

The Phil Parker Lightning Process® In Mombasa

June 2011 marked the start of a pilot project of Lightning Process (LP) seminars to help improve the quality of life of those working with or affected by HIV/AIDS. They were run with the cooperation of the Health Department of the Mombasa City Council. This has led to the exciting request from the Red Cross in Kenya for 300 of their workers to attend Lightning Process training seminars to help them deal with the challenges of caring for those with HIV/AIDS.



Healthcare workers with their graduation certificates after the very first Lightning Process seminar in Africa

Situation in Mombasa

Kenya is home to one of the world's harshest HIV and AIDS epidemics. An estimated 1.5 million people are living with HIV, around 1.2 million children have been orphaned by AIDS and in 2009, 80,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses. AIDS kills by lowering people's immune system so that they then easily contract any number of illnesses, including tuberculosis and malaria which they are then unable to fight off. In addition to this, Kenya is rated as one of the poorest countries of the world with an unemployment rate in the order of 40% and approximately 50% of the population below the poverty line.

Many of the clients at the Mombasa clinics therefore have to deal with the appalling combination of poor health, poverty, the stigma of HIV/AIDS and an uncertain future. Many report to their health workers that they feel hopeless and helpless in relation to their health and life situation. The health workers themselves work in extremely challenging circumstances, and experience serious challenges with regard to maintaining motivation and preventing burnout.

The Mombasa Branch of the Red Cross started the Family Health and Home-based Care Programme in April 2000 in order to address these issues. The programme is an effort to improve the quality of life of people and their families living with HIV/AIDS and especially to reduce the stigma of this illness. It trains volunteers and community health workers in counselling skills to work with clients in their homes. Some of the volunteers are clients who, through this programme, are able to help other clients in their local environment.

The Lightning Process

The Phil Parker Lightning Process (LP) is a training course that focuses on the science behind how the brain and body interact; it teaches people how to access this brain body link to influence their health and life.

One of the areas it focuses on is the Physical Emergency Response (PER) of the body, our natural response to threats. It recognises that chronic stimulation of this response, as identified by Selye¹ et al, suppresses a number of key body systems including good immune system function, effective neurological processing and higher thinking. By using the Lightning Process clients are able to calm the PER, and reduce some of the additional load on their immune systems, and improve cognitive and neurological function.

For the healthcare workers improving their function in this way also naturally reduces the risk of burnout and allows them to deal with the emotional pressures of their work more effectively.

The Lightning Process is a three day seminar which takes approximately 12 hours in total and is designed to teach clients:

1. About the PER and what happens if it is constantly switched on.
2. How to **Spot** when the PER is occurring.
3. How to **Calm** the PER through specific steps using movement, posture, coaching. These steps are not vigorous or physically demanding and can be tailored to meet the capabilities of even the most debilitated clients.
4. How to make this change to their physiology by practising the steps so that they become automatic, leading to improved health and wellbeing.

Pilot Project

Healthcare workers consisting of two doctors, one nurse and six counsellors, as well as clients from two of Mombasa's municipal health clinics, Mikindani and Magongo, were the first to be trained in using the Lightning Process. The seminars took place between 21st June and 8th July 2011 in cooperation with the City of Mombasa. In addition to the three day long seminar the clients were offered individual follow up sessions several days after the seminar. Norwegian Lightning Process Practitioners Anne Kleppenes Verne and Janet Wiberg were responsible for initiating, and carrying out the training. They paid for the majority of the training and logistical costs themselves with some donations from colleagues.

Pilot Project Results

The feedback from the participants of the seminars and the municipal health service of Mombasa was extremely positive, reporting that the Lightning Process had provided benefit to the Healthcare workers and client group in Mombasa. Positive outcomes were that they felt it had given everyone tools to influence their quality of life and had assisted the healthcare workers' ability to carry out their roles effectively. These outcomes of the pilot project have led to the development of the Red Cross project.

Red Cross Project

The Mombasa Branch of the Red Cross became aware of our work with the Lightning Process in Mombasa and concluded that the technique could greatly benefit their workers. In the light of this, the Mombasa Branch of the Red Cross has requested 300 of their volunteers and care providers attend the Lightning Process seminars. It is estimated that this will take two years, on the basis of 6 separate trips, 3 trips per year.

Future Plans

The future of this work is likely to include the provision of training for local practitioners to deliver the Lightning Process in Africa. As all Lightning Process Practitioner Training is currently undertaken in Europe, plans as to how this is best to be achieved are being discussed.

The initial pilot project was funded privately by the practitioners involved, with support from the Lightning Process Head Office and donations from colleagues. As this exciting project develops it is clear it needs a different funding structure to make it viable. If you are interested in helping sponsor the availability of this valuable training programme for those members of the Red Cross team who are working under such difficult circumstances, then please contact the practitioners running this project for ways to help:

¹ Selye, Hans, M.D., Ph.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.C. 17 June 1950. "Stress And The General Adaptation Syndrome", *British Medical Journal* [online] Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2038162/pdf/brmedj03603-0003.pdf> [Accessed 5 January 2012].