

## Case Management for ‘Difficult’ Students

*Many schools have a population of students who exist on the periphery of mainstream classes and carry a range of labels; school refusers, recalcitrants, sub-culture, drop outs, etc. The case management of these students may involve a range of teachers and support staff meeting regularly to review and put in place modified programs. These meetings are ideal opportunities for the restorative script to be used as dialogue and to guide discussion. Progress and/or “back-sliding” can be discussed in a way that preserves dignity and focuses on the impact on relationships.*

Susan is present at her case management meeting with her mother. Susan is in year 9 and has a history of broken homes and interrupted schooling. Others at the meeting include social worker, support teacher, student administrator and a welfare teacher. The meeting is one of the regular monthly meetings to monitor progress and provide support.

Susan and her mother are asked the following ‘scripted’ questions:

***Tell us how the past month has been, what has happened?***

Susan and her mother report some real progress. Attendance at school has increased and her class work is showing some real improvement.

***Susan, what were you thinking about when you came to school the last few weeks and did some work?***

Susan says that it so boring at home and the shopping mall is not safe any more. Some of the work in class was easy.

***How do you feel about what you have achieved?***

Good. Mum is off my back for a change!

***What have you thought about since you have been working well and coming to school?***

I suppose that I’m lucky to still have a chance. My friends want me to come to school.

***Susan, who is affected by your behaviour when you attend school and work well? How about your mum?***

She is less stressed and we have stopped fighting.

***Who else is affected? How about you?***

Sometimes I feel happy that I am doing what my friends are doing. I am good at art.

***How are some of the people at this meeting affected by your positive progress? Let’s find out. We will go around the room and see how people feel.***

The case management meeting continues with participants offering positive comments about the impact of Susan’s improved behaviour. What we seek to achieve from this process is a focus on the social and relational meaning of Susan’s behaviour in an effort to build on relationships with significant people in her life. Ideally we hope that the process can encourage and teach young people to move from thoughts of ‘self’ to consideration of ‘others’.