

# SECTION 6: EVALUATION OF THE SHARK CAGE FOR YOUNG WOMEN PILOT PROGRAM

## Summary Pilot Program Evaluation

### Introduction

The pilot of the Shark Cage Program for Young Women: A Human Rights Approach to Gender Violence and Healthy Relationships was evaluated to assess whether the stated program objectives listed below had been met:

1. Increase knowledge of healthy and unhealthy relationships
2. Increase capacity to set boundaries
3. Increase the participants' skills in assertive communication
4. Increase the participants' awareness of the impacts of abuse
5. Decrease victim-blaming attitudes
6. Increase the ability to care for and be kind to themselves
7. Increase connection to their feelings
8. Increase sense of self-worth
9. Increase connection to their body
10. Increase belief in their entitlement to rights
11. Increase ability to recognise a potentially abusive or exploitative person

### Method

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from four groups who participated in the pilot program that ran in a regional NSW High School and a regional Victorian High School in 2018. A total of 40 female students between the ages of 12 and 16 from diverse backgrounds completed the pilot version of the program. Data to inform the evaluation was collected in three ways:

1. Participants completed an evaluation form at the conclusion of each session. This form had two binary questions that could be converted into quantitative data and five options for qualitative data.

2. Facilitators completed an evaluation at the conclusion of each of the seven sessions.
3. Participants were given a pre-test before the beginning of the first session and a post-test after the last session. A control group not participating in the program was given the same pre and post-tests at the same time.

A summary of each of these forms of evaluation follows.

## Participant Session Evaluations

### Week 1: Exploring Gender and the Shark Cage Metaphor

#### Objectives:

- Explore the difference between sex and gender and ideas about what it means to young people to be male or female.
- Explore how rigid gender stereotypes have been identified as contributing towards widespread male violence towards girls and women.
- Encourage an understanding and respect for gender and sexuality diversity.
- Give an overview of the Shark Cage Framework and each of the five steps.
- Introduce the Shark Cage metaphor to understand how a sense of human rights is developed. The metaphor also illustrates that the issue of gender violence is not an individual problem, and this may reduce feelings of self-blame and victim-blaming.

100% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

91% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

#### Sample of qualitative feedback from students:

*"I will be able to use this in the future to tell if I'm in a good or bad relationship."*

*"I can use the Shark Cage to solve problems."*

*"I got an insight into gender stereotypes and my rights as a woman".*

*"I learned that we can make our Shark Cages stronger and that no matter what gender you are, you have rights."*

*"I learned that sex and gender are different things."*

*"I will be able to use this to identify people who help me and people who hurt me."*

*"I feel I am more aware of why equality is so important in 2018."*

*"The Shark Cage metaphor is empowering and will help fight sexism within society."*

## Week 2: Human Rights and Renovating the Shark Cage

### Objectives:

- Raise awareness of human rights.
- Relate rights to bars in the Shark Cage.
- Participants to identify and reflect on the bars in their Shark Cage of rights.
- Increase knowledge about consent.
- Challenge attitudes of victim-blaming.
- Encourage awareness of the rights of others.

97% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

84% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

### Sample of qualitative feedback from students:

*"I have a right to say NO to activities that make me uncomfortable."*

*"I got a deeper understanding of consent and how important it is."*

*"I loved writing stories."*

*"When I get approached, I will know what is right and what is wrong."*

*"I loved how much I learned."*

*"I will be able to realise if I'm in a bad relationship."*

*"I learned that we have so many different rights."*

*"Now I know my rights and know what is good and bad."*

## Week 3: Self-care and Fixing the Shark Cage Alarm

### Objectives:

- Further develop participants' knowledge and belief in their human rights.
- Relate rights to bars in the Shark Cage in an experiential activity.
- Explore social messages that get in the way of girls and women embracing their rights.
- Understand self-care and why it is important.
- Understand how to increase feelings of self-worth using the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy.
- Increase awareness of body sensations and feelings.
- Understand how our body sensations and emotions come together to create an alarm system in our Shark Cage that warns us if someone is pushing up against one of our rights and learn to identify and trust this 'gut feeling'.

96% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

89% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

### **Sample of qualitative feedback from students:**

*"I learned I need to listen to my gut if I feel uncomfortable."*

*"I learned that you need to listen to your alarms in your body and how you feel."*

*"I learned how to be more aware of my personal space."*

*"I will know if I'm feeling uncomfortable in a weird situation."*

*"I learned that I'm not being selfish if I don't want to give someone something."*

*"I learned that I have a right to personal space."*

*"I learned that being too selfless isn't good."*

*"I learned how to say no."*

## **Week 4: Yoga Practice and Defending the Shark Cage**

### **Objectives:**

- Reinforce why it is important to be connected to our bodies and feelings.
- Deepen understanding of how this connection becomes the alarm system in our renovated Shark Cage that lets us know when someone is pushing up against a bar.
- Experience greater presence in our bodies through participation in a yoga session.
- How to breathe in a way that is most beneficial to the mind and body.
- Understand different communication styles.
- Understand how assertive communication protects our rights.
- Practise defending pressure on our Shark Cage using assertive communication when it is safe to do so.
- Understand how assertive communication relates to self-care.
- Understand how our body postures can influence our confidence and stress levels and capacity to act assertively.
- Assess current level of self-care and consider improvements.

88% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

88% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

### **Sample of qualitative feedback from students:**

*"I learned to be assertive and not aggressive."*

*"I learned how to deal with an uncomfortable situation in a different way and will be able to use this at school and in my social life."*

*"I will now be able to say no assertively."*

*"I learned that saying no to someone if you don't agree is very important."*

*"I learned that yoga helps calm you down."*

*"I will now be able to say no assertively."*

## Week 5: Practising Assertiveness and Healthy Coping Strategies

### Objectives:

- Consolidate assertiveness skills in a safe environment using real-life scenarios in roleplay.
- Practise defending attempted Shark Cage breaches (Step 4).
- Reinforce connection to body by practising a power posture that supports assertiveness.
- Document self-care strategies that can support Shark Cage work by creating a treasure chest of resources.
- Build self-worth by increasing self-care practises.

83% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

83% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

### Sample of qualitative feedback from students:

*"I learned how to stand up for myself."*

*"I learned how to speak assertively."*

*"I will be able to use what I learned in everyday life when I'm upset or annoyed."*

*"I will be able to use the calming techniques."*

*"I learned about healthy and unhealthy coping strategies and know what to do to cope when something happens."*

*"I learned lots of coping techniques that are healthy, and I won't yell as much."*

*"I learned how to be assertive without being aggressive."*

## Week 6: Recognising Shark and Dolphin Behaviours

### Objectives:

- Identify behaviours that disrespect a person's rights (Shark like behaviours) and behaviours that respect a person's rights (Dolphin like behaviours)
- Learn about the cycle of violence in relationships
- Understand levels of trust.
- Learn how to assess someone for trustworthiness.

96% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

91% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

### Sample of qualitative feedback from students:

*"I learned that all love should be respectful."*

*"I learned that Sharks can be disguised as Dolphins."*

*"I can now recognise the different behaviours Sharks and Dolphins show."*

*"I learned about the issues of trust and who to trust."*

*"Knowing the warning signs of Shark-like behaviour."*

*"I am now aware about how I can leave."*

*"I will be able to use this if ever I make new friends."*

## **Week 7: Building Self-worth and Celebrating Our Strengths**

### **Objectives:**

- Strengthen and build on a positive narrative for identity and self-worth.
- Assess progress by re-rating the strengths of bars in each participant's Shark Cage.
- Celebrate participants' achievements.

75% of participants agreed that they learned something new.

80% of participants agreed that they could use this new learning in their life.

### **Sample of qualitative feedback from students:**

*"I learned that I can improve myself in a short time."*

*"I saw how we became more confident since the first session."*

*"I learned how incredible the Shark Cage is."*

*"I really enjoyed Shark Cage program. It's fun to talk about such engaging stuff."*

*"I loved this so much!"*

*"100% will be taking this onboard."*

*"I will be able to help myself continue to be happy."*

## **Facilitator Session Evaluations**

In summary, the four facilitators who participated in the pilot program felt that the program met its stated objectives and targeted these areas in an engaging way. Feedback regarding less handouts and more interactive activities was taken on board in converting the majority of handouts into interactive activity sheets in the writing of the final manual. Here are some sample comments from facilitator evaluations:

*"I think this is an excellent and valuable program."*

*"The Shark Cage bars were a success. The girls wrote very thought-provoking rights."*

*"I've loved the enthusiasm and questions from the girls and the things they say they have learned."*

*"I liked the way the students engaged with the information...Especially the consent and human rights information. Students enjoyed writing their own scenarios."*

*"It is set out brilliantly and so easy to follow."*

*"We have had parents calling up the school requesting that their child complete the program."*

*"Students have loved the program and would have liked it to continue."*

*"Some students from the Shark Cage program organised a Pride Day celebration. This was the first in the history of the school and it was amazing to see and hear kids' attitudes on the day shifting from hostility to understanding and acceptance of diversity."*

## **Pre- and Post-test Results**

The pre and post-test data are largely consistent with the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in each of the seven-session evaluations. For 10 of the 12 questions, a higher percentage of young women who completed the program exhibited positive growth than the control subjects who did not complete the Shark Cage program (see Table 1).

The two questions where group participants did not exhibit more overall positive growth than the control group related to connection to body and feelings. This increased connection could help inform young women that a person or situation was making them uncomfortable. It is hypothesised that these two items that relate to the "Shark Cage alarm" construct needed to be more concrete for the young women to understand. This is consistent with facilitator feedback that many young women did not understand what these questions meant. This would also account for quantitative and qualitative data from evaluations for this session that indicated that young women were in fact developing a better understanding of body sensations and emotions that helped them to identify how they felt about a situation or person.

**Table 1.**

<b>Program objective</b>	<b>Participant sample size*</b>	<b>% of participant sample with positive growth</b>	<b>Control Sample size*</b>	<b>% of control sample with positive growth</b>
1. Increase knowledge of healthy and unhealthy relationships	32	78%	23	52%
2. Increase capacity to set boundaries	38	71%	27	44%
3. Increase skills in assertive communication	36	61%	26	35%
4. Increase understanding of consent	22	77%	14	29%
5. Decrease victim-blaming attitudes	19	47%	15	20%
6. Increase ability to be kind to self	39	51%	26	35%
7. Increase connection to feelings	29	41%	23	57%
8. Increase sense of self-worth	37	57%	24	42%
9. Increase connection to body	31	48%	25	60%
10. Increase belief in entitlement to rights	27	67%	19	32%
11. Increase ability to recognise a potentially abusive or exploitive person	34	62%	22	27%
12. Increase ability to care for self	29	55%	23	22%

**Table 1.** The **total number of participants** who completed the program was 40. The total number of **control** students was 31.

\*The **sample size** is the number of subjects who were able to grow from pre-test to post-test. It excludes subjects who indicated the top response in their pre-test who could therefore not indicate growth on their post-test.



## Discussion of Pilot Evaluation Data

The combined evaluation data supported the capacity of the Shark Cage Program for Young Women to meet all of the proposed 11 objectives listed below:

1. Increase knowledge of healthy and unhealthy relationships
2. Increase capacity to set boundaries
3. Increase the participants' skills in assertive communication
4. Increase the participants' awareness of the impacts of abuse
5. Decrease victim-blaming attitudes
6. Increase ability to care for and be kind to themselves
7. Increase connection to their feelings
8. Increase sense of self-worth
9. Increase connection to their body
10. Increase belief in their entitlement to rights
11. Increase ability to recognise a potentially abusive or exploitive person

As noted previously, an increased connection to body and emotions for many participants was noted in the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the sessions relating to these items from participants and facilitators. This was not mirrored in the pre and post-test change for participants. In reviewing these items, it was decided to rewrite the majority of pre- and post-questions, so they were more concrete, understandable and clearly related to a knowledge, behaviour or attitude. The number of questions was also increased so each objective had two questions that related to it.

When reviewing the evaluation data and program objectives it was decided to collapse the objectives of increased connection to body and emotions into "increase awareness of gut feeling" about people and situations. Young women related to this phrase and it helped them to understand how being more aware of body sensations and emotions helped to strengthen their gut feeling which was connected to their Shark Cage alarm.

It was also noted that the building in of teaching young women to be more aware of the rights of others and reflect on whether their own behaviours were Shark- or Dolphin-like had been very effective. Many young women said they would now interact with others differently and more respectfully as a result of learning about rights and types of communication that supported or violated the rights of others. For this reason, increasing awareness of and respect for the rights of others was added to the program objectives in this manual.

## Conclusion

The Shark Cage Group Program for Young Women delivered the changes in the targeted participant variables that were desired and anticipated. The pilot data provided rich information which informed the modifications made in this final program manual. The program provides a powerful vehicle for raising young women's awareness of their rights and the rights of others, decreasing victim blaming attitudes, increasing knowledge about consent & healthy and unhealthy relationships and increasing assertive communication skills.