

Jan Brown On The Spiritworks Program and The Seven C's

Credit: Produced by Victoria Youcha and Brian King

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1931>

Jan Brown: One of the things that we work with with the children during our program we call the seven C's. And so a lot of the youth, as they're speaking out, talk a lot about really understanding that they didn't cause this thing. And so we look at, they look at the first C's of I didn't cause it, I can't control it, and I can't cure it. And as a result of that, and it's been interesting, that makes them feel bad if they just stop there because they say you know, we're just really going to be victims of this for the rest of our lives. And so many of them kind of enter in that place and are wrestling with this idea that maybe they did cause it or maybe there really was something that they could do about it. And so in our work with them, we help them with the other four C's, which are that they can take care of themselves by celebrating themselves and communicating their feelings. And so some of them are quite outspoken in their ability to take care of themselves and they really, you know, want other children to know mostly that they're not alone. I think that's one of the biggest feelings that they express in being a part of our program and being a part of spirit works is that they don't have the shame of being alone anymore. And I think the other big piece is that addiction is a disease and they really get it at a level that I didn't get it for most of my life, even as a person in recovery I didn't get it. And so they've really, they've helped us a lot and so, you know. One little boy came in one day and he said, you know, if you had the disease, if heart disease was in your family, what would you do? And I said, well I would exercise and eat right. And he says, well, I have addiction in my family, so I'm not going to drink and I'm not going to smoke. And I'm like wow, who knew? But they got it in a way that was very, very different. We equally have some of the younger who are very angry. A lot of these kids are very angry because they're losing their childhood and there's a video that we share with them called the Lost Childhood and it's made a dramatic impact in their lives and it certainly has in mine. And it follows kids many years ago who are now adults and talks about the role of children's programs and camps and things like that on their lives. And it's still, the message is still pretty clear that you didn't cause this and you don't have to be alone and this is a way that you can take care of yourself. It's a very different thing for the older ones; some of the shame and guilt are there. The younger ones are often, when I say young, probably 9, 10 years old, some of them are kind of angry and beginning to shut down. They have very strong views. Some of them are like, you know, drinking, drugs and alcohol have destroyed my family. And they even get that not only has it destroyed their family and they realize too that not drinking and not doing drugs is not enough and that they need some skills, you know, they need to learn how to talk about their feelings, and they need to know how to find a safe person when something is happening in their life that's too big for them. So it's really neat. They're remarkable children.