

## Leaders by Choice



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We are all products of the past but unless we choose to be so;  
we are not victims of the past.

- William Glasser, MD

*Leaders by Choice* is the title of my WGI certification project birthed from the Vital Foundation for Girls (VFG) project. VFG was created by Global Mosaic Malaysia to help young girls living at shelter homes (Rumahs) to make the right choices in life, to increase their self-esteem, to build character, and to develop their leadership qualities. The end goal of VFG is to transform the 15 teenagers from Rumahs into quality leaders and become change agents in their spheres of influence. These young girls were interviewed and handpicked for this VFG project. The main selection criteria were emotional maturity, leadership qualities, empathy for other girls, and the potential for growth.



Janice & VFG family!

The other participants in the VFG project were 6 trained Malaysian counselors in the role as mentors/coaches, and 6 USA mom-daughter teams to role model effective mother-daughter relationships. All the participants were grouped into six families.

Choice Theory/Reality Therapy (CTRT) provided the underlying principles underpinning the teachings to these Rumah girls and the interactions between intra-family and inter-families. This article is a snapshot that outlines the CTRT principles with a real-life illustration of "Amanda." The VFG project was undertaken from 14th – 18th Nov, 2012 at Golden Palm Tree Resort, Sepang, Selangor, Malaysia.

What ever happened in the past has everything to do with what we are today,  
but revisiting the painful past contributes little or nothing to improve the present relationship.

Choice Theory Axiom #5

These 15 Rumah girls have experienced some form of abuse – verbally, physically, and sexually. Some may have also witnessed abuse by one of their parents or adults in their family members. Some have addicted parents – with drug, alcohol, gambling or other forms of substance abuse. Some come from broken homes and are neglected by their parents.

These girls practiced external control and chose to blame their past and others for the situations in which they are living now. In doing so, they languish in their past and adopt a victim mentality in their perceived world. Such children choose to recount, remain in, and endure painful experiences. We taught the children that they are their own authors of their lives, no longer victims of any abusive situation, unless they choose to see themselves that way.

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## Case Study on Amanda

- A young girl staying at shelter with 50 other children.
- She has a roof over her head, food, clothes, and schooling.
- Social contact: social clubs and churches.
- Her mother has not visited her for several years.
- Her father is working in Kedah and does not see her regularly.
- She is angry, lonely, lost, unsure, insecure, and feels controlled by the Rumah workers.



Choice

The only person whose behavior we can control is our own.

### Choice Theory Axiom #1

I focused on [inviting] Amanda to make her own CHOICES. I used CT/RT as a teaching tool to psycho-educate and connected with Amanda to help her identify her Quality World pictures in order to satisfy her Basic Needs more effectively.

I continued to teach Amanda about internal control and Choice Theory:

I can't control others.

I can only control myself.

I can only change myself, respecting the choices made by others.

I am responsible for the consequences of my freely chosen behavior.

It is important for Amanda to learn that the only person she can control is her 'own' self. According to Dr. Glasser, the Quality World is the core of our lives, unique, how we like our lives to be. Amanda only shared her pictures with people whom she trusted and kept them from those she mistrusted. I introduced a safe place for Amanda to trust me and worked on building trust with her. I helped her explore her quality world by asking her some questions such as: *If you have a magic wand, what would you wish for? - How would you like to see yourself dealing with your present situation?* Self-evaluation: *Which is easier; controlling others or controlling yourself?*

We are driven by five genetic needs.

### Choice Theory Axiom #6

Glasser tells that we are always comparing our Quality World against our perceptions of the Real World [comparing what we now have]. When Amanda is matching her pictures, she is meeting her Basic Needs more effectively. She is more in balance and in more control of her life and, therefore, she experiences less pain. I also introduced the spiritual need because [many] human beings have this insatiable desire to connect to and worship God. I then helped her to work towards reviewing what she wants to fulfilling her needs in more effective ways.

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**Survival:** This need is a physiological need, which includes the need for food, shelter, and safety. Amanda was given a resort style bedroom, opportunity to fix her own burger and cupcake for lunch just the way she wanted it done. This included making her own glass of orange juice which she had never done before.

**Love & Belonging:** The need to love and belong in Amanda's picture includes the need for relationships, social connections, to give and receive affection, and to feel part of a group. I helped her to understand that the people in VFG cared for her, and that she has new friends. She is part of VFG and she belonged to VFG.

**Power:** Amanda wanted to join the adults in teaching the other kids. She thus gained recognition for her knowledge and she gained respect from the other children.

**Freedom:** I helped Amanda understand this need by teaching about choices and providing opportunities for her to explore options in responsible ways that does not deny others similar freedom.



**Fun:** Amanda met her fun needs through activities available at the resort such as kayaking, cycling, and playing Mah Jong with adults and kids at VFG.

**Spiritual:** Amanda met her spiritual needs through communication with God. She learnt God is the provider of her five basic needs. He looks after her and is an ever present help in trouble. She can depend on his promises and his ways. [Ed. note: Some people add a 'spiritual' need although Dr. Glasser teaches the basic five.]

### Conclusion

Amanda has improved her self-confidence and self-esteem since the first day at VFG. She has also learned to take responsibility and to make wise decisions for herself. She now shares her fears, dislikes, including her aspirations to be an excellent leader. As a mentor, I have committed to continue to help Amanda add pictures in her quality world to help her to be happier, by providing new information and experiences. I am hopeful that Amanda will continue to change her behaviors and also become a change agent to lead the other girls at the Rumahs in thinking about their behaviors and to try new ones to lead more effective lives.

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### About Global Mosaic Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.

Vital Foundation for Girls (VFG) was created by Global Mosaic Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., a training organization focusing on Conflict Management and Resolution, Leadership Development, Organizational and Personal Development, Personality Assessments, Counseling and People Helping Skills, and Life Coaching. Its vision is to equip leaders for the future.

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To view Vital Foundations for Girls video clip, please go to <http://globalmosaic.net/vital-foundations-for-girls-2012/> (Global Mosaic International, Inc., USA, is a non-profit organization.)