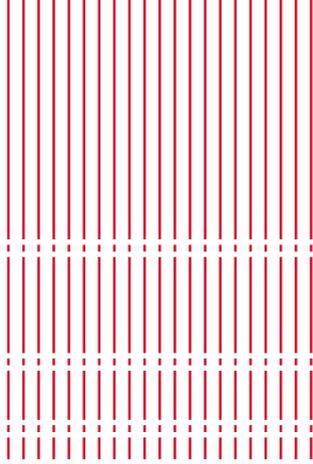


it starts with
ME

Youth shaping
a better South Africa



Researched and written by students as part of the
Leadership and Self Development course Year 2 (LSD2)

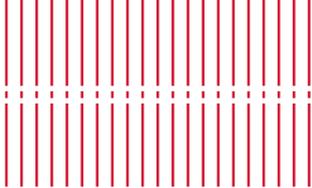


This book is dedicated
to the youth of South Africa



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Kristina Davidson is the owner of Write to the Point, a Cape Town-based communications company that helps business, government and the non-profit sector communicate succinctly, effectively and ... to the point. She has worked in Europe and South Africa, across sectors (SME, NGO, Corporate) and disciplines (administration, manufacturing marketing). For over 20 years, she has been exposed to the worst and the best of business writing, and has witnessed first-hand the importance of clear, accurate written communication. Kristina combines practical, logical thinking with visual creativity, and her strengths are structuring, summarising, and translating gobbledygook into plain English. She holds an MBA from the UCT Graduate School of Business, speaks French, and believes that, while creativity has a place in the business world, creative writing is best reserved for novels.

Jenny Ibbotson is presently a writer, speaker and explorer of the new ideas of how we create our reality, both individual and collective. She is the author of two books on this subject: *The Obedient Universe* and *How We Can Save the World: the million minutes project*. Jenny spent many years in the business world and was an executive director of Gray Security – a company employing 10,000 people. She has served on various statutory, profit and non-profit boards and committees; she has written articles, reports, government submissions and papers on a variety of subjects and has presented papers at professional conferences. Jenny has extensive experience in regulation in the private sector; strategic human resources management, and quality management systems in the service sector. She is an EFT practitioner and also works with a small company providing governance services to the SME sector. Jenny has an honours degree in social science and an M Phil in economic policy.

Petal Palmer spent 17 years working at Random House Struik heading up design in the Lifestyle Division. In 2004, she started **PETALDESIGN** in partnership with her son, Matthew, primarily concentrating on book design. In 2010, they started a free online food and wine magazine, Crush! which they publish and produce in Cape Town.



Leigh Meinert,

Co-founder and Executive Director, TSiBA Education NPC

The Tertiary School in Business Administration (TSiBA) was founded in 2005 with a mission “to be an innovative learning community that graduates entrepreneurial leaders who ignite opportunity and social change”. We have been graduating students for four years now and have already produced four Mandela Rhodes scholars.

These are the good news stories that must be told. Everyday my colleagues and I have the remarkable privilege of working alongside SA’s emerging leaders, and as a result, we are full of hope for our nation and our continent’s future.

Who better to share this hope, than our young leaders themselves? Together with their Leadership and Self Development lecturer, Ruth Mattison, the second year Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA) students at TSiBA’s Cape Town campus set out to do this by researching and writing an e-book in record time.

This book crackles with their optimism, excitement, passion and professionalism. We are very proud of what they have achieved and of the good news that they are spreading.

May it ignite hope in you too.

July 2012



Ruth Mattison,
Lecturer LSD2

Today's youth will live their lives in the 21st century. Never before have young people, worldwide, faced so many challenges and so many opportunities. How we see the world really makes a difference. If all that we see is what is going wrong and how difficult life is, we can become discouraged and give up more easily. If we are aware of the opportunities, and become excited about the possibility of reaching our fullest potential as human beings, life opens up and becomes a source of joy and fulfilment.

The LSD2 students at TSIBA Education chose to listen to people who have a positive outlook on life. During their conversations with these inspiring youth, they discovered that it is possible to face many challenges in life and still reach for your dreams – and make those dreams come true. It may not be easy, but these resilient people are creating a positive future for themselves, their families and communities.

This book is intended for young people of all ages who believe that they can make a difference and want to ensure that they live their dreams. We want to share the secrets of success with you. In fact, we hope that when you have read this book, you will go out and discover some great role models for yourself. There are some exercises outlined at the back of this book to help you do just that.

It is strange, but sadly true, that bad behaviour seems to get more attention than good behaviour. Each one of us needs to pay attention to those who make the right choices. When we show appreciation for their courage and wisdom, a new world opens up – one in which we can find like-minded people and work together.

I want to thank the students who put in many hours to do the research and write up the findings. It is their desire to share their experiences that resulted in this book. The students' ability to listen deeply to another's story and stand in their shoes shows us all how we can be inspired by those who take responsibility for their choices and create their own future.

July 2012

Introduction

SIPHIWOSETHU MZAMO | RELEBOHILE BOLIBE
ANELE NGCAMBAZA | BRIAN WILLIAMS | RENE WORSHIP
MONIQUE WILLIAMS, | NTOMBOVUYO MATHISO

TSiBA EDUCATION AND LSD

“Our mission is to be an innovative learning community that graduates entrepreneurial leaders who ignite opportunity and social change.”

TSiBA (Tertiary School in Business Administration) is a private higher education institution that offers a one-year Higher Certificate in Business Administration. In the first year, successful students are offered a three-year full scholarship to study for a Bachelor degree in Business Administration. TSiBA has two majors: Entrepreneurship and Leadership and Self Development, which is the focus of this book.

TSiBA Education believes in paying it forward, and so students are encouraged to put the skills learned into practical projects. They use their skills and knowledge to empower people in the communities. TSiBA builds students’ confidence, so that problems do not stop them in what they are standing for or fighting to achieve.

Every year, the LSD course has its unique guiding question. In the second year the guiding question is: How do I add value? The research consisted of each LSD2 student interviewing four people from these age categories: 15–18 years old, 18–25 years old, 25–35 years old, and 35+ years old (‘elders’). The individuals interviewed are from all walks of life and different backgrounds and are based in Cape Town.

This book is the result of the research. It is a book of hope for the youth of South Africa and the world. The book contains inspiring stories about individuals who overcame obstacles to achieve their goals. The obstacles they faced are similar to those that many youth are confronting. Their stories offer both inspiration and lessons to the youth of today.

THE CHALLENGES YOUTH ARE FACING

A report by the Department of Social Development revealed that the youth of South Africa face these common challenges:

- Teenage pregnancy
- HIV/Aids
- Involvement in crime
- Substance abuse
- Exposure to violence
- School dropouts and low educational status

Youth throughout the world face these challenges, which we all experience to a degree sometime in our life. Sadly, the constant focus on problems among youth negatively affects how people perceive youth, and therefore the future of our country. In fact, many young people are adding value and making a positive contribution to South Africa. Yet, they are rarely recognised or noticed for the good that they are doing. These individuals make a difference in their lives by first getting an education, which they know is the key to their success. They stay positive when they find themselves in a difficult situation; they have hope and are inspired every day of their lives; and they give back to their communities and society by helping others.

These youth are making a difference in other people's lives by consciously and unconsciously motivating them not to give up. They strive to empower young people affected by the challenges mentioned above, by showing them that drugs and alcohol will not solve their problems. They believe that, if we all stand together, this country can be a place that is alive with new beginnings and possibilities, a place where everyone is united and shares the same vision of making things happen in their communities.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

In today's South Africa, the youth face many difficulties. But for some of us, such difficulties do not stop us from dreaming and working towards our goals. Young people are the backbone of families and our nation, as they are the ones who can bring the change to this country.

The purpose of the research was to get an overall understanding of different choices youth make, as they are working hard towards their goals. The main focus was to interview successful youth to find out the secrets that are helping them reach their goals – and to see how these secrets to success vary at different times in their lives.

We also wanted to know how they are adding value to themselves, their families and to their communities – and what they value most about themselves at school, within the community and in the workplace (for those who are working).

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE RESEARCH

We discovered that the youth face many challenges, but education is the way they can bring hope to their families and create a better future for themselves. We also found that the youth want to bring change to their communities and are involved in community projects, even though resources (e.g. sports fields, internet cafes, libraries, youth support groups) are lacking. Yet, this lack of resources has not stopped them (the youth) from reaching their goals. The majority of those interviewed have finished school and are now working in good jobs at well-known companies.

For many of us, conducting the interviews was not an easy task. It was difficult to approach some of the people to interview, and the questions made some of the interviewees uncomfortable. This led them to not sharing important insights. For many interviewees, it was the first time someone had asked them the question: How can youth add value in South Africa? And it was quite surprising, and joyful, to hear the positive side of the youth, when there is so much negativity about the youth of today.

We found the experience fantastic and motivational because the people we interviewed didn't just wake up and find themselves with diplomas and degrees and living their lives today. They encountered the same challenges we face, and they have succeeded. They showed us that we can also succeed and make a difference in our country.

WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK

It is clear that the youth have the strength to do everything and to be good positive role models. A lot of negative things are said about this country, particularly the young people, so many youth don't see hope in education. Yet, as we learned from the interviews, South Africa is indeed alive with hopeful individuals.

We wrote this book to give hope to the youth, and the nation, by showing and acknowledging the positive difference that youth are making in our country. This book is intended to empower the youth of South Africa, as well as in other countries because we all face the same challenges.

We don't promise that this book will change your life, but we hope it will influence your choices in life.

Please note that the names of individuals have been changed to protect their identity.

15 to 18 years old

Young at heart, bold in mind

OLWETHU VELA | ANELISA PLANDESHI | AKHONA DZEDZE
BHADIKAZI HANJANA | VUYISILE TYESI | VUYISA MRULEKANA

DEMOGRAPHICS

Selection criteria: participants are studying and making positive choices (i.e. not having a child at a young age, not abusing alcohol or drugs, not being involved in any gangs) and aged between 15 and 18 years old.

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Black (African)	9	11	20
Black (Coloured)	5	11	16
Total	14	22	36

Of the 36 youth, 35 are still at high school and 1 is at university.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- A clear vision and big goals
- A supportive family/community
- Friends who support you (and who you support)
- Role models/mentors who guide you
- Taking on leadership roles
- Giving back to your community

FINDINGS

For youth aged 15-18 years old, this is a critical time at school, as matric is the door that opens up their future. During this period, many youth are under pressure from their peers to have sex, to try alcohol and drugs, or to skip school. Yet our interviews revealed that many students choose a different path.

Dream big

All the youth interviewed have a positive attitude and a clear vision of what they want to be in the future. They are dreaming big for themselves and for the country. For example, Vuyani from Langa wants to be a well-known economist who brings solutions for South Africa's poverty crisis and equality among people of different races and social classes. At the moment he is working very hard and getting good grades so that he can be accepted into University.

Be supported

For the youth interviewed, **family support** is vital – and the family may consist of a single father or mother and siblings or elder sisters. The most important thing is the emotional and/or financial support that they receive, which motivates them to achieve their dreams and goals. Lindiwa, from Gugulethu, says that her mother understands the importance of achieving goals and supports her in achieving her dreams and being successful. Like the other interviewees, she also relies on her **friends for support**, in the form of a study buddy or a group who helps her when she doesn't understand a certain subject. It was also interesting to discover that youth will tacitly find **role models/mentors** in their community. The role model/mentor can be a teacher, a priest or any other elder.

Take responsibility

The 15–18 year olds interviewed are very responsible. They know that, when they get home, they must do their chores, cook, clean and help around the house. For example when Nicole gets to her home in Athlone after school, she helps her siblings with their homework and prepares supper (when it's her turn to do so). At school these youth have taken on leadership roles, such as class reps, sports captain and so forth. Nosipho, a 17-year old from Gugulethu, is very dedicated and focused where his studies are concerned. He is also soccer captain at his school and plays in a community soccer team.

Give back

Giving back means adding value to their families and making a difference in their communities. They help by tutoring their peers, like 18-year old Masibulele who assists other young people with school work when they are struggling, tutoring them in his spare time. They volunteer at a community soup kitchen, play with and read stories to children living in children's homes, or raise awareness about the environment. For example, 15-year old Lavinia from Athlone and a friend put up posters in their neighbourhood showing how to improve the environment and the ecosystem, and how to stay healthy. At home, the youth help out by cleaning and cooking. Lerato, also from Athlone, cleans and does the laundry for her family, as well as being involved in the community peer education programme where young people advise each other on how to live positive and responsible lives.

HOW 15–18 YEAR OLDS CAN ADD VALUE

The youth of 15–18 years, all born-frees, are not involved in drug abuse, are currently studying either at high school or tertiary level and have not fallen into the trap of teenage pregnancy.

You can add value if you have a clear vision of who you want to be and what it is going to take for you to reach your fullest potential.

In addition to a clear direction, you need to seek support from your family and friends. You can also identify a positive role model or find a mentor who will help you succeed in your goals.

Lastly give back to your community. This doesn't have to be financial, but is rather about getting involved in charitable work and helping others with their studies, life skills or improving the environment.

A positive attitude results in positive actions

What is it like growing up as a young man living in a township filled with peer pressure, gang violence, drug abuse, and so on? The list is endless. What is his future? Is it to be a father at a young age with no job and no financial stability? Is it to be involved with a gang and drive around in flashy cars wearing flashy clothes?

It is none of the above, says Mzukisi, a determined young man who has hopes, dreams and values. Despite all the challenges that come his way, Mzukisi is a young man who perseveres. He says, "I believe in a positive attitude because only that can result in positive actions".

This is a boy who grew up without a mother or father, and who was raised by his aunt in less than wealthy circumstances. For Mzukisi, education, his faith and his aunt have played a major role in his life. Although his aunt was not rich, she provided him with what he needed to survive and to be educated. (In contrast to those people who curse the day they were born because their mother won't buy them the latest Carvela shoes and other brands.)

He did well in school because he knew that, if he wanted to change his life, he would have to work extra hard to achieve his goals. Along his journey in life he saw people that changed who they are because they wanted to fit in with their friends, but he stayed true to himself and didn't give in to peer pressure.

Mzukisi values his morals and all the teachings he received from his home while he was growing up. He believes in God the Almighty and he spreads the word among his family and his peers, even though it won't make him the most popular person in his school and community.

He dreams of one day helping solve the problems of this continent, whether it is poverty, scarce resources or lack of education among the youth. He is still in high school but is already paving the way for a brighter future for himself, his family and his community. That's what it is all about: the youth taking responsibility for their lives now.

18 to 25 years old

No (Wo)man is an Island

RODNEY BROUWER | CRAIG KOK | WAEED PETERSEN,
ANASTACIA HUDSON | KAYLIN JOHNSON |
AYESHA POTTS | JOSH WILL LEWIS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Selection criteria: participants are working or studying, are single with no children and are aged between 18 and 25 years old.

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Black (African)	7	10	17
Black (Coloured)	8	14	22
Total	15	24	39

Of the 39 youth, 21 are studying, 16 are working and 2 are working while studying part-time.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- A positive mind-set
- Life-long education
- Friends who lift you up and motivate you
- Family who supports you
- Mentors who guide you
- A spiritual practice

FINDINGS

The age of 18 years is when you start building the sense of independence, take responsibility for your own actions and make decisions for yourself. Many youth feel isolated and alone in the world. Yet, from our interviews, we found that successful youth aged 18–25 years old are not alone.

Continue studying

For the youth interviewed, education is an important part of achieving their goals – and does not stop after matric. Forming and joining study groups helps them to stay on track and enables them to learn from others, while the other members of the study group are also a positive influence. Although financial constraints meant that some interviewees had to work instead of continuing their studies after matric, they found a way to further their education. For example, Luke studied part-time while working. He found it hard to juggle the two and had to sacrifice a lot of his social life to concentrate on his studies. However, he stayed focused on his priorities, even when his mother was diagnosed with cancer just after he started studying.

Choose your friends wisely

The people interviewed all had friends who motivated them, pushed them to do their best and reminded them of their goals – giving ‘pep’ talks on days when things were not going well. For 12 years, Jeremy has had the same circle of friends who have the same goals as he does; he knows that they are true friends who will always be there for him.

Value your family

In contrast to many people from impoverished areas who become depressed and demotivated, our interviewees all demonstrated a positive attitude to life. The reason why they are so confident and positive is because of their strong family dynamics. They have great respect for their parents and value them for their financial and emotional support. One interviewee, when asked how peace is kept within the family, replied that “Our strong religious belief system keeps us in line, softens our heart and makes us resistant to conflict and differences”.

Practise spirituality

Most of our interviewees acknowledged that accepting a higher power in their lives was an important factor in their success. In life everything starts with a higher power. One of the interviewees said that without God he is nothing. Another person explained that he is the person he is today because of God, who gives the gift of life.

HOW 18–25 YEAR OLDS CAN ADD VALUE

Our youth members can play significant roles in their community to uplift not only themselves, but also the people surrounding them. If you are aged 18 to 25 years old, how can you add value?

One way is to be involved in social recreational projects and sports that focus on physical health and well-being. Through these projects you can help those who may be tempted to turn to negative behaviour such as drugs and crime.

You can get involved in your communities, for example at old-age homes or soup kitchens. In so doing, not only are you helping others, but you are also providing them with an emotional connection. Most importantly, you are an example for future generations.

Share your knowledge with others and tutor those who are struggling with subjects. In so doing you will be promoting education, as the key to success which can only lead to positivity and confidence. For yourself, aim higher in education – keep on learning and further your studies.

Above all, you can add value by loving and believing in yourself, your goals and others. You can live in peace and accept each other, and work together for a better world.

Inspiration through education

A high point in the life of 21-year old Zandile was when she was accepted at TSiBA Education to study towards her degree, and her greatest achievement was being awarded a scholarship to study at TSiBA Education. She knows that no one works in isolation and so made sure she had her family, lecturers, friends and tutors to share their knowledge, wisdom, guidance and time with her.

Her positive attitude towards life means that, when Zandile is faced with challenges, she always finds solutions to those problems rather than thinking of the problem. She explains it like this: "I believe solutions are the way to go, because the problem never goes away until you find the suitable solution".

Zandile also values her community of Langa and volunteers her time to help young people in their studies. When it comes to education, she is always willing to sacrifice her time and make herself available, as this inspires her.

She is a role model for the people within her community because she carries herself well and she has invested her time into her studies. What gives Zandile hope is that she is able to add value within her community, by helping young children academically. She knows that change starts with her, the people around her and the people she associates herself with on a day-to-day basis.

25 to 35 years old

They conquered against all odds

NICOLE BETHA | REEKELITSOE ALBERTINA MOHASI | CHRISTOPHER KOYANA,
ROSLYN ENGELBRECHT | VUYOLWETHU MEKANA | NTOBEKO RHANI

DEMOGRAPHICS

Selection criteria: participants are in full employment and aged between 25 and 35 years.

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Black (African)	10	8	18
Black (Coloured)	6	5	11
Total	16	13	29

The interviewees have all completed matric and most have tertiary education. They work as managers, tellers, administrators, carpenters and general workers.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- A lifelong plan to succeed
- Hard work and perseverance
- Education
- A supportive family
- Role models/mentors
- Involvement in corporate social responsibility

FINDINGS

All the interviewees come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and some are children of single mothers. Yet they never allowed their circumstances to determine their future. For many, they were the first in their family to get an education. We wanted to find out what made them stronger and how they managed to succeed while others remained behind. In other words, what was their winning formula?

Work hard and persevere

The people interviewed did not focus on their circumstances but used them as a motivation to succeed. They are ambitious and never stop dreaming. They know that success does not come easily but demands time, money, effort and patience. When challenges tested them, they persevered and worked hard – giving up was not an option. Xoliswa, who lives in Gugulethu and was brought up by his grandmother, says, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, our deepest fear is that we can’t rise above measure”.

Have someone to believe in you

All our interviewees had someone who believed in them, usually someone from their family. For instance, when Zebedee was in matric, he used to come home late and drunk every day, but his mother kept standing up for him and encouraging him. He turned his life around, finished matric and today is a manager at Sanlam. As Zebedee says, “You sometimes need someone to give you a little push to make it”, which is what his mother did. He now supports his mother. The people interviewed all give back to their families as a way of returning the favour. In so doing, they share their success with their families, improve their living standards, and act as a source of stimulus and hope for the next generation.

Be a leader

The people interviewed are leaders who want to better their communities and believe in paying forward. Therefore, they are involved in corporate social responsibility, are active in political organisations and assist in their local schools. They also are leaders at work, as they help and are patient with their colleagues. They do not complain but work to improve their lives and the lives of others. For instance, at work Mpumi helps to motivate fellow colleagues in reaching their sales target, and he also gives free driving lessons to assist those who wish to obtain a driver’s licence.

Find a mentor/role model

A mentor serves as a guide, especially at times when dreams seem unattainable. Mentors share their experiences and encourage our interviewees to keep on track. They also provide opportunities and openings that might not be there otherwise. For example, they assist students to find internships and ways to improve their skills for their future

HOW 25–35 YEAR OLDS CAN ADD VALUE

At 25–35 years old, people are becoming established in the workplace and within their community. They have shown that circumstances do not dictate success – attitude does. If you are aged between 25 and 35 years, you can add value in many ways.

The first place to start is at home. Your families helped you achieve your goals, and this age is the time to give back to them. Giving back can be in the form of financial contribution or, more importantly, being a mentor to younger members of your family, encouraging them to stay at school and to work hard.

You can also be a role model for other youth, who can be inspired by your story to study further. You might consider ‘adopting’ a high-school learner to mentor and support, or using your skills to improve your local high school.

The potential for giving back is increased when you work, as you can encourage your colleagues to get involved with community and social upliftment projects. You can also support your colleagues if they are struggling with aspects of their work, by being patient and helping them improve their skills.

Lastly, be an example to the people you come into contact with – take on leadership roles at work and at home, and especially in your communities.

A mother's love and support

Thobeka was raised by a single parent and debunks the myth that single parents can't successfully raise a child alone. She was always hard working and passed her BCom Accounting at the University of Fort Hare first time. She works as an Accounts Assistant at Absa Bank in East London.

Thobeka never expected that she would reach such heights and credits her mother with much of her success. She says that her mother is the source of inspiration in everything that she does: "My mother suffered at times so that I could complete my education". Although Thobeka resented her father for not being there and for leaving her mother to raise their child on her own, at the same time his absence pushed her to prove herself. She was determined to show that she and her mother could succeed as a family without his assistance.

The example of her mother taught Thobeka to be responsible. At school she knew that she had to do her work and finish all her assignments, so that one day she would be able to relieve her mother from the hard work. She learned patience and not to skip stages in a process. She is glad that her mother's influence meant that she didn't let her life go down the drain but has achieved a good qualification.

Thobeka also supports others in her community. For example, she helps people with their homework and assignments, does research for those who do not have access to internet, and assists schools in accounting. She has become a mentor to some high-school students and would love to give even more to her community. She is hopeful for the future and sees many opportunities for her in South Africa, especially with her BCom in Accounting. Her advice to the youth is to respect their families, learn discipline and listen to the elders who want to share their experience and knowledge.

Elders

Inspiring the next generation

NONTUTHUZELO MAKELENI | LUYANDA GYSMAN | LUNGA SCHOEMAN
 WI-AAM ISAACS | NURAAN VOLLENHOVEN | VUYANI TSOLEKILE

DEMOGRAPHICS

Selection criteria: participants are successful and respected in their communities and are over 35 years old.

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Black (African)	10	7	17
Black (Coloured)	7	8	15
Total	17	15	32

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- A vision of the future
- Beneficial friends
- Spiritual practice
- Supportive family and community
- Role models/motivational speakers or writers
- Extra-mural activities, especially sport

FINDINGS

The 'elders' are all over 35 years old and are mostly established in their careers and have families. They have overcome some formidable challenges, especially during the Apartheid era. We asked them what made them succeed where so many others failed, and what words of advice do they have for the youth of today.

Value your family and beneficial friendships

The elders interviewed acknowledged that their success was thanks to the support of their families. While other support structures are crucial, parents and/or guardians provide the greatest influence. According to the elders, friendships can be classified as either beneficial or harmful. Beneficial friends influenced them to make positive choices, especially at times when it seemed easier to give in to negative influences, while harmful friends reduce an individual's ability to reach his or her life goals. Observing both types of friends can be helpful. As a 49-year old successful elder said, "My 'friends' being caught up in drugs and drinking after leaving school at an early age, made me afraid of falling into the same trap".

Accept God

The elders credit their successful lives to their belief in, obedience and submission to a God. They say that developing a strong relationship with God inspired and guided them to leave behind their bad ways. As one community leader said, "I thank the Almighty God for having inspired my understanding about the future. So every time I zoom into my future, I see the horizon, and the more I see this horizon, the more I want to do good to influence what my future may be holding for me".

Persevere in your education

The elders interviewed persevered in order to get an education, which was not always easy during the Apartheid era. They believe that education is the key driver to individual and national success. Yet education is more than attending school, reading books or achieving many degrees; it involves observing the world around them, learning from other people with more experience, and spending time with the elderly listening to their heart-warming life stories. For Ntombi, one of the interviewees, education is vital but so is reading, dancing or singing in the choir. These were all things that she and her friends enjoyed when they were at school.

Get motivated

Reading self-help books and listening to motivational speakers are ways in which elders were inspired to succeed. For instance, 30 years ago Sammy read a book by Norman Vincent Pearl entitled *The Power of Positive Thinking*. This book provided him with “guidelines on how to become successful in a sustainable manner”.

Today, Bobby has completed his Master’s degree, holds an executive position at his workplace and is a youth leader and athletic coach. Inspirational talks were another source of motivation for many elders. Sharifa, a community events coordinator, says that Oprah is the world’s best role model for spreading positivity, as “she teaches that everything you do must come from within ... if the intention is right you have already succeeded”.

HOW THE ELDERS (35+ YEARS) CAN ADD VALUE

As an elder, you have a wealth of experience and knowledge that you can impart to others. You can be a positive influence and add value to the youth of today by investing your time and intellectual capital.

One of the most valuable ways in which you can add value is by motivating youth to live positively and by being a role model for them. Drawing on your life experience, you can teach the youth the basic ethics of life, the power of making informed choices and, ultimately, that freedom comes with responsibility.

You can also encourage youth to get involved in activities that fall outside their immediate comfort zone, to try new things and experience different situations.

You, as an elder, have a responsibility to give advice to the youth and to lead by example. As one elder said “The investments will pay out dividends, as their empowerment will benefit us”.

WORDS OF ADVICE FOR THE YOUTH

The elders interviewed have great hope for the future, as youth of today are able to access many more opportunities. As one elder said, "My beloved country (Ningizimu Afrika) is full of opportunities with many doors waiting for the right key to open". They had these words of advice for the youth:

- **Be a leader.** Don't settle for being a follower but strive to achieve and to lead by being an example to others.
- **Be hungry to learn.** Education, gaining knowledge and skills, is the path to success.
- **Believe in a higher power.** When God is in your life, anything is possible.
- **Build your self-esteem.** Gain knowledge and understanding through motivational books and inspirational talks.
- **Embrace the challenges.** Failures and challenges are the fuel that will lift you up and strengthen you further. "Failure is a learning curve, not a demotivator."
- **Get involved with sport.** Participating in sports makes you feel good about yourself, improves self-esteem and keeps you away from harmful activities. .
- **Get out of your comfort zone.** Travelling is a great way to get out of your comfort zone and to change your perceptions.
- **Grab every opportunity.** Life tends to throw obstacles in the way so be sure to grab every opportunity that comes along.
- **Make the right choices.** The choices we make are directly related to the outcomes of our lives. Have a plan for your life, including your job, lifestyle tastes and working hours. Stay away from drugs.
- **Respect your educators.** You cannot learn from someone you disrespect and so cultivating a positive attitude towards your studies – whether at school or work – is vital.

- **Take time out to think.** Great ideas come from real thinking.
- **Volunteer your time.** Helping others brings with it a sense of accomplishment and belonging, and can unlock your own potential.
- **Work hard.** Not everything is free, and it takes hard work to achieve something valuable.

LET'S REDEFINE THE WORD "COOL"!

Cool is not about taking the easy way out, escaping every day realities and indulging in unnatural stimulants.

What is really cool is:

- Going to school
- Arriving early for class
- Sitting in the front of the class
- Asking the teacher/lecturer questions
- Doing your homework
- Furthering your studies at tertiary level
- Having a vision
- Researching possible career choices
- Going for interviews
- Making informed decisions to reach your dreams
- Becoming an entrepreneur
- Helping your community by volunteering your time

Education is the path to success

During the Apartheid era, Abdullah's family was removed from Claremont to the Cape Flats. Here he grew up in the heart of poverty where unsuccessful people far outweighed the successful. His father was a painter and a gardener, which meant little work during the winter months, while his mother worked as a machinist in a clothing factory in Hanover Park. His parents may not have been highly skilled but they imprinted into Abdullah's mind that poverty and struggle would not be beaten without education.

He therefore decided early on to work hard at school because he knew that education was the path to a better life for him and his family. In primary school, he particularly liked mathematics because his teacher would give a chocolate to the student who got the highest score in the weekly test – and Abdullah always made sure he got that chocolate! He studied for his matric exam by candlelight because the family could not afford electricity. This damaged his eyes and he now wears spectacles. But, as Abdullah says “it was a sacrifice I knew I had to make”. He passed matric with good marks but was unable to study medicine, as no bursaries were available at that time for blacks.

When Abdullah was 18 years old, his father died after two years of suffering – his father had fallen from scaffolding but the family did not have medical aid and could not afford to go and see a doctor. As a result his father was bed-ridden and suffered from internal damage until he died of a brain hemorrhage. Abdullah now had to work in order help his mother feed and clothe his three siblings. However, he didn't give up on his dreams of education and studied part-time through UNISA, with the help of his older sister who paid most of his study fees.

He studied accounting through UNISA and eventually became a cost-accountant. He continued to study and learn and today is a SAP consultant and Business Analyst for The City of Cape Town. He is also a mentor to students facing similar choices and challenges because he believes that education is the formula for poverty alleviation”.

Conclusion

Youth should be open to change and willing to learn

GLORIA SIBONDANA | EKOME SAME | VERA NGALO
VIVIAN NGALO | NICOLE KADA | LAMEEZ VOLLENHOVEN
SIERAAJ VAN DER ROSS

The LSD2 students interviewed 136 people between the ages of 15 and 35+ years in order to find out how youth are adding value. The research also looked at what aspects of life contribute to the success of an individual. The findings were:

- Education
- Family support
- Values: responsibility, belief systems, initiative, curiosity, resilience
- Discernment: good vs. bad choices

EDUCATION

Education shapes an individual's future. The youth of South Africa understand that education is one of the major factors of success. The knowledge and skills acquired through education and experience are major pillars of economic and societal success. Successful youth are those who complete their education and make positive life-affirming choices that will ensure good health. In so doing, they are able to acquire stable incomes, improve their living standards and offer greater opportunities available to their own children. Education is the way to eradicate hardship and deprivation.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Charity begins at home. Successful youth add value to their families by doing their chores, helping siblings with homework, thereby creating a positive family environment of peace and open relationships. A good family support structure, a sense of belonging and involvement in the community are required for youth to reach their full potential. Youth need to be willing and open to change and need family members to encourage them to get a quality education.

VALUES

The right values make change easier and provide guidance in life when facing challenges and obstacles. The values found in most of the youth interviewed are responsibility, belief system, initiative, curiosity and resilience.

Responsibility

Responsibility can take the form of giving back to their communities, such as tutoring other students, assisting with charity work, participating at churches or giving encouraging talks. Responsible youth know that they have to be on time when invited to events and when tutoring students in order to set an example to others. Responsibility also takes the form of helping at home, cleaning and cooking, or helping siblings with their homework.

Belief systems

For the youth interviewed, a strong belief system is an important part of their lives. Most have a daily spiritual practice and all believe in a higher power. The result is a positive attitude, self-confidence and a drive to succeed and look for new knowledge and information.

Initiative

Many opportunities are available for youth, who need to take the initiative to go out there and grab opportunities with both hands. Youth have to have self-belief and set life goals, work toward achieving those goals, and seek help to overcome obstacles.

Curiosity

With curiosity, it is impossible to stay in a comfort zone. Youth need to be open to change and willing to learn the skills and competencies needed for South Africa to succeed. Adapting to change is important and can have a huge impact on how life is viewed.

Resilience

Resilience means learning from mistakes, bouncing back from failure and learning that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Positive thinking and staying focused on short and long-term goals leads to success.

DISCERNMENT

Life is all about choices, and each choice comes with consequences. Successful youth make good choices, refusing to get caught up in gangsterism and substance abuse. Youth should be made aware of the dangers of gangsterism and drugs. This information is readily available in local clinics, schools, some churches and community centres. Today's youth should not dwell on the past, but let in what wants to emerge in their lives today. Good choices result in living a long and fruitful life, whereas bad choices are bound to shorten the life and/or end in jail. Youth who make good choices are the role models and mentors of the future.

THE FINDINGS IN BRIEF

AGE GROUP	WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THIS LIFE STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS
15–18 years old	Making positive choices, as they are the first steps into adulthood and your future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help one another • Appreciate their successes • Share knowledge through study groups • Give back to their communities
18–25 years old	Continuing your education, even if circumstances mean you have to work to support your family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have strong morals and values • Adapt to change • Learn from mistakes • Are self-driven, confident hard-working and dedicated to achieving goals
25–35 years old	Giving back to your community, having overcome obstacles in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be spiritually grounded • Help young people in the community • Be a role model for others • Unlock barriers to career opportunities
35+ years old	Being a positive source of inspiration to the youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower others • Encourage the youth to follow their dreams • Get involved in sporting and religious activities • Motivate the youth to live a healthy life

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM RESEARCHING AND WRITING THIS BOOK

The impact of researching and writing this book was profound for many of the LSD2 students. Here, in their words, are some of the lessons they learned from this project.

What really touched me was the impact that other young people are having.

I am even more inspired now to work with other youth in redefining the face of youth in South Africa and what we stand for.

This was a life-transforming journey that made me realise that we, the youth, indeed have plenty to offer; we just need to be pruned into the right direction.

What we pay attention to, creates our future, our reality. As the youth of South Africa we have a mandate to change our country for the better. We have to let go of the past, observe and listen in the present, reflect and act on the future.

This work has really made me feel very excited about the future of this country.

I appreciate my family more because I have a family who stands together, a family who is not rich in money but who is rich in giving love and understanding. I appreciate my parents, who have left this earth, knowing that I will be able to survive through the values which they have invested in my life. I know now where I put my attention creates the future reality, and I want my future to be better than my past.

What touched me the most this semester was my change of attitude towards the youth. I have this positive outlook on the youth of today now.

I will look at youth differently and mainly believe in them by giving them a chance to express themselves. If the older people around us succeeded and got through their hardships in life especially during the apartheid era, then we can definitely walk out of our situations with our heads held high and succeed in whatever it is we want to achieve. Elders have wise words we should listen to them and learn from their stories.

I now see the youth as an important instrument in society.

I am proud of the individuals who live and strive for self-improvement because I can now see how a successful individual impacts the lives of so many others within their families and within their communities.

No matter what you want to accomplish in life, it is impossible to do so on your own – many hands make the journey worthwhile and lighter.

I envisage a world in which youth take responsibility for their actions and chose positive lifestyles.

This project has enabled me to become aware of the way I listen to people. I never understood the impact that listening has on how you perceive things. It is amazing how my perception shifted, and I am grateful to the individuals for sharing their inspiring stories with me.

I have gained so much wisdom and experience since I started working on this project. I learnt how to create an environment conducive to thinking and how to use the principles to help you free your mind and let imagination inspire you to achieve what the mind conceives.

I am grateful that I was granted the opportunity to be part of the journey of writing this amazing book that will help uplift so many young lives that are out there in South Africa.

This book will bring hope to those who have lost hope, boost the confidence of those who are already striving towards their dreams and make the believers to want to believe more in their dreams, communities and country.

QUOTES



Nicole Kada

"The investment you put in at the beginning surely will pay out dividends at the end."



Vera Ngalo

"Have a DREAM; we need to be strong-minded, determined and devoted citizens of South Africa."



Wi-aam Isaacs

"Be open to the lifestyles and learning's of those around you, especially our elders."



Vivian Ngalo

"Dream the impossible and imagine the unimaginable."



Siphiosethu Mzamo

"They should strive for their dreams no matter how big they are, nothing is impossible!"



Bhadikazi Hanjana

"The Youth should set SMART goals and work towards them to be successful."



Ntobeko Rhani

“When tears hit the dust success is embedded in healing process”



Ntombovuyo Mathiso

“Nothing is impossible, if you can dream it then you can do it! ”



Reekelitsoe Mohasi

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characteristics are scared with scars” – Khalil Gilgran



Vuyisile Tyesi

“Drive your wheel; it will take you there – to your destination.”



Lameez Vollenhoven

“Surround yourself with positive things, people and you will want to achieve positive things in life and do positive things for others”



Ayesha Potts

“The surest way not to fail is to determine to succeed”



Luyanda Gysman

“When complexity arises, you do not change the decision to get there but, you change your direction to reach your goals.”



Vuyani Tsolekile

“The will to succeed is defined by the will to live.”



Masibulele Cwilo

“Your background does not determine your future. Determination, hard work and commitment does.”



Rodney Brouwer

“When you have a setback, don’t take a step back.”



Kaylin Joseph

“Take the first step in making a change; don’t wait on others to make the first move ... BE BOLD AND BRAVE.”



Anelisa Plandeshi

“Go to the people. Learn from them. Live with them. Start with what you have. Job is done.”



Gloria Sibondana

"Education is the beginning of great things in one's life."



Ekome Same

"Your intention to feel successful and experience abundance depends on what view you have of yourself."



Sieraaj Van Ross

"Youth should realise that they are the most important person in their lives."



Joshwill Lewis

"No (wo)man is an island."



Monique Williams

"Follow your gut; it will never mislead you."



Craig Kok

"Never let someone tell you that you cannot do whatever you want to do, because you can."



Olwethu Vela

"You are the great South African."



Roslyn Engelbrecht

"Hope is never born in hope, but rather in despair."



Lunga Schoeman

"The world does not revolve around you, but needs you in order to make it a better place."



Christopher Koyana

"The greatest weapon for success is by doing what you love, not what others say or tell you to do."



Nontuthuzelo Makeleni

"Youth are the future of South Africa, and it is important that every young person discovers their intention and lives up to it."



Nicole Betha

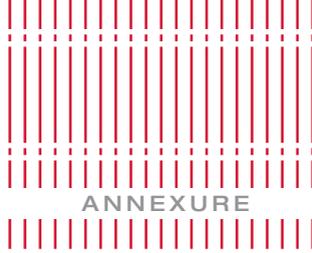
"Believe in yourself and capabilities and never give up on your dreams."



Vuyolwethu Mekana

“Never compare your inside with someone else’s outside.”

- *Hugh MacLeod*



Building a Positive Future

A suggested lesson plan for youth groups

These exercises are designed to promote curiosity, listening skills, peer learning and interaction with the community. The action research methodology allows students to take responsibility for their learning through asking questions and reflecting on the findings. It uses discovery learning as a means for identifying dreams, potential, life purpose and core values. This helps to build self-esteem and hope for the future.

The following activities can be used in a formal classroom setting or in informal groups to encourage youth to listen to each other and discover the values, strengths and hopes of their generation. Listening to each other's stories, and sharing their dreams, opens up endless possibilities for positive change and collaboration. We need to encourage our youth to believe in themselves and their peers for truly they hold the future in their hands.

EXERCISE ONE - CLASSROOM

(You will need a copy of the questionnaire for each student)

Discuss the concept that there are many youth who are taking responsibility for their lives and making positive choices that allow them to be successful. They can learn from these role models and inspire each other to reach their highest potential. Together this generation can create a positive future for themselves and their families and communities.

Introduce the questionnaire. Read through the questions and make sure that the students understand what the questions mean. Refer to the questionnaire supplied at the end of this book. You can use all or some of the questions, or make up your own.

Interview. Let the students choose a partner from the group, then find a quiet corner where they can interview each other using the suggested questions. The person who is asking the questions writes down the answers so they can be referred to later. You need approximately 20 minutes each way.

Bring the students back together and then discuss the answers to each question (This can be done in smaller groups if necessary). Let the students appreciate the positive choices and behaviours of their classmates. Draw some conclusions from the discussion.

EXERCISE TWO - COMMUNITY

(you will need a copy of the questionnaire for each student)

Ask each student to find one youth in their community who he/she regards as a positive role model. Ask them to interview this person (as they have done in their class already) and be prepared to share the answers (protecting the anonymity of the person if it is important)

EXERCISE THREE - CLASSROOM

Ask the students to share their findings to each question. What inspiring stories have they heard? What have they learned about being successful? What do the youth need to do in order to create a positive future for themselves?

QUESTIONNAIRE

ENSURE THE PERSON YOU ARE SPEAKING TO IS AWARE OF THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW AND IS AT EASE IN A COMFORTABLE, QUIET PLACE. ASK THE QUESTIONS AND LISTEN TO THE RESPONSES CAREFULLY.

QUESTIONS (Write the responses in the space provided)

Tell a story about a high point in your life when you felt you were reaching your full potential. What were you doing? Who else was involved? How did they support you? Why was this time important to you?

What do you value the most about yourself as a young person?

What do you value the most in your life?

How do you help others (add value) in your family and your community?

What gives you hope for your future? Why?

What could youth do now to make a positive contribution towards the future in South Africa?

Imagine your life 5 years from now. It is as you want it to be. Describe what you are doing.

What will you need to do to achieve your dream?

What support will you need from others in order to be successful?