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The Cypress Initiative is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides **Principle-Based Training** to individuals and organizations in the Tampa Bay community. We conduct regular, on-going programs for residents of transitional facilities, drug treatment programs, correctional facilities, work-release/ re-entry programs, and for the general public in community settings. We also provide training to corrections staff, social workers, counselors, and non-profit staff and boards. We teach people in crisis how to engage their *innate resilience*—the human capacity for learning, creativity, compassion, common sense and well-being—to overcome habitual, unhealthy thinking and the beliefs that create barriers to change. We also teach those who work with people in crisis how to engage *their* innate resilience in order to overcome stress, bring out the best in their clients, and further their mission. Our Board of Directors includes professionals working in the fields of medicine, mental health, criminal justice, and early childhood education.

**What is Principle-Based Training?** Just as basic principles exist in mathematics, physics or any other science, there are fundamental Principles that drive the working of *all* human psychological functioning, regardless of environment or background. As with any science or discipline, once we understand the basic principles, we can learn to work out *any* problem. The Principles upon which our work is based are simple words with simple definitions, yet their implications for humanity are limitless and profound. We define **Mind** as the formless energy and intelligence of all Life; **Consciousness** as the ability to be aware of reality and of how reality is created for each of us; and **Thought** as the ability to create images and form ideas - the tremendous gift we have as human beings to create our own emotional realities.

These Principles, developed by Sydney Banks, and the resultant body of work are grounded in the concept of resilience or the power of individuals to "self-right." Rather than teaching various "techniques" for different situations, our trainers focus on helping participants learn how to access their own innate common sense and good judgment to make better choices for themselves and their families.

Principle-Based training helps us to see how and why we experience life in a positive or negative way. Our thoughts and conditioning (our personal experience of life) create a world view and a view of the people and events we encounter that is absolutely unique to each of us. Our experiences of life, home, work, and our performance in those environments, is a direct result of our "personal perception." As we begin to understand how personal thought and perception form our experience of "reality," a shift in our awareness is created. We become less vested in or tied to our preconceptions and habitual ways of viewing life and people, and in effect, begin to see life "as is."

In 2007, an independent study by Collaborative Solutions Consulting on the 3 Principles Services Division of the Department of Alcohol & Drug Services, Santa Clara County, California found

"Another element that differentiates work based on the Principles from other approaches is its emphasis on helping people become aware of their own role as the thinker of their thoughts. As they gain an understanding of the function of thought and their role as the creator of thought, they are less frightened or gripped by conditioned, negative habits of thinking. This can be particularly important for people with behavioral and impulse control problems." <sup>1</sup>

### **Unique Qualifications**

Our program is unique in that the trainers never tell the participants how they should think, feel, or behave. We know that most of the people in our class have had an abundance of this kind of guidance and this can sometimes lead to either defensive behavior or dependency on others for direction and happiness. Our program allows people to *naturally* tap into their *own* wisdom and have a greater sense of well-being without the use of techniques. Without independence and resourcefulness people fail to take advantage of re-entry services and community resources, or fail to “progress” past needing such services. The 2007 CSC study found, "According to most respondents, one of the most appealing elements of this approach is its profound belief in people's natural resources for health and well-being. This concept is in contrast to the more deficit-oriented, problem-oriented approaches that have dominated the field of substance abuse treatment, counseling and mental health for many years." <sup>2</sup>

Many of our graduates report that the Three Principles training has dramatically improved their self-esteem, helped them to let go of the past, and to make better choices regardless of their background or current circumstances. Participants often reflect how situations that would normally cause extreme stress are handled with ease when they apply what they have learned about the Three Principles. We believe that Principle-Based training is the key to stopping the cycle of un-healthy thinking that leads so many to make choices that do not serve them, their children, or their communities well.

### **Existing Programs**

The Cypress Initiative currently receives funding from the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay. We have on-going programs in place at Goodwill Industries Suncoast (women's work release program; intensive residential substance abuse treatment program for men and women); Hillsborough Correctional Institution (women's facility), Orient Road Jail (juvenile male offenders); Pinellas County Jail (men and women's facility); Still Standing Recovery Ministry (substance abuse treatment and homeless shelter for men and women); St. Petersburg Work Release Center (men's facility); Tarpon Springs Work Release Center (men's facility); and Welcome Home House (substance abuse treatment and transitional housing for women.) In addition, Cypress provided training for the entire corrections staff of Goodwill Industries Suncoast, including management, and completed a training course for social workers at 49<sup>th</sup> Street Jail in Pinellas County. In October of 2009 we began a weekly Second Chance class in downtown Tampa that is open to the general public. We are also offering community workshops entitled “A Second Chance for Happiness.”

1, 2 Rojas, R. (2007). *Impact and Possibilities: A Summary Report on the Findings of a Survey of Principles-Based Training Participants*, from Collaborative Solutions Consulting CSC. pp. 4-5

