made me feel more confident.

It just made me realise things about myself, maybe more aware of who I was and how I should, how I deal with more, how I deal with it and things. And also a lot of the techniques we used or learned can be like used by yourself to help you like figure out your own problems and stuff like that.

I was rather negative, I was rather passive, umm okay in a way I am still negative but it just kind of, but I realise that I can be there and I know that people need it. So I, in a way am a better person, a better person for others.

### Acceptance of Others.

I learnt not to be judgemental.

Learnt more about other people.

Breaking the conceptions I've had of those other people. Umm they weren't really as like my first impressions, those changed.

I am so happy that I got to know people that I have never spoken to before.

It was meaningful that we were not being judgemental and we were encouraged to be assertive.

It has changed me for the better. Umm like I said it has changed my whole outlook on life and you realise like, also with sharing, other people sharing problems, you realise that you are not the only one who has problems. And like you always knew like before but you didn't realise how similar everyone's problems were and umm it just changes everything, cause they are life skills.

People are very understanding, I realised that they were very understanding and they all gave me like a lot of support and ja they were very like encouraging

I enjoyed getting to know people that are in my school.

And also it umm you know if they like helping out people and stuff, it will make it so much easier to chat with people and learn more about them and get to know their problems and help them deal with it.

I think it is easier for people to come up to me, talk to me. I find it easier to go and talk to different people that I don't normally (R: Okay) talk to.

I've stopped judging people (laugh), I use to be really bad with that, you know 'she's like being such a cow' you know just whatever and then you know after that I realised people have their bad days and people are going through different things and you just have to leave them to get past it.

I have learnt not to be judgemental.

### Skills Acquisition.

I still need to work on my self-esteem and my listening skills.

So I thought that it was very good that they focused on you as an individual who will be counseling someone and then on teaching you how to deal with it.

I would like to become more extroverted.

I have learnt to listen.

Learn listening skills

I learnt to listen and to communicate.

Helped me learn about the skills I need.

I have greater insight of how to deal with problems.

I've learned how to listen more

I have learnt new skills.

Learn the skills necessary to help people.

I like always wanted to do psychology and what ever, and that's what I want to do when I'm, when I'm finished. So I just thought well okay door open, take it.

Probably learning how to deal with my own issues, ja and not just keeping it all down inside.

I learnt how to deal with people and their emotions.

I've learned how to listen properly.

To be able to help people in need.

LifeLine is skills to learn how to help other people with their problems, it also helps you to deal with your problems and by you dealing with your problems, you can help other people deal with their problems.

Yes I can (help others), not to the degree that I would have wanted to, but at least I know that I have some skills to take with me, even after out of school, like in dealing with other people's problems.

I can now listen closer.

I would like to work on my listening skills.

Umm I learned to be more, like non-aggressive. I learned to listen to people more

I have learnt to be open and assertive.

Learn to help people in need.

I've always wanted to help people, all the time and actually its a skill that I had, the skills are there you just need to develop it.

I learnt how to deal with situations constructively.

I learnt a lot.

I learnt how to get someone to open up and to get them to resolve their own problems.

I acquired many new skills.

You learn to understand yourself and you know, you learn to deal with, when you come about problems, you learn how to deal with them

To learn new experiences.

It has taught me a lot of new things.

It has helped me become more assertive.

I have learnt excellent skills.

I have learnt skills that I will have for life.

It just it really made you think, it made you like really think deeply and then once you exposed like the truth, about whatever you feeling, it taught you how to deal

with it and how to find solutions and stuff

Learnt to relax

We learn to be assertive

I think I am a better listener and umm I think when people need help I am always there for them and also because it is a skill that you need, you know when you grow up and when you're older, you know to help people with their problems. So that's, one reason partly why, I wanted to do it.

It just made me realise things about myself, maybe more aware of who I was and how I should, how I deal with more, how I deal with it and things. And also a lot of the techniques we used or learned can be like used by yourself to help you like figure out your own problems and stuff like that.

### **Empathy.**

I enjoy helping people and listening.

I want to make a difference in people's life.

I think I look at situations and not judge them, like you know like at the first view, I look at a situation and not say 'o you know, I'm just judging', if I look at it I think okay, you know we should think about what that person is going through and then what that person is going through and then you know make a conclusion, not just judge it completely. And I think that is very important 'cos I honestly just look at a situation and just judge it, you know just my first thought, and now it's like, I analyse the whole situation and I say okay.

To help others who need it.

I realised that everyone has problems.

I learnt how to deal with people and their emotions.

I can now listen closer.

I am now more sensitive towards others

To make a difference in someone's life.

I learned the power of listening to someone.

Presenters were extremely compassionate when I was crying.

It's helped me to actually be more sincere and think about what that person is actually going through, you know just don't look at them and they are just going through this you know, I actually look it and say they are going through this just a little bit compassion, you know let's just give them a break whatever

Love helping people.

Learn to give to people what I would like to receive.

I learnt that other people have problems in life.

I learnt a lot about myself and other people's feelings.

### **Broader understanding of others / Heightened social Awareness.**

To become a person that people will turn to for support and help.

They helped me to know myself and to know others.

I feel more informed about myself and other people around me.

I've learned that you know everyone has a history, we've been here for seventeen years, twenty years, fifty, there's been fifteen years of experience that you have to think more into it. You got to have more understanding and I'll just go out and just think you know what's going on.

I have come to a realisation of the workings of the world around me.

I have been made to think more about situations.

I have learnt how people's lives are so different.

This has helped me understand life and other people much better.

I could say I am more objective now in the way I think and I'm not, I tend to listen to what people have to say and ja, basically ja, I'm a good listener.

Learnt more about other people.

Have greater knowledge of human ways and psychology.

I learnt that other people have problems in life.

It helped me see people in a different light.

I have learnt not to be judgemental.

I learnt that I do not know as much as I thought I knew about the world and the people in the world.

I realised that I am not the only person in the world that's going through what I'm going through, you know there are other people that also go through what I go through.

I've stopped judging people (laugh), I use to be really bad with that, you know 'she's like being such a cow' you know just whatever and then you know after that I realised people have their bad days and people are going through different things and you just have to leave them to get past it.

It's just made me look at things differently, how I approach situations, I don't approach them with that very same attitude.

Life Line for me wasn't actually the techniques we done, but it was more the whole everyone telling everyone their problems in the group. That's what I remembered, there were times were people cried and you know and for me I learned more from that, from other people's problems than from Life Line itself, you know. The things they taught us, the techniques they taught us, how to speak to people you know, it's there but I remember more about how different people's opinions, in that situation and it was the first two lessons I think, when we had to open up.

### **Emotional Awareness.**

To look for the best in those around me.

I found it rather insightful. Umm it taught me a lot about life in general and about the, the needs that people need, I mean not like only your normal basic needs, but I mean people to listen and to understand and for people to be there.

I experienced emotions I never believed in like crying.

I learnt a lot about myself and other people's feelings.

You know I ended up learning that my dad's not there and if I want to cry you know over his death I am allowed to. You know and I shouldn't feel guilty, what happened between him and my mom is between them, not between me.

Learn to give to people what I would like to receive.

I expressed myself like I never thought I could.

I have greater insight of how to deal with problems.

It was challenging in the sense that I had to open my feelings.

The course left me feeling very happy.

Have greater knowledge of human ways and psychology.

It just it really made you think, it made you like really think deeply and then once

you exposed like the truth, about whatever you feeling, it taught you how to deal with it and how to find solutions and stuff

I learned to be more, like non-aggressive. I learned to listen to people more

I have learnt to be more open and in touch with my feelings.

I think it just helps me to listen more to their problems and not just sit there and you know like give advice, but actually sit and listen to what they say and then only like you know interpret it and give them feedback.

I've learned how to listen more

I had a feeling of belonging and I felt appreciated.

I opened up a lot, because normally I keep all my feelings inside, and Life Line gave me the chance to tell someone how I felt





## Appendix D: Raw Data – Negative Categories

| Expectations  |  |
|---|--|
| Unfulfilled   | Inaccurate / Uncertainty   |
| <p>I think it was kind of rushed at the end.....how to deal with stuff like aids, rape, suicide and that was kind of rushed because it was kind of like a separate thing and I think that even if they make the course longer. So that was kind of like wishy-washy.</p> <p>I also expected that straight after once we get our certificate we can go straight into that counselling people, you know and what ever, but that didn't exactly happen. I don't know, well I have but that's my friends, but it hasn't really been outsiders or anything in the school yet, so in that way it was I expected more.</p> <p>I don't think that it was something that I could take and you know say I've learned so much about this and I know how to deal with this issue</p> <p>I would still like to work on my relationship with my parents.</p> <p>I would still like to work on my self confidence.</p> <p>Discriminations in school, how do we go handle that, because we did, we did stuff on rape and suicide and all that, but I know that the biggest problem in our school is discrimination and we, I wanted to learn how to help people to over come that and to see that it's okay.</p> <p>I expected more of giving people advice and like using like your own experiences to help people and I also expected that we wouldn't be looking at ourselves, we would just be focusing on people's, other people's problems and how to deal with it.</p> <p>There were a couple of things that weren't answered and properly elaborated on.</p> <p>I would like to be more open and to be able to express my feelings, and to be more accepting.</p> <p>Yes I can (help others), not to the degree that I would have wanted to, but at least I know that I have some skills to take with me, even after out of school, like in dealing with other people's problems.</p> | <p>It wasn't what I expected.</p> <p>I didn't get a lot of information before.</p> <p>It just wasn't what I expected.</p> <p>Honestly when I did the course it wasn't exactly how we expected it to go, you know, cause you have to, you can't ask direct questions and stuff like that. So it was very different to the way, what I expected.</p> <p>At first I was unsure about how it was going to be like.</p> <p>It was not what I thought it would be.</p> <p>I didn't expect everyone to, like with your big personal lives and say what affected them, you know I didn't really think that it would be us, I thought we would just get straight into the course and learn how to counsel people, that kind of thing. I didn't realise it was a whole healing process of ourselves before we get to other people.</p> <p>I expected to learn more about how to deal with issues, like more how to get to know a person, not, without them telling me about themselves, you know just reading in how they acting and you know.</p> <p>They didn't tell us what it was about, they just said that it is a course were you are going to learn how to help other people. They didn't give us any information about what they were going to do, anything like that.</p> <p>I never knew it was about dealing with your own issues first before you can deal with other people's, you know, sort of. So that to me was a bit of a shocker.</p> <p>I didn't think it would be so much involved with me, like you know like, with the first half it was just about us. I thought it would be more a skills thing, than sorting out your own problems in the beginning, but ja that's basically it, I thought it would be more skills based than it was.</p> |

## Inhibition and Trust

If you are a very selfish person, it wouldn't help you to do the course, because you wouldn't use it and also if you have a lot of trust problems, because it is probably the secret, you have to be able to keep it all the time, not tell everybody else's problems to the world

The hardest part of the course was the beginning part, where you have to deal with your own issues, you know like, you know your problems that you solve in the beginning and your group thing and whatever. Umm for me that was the hardest part, like having to, cause at that time like my dad passed away in December in 2004. So like I was still dealing with that and like having to come to school and like there was a whole lot of other issues and, so for me that was the hardest part, but ja.

Regret that I did not have the strength to reveal myself a bit more.

I regret that I did not open up more in the beginning of the course.

I couldn't really tell people things and, because one of the things was trust, and I didn't know, even though everyone said okay it was confidential and it will stay in the group and what ever. I didn't know if you know I could go out and trust those people.

It was weird you know, you don't know whether to go there, because some people were very to themselves, you know they didn't really want you to hug them or whatever. They just want to tell you and then you had to leave them alone you know. So it was kind of, it was a bit tense at first you know and then people started crying and you know everybody started hugging everyone and you know and it wasn't that bad, it was just weird, that was.

So you had to reveal things about yourself and your life.

How was that for you? Were you comfortable with it or not?

No not really, because I am not a very open person, but it was part of the process and like they told us, what ever you put in you'll get out of the course. So you had to like really commit yourself fully and tell everyone everything in order to get that back.

In the beginning it was really hard to trust people you were with.

I think on the course you don't know those people very well, so you don't know if they will judge you or not. So going to a situation where you have to tell them things that are very personal that you wouldn't, that you wouldn't just tell anyone, you scared that they'll, it's a fear that they will judge you

The first part was really difficult we had to deal with our selves and our own emotional issues, which was hard, I don't know I was very nervous about telling people in my school about things that have happened with me and stuff. So I didn't really trust them, I wasn't friends with anybody to begin with, I knew them but they weren't my friends.

I felt that I did not open up as much as I would have liked to.

I had such an issue with trust, because I've experienced where you know I trusted someone and they've completely just betrayed me. You know I think that is one of the hugest things, because you tell someone in confidence and they just go and share it with everyone, you know there wasn't a point in telling them in the first place, you could of just kept it to yourself.

I did (open up) with most things, some things it was kind of like I had to keep it to myself I wasn't ready.

Umm I think opening up to strangers and it was just ja, ja that was difficult.

That it is an intense course, you have to be willing to be open and share your, your life basically with people and it's gonna be, if you have the trust issue it will be hard for you, because you have to trust people that you are working with to be able to get through this course.

I need to work on my ability to trust and confide.

The toughest part, was saying what you really felt and not the right answers, like you meant to feel this way about something, and you don't, you shouldn't be scared to say so, you know.

I would like to be more open about everything and everyone.

I was a little bit nervous and I was kind of like wary to do stuff like that, cause I didn't want to, cause it was kind of strangers that you were like, people that you are going to see everyday, like kind of open up to them. So that was a little bit weird.

Having to come to terms with my own issues (was difficult). Coming to let people know the pains out there, but because I mean everyone has there own issues. So it was just, it was just hard to let it come out.

I think there were a few people, that didn't quite open up as much as everyone else, or it took them a bit longer to open up. Umm they just a bit more shy than the other people, or their trust has been betrayed before, so.

It is probably opening up right in the beginning, in front of everyone, I didn't know anyone and they were asking all these questions.

We did it with people from our school, there was always that element of, someone can decide to say something that you said, even though they signed that confidentiality form what ever. It's, it was always, we always had that you know, it was more you didn't know, they couldn't really say anything, but it was all people from the same school, and just now they just let something slip that really was personal, you know.

I think getting into the concept of how you umm, how you will interact with that person, I think that was huge, you know like when we did role plays and stuff. Ja I think that was a very, very, 'cos it is so hard to like reflect what somebody else is saying when, if you don't know how to put it, so now you have to think about what you are going to say to them, that was actually very hard,

Well if you counsel other people you could get attached, you know. So it could affect you and you have to deal with your own issues before, kind of thing. You know so you have to be able to be a people's person and be able to open up to complete strangers about your life you know. That's I mean if you are not willing to do that then I don't think.

There are some people that's like, doing this course you got to know more people and that people aren't just how they look on the outside there is more to them and there's a problem that they might not show to you or to other people around them.

I think a lot of the people were very like excited to do like, you know like, do stuff about themselves, but I also think that a lot of the people were doing it for the wrong reasons and then when they found out like, on the second part of the course, actually learning facts and learning properly how to deal with, they didn't really care about that.

### **Insufficient Debriefing**

We should meet on a weekly basis and get counselling.

There should be support groups for the people after the personal side of the course is over.

### **Emotional Preparedness – Emotional Sensitivity – Emotional Immaturity – Emotional Intensity**

Tough in a way that, you there and you, you not gonna, not gonna like cry with them, you not going to fall to pieces with them. I mean you are going to be emotional, you got to have empathy with them, understand it and, and that sort of thing, but you got to be tough on yourself practically, not like on your, your counselees but on like yourself.

You might find out things about yourself that you don't want to, but if you are not a strong person, then you shouldn't do it, because it's dealing with real life issues.

That it is an intense course, you have to be willing to be open and share your, your life basically with people and it's gonna be, if you have the trust issue it will be hard for you, because you have to trust people that you are working with to be able to get through this course.

I did (open up) with most things, some things it was kind of like I had to keep it to myself I wasn't ready.

If you are not open-minded and you don't actually want to learn about things, then don't go, it's a waste of your time.

Like this is not for the faint hearted, you, you there are tough situations out there, you are

dealing with these things and you can't just you know collapse.

### **Ulterior Motives**

I think a lot of the people were very like excited to do like, you know like, do stuff about themselves, but I also think that a lot of the people were doing it for the wrong reasons and then when they found out like, on the second part of the course, actually learning facts and learning properly how to deal with, they didn't really care about that.

I think everyone who did it wanted to help people, but I think it was kind of in the wrong, like they didn't realise to what extent you'll gonna have to help people. Like they just thought okay it's like it goes into your like CV and I'll just look for it and do it. I just don't think people who were there were really committed and I can like see now afterwards that they like not that committed and stuff.



## Appendix E: Feedback Form 1

### **Ending off this first part of the LifeLine course.**

Saying goodbye has different meanings for different people. It can be difficult after a course like this. And although most of you would probably be around after today – we can never repeat the special experience that we have had over the past 7 weeks.

### **KIA ORA** **GOODBY – TERMINATION**

This is an opportunity to round off our group interaction.

Please think about each of the following questions and then share with the group.

1. Reflections on the entire course; feelings \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Regrets that I have \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Something that I found exceptionally meaningful was \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I would like to work on the following aspects of my growth \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Had this course been a movie/book, it's name would be \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. I want / do not want to become a counsellor for LifeLine.

***I realise that LifeLine is a 24 hour service which will include night shifts and other possible uncomfortable duty times.***

7. If I am not selected to continue with the Skills Course, I would feel \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***I have taken a pledge of confidentiality and shall continue to hold in strictest confidence all information related to the group interaction and the LifeLine service.***

.....  
SIGNATURE

.....  
DATE

## Appendix F: Feedback Form 2

### **Course Evaluation Form**

How did you experience this course? (Please give specific feedback)

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Give some specific examples with facilitators' names, of things that facilitators did that were:

Helpful:

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Unhelpful:

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Give us some feedback on course material.

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Any further comments or suggestions.

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## Appendix G: Sample Interview Transcript

### Participant 6

- Researcher: All right tell me a little bit about the course. 1
- Participant 6: Okay umm I think it's very different and it is very unique in the way that they deal with 2  
your problems before, because I think it is true that you can't deal with someone 3  
else's problems if you have, if you are going through something similar, because you 4  
wouldn't be able to deal with it probably. So I thought that it was very good that they 5  
focused on you as an individual who will be counseling someone and then on 6  
teaching you how to deal with it. 7
- Researcher: Okay. What were your expectations, before you knew anything about the course? 8  
What did you expect? 9
- Participant 6: I expected, I expected more of giving people advice and like using like your own 10  
experiences to help people and I also expected that we wouldn't be looking at 11  
ourselves, we would just be focusing on people's, other people's problems and how 12  
to deal with it. 13
- Researcher: So was the course different to your expectations? 14
- Participant 6: Yes, because you are not suppose to give advice you are suppose to basically just 15  
listen (R: Ja) and umm ja the first half of the course was about like yourself and stuff, 16  
that was very different. 17
- Researcher: And how was that part of the course for you that looking at yourself so intensely? 18
- Participant 6: I thought it was very good, because I agree with the policy that you can't help other 19  
people if you have the same problems and I thought it was very umm, ja I thought it 20  
was very good and it kind of helped you to see things. 21
- Researcher: And how did you feel about doing those kinds of activities? 22
- Participant 6: Umm at first I was a little bit nervous and I was kind of like wary to do stuff like that, 23  
cause I didn't want to, cause it was kind of strangers that you were like, people that 24  
you are going to see everyday, like kind of open up to them. So that was a little bit 25  
weird but after a while it was fine. 26
- Researcher: Okay, umm you said here that one of your expectations was that you wanted to make 27  
a difference in people's lives. 28
- Participant 6: Yes. 29
- Researcher: Tell me about that. 30



|                |   |    |
|----------------|---|----|
| Participant 6: | Umm well the reason why I did the whole thing was, because I wanted to help people        | 31 |
|                | and that's always been like a passion of mine, even before this thing came like to our    | 32 |
|                | school.   | 33 |
| Researcher:    | Do you think you can do that now?   | 34 |
| Participant 6: | Yes I can, not to the degree that I would have wanted to, but at least I know that I      | 35 |
|                | have some skills to take with me, even after out of school, like in dealing with other    | 36 |
|                | people's problems.  | 37 |
| Researcher:    | So how do you use those skills in your everyday life now?                                 | 38 |
| Participant 6: | I, I've learned how to listen more and not so much give advice, because people have       | 39 |
|                | different ways in dealing with things and your advice might not be, every one has         | 40 |
|                | different situations and different circumstances in those situations. So if you give      | 41 |
|                | advice that you think might be good for a certain situation might not be very good for    | 42 |
|                | that person. So it's, you more need to listen and just be there for the person, instead   | 43 |
|                | of giving your opinion on things.   | 44 |
| Researcher:    | Okay. Umm another thing you said is that I learned about myself, okay that was in         | 45 |
|                | the first part of the course. Do you think there is anything more about yourself that     | 46 |
|                | you need to explore further?  | 47 |
| Participant 6: | Umm no not really, in like that, like certain, like situation of your problems other      | 48 |
|                | people's problems I think I've learned like, I evaluated myself a lot and I got           | 49 |
|                | everything out and it was ja.   | 50 |
| Researcher:    | All right. This statement is very interesting for me, you said I'm so happy that I got to | 51 |
|                | know people that I've never spoken to before.   | 52 |
| Participant 6: | Ja, umm, the reason why I said that was because you walk past people every day,           | 53 |
|                | those are people that I might have seen before but I never like took notice of them       | 54 |
|                | and you actually realise, you know like get to know people and everyone's has their       | 55 |
|                | stories and their own set of problems and their certain talents and everyone is just      | 56 |
|                | like, everyone goes through certain things and you just see, you see them, you don't      | 57 |
|                | get to know people like on your every day basis and you would actually get along          | 58 |
|                | with so many people if you just got to know them.   | 59 |
| Researcher:    | While you were on the course, did you know the people on the course before?               | 60 |
| Participant 6: | Yes, most of them were my friends.  | 61 |

|                |  |                                  |
|----------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Researcher:    | Okay, now observing other people on the course do you think there was anyone there who didn't enjoy it?  | 62<br>63                         |
| Participant 6: | Umm I think the first part of dealing with yourself, most people were very interested in that, umm and I think, I think a lot of the people were very like excited to do like, you know like, do stuff about themselves, but I also think that a lot of the people were doing it for the wrong reasons and then when they found out like, on the second part of the course, actually learning facts and learning properly how to deal with, they didn't really care about that.  | 64<br>65<br>66<br>67<br>68<br>69 |
| Researcher:    | Okay you said some of them were doing it for the wrong reasons?  | 70                               |
| Participant 6: | Yes.   | 71                               |
| Researcher:    | What were their reasons for doing it?  | 72                               |
| Participant 6: | I don't know what their reasons were, but I just think that you, I just think that, not so much the wrong reasons I think everyone who did it wanted to help people, but I think it was kind of in the wrong, like they didn't realise to what extent you'll gonna have to help people. Like they just thought okay it's like it goes into your like CV and I'll just look for it and do it. I just don't think people who were there were really committed and I can like see now afterwards that they like not that committed and stuff. | 73<br>74<br>75<br>76<br>77<br>78 |
| Researcher:    | Okay. So what are the right reasons for doing the course?  | 79                               |
| Participant 6: | I think if you have a true passion for helping people and you, you, you really you have a full understanding of what like helping people is, it's not just going okay umm I'm listening to you and then like or like stuff like that. I just think that you have, if your passion is really truly to help people and stuff like that then.   | 80<br>81<br>82<br>83             |
| Researcher:    | Okay. What was the toughest part of the course for you? What was really difficult for you?   | 84<br>85                         |
| Participant 6: | Umm I think opening up to strangers and it was just ja, ja that was difficult.   | 86                               |
| Researcher:    | One of the things you said at the end was that you enjoyed sharing. So initially you said one of the difficult things was opening up (P: Ja) and then you said you enjoyed sharing.  | 87<br>88<br>89                   |
| Participant 6: | Ja.  | 90                               |
| Researcher:    | Tell me about that change.   | 91                               |
| Participant 6: | Because it, because umm people are very understanding, I realised that they were   | 92                               |

very understanding and they all gave me like a lot of support and ja they were very 93  
like encouraging and not like very objective or anything like that. Like I expected 94  
people to just be quiet or you know like judging you (R: Ja), but they were very 95  
exceptful. 96

Researcher: That word judging has come up quite often, umm in other people's interviews. Tell 97  
me a little bit about judging. 98

Participant 6: Judging? 99

Researcher: On the course, did you feel people were judging you? 100

Participant 6: Umm I think that if you don't know a person well, if it's not like a close friend, because 101  
you normally open up to who are close to you, and people you know who won't judge 102  
you and I think on the course you don't know those people very well, so you don't 103  
know if they will judge you or not. So going to a situation where you have to tell them 104  
things that are very personal that you wouldn't, that you wouldn't just tell anyone, you 105  
scared that they'll, it's a fear that they will judge you and ja. 106

Researcher: All right. Then if you were phoned by Life Line and they want you to now go recruit 107  
people to do this course, you have to go to another school and stand up in front of 108  
the class and now you got to say something to them to get them to sign up for this 109  
course. What are you going to say? 110

Participant 6: I will say that if you are passionate about helping people and you want to make a 111  
difference in your school environment and you are willing to go through a course 112  
where they teach you skills and you will be able to take those skills and use them in 113  
the right ways then you should. 114

Researcher: And what was, what would you warn them about? 115

Participant 6: Warn them? 116

Researcher: Say but be careful? 117

Participant 6: I don't think I will warn them about anything. I think, I think that I would say that it 118  
does take a lot of commitment and time and you can't just after doing the course 119  
forget about it, you have to take the skills with you and actually use them. 120

Researcher: So how have you used them? 121

Participant 6: Umm I, I've counseled quite a few people and I just learned how to listen and it 122  
helped me to look at situations differently and be able to give, I wouldn't say, I don't 123

know what word to use but more of a, this is the wrong word but like professional, it's 124  
 like you are kind of using a different approach where you not like, I think it is a better 125  
 approach like dealing with people in this way, because it is not so. I don't think many 126  
 things can go wrong. I would have done things differently, I would have given my 127  
 advise and then that person would have used my advice and their situation could 128  
 have turned out in completely like a different way and they could have blamed me or 129  
 like something like that or something bad could of happened. But in this way you 130  
 learn how to not do those things and rather give them options and you know so they 131  
 can make a decision for themselves, and in that way you kind of. 132

Researcher: Okay. In one last statement, what, what, from your heart what is your feeling about 133  
 the course? What was the benefit to you? 134

Participant 6: Ja it was, it was a benefit to me I really learned a lot, but umm I think it was kind of 135  
 rushed at the end, because okay your first part, I think the first is really good how 136  
 they concentrate on yourself and stuff and then like the second part was kind of 137  
 learning how to, like for instance how to sit when you are talking to someone, stuff 138  
 like you have to be objected and stuff like that. And then the extra thing was like how 139  
 to deal with stuff like aids, rape, suicide and that was kind of rushed because it was a 140  
 separate, it was kind of like a separate thing and I think that even if they make the 141  
 course longer, they should rather include it in the second part to make like a whole 142  
 (R: Right), cause that was really rushed and people didn't really know when it was 143  
 and I think I like missed one or two, because I didn't know when it was and then I was 144  
 like busy and stuff like that. So that was kind of like wishy-washy and I didn't know 145  
 what was going on there, so I think they should actually incorporate it so that you 146  
 know how to deal with that situation and like what, know more about the situation. 147

Researcher: All right. 148

## Appendix H: Intake Form

**LifeLine** / offers you a dynamic opportunity for personal growth, acquirement of life skills and counseling orientation.

### **COURSE PROGRAMME**

(RELEVANT DATES AND VENUES INDICATED)

### **REGISTRATION FORM**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TEL: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME LANGUAGE: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER LANGUAGES SPOKEN: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

RELIGION: \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

HIGHEST QUALIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THE COURSE?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

HAVE YOU EVER OR ARE YOU PRESENTLY RECEIVING ANY FORM OF PSYCHIATRIC OR PSYCHO-THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If presently undergoing therapy, a letter from your therapist is required acknowledging that he/she is aware of your intended participation in this course and stating that you are currently comfortable with experiential group work training.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER APPLICANTS FOR THE COURSE? IF SO, PLEASE SPECIFY: \_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cost:** R800.00 per person

### **POST PAYMENT REGISTRATION FORM TO:**

LIFELINE WEST RAND PO BOX 1300,  
KRUGERSDORP, 1740.

ENQUIRIES: Tel: (011) 665-2281/2111

Fax: (011) 665-1167

e-mail: lifelinewr@icon.co.za