



Edge Hill University

Making a difference

The development of a Social Support Group

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Background to the work: student engagement

- “The goal of widening participation is supposed to allow more of society to benefit from the experience of Higher Education but that will not be realised if all the participants do not achieve anything because they have never engaged with that experience”
(Bryson and Hand 2008)
 - “...making friends becomes not just desirable but an essential survival skill”
(Purnell and Foster 2008)
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Why is engagement important?

- The requirements of active learning
 - Getting and using information
 - Feeling part of the organisation
 - Feeling valued
 - Being able to ask for help
 - Developing purposeful and personal objectives
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Self efficacy and the Solution Focused Approach

- Try to recall the things that you **are good at and enjoy – lots of them**
 - Now think about what are **your best hopes** for **tomorrow** or **next week** or **next month** or **next year**
 - Remember a time when you have **done anything like those things** in the past or are just beginning to do them now
 - Don't forget to keep **noticing** and **marking up** your progress
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Methodology: Action Research

- Weekly meetings: factual and personal notes
 - Critical friend: notes written up or tape-recording transcribed
 - Outcomes presented round themes
 - Themes presented to participants in interviews which were transcribed
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Creating the Group

- Pre Group Activity
 - The Group
 - Personal contact
 - Maintenance of contact
 - Implications of mode of contact
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Did it work?

- Record of meetings
 - Commitment
 - Break
 - Effects
 - personal
 - social
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How did it work?

- The participants
 - The Environment
 - Role of the facilitator
 - Function:
 - social
 - counselling
 - X factor
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Social Support Groups and the University

- Creating a positive environment
 - Self-efficacy
 - Widening participation
 - Where does it fit?
 - Student engagement
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Future developments and aspirations

What do you think?

- Participants?
 - The University?
 - You?
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“ Student success is not only about grade point averages or honours degree classification but also about the ability to be effective in working with others, solving the ‘messy’ problems life throws up and so on”

(Yorke & Longden 2004)
