

**TEEN CHALLENGE
OF
CHATTANOOGA, TN**

Survey of Alumni

Dr. Roger D. Thompson

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Survey Report, 1994

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To all I say thanks! Job well done!

This edition of the Teen Challenge of Chattanooga Survey of Alumni is a condensed version of the Final Report. To receive additional copies of this report, contact:

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INTRODUCTION

Teen Challenge was founded in 1958 by the Rev. David Wilkerson on the premise that being a “born again” Christian will overpower the need for drugs. Expansion of the original program in New York City crossed state and international boundaries with Chattanooga coming on board about 1978. According to the mission statement of Teen Challenge—Teen Challenge is Christian people helping men with the life controlling problems of drug and alcohol addiction to transform their lives through a relationship with Jesus Christ so that they become productive members of society.

Teen Challenge of Chattanooga is a non-profit organization funded entirely by individuals, churches, civic organizations, businesses, and foundations. Entrance requirements are a willingness to change habits that have caused the person to become involved with drug and alcohol abuse. The program consists of an initial 4-6 month residential stay at the Chattanooga center followed by a 8-10 month involvement at a Teen Challenge training center. The final phase is an optional graduate program whereby the individual can live at the Graduate house for 6 months to 1 year while finding a job and getting established with a local church.

Interest was expressed by the Teen Challenge of Chattanooga leadership and Board of Directors to conduct a survey of alumni to determine what happens after their conversion experience. Contract was entered into with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in summer of 1992. The final report of said contract was completed in September 1994.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research herein focused on those successfully completing the Phase I 4-6 month Induction program of Teen Challenge of Chattanooga. Alumni from a 15-year time period (1979-1991) were included, totaling 213 individuals. The strongest research design was wanted in order to allow conclusions and generalizations.

Selected as the method for survey involved development of a 6-page questionnaire in collaboration with Teen Challenge of Chattanooga staff. Self-reporting surveys are recognized in the scientific and research community subject to a few concerns being satisfied. See *The Practice of Social Research* by Babbie (6th Edition) for a complete discussion of self-administered questionnaires.

The population selected for purpose of scientific analyses and comparison involved a simple random sample of 50 individuals.

The response rate for the random sample of 50 alumni stands at 50 percent. According to Babbie in *The Practice of Social Research*, a 50 percent response is adequate for analysis, and a response rate of 70 percent is very good. Considerable time and attention was directed at attempting to increase the response rate but without much success. Dealing with time factors of 5-10-15 years can be a major handicap to the best of research designs. Nevertheless, the response rate is respectable.

Ethical codes of conduct respecting the voluntary nature of participation in this research were strictly observed. Admittedly, frustration levels surfaced on occasion when trying to determine whether the mail reached its proper destination or if conscious decision had been made not to respond be it for reasons of time, effort, etc. Contact was attempted repeatedly over a 2 year period, with phone contact tried as well.

This research was conducted independent of Teen Challenge of Chattanooga. No personal identifiers or personal comments have been shared with the staff outside the publication of interim reports and this Final Report. A system for protecting the integrity of anonymity has been developed for storing the data now that the project is complete.

**TEEN CHALLENGE OF CHATTANOOGA
SURVEY FINDINGS**

**Table 1
Time Since Completion of
Teen Challenge of Chattanooga**

Year(s)	%	N=25
< 1 Year	0	
1-2 Years	24	
3-5 Years	32	
7-9 Years	24	
10-15+ Years	20	

The respondents represent a broad span of time since completing Teen Challenge.

**Table 2
Age of Respondents at Time of Entry**

Age	%	N=25
15-19	0	
20-24	40	
25-29	32	
30-34	8	
35-39	16	
Over 40	0	
No Response	4	

The majority of respondents were in their twenties or thirties at the time of entering Teen Challenge of Chattanooga.

Table 3
Other Drug Treatment Programs Tried Prior to Entering
Teen Challenge of Chattanooga

Response	%	N=25
Yes	72	
No	28	

Over 70% of the respondents are coming to Teen Challenge of Chattanooga after unsuccessful results with several drug treatment programs. In other words, Teen Challenge of Chattanooga, according to the study results, was attracting more of the seasoned drug user and abuser than the young adult male at early stages of drug experimentation and destructive behavior patterns.

Table 4
Number of Prior Drug Treatment Programs Before Entering Teen
Challenge of Chattanooga

Scale	%	N=18
1	28	
2	45	
3	22	
4 Plus	5	

The number of prior treatment programs attempted serves notice of when Teen Challenge of Chattanooga is intervening in the life of the respondent.

The Teen Challenge program has two program components. Phase I is a 4-6 month induction phase taken in residence at the Chattanooga facility. Phase II is a 8-10 month training program available at selected sites, Rehrersburg, PA, or Cape Girardeau, MO.

Responses indicate that 96% attended a Teen Challenge Training Center. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents attending a Teen Challenge Training Center completed the 8-10 month program.

One of the stronger indicators defining success would be whether any other drug treatment program was necessary and used since completing the Teen Challenge Program.

Table 5
Other Drug Treatment Programs Since Completing
Teen Challenge of Chattanooga

Response	%	N=25
Yes	12	
No	88	

Survey responses indicate that there have been no additional drug treatment program(s) in the lives of 88% of respondents since Teen Challenge of Chattanooga. The affirmative responses involve two re-entries to Teen Challenge and one to a 12-step AA program. While the sample size does not meet scientific standards to draw final conclusions, it is clear from the pattern of responses given that success may be defined in the 80's percentile.

The significance of this 88% number can be seen when looking at how many drug treatment programs had been tried prior to entering Teen Challenge of Chattanooga (see tables 3 and 4).

Table 6
Treatment Program Most Beneficial

Response	%	N=25
Teen Challenge	88	
Other	0	
N/R	12	

Table 7
Education Added Since Leaving Teen Challenge

Response	%	N=25
Yes	60	
No	40	

Table 8
Type of Education Added

Type	%	N=15
High School	0	
GED	13	
College	87	

Most of the efforts have been directed at the university level. Sixty percent of the respondents have added to their education.

Table 9
Current Employment Status

Response	%	N=25
Employed	72	
Unemployed	20	
Pursuing further education	8	

Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated their current status as employed.

Table 10
Length of Time at Present Job

Time	%	N=18
<1 Month	22	
1-6 Months	17	
6-12 Months	11	
>12 Months	50	

Fifty percent of the respondents have been at their present job for over one year.

Table 11
Satisfaction With Present Job

Response	%	N=18
Yes	78	
No	22	

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents currently employed are satisfied with their present jobs.

Table 12
Financial Ability to Support Self

Response	%	N=25
Yes	76	
No	24	

Seventy-six percent of the respondents indicated the financial ability to support themselves. Of those who are currently employed, 94% are earning enough to support themselves.

For the majority of respondents, exercising truthfulness and honesty about their past has helped rather than hurt employment prospects. Considering the combination of negatives that might be in a person's past history this open approach is telling insofar that employment opportunities depend more on the here and now as opposed to being cursed by their prior indiscretions.

When honesty is compared to the ease reported in finding a job there can be no question in terms of realistic expectations in the labor market upon completion of the Teen Challenge program. Again, it must be emphasized that many had been around the track a few laps before entering this drug treatment program. The data suggest a major change in lifestyle following their experience with Teen Challenge of Chattanooga.

Table 13
Legal Status At Time of Entry

Response	%	N=25
Free	40	
Charges Pending	28	
Probation/Parole	32	

Sixty percent of the respondents were either under the jurisdiction of the court and subject to community supervision or had charges pending when entering Teen Challenge of Chattanooga.

Table 14
Current Legal Status

Response	%	N=25
Free	76	
Charges Pending	4	
Probation	4	
Parole	0	
Jail	16	

At the present time, 76% of the respondents are free of legal interference.

One of the measurements of success for any drug treatment program would be whether the drug habits of the individual changed over a period of time. The following charts and graphs attempt to illustrate responses to the question of current drug usage.

Table 15
Current Illegal Drug Use

Response	%	N=24
Illegal Drug Use	25	
Abstain	75	

Alumni were asked to describe their current drug use; 75% of those who graduated from Teen Challenge 1-15 years ago are abstaining from any use of illegal drugs. Of the 25% that are currently using drugs, none reported heavy use (at least one a day). Of the active users, one third use 1-2 times a week and two-thirds use drugs occasionally, at least once a month.

Table 16
Current Alcohol and Illegal Drug use

Response	%	N=24
Use alcohol &/or Drugs	33	
Abstain	67	

When measuring both alcohol and illegal drug use, 67% are currently abstaining. The majority of those using alcohol also use illegal drugs.

Table 17
Current use of Tobacco, Alcohol & Illegal Drugs

Response	%	N=24
Use of tobacco, alcohol &/or illegal drugs	46	
Abstain	54	

Closer examination of the responses with employment status reveals those claiming unemployment status are responsible for most of the drug activity represented. Several are multi-drug users.

Table 18
Relationship With Immediate Family Since Completing Teen Challenge of Chattanooga

Rating	Good	Fair	Poor	No change	
Parents	72	28	0	0	N=25
Spouse	62	15	0	23	N=13
Children	58	17	0	25	N=12

A review of responses in Fair/No Change responses matches those experiencing a relapse in the use of drugs.

Table 19
Church Attendance

Response	%	N=25
Regular	76	
Sometimes	8	
Seldom	8	
Never	8	

Table 20
Tithing Activity of Respondents

Response	%	N=25
Regular	48	
Sometimes	24	
Seldom	12	
Never	8	
N/R	8	

This question was asked to determine the level of religious discipline being applied in their daily life. The majority do tithe. Forty-eight percent tithe on a regular basis.

Table 21
Impact of Teen Challenge on Life

Response	%	N=25
Greatly	92	
Moderately	8	
Little	0	
Not at all	0	

Ninety-two percent of the respondents claim that Teen Challenge has had a great impact on their life.

Table 22
Has Born-Again Experience Helped The Individual
To Stay Off Drugs?

Response	%	N=25
Yes	80	
No	20	

The Teen Challenge approach to helping people with life controlling problems is built on the foundation that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is essential for long term success. Eighty percent of the respondents credit their conversion experience as a major influence in facing the temptations of drugs.

Table 23
Has the Individual Been Baptized In the Holy Spirit?

Response	%	N=25
Yes	80	
No	20	

Table 24
Has Baptism In The Holy Spirit Helped The
Individual to Stay Off Drugs?

Response	%	N=20
Yes	85	
No	15	

Eighty-five percent of those who have experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit credit this as a significant part in giving them the power to resist temptation to use drugs. The negative responses in this category are largely attributable to those currently experiencing difficulty with the law.

When asked if they would recommend Teen Challenge to others needing help, 100% of the respondents would recommend this Teen Challenge program to others.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The original purpose in conducting a survey of alumni was to determine what happens after their Teen Challenge experience and whether this program made a difference in their life. The data certainly would support final decision in the affirmative given individual and collective analyses. Indicators of success include employment with some level of stability, financial independence meaning that adult responsibilities are not imposed upon parents and friends, an absence of trouble with the police, an ability to enjoy freedom without condition or supervision, and little need for additional drug treatment once completing the Teen Challenge of Chattanooga program.

Critics will no doubt step forward and urge caution accepting these results given the role of religion in defining the Teen Challenge approach to the problem of drug abuse. Several factors stand ready to refute any direct challenge: First, the research was conducted and analyzed by an independent party skilled in the research process and conscious of ethical considerations when confronted with the problem of no response. Very simply, the highest standards were employed throughout this project so that focus and attention could rest with the findings and not surround methodological issues.

Secondly, it is clear from the data that very few are active or involved in alumni activities. Therefore, any suggestion that this survey reflects a stacked deck can be discounted by their lack of connection and the extreme difficulty in locating alumni. Thirdly, the detail contained within the responses will speak for itself! Not only were answers provided to the questions asked but commentary was oftentimes added in the margins and on the last page of the questionnaire which remained blank for this reason.

This report then represents a snapshot of lives touched and influenced by Teen Challenge of Chattanooga. A change in lifestyle is apparent, significant, and long-lasting. A dramatic change in attitude and behavior cannot be denied. As more attention focuses on drug treatment strategies in the future, as surely they will given recent passage of the 1994 Crime Bill, governments at all levels would benefit by examining the Teen Challenge model.

In closing, speaking now as a member of the Chattanooga community, I can say, based on the findings, that indeed we are better because of our having Teen Challenge of Chattanooga as a local resource and change agent for those struggling with drug addiction and self-destructive behavior patterns. More research needs to be done but the initial results are encouraging!

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