



Issues our youth must cope with!

Many young New Zealanders will have to cope personally with abuse, bullying, self-harm or even suicide among their circle of friends in the foreseeable future.

Our Foundation, at the request of some teachers, has just completed work on Gemstones 2, a sequel to one of our earlier resource kits known as Gemstones, which proved to be particularly helpful to emerging adolescent students of Intermediate school age.

We now need your help to fund production and distribution of this new material; to schools and teachers who request it for use with their students. — *Will you please help us to help our young people?*

Valuing Life — Gemstones

Where are our young people heading?

Despite the decline in youth suicide over the past decade, New Zealand still has a very high youth suicide rate when compared with similar countries. In fact we have the second highest rate of these countries.

Results from the Ministry of Health's 2007 / 08 Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use show that between eighty and ninety percent of young people in the 16 — 24 age group reported using alcohol in the previous twelve months and between twenty and thirty three percent of young people report being current users of tobacco.

And according to the Youth 07 survey sixty percent of secondary school students drink alcohol regularly. The proportion increases by age. Just over a third of 13 year olds drink, but by age 17, 75 per cent are drinkers.

Bullying is reported as increasingly prevalent in our schools, workplace and society at large.

These problems are not new, and there is no simple "quick-fix". However, the good news is that if we upskill young people at the right stage of their lives, we can help reduce major problems very considerably!

We have designed a set of resources for teachers and students pitched at the 11 — 13 year age range. These are helping young people understand the problems that are all around them and to learn the skills for dealing effectively with them.

The two resources are called Gemstones 1, and Gemstones 2 (sequel to the first). They are named after the gems of **knowledge** and **understanding** we all need to live satisfying and productive lives.

What is the secret of the Gemstones success?

There are two special features which answer this question. We call these **Storytelling** and **Valuing Life**.

First:

Gemstones 1 and 2 both use **Therapeutic Storytelling Intervention (TSI)** for short). This storytelling relies on the use of metaphor which allows the conscious mind to be kept busy while therapeutic messages are being sent to the brain. Metaphors have been used throughout history to help people gain greater understanding of their world. The journey of the boy in the stories parallels the journey through adolescence and there is a strong emphasis on the boy having to make choices and take responsibility for his actions.

We talk more about this on the back page.

Secondly:

Young New Zealanders Foundation also bases Gemstones on its key message: "**Valuing Life**".

Let us turn to the double centre page to see just why **Valuing Life** links very closely to the use of storytelling to help young people walk their own path to success.

What is "Valuing Life" all about?

Have you ever stopped to wonder why teenagers do stupid things? Or why some young people manage to get through all sorts of difficulties in their lives and some slide down the slippery slope and become depressed, or suicidal?

Some Up-to-date Research

There are a couple of reasons why this is so. One has to do with the brain and one with life skills.

Up-to-date research shows us that teenagers' brains are not fully developed. They might look, talk, and sometimes act like they're grown-up, but don't be fooled. Their brains are actually only at around 80% capacity and may not start to work at full capacity until the age of 20, or even 25. Unfortunately the crucial part of the brain that is unreliable is the part responsible for some really important functions including:

- Being able to weigh up what the consequences of their actions might be.
- Forming judgments.
- Controlling their impulses and emotions.
- Helping them understand other people's emotions.

This explains why some young adolescents act recklessly, for example, taking risks when driving cars. It's why they have trouble thinking about and planning for their future; why they can be selfish, difficult, and hurtful to their parents and carers; why they seem to have no common sense or understanding of the consequences of their actions.



The trouble is that right at this time when the brain is most vulnerable is also the time when teens are most likely to experiment with drugs or alcohol.

Advertising exploits this.

Another important piece of research tells us that young people need a whole range of skills (or **Developmental Assets**) to help them grow up as healthy, caring, and responsible people. The more skills or Assets they have, the more likely they will be able to cope in difficult situations, and less likely to get into trouble. The fewer assets, the more likelihood of negative behaviour such as alcohol use and violence.

'I found Gemstones was a great resource to use with kids. It has variety in terms of activities and engages the students with the short stories. This resource has created some in-depth discussions amongst students as to how they have dealt with situations and how they could have dealt with them better. I would recommend this resource to any school that is looking at more development of the Key competencies within their curriculum.'

Regards, Mali — Deputy Principal

One of my many "hats" at work is that of Careers Adviser and I use Gemstones 2 as a part of my year 9 teaching tools. Looking at choices and consequences for actions is a very valuable part of the health and guidance programme and pertains to careers in that it affects the ultimate outcome of one's life and one's career options if choices are not made thoughtfully.

I find the programme immensely valuable in assisting students of this age. The variety of activities on offer allows me to tailor each delivery to the needs of the particular group of students, thus allowing them to derive the greatest benefit from each session. I would recommend using this resource with students of adolescent age.

I do hope you have success with your funding endeavours. Kind regards, Nikki — Head of Dept.

What Does the Young New Zealanders Foundation Do With This Information?

The good thing is that we can help young people to develop skills to prepare them for potential situations and work through ways of dealing with them. We can make it easier for them to decide about things they shouldn't do. So though their brain doesn't work as well as an adult's, having practice in things that will help them to avoid common pitfalls that await them, will help their brain function better.

And this is where the **Young New Zealanders Foundation's (YNZF) Valuing Life** concept comes in.

Valuing Life concentrates on the **positive development of our youth** so that they become healthy, productive adult New Zealanders.

Our primary aim is not to **try to fix problems**, like drug and alcohol abuse. We concentrate on

thinking about the **opportunities, learning experiences, and support we can give to our young people** which will help them **avoid** these problems and stay on the 'right' path.

We know that negative experiences such as abuse, bullying, failure at school, and negative peer associations can endanger some young people, even to the point of self-harm or suicide. Every one of our resources is designed to help young people develop skills (or Assets) that can help them to develop and strengthen their resiliency to cope.



Young New Zealanders
Foundation

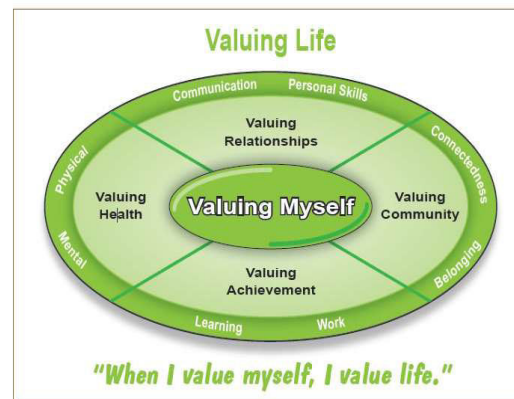
"When I Value Myself, I Value Life" – Our Valuing Life Philosophy

We created this diagram to try and show, in a simple way, what we are all about.

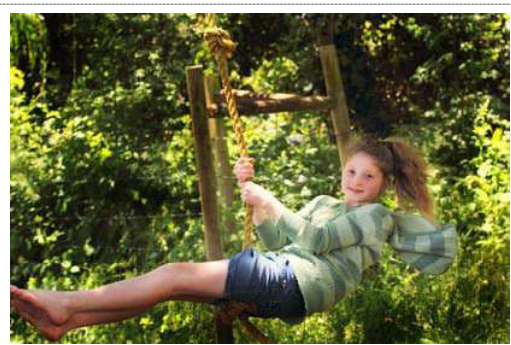
We believe that the most important thing a young person can do, to grow into a healthy adult, is **value himself / herself**.

Our slogan is "**When I value myself, I value life**".

When a young person values themselves, they are more likely to value their health, their relationships (with their family, friends, and people around them), their school and other learning situations (and the opportunities these give them), and they will value the environment they live in (their community, their country, and their world).



We believe if a young person does all this, then, when a major crisis comes along, taking their own life will not be an option. **Valuing Life is an antidote to suicide.**



Back to Gemstones — How does it work?

The Gemstones programme has been developed as a classroom resource by New Zealand teachers to align with the New Zealand curriculum. It is based on the book Gem of The First Water by Ron Phillips, an American Family Therapist. It is a fable about a boy embarking on a journey in which he encounters all sorts of interesting and personally challenging adventures.

The programme uses Therapeutic Storytelling Intervention (T.S.I.) a methodology which incorporates the age-old art of storytelling as a very effective means of bringing about positive behavioural change in people's lives.

The stories in Gemstones invoke mental images and pictures in the students' minds and can be likened to holding up a mirror to them. It allows them, in their own time, to take an honest look at themselves. The teacher guides them through the three stages of the TSI process by helping them to:



- **identify** with the behaviours of the characters in the story from a safe place;
- **internalise** the struggle that the character is facing and recognise their negative behaviours;
- make a decision to **apply** the successful techniques used by the character.



What does Gemstones deal with?

Gemstones 1 and 2 both deal with really important issues confronting young people.

The 6 themes in Gemstones 1 are:

Family Relationships
Making Choices
Managing Anger and Fear
Resisting Alcohol and Drugs
Bullying
Appreciating and Valuing Life

The 7 themes in Gemstones 2 are:

Change Takes Courage
Think before You Act
Crevice of Anger and Lies
Healing from the Inside
Pool of Right decisions
Keep Your Eyes on the Goal
Rebuilding Relationships

In all of these situations, the young people are encouraged to value who they are and what they can do in life. This is reinforced by the catch-cry:

"When I value myself I value Life."

The Young New Zealanders Foundation is now campaigning for funds to help distribute Gemstones 2 to all centres of learning with 11 to 13 year old students.

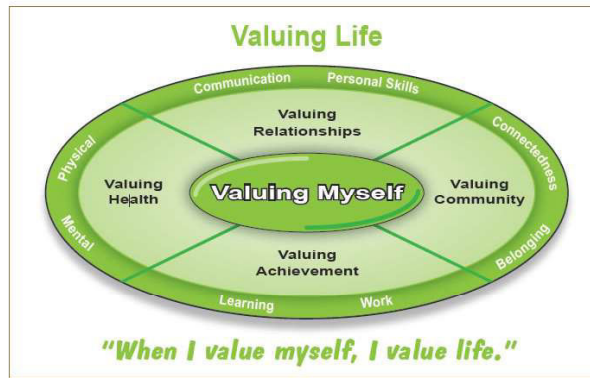
- **The problems are real!**
 - **We are helping teachers, parents and especially the young people, deal with these.**
- **Will you help us?**

Young New Zealanders Foundation, Takapuna,
Auckland 0740 P.O. Box 331316 Phone 64 (0)9 440.5200
E-mail: info@youngnz.org.nz.

Please visit our web site: www.youngnz.org

Mission Convenors, Association of Methodist Women
and Presbyterian Women, Aotearoa, N.Z.
C/- Sounoa Tulou (AMW) or C/- Joan Roberts (APW)
149 Heta Road, New Plymouth. Phone: 067.575.267
E-mail: dan-extulou@xtra.co.nz or E-mail: syirob@xtra.co.nz

Supplementary Artwork Options



A Koru is often associated with nurturing — representing the strength and purity of a loving relationship or partnership:

*Ka hinga atu tete-kura As one fern frond (person) dies
ka hara-mai he tete-kura one is born to take it's place*

Our Koru therefore symbolises the **Young New Zealanders Foundation** and all that we seek to achieve. In a visual way it represents individuals, irrespective of gender, from the various cultures and ethnic groups who now elect to reside in our country.

Our Koru, designed by *Karl Patterson* (a young New Zealander of Ngai Tahu descent), represents not only new-birth, but the growth of each individual, through the childhood phase, through the in-between years, through adolescence, and even embraces young adults in their early twenties.

The design seeks to express something of the strength and unity of our country and its people. It is as though our generation were an unfurling fern frond striving for perfection, reaching for the light, seeking nurture, nourishment, empowerment, and the strength to stand strong with national identity.

As a Foundation, we seek, with public support, to help nurture our young people in their need of:

- mental and physical health,
- resiliency and personal strength,
- success and achievement.

We have named our Koru *Kimi Ora*, which simply seeks to express what it is to nurture and develop personal health, fulfilment and maturity, national identity and harmony as a nation.



Gemstones 2 — Feedback from Teachers

I was impressed with the thought students put into their writing when working on Gemstones tasks. Their honesty and considered opinions were really thought provoking. They enjoyed the range of activities and these have been incorporated in other lessons - great experience for most students.

Dilys

Gemstones is an intriguing adventure novel for our young students to read. They can't put the book down once they start reading it. They love the story, they love the adventures in every chapter and as a valuable resource it has lessons to be learned and used in day to day life. I would recommend this in every school for 10 — 12 year old students. The language used is pitched at their level and the illustrations fire their imagination. My students love [reading this text](#).

Elfrida

'I found Gemstones was a great resource to use with kids. It has variety in terms of activities and engages the students with the short stories. This resource has created some in-depth discussions amongst students as to how they have dealt with situations and how they could have dealt with them better. I would recommend this resource to any school that is looking at more development of the Key competencies within their curriculum.'

Regards

Mali
Deputy Principal

One of my many "hats" at work is that of Careers Adviser and I use Gemstones 2 as a part of my year 9 teaching tools. Looking at choices and consequences for actions is a very valuable part of the health and guidance programme and pertains to careers in that it affects the ultimate outcome of one's life and one's career options if choices are not made thoughtfully.

I find the programme immensely valuable in assisting students of this age. The variety of activities on offer allows me to tailor each delivery to the needs of the particular group of students, thus allowing them to derive the greatest benefit from each session. I would recommend using this resource with students of adolescent age.

I do hope you have success with your funding endeavours.

Kind regards

Nikki