S.P.A.R.K. Teen Mentoring Program Components & Objectives

Core Curriculum

Overview & Introduction
- Introductions
- Overview of the program.
- Identify personal short-term and long-term goals.

You Experiencing you!
- Define various Principles and identify their importance.
- Define the Principles behind the human mind.
- Understand how the Principles create experience.
- Understand the Thought Chain

Yep! That's Thought Too
- Differentiate between **Thought** and perceptions.
- Identify perceptions, beliefs, values and opinions as personal and understand that they all come from **Thought**.
- Identify how perceptions creates our experience.

Your Personal Guide to Making Decisions
- Make the link between thinking and decision-making.
- Identify the connection between decision-making and consequences.
- Identify the value of your **SPARK** when making decisions.

Habits Pulling You Around
- Identify habits.
- Identify the relationship between habitual thinking and habits.
- Understand how habits are formed from habitual thinking, and how your brain likes to form habits because they are efficient; they save your brain time and energy.
- Learn to override the "Lizard Brain" and stop habits you don't want.

How State of Mind Influences Judgment and Reasoning
- Understand your **SPARK** and realize it can't be damaged.
- Demonstrate how state of mind influences decisions and perceptions.
- Realize that understanding state of mind naturally creates a clearer state of mind.

Surviving Mood Swings
- Define and identify various mood characteristics.
- Understand that moods continuously fluctuate.
- Learn how state of mind and moods are directly connected.
- Realize that moods aren't connected to circumstances.

Finding the SPARK in Your Stress
- Define and identify stress.
- Link state of mind and feeling stress.
- Realize their personal indicators of stress.
- Realize, through awareness, their stressful thinking has less power.
- Create a healthier relationship with stress.

Feeling Fear and Insecurity Without Fear and Insecurity
- Define fear and insecurity.
- Identify the difference between true danger and fearful and insecure thinking.
- Identify the fear and insecurity in unwanted emotions and behaviors.
- Realize the potential to experience fear and insecurity without being limited by them.

The Inside-Out Nature of Self-Esteem
- Learn that self-esteem is a natural state created from the **SPARK** in us all.
- Differentiate between self-esteem and self-image.
- Understand that only personal thinking can cover up natural self-esteem.
- Link how self-evaluation limits your capacity for the **SPARK** to shine through.

Separate Realities
- Define and identify various types of separate realities.
- Understand that separate realities exist among all people.
- Demonstrate acceptance of different thoughts about the same situations.

Discovering You
- Demonstrate the ability to see their goals and dreams as ever evolving, just like their potential.
- Illustrate the use of the **SPARK** in us all.
- Identify insights they have gained for themselves.

Graduation
- Receive completion certificate and individual awards.
- Invite teachers and parents to participate in the graduation.
- Serve lunch/dinner/refreshments.
- Share experiences among facilitators, participants, staff and parents.

Supplemental Lesson/s

Alternate Decision-Making Lesson
Using Your SPARK to Make Decisions
- Make the link between thinking and decision-making.
- Identify the connection between decision-making and consequences.
- Identify the value of their **SPARK** when making decisions.

Topic-Specific Modules

Relationships Module
Cultivating Meaningful Relationships
- Understand the link between separate realities and state of mind.
- Identify the benefits of communication in times of conflict.
- Understand the link between connection and cultivating meaningful relationships.
- Identify the foundations of meaningful relationships.

Dating and Healthy Relationships
- Define and identify the different types of domestic violence.
- Identify the signs of domestic violence.
- Demonstrate how to stay safe in times of conflict by understanding the **SPARK** in us all.
- List the main components of a healthy relationship.

Your Values, Your Relationships, Your Decisions
- Define the terms of *Values* and *Boundaries*.
- Identify the relationship between *Values* and personal and sexual *Boundaries*.
- Develop a personalized "Relationship Value-Boundary Code."

Leadership Module
Community Engagement
- Define and understand the value of volunteering.
- Understand how integrity plays an important role in being a volunteer.
- Learn how to get involved in the community.
- Plan a community-service project to complete as a group.

Mentoring and Leading From the Inside-Out
- Identify the characteristics of a successful mentor.
- Understand the positive impact a good mentor can have in one's life.
- Understand the positive impact being a good leader can have in one's life.
- Understand ways to build a good mentor/mentee relationship.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify the **SPARK** within the others.

Bully Prevention From the Inside-Out
- Identify the reasons why people bully others.
- Learn to view bullying from the Inside-Out understanding.
- Create an Inside-Out Anti-Bullying Campaign video.

Life Skills Module

Academic Success

- Identify how thoughts can create boundaries in academic success.
- Understand how challenges in learning increase knowledge.
- Understand that possibilities and potential are infinite.

College and Career Readiness

- Demonstrate using your **SPARK** for guidance toward a college degree or career choice.
- Demonstrate how to convey inner qualities to prospective employers and/or college administrators.
- Understanding why being present during college/job interviews is useful.

Financial Stability

- Learn that money is not freedom—freedom is our natural state – our SPARK.
- Learn to view money through and understanding of the mind.
- Demonstrate basic budgeting skills.
- Discover a sense of ease with regards to handling money and the future.

Framework for Prevention

This framework for prevention depicts The Cypress Initiative's view on cultivating human and creative potential within all lives through understanding of the mind and the human experience. Much research has been conducted around the implications of understanding how the mind works to create the human experience through recognition. This understanding has been proven to naturally reduce risk around high-school dropout, teen delinquency, bullying, teen violence, suicide, depression, and anxiety, while building resiliency around academic success, emotional well-being, and social-emotional skills. (Kelley, T. M., Lambert, E., & Pransky, J.).

According to the *Theory of Planned Behavior* (TPB)*,* by Icek Ajzen, predictors of dropout, delinquency, academic failure, depression, and teen violence are *attitudes*, *subjective norms* and *perceived control*, meaning a person's perception of his or her own capability to perform specific behaviors and/or meet specific results. Therefore, unlike many popular prevention models, this framework is individual-based, because resiliency and success in these areas is created from the inside-out. Consequently, if the participant understands the mind and the human experience, success will not **require** the participation of environmental factors. Yet, through the powerful research organized and presented in the *Social Development Model* (SDM)*,* by R.F. Catalano and J. D. Hawkins, we found that active participation and connection to a mentor, school, and community have been proven to contribute to increased positive outcomes of the overall program.

Target Audience: Youth

The S.P.A.R.K. Program increases connectedness, reduces risk factors and builds resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth.

Though TPB predicts undesired behavior in youth that can be identified and addressed through *attitudes, subjective norms* and *perceived control*. The S.P.A.R.K. Core Curriculum is specifically designed to teach an understanding of the human experience, which subsequently creates desired changes around *attitudes, subjective norms* and *perceived control*.

Inputs:

Core Curriculum: The Core Curriculum consists of 13 lessons that focus on an understanding of the mind and human experience for the purpose of reducing risk, uncovering resiliency and potential, and increasing a feeling of connectedness within one self. The curriculum teaches youth an understanding of the mind and it connects knowledge and skills learned in order to help youth navigate their personal life experiences and circumstances.

Supplemental Modules: Modules are supplemental lessons used after the participants have been taught the foundation through Core Curriculum. They are optional lessons that are separated into groups (modules) by topic and should be chosen based on the participant's specific needs. All modules were created to connect the knowledge and skills learned through the Core Curriculum to the participants' personal life experiences and circumstances.

Facilitators/Mentors:

Research states that it takes approximately 6-12 months to see desired outcomes from mentoring. Additionally, mentoring relationships that last one year or longer have shown the biggest improvements in academic, psychosocial, and behavioral outcomes. Finally, research also states that mentor pairs should spend at least 1-2 hours together, per week, for at least one school year. Because of this, adding modules that are relevant to your participants and providing one-on-one and/or group mentoring in addition to the Core Curriculum are both encouraged.

One-on-One/Small Group Mentoring: Facilitators/Mentors act as guides to the participants, helping them connect the dots of learning and providing weekly opportunities for positive interactions with an adult in their lives. Facilitators/Mentors also provide a healthy space to build a relationship and connectedness that supports youth and the skills learned.

If incorporating one-on-one or small-group mentoring, it is suggested that the mentoring be facilitated by recruits who have been trained in the curriculum. Also, because of the bond formed through the teaching of the curriculum, it is strongly suggested that the mentor/s be the same person/s facilitating the Core Curriculum. If the Core Curriculum is being taught every other week, participants may receive one-on-one or small-group mentoring on the alternate weeks. If the Core Curriculum is being taught weekly, the mentoring may occur before, after of in between the lessons.

School and/or Organization

School/Organization support for the purpose of disseminating the Core Curriculum is essential. Research suggests that the quality and longevity of any mentoring program is directly tied to communication with staff and sufficient availability to resources and safe spaces. Mentoring programs require buy-in from the schools/organizations they work with and can help achieve this by involving the school/organization in setting outcomes, providing a safe and dedicated classroom, and using best practices to set these standards (Burrus, J., Roberts, R.).

S.P.A.R.K. Facilitator Training: Facilitator Training in the foundation and implementation of the curriculum, is highly suggested for any educators or mentors who will facilitate the program. The Cypress Initiative, Inc. provides access to teacher-training resources, as well as, on-site and virtual training opportunities. For more information on S.P.A.R.K. certified facilitator training, please contact us at info@cypressinitiative.org or call 1 (813) 662-6920.

Community

According to research done by the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care and the SDM, a feeling of connectedness within the community was also a protective factor in reducing the risk of anxiety, depression, disruptive behavior, dropout and substance abuse. Therefore, the S.P.A.R.K. Mentoring program also provides a community-involvement component within the Leadership Module of each S.P.A.R.K. curriculum level.

Community Involvement: The S.P.A.R.K. program empowers youth to utilize their leadership capability and creativity in giving back to their community. All participants being taught the Leadership Module will choose a community project they would like to complete as a group. They will discuss and decide upon their projects during the Community Engagement lesson of the Leadership Module. Completing this lesson and project provides participants the opportunity to bond with their community, and it empowers them to see that they can be a vital asset to that community.

SPARK Curriculum/Materials

Teaches youth an understanding of the mind and connects knowledge and skills learned to help youth navigate their personal life experiences and circumstances.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to themselves.

Facilitators/Mentors

Connects the dots of learning and increases positive interaction.

Builds a relationship and connectedness that supports youth and the skills learned.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to a positive adult in their life.

Youth

The S.P.A.R.K. Program increases connectedness, reduces risk factors and uncovers resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth.

Community

Empowers youth to utilize their leadership and creativity in giving back to their community.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to their community.

Schools/Organizations/Classrooms

Hosts a safe space for youth to gather.

Creates sense of buy-in via trained facilitators.

Increases a feeling of connectedness to their school/organization.

Logic Model

Target Group	Youth: Ages 6 - 22
Goals	The S.P.A.R.K. Program reduces risk factors and uncovers resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth. The S.P.A.R.K. program addresses the following protective factors. • Academic Success • Emotional Competency • Self-Efficacy Skills • Communication Skills • Conflict-Resolution Skills • Connectedness to Family, School and Community
Objectives	Teach youth an understanding of the mind in order to reduce risky behavior and uncover resiliency (Lessons) Connect skills learned to life experiences and circumstances (Generalization) Build a relationship and connectedness that supports participants and the skills learned (Mentoring) Empower participants to utilize their leadership capability and creativity in giving back to their community (Community Involvement)
Challenges	Many young people come to school with an array of the following risk factors: • Aggressive/Reactive/Impulsive Behavior • Poor Academic Success • Lack of School Commitment • Depression, Anxiety • Low Confidence/Self-esteem • Low Social Skills • Disrespect Towards Authority Many schools do not have the resources to implement social-emotional learning programs or curricula in social and communication skills, and in emotional competency.
Activities (Strategies)	**Curriculum Lessons** **Core Curriculum:** The S.P.A.R.K. Core Curriculum is designed to be taught during or after school, throughout the school year, by classroom teachers or certified S.P.A.R.K. facilitators. It can be taught once a week throughout the school year, or once every other week when implementing the *one-on-one mentoring* component in between lessons. The Core Curriculum consists of lessons that focus on an understanding of the human experience in order to teach participants personal and interpersonal skills needed to navigate life successfully.

Activities (Strategies)	**Topic-Specific Modules:** Additional lessons, also taught in a classroom setting. Based on the needs of the audience, topic-specific modules can be included into the program. Example modules: Relationships, Leadership, Life Skills, Sex Education and Teen Pregnancy Prevention, and Teen Parenting. **Curriculum Techniques:** • Group discussions • Role plays • Student workbook • Thought chain / decision making • Creativity challenges • Videos • Trivia • Teachable moments / stories • Relatable story sharing • Real-life examples • Demonstrations **One-on-One Mentoring:** If the Core Curriculum is being taught every other week, participants receive mentoring, on the bi-weeks, in various life areas (goal setting, rapport building, social and emotional skills). **Community Involvement:** The S.P.A.R.K. Mentoring curriculum also provides a community-involvement project through the Leadership Module. Participants complete various volunteer projects to help support local nonprofits. All participants being taught the Leadership Module will choose a community project they would like to complete as a group. They will discuss and decide upon their projects during the Community Engagement lesson of the Leadership Module. Completing this lesson and project provides participants the opportunity to bond with their community, and it empowers them to see that they can be a vital asset to that community. **S.P.A.R.K. Facilitator Training:** Foundational training is strongly suggested for of any schools, organizations or educators who plan to facilitate the program. The Cypress Initiative, Inc. provides access to online training resources and webinars, as well as on-site and virtual training opportunities. For more information on S.P.A.R.K.-certified facilitator training, please contact us at info@cypressinitiative.org or call 1(813) 662-6920.

Theory of Change (Outputs)	The S.P.A.R.K. Program reduces risk factors and uncovers resiliency to promote emotional well-being and school success in youth via an understanding of the mind and human experience. Through this the participants acquire: • Insight into thought recognition • Insight into inner resilience, clear-mindedness, and mindfulness • Understanding of the dynamics of feelings • Insight into self- esteem • Ability to use "thought chain" in decision-making • Increased positive connection with themselves, others and their community
Short-Term Outcomes	Participants who complete the S.P.A.R.K. program, demonstrate: • Increased resilience • Increased inhibition and impulse control • Increased problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict-resolution skills • Increased communication skills • Increased positive outlook and greater sense of well-being
Long-Term Impact	Participants who complete the S.P.A.R.K. program demonstrate: • Increased academic success • Increased self- confidence and self-worth • Increased self-regulation • Increased engagement in positive relationships • Increased acceptance in differences in others • Engagement in pro-social behaviors
Measurements	**Inputs:** • Fidelity Scales • Teacher feedback **Activities:** • Service Delivery Documentation **Outputs:** • Pre-and post-curriculum surveys • Student Feedback • Teacher Input **Short Term Outcomes:** • Resilience, DERS, CDP, 3PI and UP scales **Long Term Impact:** • School Attendance Reports • School Discipline Reports • Student Grade Reports