

## Chapter 12

# An African-Centered Model of Prevention for African-American Youth at High Risk

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**T**here is an African proverb that states, "When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion." It is the expectation that an African-centered model of prevention would help to create and guide the programs, activities, and practices that would enable African-American people to "tie up the lion" of alcohol and other drugs in the community.

In the process of restoration of order in the African-American community, there are several critical components of an African-centered model of prevention for the family that need to be implemented.

- ◆ Establish African-centered theories of human development and transformation;
- ◆ Develop culturally consistent intervention, prevention, and treatment methods;
- ◆ Create African-based development and training programs in response to the concrete conditions affecting the viability of African peoples;
- ◆ Create contemporary examples of traditional African-American techniques of child development without violating the traditional cultural core; and
- ◆ Develop methods and processes designed to force societal institutions to respect, reflect, and incorporate the cultural integrity and expressions of African peoples.

## Theoretical Foundations of an African-Centered Model

The importance of culture in program development and implementation is derived from the fact that culture represents the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies, and practices "peculiar" to a particular group of people, and that it provides them with (1) a general design for living and (2) patterns for interpreting reality. As such, culture is a critical component in determining program development and implementation because it determines how we see the world, and the way we see the world is reflected in our behavior.

Based on over 20 years of research on Black family life and culture we have been able to document that Black culture in the United States is the result of a special mixture of our continued African orientation operating in another cultural milieu that is primarily defined by the philosophical assumptions and underpinnings of the European-American community (Nobles 1985; Nobles and Goddard 1984; Nobles et al. 1987a, 1987b; Nobles and Goddard 1989). Accordingly, it is the African perspective that is at the base of the Black cultural sphere. Similarly, it is the continuation of that African worldview that is at the root of the special features in Black lifestyles. It is the continuation of the African orientation that, in part, helps define the "general design for living and the patterns for interpreting reality" for, or characteristic of, Black people. The term used to classify the African and African-American cultural system is Africanity or "the African-centered paradigm." A brief discussion of African philosophical principles and cultural substance is provided here.

## African Philosophy and African-American Cultural Precepts

In terms of the nature of being in the universe (ontology), the African belief system understands that all things in the

universe are "force" or "spirit" (Mbiti 1970). In believing that all things, including humanity, were endowed with the same Supreme Force, the African also believed that all things are "essentially" one, i.e., interdependent and interconnected. For the African, the world view is based on the identification of "being (existence) in the universe" as characterized by a cosmological "participation in the Supreme Force." Parenthetically, it follows that, if ontologically the African believes that the nature of all things is force, the African, accordingly, views the variety of cosmic beings as quantitative alterations of the same Supreme Force (Thomas 1961). That is, the classification of "beings" and the "level of being" becomes a classification of forces or spirits.

For the African, a natural feature of the universe is the multiplicity of forms and moments. That is, the African believes the universe to be alive. Consequently, the African's relation to the universe is characterized by a belief in the paramountcy and primary importance of life. What characterizes African peoples' understanding of the universe is, consequently, a simultaneous respect for the concrete detail in the multiplicity of forms and the rejection of the possibility of an absence or vacuum of forms.

In terms of the primary characteristic of relations within the universe (i.e., axiology), the African conception of the world and phenomena in it amounts to a set of interchanging syntheses (connections) and contradictions (antagonisms) linked to the particular classification of beings as differential quantifications of force. As interchanging syntheses and contradictions, the primary characteristic of universal relations is rhythmic and harmonious. Combined, these "connective" and "antagonistic" participatory sets form the whole of universal relations. Accordingly, Africans traditionally believe that relations in the universe are determined by elements belonging to the same metaphysical plane, "participating by resemblance," or by elements belonging to different metaphysical planes, "participating by difference" (Thomas 1960). The

dynamic quality of the total universe is, however, thought to be the conciliation of these various "participatory sets" (i.e., connective and antagonistic). Therefore, the African believes that all things are the same or on one level while different, yet interconnected and interdependent, on another level. Thus the African thinks (conceives) of experience as an intense complementary rhythmic connection between the person and reality. In fact, the conciliation of, on the one hand, the unity of the cosmos and, on the other, the diversity of beings within the cosmos, makes for the special features

(e.g., dynamism, interdependence, egalitarianism, variety, vitalism, cooperation, synergism, transformation, optimism) of the traditional African worldview. These principles combined represent the core quality and fundamental nature of African and African-American beingness. Some of the most critical traditional African and African-American cultural precepts are the principles of consubstantiation, synergism, vitalism, egalitarianism, humaneness, harmony, interdependence, transformation, and collectivism (figure 6).

Figure 6. Cultural structures and African-centered cultural precepts

Cultural Structures	African-Centered Cultural Precepts
Ontology (Nature of being-essence)	<b>Consubstantiation</b> Notion of all elements (humans, animals, inanimate objects) being of the same substance
Cosmology (Origin/structure of universe)	<b>Interdependence</b> Idea of all elements in the universe being connected
Axiology (Primary character of universal relations)	<b>Egalitarianism</b> Nature of relations being harmonious and balanced
Ethos (Set of guiding principles)	<b>Collectivism</b> Codes of conduct based on idea of group and/or collective survival/advancement
Ideology (The ideational basis of conduct)	<b>Transformation</b> Change is movement toward higher level of functioning
Worldview (Most comprehensive ideas about order)	<b>Cooperation</b> The way things function is based on mutual respect and viability
Values Orientation	<b>Humaneness</b> Behavior is governed by sense of vitalism and viability
Central Belief System	<b>Synergism</b> Notion that sum of complementary actions is greater than total effort of individuals

The cultural precepts serve to guide the assessment, understanding, and evaluation of reality as well as give meaning to it. As part of the cultural substance, values define, select, create, and re-create (or reformulate) what is considered good, valuable, or desirable in the social milieu. In a general sense, the cultural substance of a particular group of people functions like a special set of glasses that, in focusing on reality, perceives and is aware of those situations that are "meaningful" and excludes those that are not. Hence, it is primarily through this special set of glasses that the myriad of sensory impressions received by the organism is filtered, organized, and transformed into mental impressions and behavioral dispositions and/or responses.

The values indicative of this African cultural orientation are reflected in the high regard for life, cooperation, interpersonal connectedness by differences, and collective responsibility. Similarly, African behavioral and mental dispositions emphasize notions of commonality, similarity, and synthesis. The traditional African and African-American lifestyles are guided by the added principles of restraint, respect, responsibility, and reciprocity.

Given that all is not well with the African-American community, it is especially critical that one does not mistake the current behavior of the African-American community for an expression of the culture of the African-American community. It is important to remember that current behavior results from the interaction of the culture and the material condition of a people and that both, culture and condition, must be understood and manipulated if intervention and change is to be achieved.

## African-Centered Model of Prevention

The African-centered paradigm is a quality of thought and practice rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people. As the core and fundamental quality of our beingness and becoming, the African-

centered paradigm reaffirms the right of African people to (1) exist as a people, (2) contribute to the forward flowing process of human civilization and culture, and (3) to share with as well as shape the world in response to our energy and spirit. The African-centered paradigm is the intellectual and philosophical foundation upon which we create the political, scientific, and moral criteria for authenticating the reality of African family processes. The African-centered paradigm refers to the life experiences, history, and traditions of African people as the center of one's analyses.

This African-centered model of prevention takes as its fundamental premise the notion that the most effective prevention techniques are those that promote a natural resilience to pathology. In a sense, the model acknowledges that the best prevention strategy is a plan that promotes positive development rather than prevents dysfunctional behavior.

An African-centered model of prevention recognizes that intervention strategies designed to address behavioral dysfunction in the African-American population must be culturally consistent. "Culturally consistent" means that the phenomena (prevention programs, training activities, and so on) can be judged as congruent with the particular cultural precepts that provide people with a "general design for living and patterns for interpreting (i.e., giving meaning to) their reality." Accordingly, in this African-centered model *culturally consistent service praxis* is a systematic process whereby one develops and/or stimulates the knowledge, skill, ability, attitudes, and character necessary for people to undertake socially defined, goal-oriented, and culturally meaningful activity designed to allow them to (1) achieve mastery of all aspects of human functioning; (2) reproduce, refine, and make explicit their personality in the objective world; and (3) validate their self and kind.

An African-centered approach to the delivery of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use/abuse prevention and treatment programs, then, reflects in its philosophy

and practice the cultural precepts, ideas, and beliefs of African and African-American people. It is grounded in, and based on, the cultural precepts that represent the cultural substance of African Americans. In terms of African-American culture, eight cultural precepts, listed in figure 6, have been identified as influencing the general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality in the traditional African-American community. These eight precepts represent the philosophical foundations on which the African-centered model is based. In terms of the model, these precepts are made operational as follows:

1. *Consubstantiation* assumes that all things in the universe have the same essence. In terms of prevention, this precept supports, in part, the belief that every person is innately and inherently AOD free and can become free from AOD use/abuse.
2. *Interdependence* assumes that everything in the universe is connected. In terms of prevention, this precept requires, in part, that the information, the process of knowing, and the knower (i.e., the target population) be connected for optimal information internalization to take place.
3. *Egalitarianism* assumes that the correct relationship between people is one of harmony and balance. In terms of prevention, this precept requires, in part, that the delivery of services and the process of learning be characterized by cooperation and mutuality between the service provider and the client.
4. *Collectivism* assumes that individual effort is a reflection and/or instrument of communal or collective survival/advancement. In terms of prevention, this precept defines, in part, how the intrinsic value of prevention/intervention activities are related to one's ability to contribute to the well-being and welfare of one's community.
5. *Transformation* assumes that everything has the potential to continually function at a higher level. In terms of prevention, this precept requires, in part, that the delivery of services (prevention/intervention) be designed to guide each client to a higher level of performance/functioning and understanding of self, family, and community relative to AOD abuse.
6. *Cooperation* assumes that the optimal way of functioning is with mutual respect and encouragement. In terms of prevention, this precept requires, in part, that the service delivery process provide clients with the attitude, ability, and willingness to contribute to their own, as well as other, human wellness and fulfillment.
7. *Humaneness* assumes that all behavior is governed by the sense of vitalism and goodness. In terms of prevention, this precept requires, in part, that every aspect of the AOD use/abuse prevention process restore and reinforce in each client a compassionate commitment to the common destiny of the client and community well-being and welfare.
8. *Synergism* assumes that the performance outcomes of cooperative effort is greater than the sum total of individual effort. In terms of prevention, this precept requires, in part, that every aspect of the AOD use/abuse prevention process complement every other aspect and, in so doing, result in greater resilience in the client and protective factors in the community.

African-American culture defines and determines effective human functioning for African Americans. African-American culture should be understood as a significant intellectual and philosophical tool that directly influences our perception of reality and how we come to develop as fully functioning members of society. Hence, every aspect of the AOD use/abuse prevention process (e.g., program development and management, site leadership, program curriculum, learning styles, instructional techniques) will benefit from the infusion

and/or application of African-American culture. In utilizing African-American culture in the service of drug use/abuse prevention with African-American youth, a culturally consistent service delivery process would reflect (1) the belief that every African-American youth can lead an AOD-free life; (2) a process whereby knowing and knowledge are connected directly to the youth; (3) programmatic techniques and practices characterized by cooperation and mutuality; (4) the blending of individual achievement with collective advancement; (5) the desire to continually guide each youth to a higher level of understanding and functioning; (6) the underlying goal of personally contributing to one's own, as well as everyone's, fulfillment; (7) training and learning linked to the student's and community's well-being and welfare; and (8) a process whereby cooperative effort is used to continually develop and expand the natural resilience of youth.

## The Cultural Foundations of Program Development

Most program developers recognize that program development is always in response to a specific human problem and that there is a direct relationship between identified human needs and human functioning. Specifically, when human needs are being met or satisfied, human functioning reflects that condition. When human needs are not being met or satisfied, human functioning will reflect equally that state or condition. Programs, particularly human services programs, are, in part, created in order to structurally address behavioral dysfunction as a reflection of unmet human needs. In effect, the rule of operation is that "needs" influence "function(ing)," which in turn determines "structure." In regard to human services program development, the formula becomes: "To the extent that human needs are not satisfied, human dysfunctioning will occur; and, in order to remedy the human dysfunctioning, activity must be developed and structured so as to be responsive to the unmet needs."

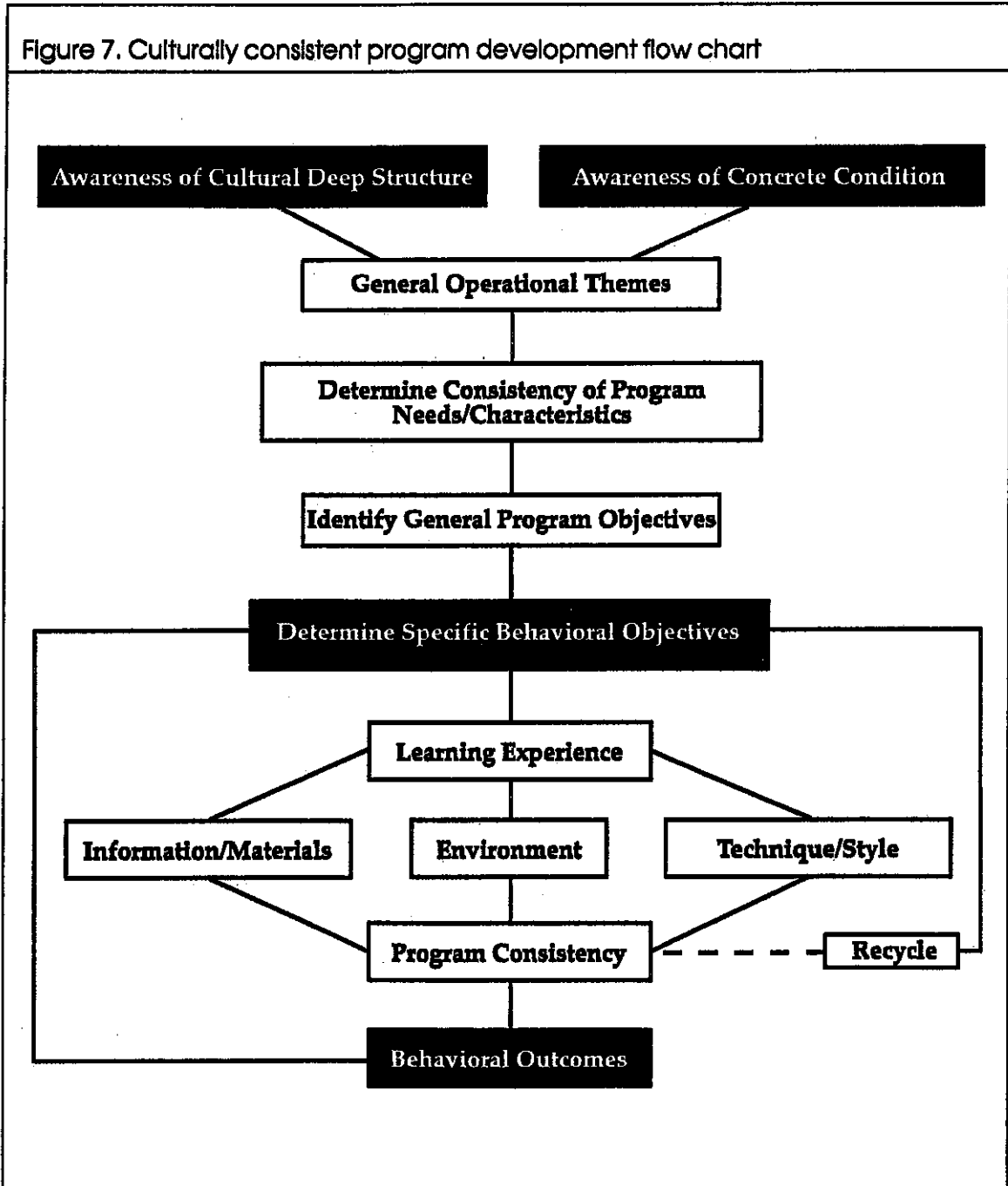
Beyond basic needs imperative for species survival (e.g., sex, food, and shelter), most human needs, as well as the importance of (and the method for) satisfying human needs are determined by culture. As mentioned above and restated here, culture represents the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, and practices that give people a "general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality." As such, culture emerges as a dynamic human system of features, factors, and functions with sets of guiding principles, assumptions, conventions, beliefs, and rules that permit and determine how members of a group relate to each other and develop their creative potential. Hence, if there is a direct relationship between the meeting of human needs and human functioning, and if the significance of both human needs and functioning is culturally determined, then program development must be grounded in the same culture that determines human needs and functioning. The cultural grounding of program development is further reinforced by the recognition that the effectiveness of human service programs is maximized when programs are in response to or designed for a particular community, constituency, or clientele. A "community" is both an identifiable area and collection of people who share a common set of experiences, a worldview, and a value system. A "problem," in turn, is any issue, agent, or condition that prevents a person or community from meeting or satisfying their needs and/or achieving a sense of well-being. Hence, in program development, one must make sure that the program in its structure and function is as follows:

1. It is grounded in the same culture that gives meaning to human needs and functions;
2. It is relevant and responds to the conditions in the target community; and
3. It addresses the real (actual) problems experienced and defined by the community.

To ensure the cultural grounding of a program or program development, one must design the program so that it is responsive to both the culture of the community and the concrete conditions (problems) experienced by the community (figure 7).

In so doing, one should be able to demonstrate how the general operational theme or the "mission statement" of the program is related to the culture of both the community or the client and the problems (concrete conditions) they experience.

Figure 7. Culturally consistent program development flow chart



Having determined the consistency between the characteristics (structure and function) of the program and its mission statement, a "culturally consistent program" must also demonstrate how its structure and functions are designed to accomplish a particular objective.

Hence, in terms of program development, the learning/training or therapeutic experience, the facility or programmatic environment, and the training or treatment information/materials, as well as the teaching or therapeutic techniques and methods, must all reinforce and reflect the desire to accomplish specific program objectives, which are evidenced by specific behavioral outcomes in the community or client population.

### Five Critical Components of an African-Centered Model of Prevention

A program/model of services is generally thought of as a set of activities, courses,

and/or instructions bound by an area of specialization. Its essential components are objectives, content, intent, process, and outcomes. If the program is to be effective, then it must be consistent with and predictable from the cultural substance of the population on whom it is targeted. Accordingly, the philosophical grounding of an African-centered model of prevention is presented in figure 8.

In terms of programmatic activities, we believe that the model should have the following characteristics.

### Objectives

In its objectives the African-centered model aims at the development of a sense of consciousness, confidence, competence, commitment, and character in Black adolescents that would make them contributing members to family, community, and society. The program activities must enable African-American adolescents to believe, and experience the feeling, that there are positive things they can do well and that benefit the

Figure 8. Philosophical components of Afrocentric model of prevention

Cultural Precepts	Intent	Content	Process	Objectives and Outcomes			
				Knowledge	Attitudes	Beliefs	Behavior
Consubstantiation	Confident	Culture	Dramatic consciousness	Black history	Self-pride	Interdependence	Respect
Interdependence	Competent	History	Mind modeling	Black culture	Race-pride	Primacy of group	Reciprocity
Egalitarianism	Conscious	Values	Image/interest/discussion/dialoguing	Family history	People-oriented	Humaneness	Responsibility
Collectivism	Contributing	Skills	Culturally consistent problem solving	Black values	Harmony with nature	Spirituality	Restraint
Transformation	Committed	Virtues	Metaphoric memory	Academic skills	Egalitarianism	Unit	Righteousness
Cooperation	Character		Analogical thinking	Nutrition	Cooperation	Balance	Reliance
Humaneness				Life management skills	Communalism	Change	Resiliency
Synergism				Path to fulfillment		Order	
				Purpose			



family or the community. By providing the youth with the opportunities to experience success, the program would help to develop a sense of confidence in these youth. Additionally, the program would develop competence in the youth through providing them with opportunities to acquire new skills, knowledge, and practices. Finally, the program activities would develop a sense of consciousness in the adolescents by providing them with an understanding of their resolute position in world history. If African-American adolescents understand the critical contributions they have made to world civilization, then pride, awareness, and commitment to self, family, and community would become possible. The essential task of the service delivery process is to create the conditions wherein youth can acquire essential information about the African and African-American contribution to world civilization. By knowing what was in the past youth can begin to conceive an alternate reality to what is at present:

### *Intent*

The African-centered model in its intent requires a systematic and intentional process of enculturation, immersion in the African-centered cultural traditions that provides the basis for insulation, and inoculation of African-American adolescents against contemporary pressures to engage in self-destructive behavior. These cultural traditions provide the basis for the development and expansion of the natural resilience factors that exist within youth and that have traditionally enabled African-Americans to overcome some of the worst excesses of racism without being destroyed by the process. It should be clear to all participants in the program activities that there is a cultural basis to the program and that it is rooted in African and African-American traditional cultural precepts.

### *Content*

The content of the African-centered model should be based on, and reflect, an emphasis on spirituality. This emphasis is

designed to enable youth to perceive and understand such principles as reciprocity, responsibility, restraint, and respect. The content of the program should serve to develop a consciousness, an awareness, of a Supreme Being and the intimate relationship that exists between human beings and the Supreme Being. The language used in the program should be simple and direct, yet challenging to the target population. In their activities the service providers should make use of symbolic imagery—proverbs, analogies, folktales, and so on—as a primary mechanism for the transferral of information. The use of proverbs represents an important teaching process within traditional African and African-American communities that allows the learner to engage in abstract thinking by applying general principles (the proverb) to a specific situation (the event). It is through this process of synthesis and induction that the learner comes to acquire knowledge of more complex problems. The details of the content component of the African-centered model of prevention are presented in figure 8.

### *Process (Methods)*

The prevention specialist is the "bridge." It is the prevention specialist's job to make this information come "alive." The prevention specialist must carry the complex and technical information supporting human growth and development to the life and minds of the Black adolescents. The prevention specialist must be able to translate or exchange the information in the content component of the program to experiences and applications that the Black adolescents can use and understand.

In this regard, the following African-centered processes (training techniques) should be useful:

- ◆ Dramatic consciousness,
- ◆ Mind modeling,
- ◆ Image and interest discussion/dialoguing,
- ◆ Culturally consistent problem-solving,

- ◆ Metaphoric memory, and
- ◆ Analogical thinking.

*Dramatic consciousness* is a training and development technique wherein the prevention specialist teaches youths (1) the five dimensions of consciousness and how overall awareness can be revealed by the acts (drama) one performs; (2) how human consciousness results from the interaction between (interdependence of) an actor, other actors, the dramatic situation, and the residuals of the various dimensions of consciousness; (3) to use creative drama to help the trainee understand the underlying issues and/or events that drive feelings, thoughts, and behaviors; and (4) to obtain greater awareness by studying the verbal and nonverbal "script" of both the actors and the situation, combined with the appropriate dimension of consciousness. When youths analyze and understand these relationships, this gives greater meaning to awareness and provides them with a better understanding of what is really happening.

*Mind modeling* is a training and development technique whereby the prevention specialist utilizes the African-centered ideas, as represented in the lives and work of African and African-American men and women of excellence, to think and act differently about situations and problems. In so doing, this technique replaces the trainees' destructive and deviant ideas (thinking) with ideas that are positive and consistent with the cultural precepts and ideas of African people.

*Image and interest discussion/dialoguing* is a training and development technique whereby the prevention specialist teaches youths to (1) locate the image and interest of their own cultural reality in the discussion/dialogue, and (2) use the image and interest of their cultural reality as the basis for appropriately responding to issues and problems they confront.

*Culturally consistent problem-solving* is a training and development technique by which the prevention specialist teaches youths to develop strategies or solutions

that will (1) eliminate and/or oppose any condition, situation, or agent that prevents the positive development of themselves, their families, and their communities; and (2) create and/or reinforce those situations, conditions, or agents that foster positive growth and development of themselves, their families, and their communities.

*Metaphoric memory* is a training and development technique wherein the prevention specialist teaches the youth how to go from the known to the unknown via the metaphoric device of comparing the underlying, invisible, and/or implied principles, attributes, and qualities of the known to the task of understanding the unknown. By stimulating the memory of known things, especially with proverbs, one is able to apply the principles, attributes, and/or qualities of the known phenomena to acquire an understanding of the unknown.

*Analogical thinking* is a thought process that (1) utilizes a reference system as an aid to conceptualization and (2) focuses on the identification of "relationships" and/or similarities among experiences or phenomena, and thereby reveals the "synthetic quality" and "synergistic capacity" of all phenomena. In so doing, the analogical process provides thinking with an ever moving and ever flowing quality, as well as the ability to produce a greater effect than the sum of the individual thoughts (ideas) connected by either inductive or deductive linkages.

This model, then, in its process includes a set of thinking, feeling, and doing activities that enable African-American adolescents to internalize the African-centered cultural precepts and stimulate the youths' natural resilience against disorder and disease. In terms of the process, the African-centered model must include the same set of symbols and rituals that derive from the cultural precepts. Simply stated, the programmatic activities must involve a set of rituals, ceremonies, and practices that provide for the expression of a sense of humaneness and respect for self and others. For example, youth should serve the elders

and honor and respect them. Similarly, the program site should be decorated to represent the image of African-Americans, with bright colors, pictures, and symbols of African society and the African-American contribution.

### Outcomes

The African-centered model of prevention suggests the need for the acquisition of a core set of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that serve as indicators of successful completion of the particular program activities. The core knowledge required is that which enables African-American adolescents to maintain their cultural identity and function effectively in an information-producing and -consuming society. The program must, of necessity, include an education component that motivates and inspires youths to pursue their education to the fullest. To this end, the African-centered model would provide for an educational thrust that would focus on and reinforce the basic educational skills that enable youth to transcend and transform the delimiting nature of the school system. The core set of attitudes that are needed in this process is an understanding of spirituality. Spirituality here refers to the process of understanding the dynamic and interactional relationship between and among elements in the universe. Spirituality is an inner feeling that reveals itself in an understanding of the universe and its operation and attitudes of humaneness and concern for the welfare of others. It manifests itself in behaviors that speak of a sense of being in the service of others rather than in the form of personal self-aggrandizement. The African-centered model has at its center a basic set of values representing the set of guiding principles that determine how the individual lives.

The African-centered model does not promote values clarification as a framework for prevention. Through the model the individual receives a set of values that represent how he should live his life, and these are standards to which the youth should be held accountable. One core set of values

that is useful is the principle of *Maat*—values of truth, justice, righteousness, propriety, balance, harmony, and order. Another value system is the *nguzo saba*, developed by Maulana Karenga, comprising *umoja* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity), and *imani* (faith). Whatever the system adopted, youths are provided with a set of guiding principles, an ethos that governs their social conduct. The African-centered model would produce behaviors that represent a sense of commitment to the greater good. In its philosophy, process, and practice the model indicates that the well-being and welfare of the group take precedence over the individual's. In this sense, youths become contributing members to their families, communities, and society. A feature of the African-centered model is that youths should do something to make their community a better place than it was before. In essence, the transformation produced by the African-centered model manifests itself in terms of feelings of achieved internal development, excellence in social relations, and sociohistorical service and achievement. These characteristics are expressed in the form of moral character, social responsibility, and human conduct governed by a devotion to a higher purpose. The expected behavioral outcomes are summarized in figure 9.

These features of the program aspects of the African-centered model are presented in figure 10.

The African-centered model of prevention, with its basis of holistic, humanistic, and naturalistic orientation, implies dealing with the totality of the individual's existence. It should address the social, physical, spiritual, and mental aspects of youths. It cannot be just an alcohol and other drug (AOD) use prevention program. It has to go beyond the prevention activities and begin to address issues of development in the broader context. Thus, the content of the African-centered model should provide

Figure 9. Desired outcomes of Afrocentric model of prevention

Attribute	Expressed In	Behavioral Modalities
Competence	Human Conduct	Behavior governed by sense of Purpose Planning Productivity Persistence Patience
Confidence	Social Responsibility	Duty Desire Devotion Discipline
Consciousness	Moral Character	Respect Restraint Responsibility Reciprocity Righteousness

youths with the psychosocial skills and attributes that increase their capacity to resist negative environmental influences. The African-centered model should have as a central feature an opening and closing ritual that reaffirms the sense of connectedness and interdependence created in the program. The program should use symbols representative of the importance and achievement of Africans and African-Americans in the development of world civilization. The teaching of an African-centered history is critical in the content of the African-centered model in that it would provide youth with an understanding of the resolute position of Africans and African-Americans in relationship to world rule and governance. Other symbols used in the model would be the wearing of *kente* cloth on occasions of honor and establishment of a dress code with formal and informal dress for project participants, such a code serving as a source of identification and as representative of the image the program is trying to project.

The African-centered model should place heavy emphasis on the traditional cultural themes of the sense of excellence and the sense of appropriateness. The sense of excellence requires that the service providers challenge the youths in the program to be the very best they can, that high standards of achievement are set for the youths, that the youths know what the expectations are, and that the youths collectively strive toward these levels of achievement. The service providers would be doing a disservice if they allowed the completion of activities without setting standards and holding the youths to the expectations. Holding youths accountable for their performance assists them in developing a sense of discipline necessary to ensure success. The sense of appropriateness requires that behavior be governed by notions of formality, civility, and deference. The youths have to understand that, while we recognize the principle of interdependence and interconnectedness, there still exists a clear distinction between and among individuals and that these distinctions need to

Figure 10. Programmatic components of Afrocentric model of prevention

<b>Objectives</b>	Promote fully functioning ("perfected") members of society Prevent alcohol and other drug abuse
<b>Intent</b>	Enhance psychocultural competencies Sense of belonging; sense of identity; sense of power; sense of security; sense of trust; sense of permanence; test of courage, character, and commitment Increase resiliency, protective factors, and inoculation
<b>Content</b>	Drug prevention specific information Nature, course of addiction; effects of addiction Human ("perfectibility") development specific information —Values internalization; decisionmaking —Psychocultural competency; capacity building —Academic skills—reading, writing, mathematics, science, history —African and African-American contributions to world history and civilization (from pre-KMT to present) —African-American cultural substance—philosophy of human perfectibility cultural precepts, cultural values, cultural themes; Cardinal Virtues of Ma'at, Principles of Initiatory Mastery, Nommo, Kra, Muntu, Nguzo Saba
<b>Process</b>	Thinking activities —Discussions, problemsolving, analysis of folktales, proverbs, literature, etc. Feeling activities —Empathic understanding, critical incident technique, introspection, "what if..." situations, etc. Doing activities Overall infusion activities —Language should be appropriate to level of youth, but should inspire them to raise their level—pattern of analogical thinking; use of proverbs, folktales, poems, analogies to convey messages —Emphasis on spirituality—spiritual connection as basis for action in community; revealed in human conduct, moral character, and social responsibility —Emphasis on sense of excellence and sense of appropriateness as guiding themes in programmatic activities
<b>Outcomes</b>	Self-conscious, fully functioning ("perfected") member of society Competent—acquires some skills, knowledge, etc. Confident—belief that he can do and become anything he sets his mind to Conscious—aware of who he is and his responsibility to self, family, and community Committed—willing to work for the better of the whole Contributing—makes a contribution to the community

be recognized and respected. Thus, the program should emphasize the principle of eldership whereby elders (anyone older than the youths) are respected; the practice of entitlement by which one refers to others by terms of relationship and thereby treats

them with dignity (an older person or someone in authority is not referred to by a first name, but by titles like Miss, Mister, Auntie, Momma, Poppa, Uncle, and so on); and appropriate language to suit the occasion.

## African-Centered Evaluation Criteria for Program Components

The development of the African-centered model provides some broad operationalization of the core cultural precepts that provide the general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality for the African-American community. As such, these philosophical principles provide some guidelines for the evaluation of programs targeted on the African-American community. These guidelines are provided here.

### *Objectives*

To the extent that the program objectives focus on collective development and/or transformation, they can be judged as culturally consistent with African-centered cultural precepts.

### *Intent*

As far as the program intent can be judged as reinforcing and respecting the development of a being in harmony with the vital goodness of oneself, one's family, and one's community, it can be judged as culturally consistent with African-centered cultural precepts.

### *Content*

To the extent that the program content shows evidence of materials, ideas, and information reflective of the image (any representation, reproduction, likeness, or impression of African peoples that symbolizes and/or reflects the basic quality and nature of a people) and interest (any thing or attribute belonging to, and consistent with, the benefit, growth, and development of a people) of African people, it can be judged as culturally consistent with African-centered cultural precepts.

### *Process (Method)*

To the extent that the program process (method) shows evidence of being based on

a strategy that promotes collective attachment, a sense of self-worth, and recognition and respect for self, family, and community, then it can be judged as culturally consistent with African-centered cultural precepts.

### *Outcome*

To the extent that the proposed program outcome is a human being who is spiritually rejuvenated, has love of self, family, and community and is willing and able to respect, protect, and defend self, family, and community, then it can be judged as culturally consistent with African-centered cultural precepts.

In working with youth at risk from an African-centered perspective, the objective of the prevention/intervention program is the development of a particular kind of human being who is aware (with knowledge), and can express a sense of unity or collective self. The content of the prevention program shall reflect the same set of signs, symbols, rituals, and practices that give meaning and direction to proper conduct in the African-American community. The process of the African-centered model of prevention shall similarly reflect, for example, the practices of harmony and balance. The outcome of the prevention activity is a person who is cooperative; who understands and respects the sameness of self, as well as the diversity and difference of forms characteristic of the community; and who has a high sense of responsibility to self, family, and community. An African-centered prevention program aims to develop a person who is committed to the welfare and well-being of the larger entity rather than to individual self-actualization. That is, the African-centered model calls for the development of a person guided by the concept of "right conduct," which implies the notions of moral character, social responsibility, and devotion to a higher purpose. A person who possesses these characteristics is less likely to engage in such dysfunctional behavior as AOD use/abuse.

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