



Successful Healthway Projects

# Break the Habit Breakdance

Break the Habit Breakdance used an innovative approach to address unhealthy behaviours in youth, including inactivity and drug use.

Case Study  
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# Break the Habit Breakdance

<b>Organisation:</b>	Swan City Youth Service/ North East Regional Youth Council
<b>Healthway funding:</b>	\$9,600 (Funded: Breakdance group for dance workshops)
<b>Program period:</b>	9 months
<b>Year:</b>	2002
<b>Target group:</b>	Young people, predominantly young Aboriginal males
<b>Number of participants:</b>	200

## What was the project about?

The Break the Habit Breakdance project was an eight-month health education and breakdance program targeting young disadvantaged males aged 17-25. The program addressed inactivity and drug use, as health and fitness are low priorities among this group, making them hard to reach.

The first eight weeks of the program involved education sessions about health and how participants might improve their own health. It also provided information and demonstrations on basic breakdance skills. A disco was held after the first eight weeks to enable participants to showcase their skills and promote the program. The remainder of the program involved a series of advanced breakdance workshops where participants could apply their new breakdance skills.

## What strategies were used?

- The program used local, young, workshop facilitators, who could relate well to the target group.
- Providing a fun, non-threatening workshop environment helped keep participants interested and committed.
- Workshops were offered free of charge.
- Health information and resources were up-to-date and user-friendly.
- Foodcent\$ nutrition education and food shopping sessions were provided.
- Young men in the target group were encouraged to join the program through competitions, website design workshops and opportunities to develop employment skills.

## What did the project achieve?

- Break the Habit Breakdance was one of the most popular programs offered through the Swan City Youth Service.
- While 40 participants were expected, the program reached 200 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people.
- The strategies were fun and relevant to youth.
- The facilitators were comfortable with and related well to the target group.

The project was successful in:

- Building self-esteem among participants.
- Getting the majority of participants to attend at least two workshops.
- Motivating some of the group to eat and enjoy fruit for the first time.
- Keeping detailed notes about what worked and what didn't work.

However, the evaluation methods used were unable to show any measurable increases in participants' health knowledge.

## What the coordinator of Break the Habit Breakdance had to say about the project:

This was one of the best and most popular programs we have run, and was really successful in involving young people in physical activity through breakdancing, art and fun.

# What Were the Effective Health Promotion Elements?

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## PLANNING

The issues affecting young people in the region included poor health and health knowledge, a lack of motivation and low employment skills.

The stakeholders consulted included:

- The Mobile Access Bus.
- The Swan Valley Child and Adolescent Health Service.
- The Aboriginal Community Health Service.

The target group and youth workers were involved in planning the project to determine the type of program that would appeal to the target group.

The Foodcent\$ program was used as the basis for nutritional education sessions.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

Breakdance was chosen because it was fun, relevant and attractive to the target audience.

The workshops were offered free of charge as many participants could not afford to pay.

The program was promoted through:

- Articles in the community newspaper and Council newsletter.
- Promotional flyers.
- A disco night for young people.

Young people were involved in running the program and creating promotional flyers for the breakdance classes.

The program was so popular that it led to classes for other age groups and for girls.

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## EVALUATION

The project was evaluated through:

- The number of participants (including first time and return participants).
- Measuring changes in knowledge among participants.
- Participants' self-esteem and enjoyment.

Participants improved their fitness and were better able to participate in dance workshops by the end of the program.

The results and lessons learned from the project were disseminated to:

- Other youth services and the Youth Coordinating Committee Area North East.
- Board members of the Swan City Youth Service.

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## SUSTAINABILITY

Funding was secured from other sources to continue the program after the end of the Healthway grant.

The healthy lifestyle messages will be maintained through the Service's youth health policy, and through resources, posters and artwork.

At the end of the project, participants planned to start their own dance groups.

The Break the Habit Breakdance website, created by participants, continued for at least one year after Healthway funding ended.

The breakdance classes and cooking sessions continued and were promoted through the Swan City Youth Service after the Healthway funding ended.

### What lessons were learned?

- Health messages and health education can be incorporated into fun activities to increase their appeal.
- It is important to provide healthy food options so young people can enjoy healthier snacks e.g. fruit.
- It is essential to build young people's self esteem within a project of this nature.
- The outcomes need to be realistic given the timeframe of the project.



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