

# PEER RESOURCES

## Papers

### Measuring Change in Training: Thinking Out of the Box

*The most frequently used design to assess change as a result of training is the pre-test, post-test method. While a useful and easily set-up procedure, the pre-then-post approach can reduce rather than reflect actual changes. In this brief article, the author outlines a different procedure, called the post-then-pre method. This method is described as being significantly more suitable for determining the magnitude of change. Although the specific example used in this article concerns training in peer assistance, the model can be used in virtually any training program where it is expected that participants will change skill, knowledge or attitude as a result of the training.*

It makes sense for both accountability and responsibility to design a way to assess the impact of your peer training program. In addition you can gain information that can lead to improvements in services and increase the quality of interactions between students.

Dozens of instruments have been used to examine the impact of peer training on those being trained. Some programs design or create their own instruments rather than using standard tests. The only known published example is *A Peer Program Evaluation for a Secondary School* prepared by Ailsa Edge and distributed by Peer Resources <<http://www.peer.ca/Pubs.html>>.

Other sources for instruments are journals that publish articles about peer research, the world renowned book: *Tests in Print* published by the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements <<http://www.unl.edu/buros/>>, and various primers on program evaluation, of which one of the best for beginners can be found at <<http://www.ttac.org/power-of-proof/>>.

Regardless of whether you design your own or use an existing instrument, you still have to consider what you want to know about the effectiveness of the training. In most cases this comes down to one word: change. Most peer program leaders want to know, for example: “Did X change as a result of Y?” For example: “Did the peer helpers increase in their ability to use interpersonal communication skills as a result of taking this six-week training course?”

Since “change” (and to some degree the extent of change) is often the key target, we suggest using a more powerful method than what is traditionally used to determine whether change took place. Most peer program leaders use a pre-test then post-test model. That is, they have the training participants complete an instrument prior to the training; then they implement the training; and near or at the end of the training they administer another version of the instrument they used prior to the start of the training. This is the traditional pre-then-post method. Common, traditional, easy, accepted, but a weak indica-

tor of change. Many a program leader has been disappointed by the results. Many a researcher has been unable to demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention. Why minimize your program efforts by using a method that is faulty?

In order to develop a method that is more responsive to the actual changes, we have to “think out-of-box.” There is a simple alternative that is just as scientifically valid as the pre-then-post method, but much more sensitive to or indicative of the actual changes that have taken place.

Before we detail this startling and effective new method, it is essential to understand what prompted us to come up with this alternative.

When participants sign-up for a peer training, they often do so because they have either been nominated or selected by someone who believes that (among other traits) they have pretty good communication skills. And often people volunteer to become peer helpers because they would positively rate their ability to communicate with others.

And herein lies the problem. If you use a pre-test that asks participants to rate, for example, their communication skills (prior to the communications skills training) they will likely rate themselves either at the high end or towards the high end of the scale. Consequently at the completion of the training (and let’s assume the training was very successful) when the participants are asked to rate themselves again, but this time on the post-test, there would be minimum difference in their score from the pre-test. You might conclude there was no change.

That’s what happened to us. Yet the participants frequently commented both during and at the end of the training, “how much they learned” and “how much they got out of the training.” In addition they would often say, “Wow, I didn’t know how much more there was to know about communication skills!” And this was the key.

When people rate themselves prior to the start of the training, their “awareness” of the fullness of the topic (ideas, skills, attitudes necessary to be effective) is low. In other words, they don’t often know what they don’t know. Make sense?

This means that change scores will be dramatically influenced by this concept because the participants have little room left to “raise” their score at the end of the training (since they rated themselves relatively high to begin with).

Now, here’s the way to prevent this problem.

Instead of using the pre-then-post method, use the post-then-pre method. A simple way this can be accomplished is to have training participants complete the instrument only at the end of the training, but set it up with two rating columns. One column can be headed: “Rate where you think you were on this item PRIOR to the training.” And the second column can be headed: “Rate where you think you are on this item NOW that the training has been completed.” In other words they complete both ratings at the same time.

You can include dozens of items for the rating. Some can focus on specific skills, some can be on self-concept, some can be on knowledge, etc. Two sample uses of this method are included on the next two pages.

If you use this method, I’m sure you’ll find a more accurate way to determine the magnitude of change and get a much better picture of the impact of your training.

## **Peer Resources**

*Navigation Tools for the Heart, Mind and Soul*

Tel: (250) 595-3503; Fax: (250) 595-3504

1052 Davie Street, Victoria, B.C. V8S 4E3

rcarr@islandnet.com

[www.peer.ca/peer.html](http://www.peer.ca/peer.html)

AFTER the training the rating that most closely matches my viewpoint:

- 1 Always
- 2 Mostly
- 3 Frequently
- 4 Sometimes
- 5 Never
- 6 Uncertain
- 7 Don't Know

# Post-Pre Sample 1

For Drug & Alcohol Prevention Programs

Instructions: Complete the column on the left and put a check or an X in the box that most closely matches your view about the statements in the center of this page. Then go back to the first statement and do the same for the column on the right. Be sure to complete all the statements for the left column first. There are no right or wrong answers. Thanks for your help.

BEFORE the training started the rating that most closely matched my viewpoint:

- 1 Always
- 2 Mostly
- 3 Frequently
- 4 Sometimes
- 5 Never
- 6 Uncertain
- 7 Don't Know

- |                          |  |                          |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. I feel supported and encouraged in my choice to not use alcohol and/or other drugs.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. I know what to do to help myself withstand pressure to engage in alcohol and/or other drug use.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. I have the knowledge about how to help other students who are using alcohol and/or other drugs.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I have the skills to help other students who are using alcohol and/or other drugs.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. I know the risks associated with alcohol and other drug use.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. I have the knowledge and understanding of the safety issues around alcohol (such as alcohol poisoning and other drug use).  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. I know what to do with someone who has alcohol poisoning.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. When I encounter another student who has been drinking, I know how to help them reduce high risk situations such as drinking games, beer bonging, mixing drinks, and combining alcohol with other drugs such as pot, ecstasy. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. I can challenge the normative belief that all (majority) of students are drinking and/or using other drugs.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. I know how to correct the misperception that everyone is drinking and/or using other drugs and promote anti-drug using norms.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. I feel safe to share my ideas and ask questions.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. I feel listened to and not judged or forced to believe in a particular agenda.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. I feel comfortable exploring my own ideas and coming to conclusions without being manipulated or coerced.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. I feel empowered (have learned a skill) to talk to friends and/or loved ones that they have concerns about their alcohol and/or other drug use.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. I can recognize the signs of chemical abuse and dependency.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. I can teach others how to show concern and intervene effectively.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. I can initiate discussion among other students in my peer group.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. I can help other students initiate discussions with their parents.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. I can provide other students with accurate information regarding the physiological and psychological effects of alcohol (abuse) and other drug use.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. This training workshop was fun.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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AFTER the training the rating that most closely matches my viewpoint:

## Post-Pre Sample 2

Mental Health Survivor  
Peer Helping Program

BEFORE the training started the rating that most closely matched my viewpoint:

Instructions: Complete the column on the left and put a check or an X in the box that most closely matches your view about the statements in the center of this page. Then go back to the first statement and do the same for the column on the right. Be sure to complete all the statements for the left column first. There are no right or wrong answers. Thanks for your help.

- 1 Always
- 2 Mostly
- 3 Frequently
- 4 Sometimes
- 5 Never
- 6 Uncertain
- 7 Don't Know

- 1 Always
- 2 Mostly
- 3 Frequently
- 4 Sometimes
- 5 Never
- 6 Uncertain
- 7 Don't Know

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. I feel supported and encouraged in my choice to become a peer helper.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. I know what to do to help myself withstand pressure to act in ways that interfere with my well-being.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. I have the knowledge about how to help other persons who come to me for help in my role as a peer helper.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I have the skills to assist other people who come to me for help.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. I feel confident to act as an advocate for peer helping.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. I know how to refer someone whom I cannot help.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. I know my limits and boundaries and when to refer someone who needs help.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. I have an understanding of the resources available in the mental health system.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9a. I feel comfortable exploring my own ideas and coming to conclusions without being manipulated or coerced.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9b. I feel empowered (have learned a skill) to talk to friends and/or loved ones that they have concerns about their mental health. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9c. I can recognize the signs of mental health problems.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9d. I can teach others how to show concern and intervene effectively.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. This training workshop was fun.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. My ability to understand and tune into the feelings of others is very good.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. My ability to ask questions that help another person talk about what is of concern to them is very good.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The session I liked the most during the training was the session about:  
And the reason I liked that session the most was:

The session I liked the least during the training was the session about:  
And the reason I liked that session the least was:

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