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Evaluation: Your Friend or Your Nemesis?

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You are already doing evaluation!

- **Needs Assessments**
 - What do we need to do?
- **Process Evaluation:**
 - Is the program happening?
- **Outcome Evaluations: (Short & Longer Term)**
 - What immediate changes do clients make?
 - What longer-term changes occur?
- **Cost Effectiveness/Cost Benefit:**
 - At what price does this occur?



But perhaps not happily?



- Are you being forced by a funder?
- Do you know it's the only way you will pull down some of the big money that's around?
- Do you resent every dime you have to spend on it?



The Horrors of Evaluation



- the paperwork
- negative findings
- people who don't "get it"
- you can't measure what I do
- incomprehensible reports
- we know anyway

Still, the pressure to produce evidence is...

- Strong
- We are a data driven nation --mostly!



So now let's pretend we are drug researchers

- We invent a new drug that is a sure cure for adolescence.
- We skip the animal trials, the human clinical trials and instead, we just hand this pill out
- We figure we should start in the most “at risk” neighborhoods.



So what if your kid came home from school--

- And told you he had this wonderful pill today.
- What would you do?
 - Call the school?
 - Check up on this?
 - The principal says he is sure it will make your kid a better person and by the way, there is no research on this pill.



What??? *%#@!!

Call the lawyers!!!



Some of us are more likely to research--

- Vacuum cleaners
- Movies to see, or
- Places to eat



than to research the programs about sex and pregnancy that we offer young people.

But I can hear you saying...



- Where am I going to get the money for that?
- I'm not a researcher—I don't even like numbers!
- It's unethical to spend money on research rather than serving our young people.

So let's talk about these issues

First, some evaluator jargon:



Process / strategy / activity / intervention:

- Things the program, initiative, or organization does.

Outcomes / results / goals / objectives / impacts:

- What happens as a result.

You need to be severe clear about your outcomes!

NOT like this!

To develop youth to their fullest potential.



But instead...

- To significantly reduce the rate of teen pregnancy, or
- The program group will have significantly lower rates of teen pregnancy than the control group.
- Psst—why doesn't she have numbers or percents in these goals?

Where would I get such numbers?

Unless I had data already on this program
I would have to pick them out of the sky—right?



Now when have clear outcomes
we can make a logic model:

activities → short term
outcomes → long term
outcomes

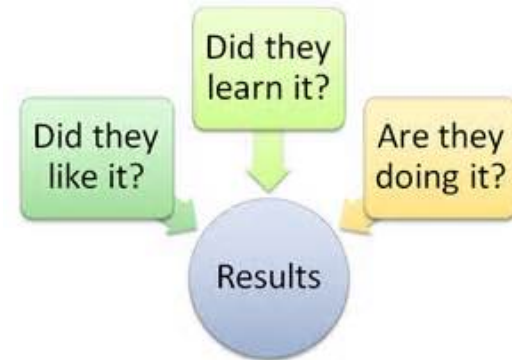


Outcome Evaluation

Measures the results of your efforts.
Holding 10 workshops is NOT an outcome.

What WON'T tell you about outcomes.

- Client satisfaction or testimony about how much they like you and your program.
- Staff testimony about how hard they work.
- Poignant vignettes of high profile clients.
- Counts of successes and failures.





Your wonderful program

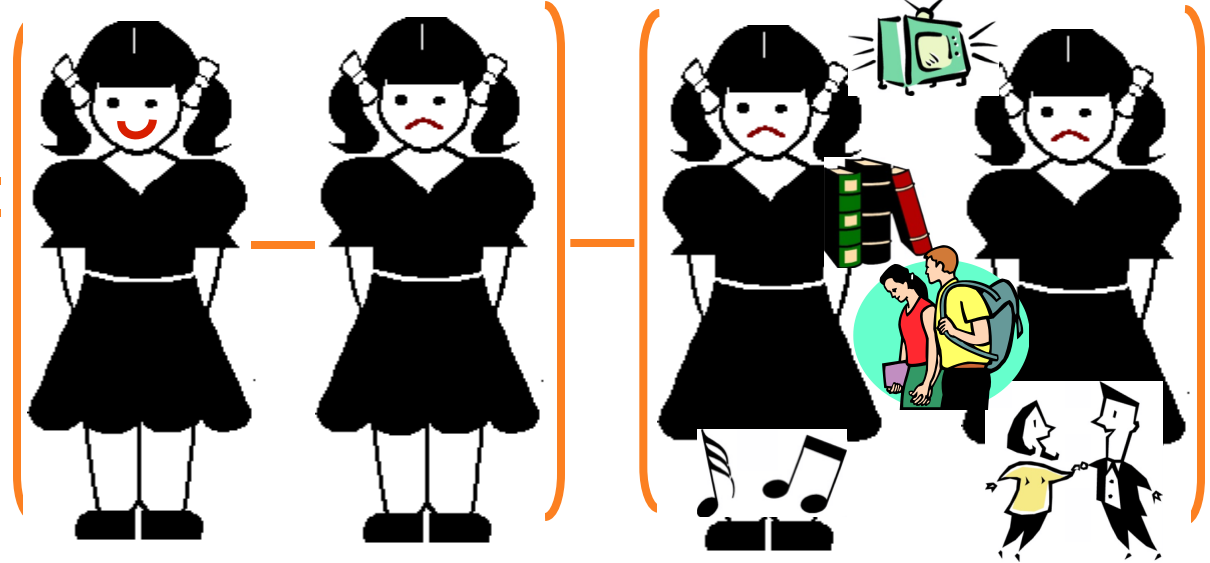


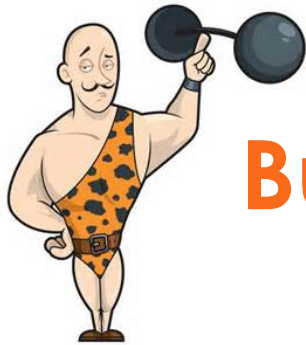


Group 1

Group 2

The Outcomes of Your Program!



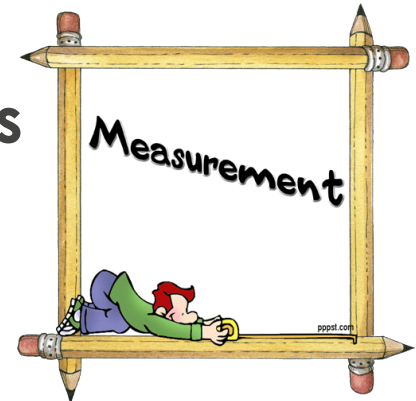


But that's the strongest design

- What about if you are just getting started with evaluation?
- What about a one group change design?
- What about starting with modest outcomes?
- Could you find a comparison rather than a control group?

So most evaluations include...

- **Baseline measurement**
Outcomes when the program starts
Characteristics of those being served
- **Tracking of what the program does**
Attendance, fidelity
- **Post-program measurement**
Re-measure outcomes, testimony

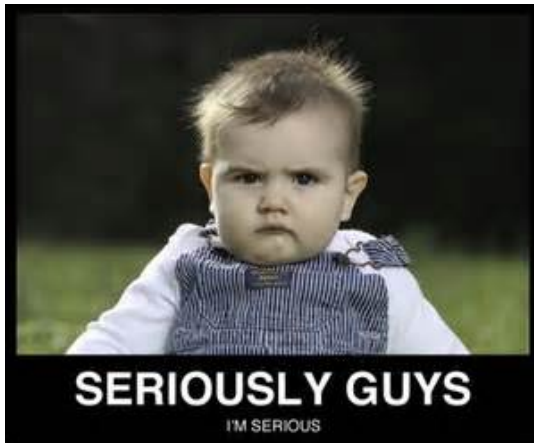


So where do you get an evaluator?

What do you call 500 evaluators at the bottom of the ocean?



No seriously....



- An advanced degree in a social science discipline, public health, or a field where they learned statistics, methodology, and analysis
- A track record—it's okay to ask for references or examples of previous reports

Extra points for...

- Teen pregnancy prevention evaluation
- A team rather than a single person
- Publications
- Talking like a regular person you can understand



Also think about...

- **Whether you need a local evaluator**
 - It depends
- **Whether you want an evaluator who says he/she only does qualitative work or only does quantitative work**
 - These are tools. Would you hire a construction guy who only has a hammer? What? No screwdriver?



Make an agreement that...

- These data are yours
- No communication about your data without your written permission
- If you are hiring a student, who will supervise that student?





How much does this cost?

- For the senior evaluator \$800 to \$1500/day
- There may be data entry costs
- Travel costs
- Incentives for subjects being surveyed
- Perhaps there are data analysts, support staff if you are working with a firm
- There may be overhead, accounting fees, etc.

Options in Responding to Data

- Kill the messenger!
- Kill the implementers!
- Embrace the news gracefully
(this is preferred)
- Decide what it means and course correct
(this is essential)



So, are you ready yet to do evaluation?

- It could make your program famous, or
- It could find your program doesn't work, or
- It could give you some good news (yay!) and show you some things you need to change (also yay!)



Aren't all of those outcomes

better than not knowing?





Thank You
Thank You
Thank You!!!!

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