

CHARM Behavior Change

Stonesoup School is different from your average school for troubled teens. Here, students debate about important values such as accountability, respect, and compassion. They work together to develop school rules and hold one another accountable to a high standard of behavior. These kids didn't start out that way.

Stonesoup School uses the *CHARM Behavior Modification System* (CHARM) to teach kids how to set and achieve goals for success. CHARM is an acronym for Compassion, Honesty, Accountability, Respect, and Motivation.

The students create the definition for each of the above values and hold themselves and others to the expected standard. CHARM gives students a common vocabulary when discussing a person's strengths or areas of concern and helps them clearly define any problems that they may experience. This is invaluable as students learn how to communicate their feelings in a positive manner.

There are three components to the CHARM Program:

1. As a group, students create working definitions of the CHARM values so they are meaningful to the group. Below are the definitions that the current group of students at Stonesoup School have developed:

Compassion: Understanding another person's situation and having the caring and willingness to help them positively progress through these situations.

Honesty: Telling the entire account of an event in full.

Accountability: Holding yourself and others responsible to maintain an agreed upon level of expectation

Respect: Treat others with the same level of respect that you want to be treated with.

Motivation: Have the willingness, determination, and drive to accomplish set goals and tasks.

2. In a nightly meeting, students review their progress and set personal goals for the next day. The goals are posted in the community area to serve as a reminder throughout the day. For example, a student might set a personal goal to be more motivated in school. The next night he will review his actions with the group and discuss what he did well, and what he could have done differently.
3. Every three weeks students and staff gather for an in-depth assessment session; each student evaluates himself and hears feedback from peers and staff. They consider the CHARM values as well as their performance on academics, attitude, personal hygiene and use of free time. This allows each student to get a broad range of feedback on his personal growth as well as explore areas that he needs to work on.

Over time the values of CHARM, fundamental to a successful life, become internalized in each student. Students take these values with them everywhere they go: on home visits, family outings, classes, and throughout life. CHARM capitalizes on the sociological model of Positive Peer Culture by resetting the value system of the peer group; instead of focusing on negative values such as dishonesty, students work with their peers to develop behaviors with positive values, such as motivation and accountability.