

## **INNOVATIVE USE OF IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER IN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION [640]**

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### **Session Plan**

#### **Lecture Summary**

Urban Improv (UI) is an interactive theater and educational violence prevention program serving Boston Public School students. This program utilizes drama improvisation as a means of preparing children for potentially violent conflict situations and providing alternative solutions to violence. Research has supported the use of UI in preventing aggressive behaviors in 4th graders, while increasing prosocial behaviors and classroom engagement. The Trauma Center (TC) has partnered with UI to evaluate, adapt, and extend the UI curriculum. This collaboration has resulted in two innovative youth violence prevention programs: (1) UI Teacher Curriculum and (2) Trauma Drama.

UI Teacher Curriculum is a classroom-based, teacher-led component of the UI program that extends the application of UI violence/problem resolution strategies within a broader context and cements learning through increased practice. The UI teacher curriculum manual was designed for 4th graders and can be incorporated into standard school lesson plans. The proposed lecture will present findings from a 16-classroom outcome evaluation study designed to assess the efficacy of the teacher curriculum, both alone and in combination with the standard UI program.

The Trauma Drama (TD) intervention program was developed to target youth violence for young adolescents with histories of exposure to violence and trauma. The program is a clinically informed theater-based program that aims to reduce youths' risk of perpetrating and/or becoming victims of violence. The proposed lecture will present findings from a 4-classroom outcome evaluation study assessing the efficacy of TD as a tertiary prevention/intervention program.

#### **Lecture Goals and Objectives**

- To introduce participants to two programs based on Urban Improv (UI), an interactive theater youth violence prevention program.
- UI Teacher Curriculum is a classroom-based, teacher-led program designed for 4th grade students.
- Trauma Drama is a clinically informed theater-based program for traumatized youth that aims to reduce their risk of perpetrating and/or becoming victims of violence.

The presentation will introduce each program, present evaluation study findings, and discuss study implications. In addition, the lecture will include demonstrations and video presentations of select program components.

### **Lecture Activities**

1. 25-minute presentation by Dr. Zucker on the UI Teacher Curriculum and the outcome evaluation study findings.
2. 10-minute question and answer period.
3. 25-minute presentation by Dr. Spinazzola and Dr. Pollack on the Trauma Drama curriculum and the outcome evaluation study findings.
4. 20-minute question and answer period

### **Assessment**

Four indicators of success for this lecture will be measured through observation and discussion with lecture participants and through formal and/or informal feedback that they may provide. At the end, participants will be asked to complete an evaluation form (attached). The four indicators are as follows:

1. Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the UI Teacher Curriculum and the Trauma Drama program and have an opportunity to ask questions of the presenters that will enhance their understanding of and ability to utilize these interventions.
2. Participants will be inspired to utilize the curriculums, or selected components, in their classrooms/schools.
3. Participants will gain some ideas for adopting the two programs to fit within their own school district's existing curriculum.
4. Participants will demonstrate a high level of engagement and active participation in the discussion components of the lecture.

### **Resources**

<http://www.traumacenter.org>

<http://www.urbanimprov.org>

### **References**

- Kisiel, C., Blaustein, M., Spinazzola, J., Schmidt, C., Zucker, M., and van der Kolk, B. (2006, in press). Evaluation of a theater-based youth violence prevention program for elementary school children. *Journal of School Violence*, 5(2).
- Spinazzola, J., Pollack, A.A., Blaustein, M., Dewey, T., Jones, R., Perkins, M., Soloway, F., and Smith, K. (2005). Trauma Drama: Urban Improv-intensive protocol for middle school-aged children exposed to trauma and violence. Unpublished.
- Zucker, M., Villafior, E., Holden, J., Jones, R., and Spinazzola, J. (2004). Urban Improv for the classroom: 4<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Unpublished.

The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute

**Evaluation Form**

Trainers: Joseph Spinazzola, Ph.D., Marla Zucker, Ph.D., Amie Alley Pollack, Ph.D., and Bessel van der Kolk, MD

Site: Persistently Safe Schools 2006

Training Topic: Innovative Use of Improvisational Theater in Secondary and Tertiary Youth Violence Prevention

Please rate the overall training by circling a number for each statement.

	Strongly Agree	2	Somewhat Agree	3	4	Strongly Disagree	5
I was satisfied with the quality of the lecture.	1	2	3	4	5		
I found the training useful to my work.	1	2	3	4	5		
I will be able to incorporate material from the lecture into my work.	1	2	3	4	5		
The presenters had adequate knowledge of the topics covered.	1	2	3	4	5		
Presentation of the material was understandable.	1	2	3	4	5		
Demonstrations and video presentations were helpful.	1	2	3	4	5		
My questions/needs were addressed.	1	2	3	4	5		
The handouts provided were helpful.	1	2	3	4	5		

**Comments**

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