



NIROGA™

Fostering Health and Well Being Through Yoga

Niroga Institute Integral Development Program Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (ACJJC) Quarterly Report

Program Description: Niroga Institute began an Integral Development (ID) with Yoga, Breathwork, and Meditation in B2 Unit at ACJJC on June 19, 2006, jointly funded by Alameda County's Probation Department and Health Care Services Agency, with in-kind support from Niroga. Youth are provided ongoing ID sessions 5 days a week (Monday through Friday) by Niroga staff, in gender-segregated groups of 12 and 8 young men and women respectively. Additionally, once a week an ID session is provided for B2 Unit staff, and is open to all ACJJC staff.

Program Evaluation: Program evaluation was done using two quantitative psychometric tools, PSS10 (an established 10-point Perceived Stress Scale) and IHS30 (Niroga's 30-point Integral Health Scale), measuring Stress (and anxiety and depression), Self-Awareness (and self-control, self-esteem, and subjective happiness), and General Health. Additionally, youth complete a qualitative survey instrument indicating what they have learned from the program, and if and how they use it to calm themselves down. These are completed on each intake and outtake, to gauge pre-intervention and post-intervention changes, if any. Staff also completed a quarterly program evaluation.

Results: An analysis of PSS10 and IHS30 results indicates a statistically significant improvement in stress resilience and self-awareness of youth exposed to greater than 10 ID sessions, as compared with those who attended between 0 to 10 ID sessions, confirming that life skills and personal transformation require frequent and regular practice. Youth had much to say in their own words about the usefulness of the program, especially the breathing and mindfulness techniques presented, e.g. "I learned how to relax and how to breathe; when staff put me on 'special program', instead of banging and kicking, I breathe," and "I've learned to go to Yoga instead of flashing on people," and "I learned a lot from it whenever I get mad! Just start breathing, and I actually like Yoga." Staff rated program quality and overall satisfaction at 6.2 and 6.1 out of 7, and said they found many opportunities for applying ID techniques in their own lives and in their interaction with youth: "Opportunities for growth in everyday life," and "I use the breathing at different times during the day and definitely when I am stressed," and "During emotionally charged days – focus on breathing – key word BREATHE! When children seem anxious or very distracted/irritated tell them to close eyes and feel their breath."

Staff Recommendations: Several staff have requested that the program be offered twice a week for staff, and pervasively across all other JH units. One senior staff member said, "My goal is to get more staff to use the 'Yoga' language throughout the day and evening. I'm noticing so many opportunities to redirect kids by having them come back to their breath. If more staff use this, it will be better for all of us." Speaking about the effect of the program on a particularly challenged young woman, another veteran Staff Psychiatric Social Worker said, "The Yoga instruction you provided to her each day obviously offered her both a way of being an agent in her own care and a means of building her own spiritual foundation. I am convinced that having the opportunity to engage in the practice of Yoga with you was a gift that she will carry with her for life."

Bidyut (BK) Bose, Ph.D.
Executive Director
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