

Title: The Lost Boys: A ‘MEN’tal Health Home for youth at risk

Principal Author: Luke Lamprecht
Director of Fight with Insight
MSc Child Neurodevelopment
luke.jcaf@gmail.com

Co Author: Sheri Errington
Director of Fight with Insight
MA Research Psychology
sheri@socialperspectives.co.za
083 280 9613

Abstract:

Since 2021, Fight with Insight has seen an exponential increase in the number of boys and young men struggling with severe behavioural challenges. The widespread increase in mental health issues amongst boys seems to stem from their neuro-vulnerability to stress and the devastating impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on their social and emotional development. These boys and young men are being increasingly referred to Fight with Insight at high rates because they either have no other access to a suitable mental health intervention, or are quoted as being “not a candidate for therapy”, essentially becoming who we have called: “The Lost Boys”. Through our ‘MEN’tal’ health programme, we see these “Lost Boys” and how well they respond within the context of the boxing and life gym. We know that key elements of our programme contribute to improvements in their well-being. More specifically, these elements are the aspects of the physical activity related to rough-housing, as well as recognising the importance of the paternal function and play in young people’s ongoing development. In combination, these elements promote greater emotional regulation, which assists these young people to engage more meaningfully within their families, as well as at school and with friends. This paper aims to provide a reflective account of the theory and practical application of Fight with Insight’s boxing programme for children struggling with behavioural challenges, and the reasons why it seems to constitute an effective intervention and ‘MEN’tal health home for young people.

Key words: Emotional regulation, alternative therapy, adolescent boys