Try It Out and See If It Works

"Try it out" projects are good if you have an plan for how you can make something better than it is now. You will need to say how you think things will be better.

- Will it make people <u>feel</u> better?

- Will it change what people <u>think</u> or <u>believe</u>?

- Will it help people <u>know</u> more?

- Will it help people <u>do</u> something they could not do before?

Once you decide how you think the 'better way' will make a difference, you can pick a method that is good for finding that kind of change. You can ask people, watch and listen, or do a test. Then you can show others how well your project worked. This is sometimes called a "program evaluation."

Try it out.

It is important to plan what you will try out, so you do it right. When you try out your plan with different people or groups, you should carry it out the same way each time. If you do it a different way each time and it does not make things better, you will not know the reason why. Maybe the experience would have helped people if you did it the same way each time. So it is important to be consistent.

See if it works.

You can find out if what you try out makes a difference in three ways:

- You can <u>ask people</u> if it made a difference to how they feel or what they think or believe.

- You can <u>watch and listen</u> to find out if it makes a difference to what people do.

- You can <u>test</u> if it makes a difference to what people know or can do.

You can compare people who have or have not had an experience in two ways. We will call these methods

1. Before and After, and

2. Two Groups.

Before and After. Pretend you want to know if a workshop on stress helps people. You could use the 'before and after' method to find out. You can give people a test at the start of the day to find out how much they already know about stress and how to reduce it. Then you can give them a test at the end of the workshop to see what they learned. You can compare the number of answers they got right after class with the number right before class. If they got more right at the end than at the start, your workshop was helpful. If not, maybe it was too hard.

Two Groups. Another way to find out the same answer is to find people with the same learning ability and experience. Divide them into two groups at random. "At random" means that you do not put people into a group based on something about them, like their ability or age. For example, you could pick names out of a hat. One group gets the workshop on stress. The other group does not. Then give both groups the test about stress. You can compare their answers to see if the workshop makes a difference in what people know about stress and how to reduce it.

Sometimes people may know more just after they try something out, or feel better just after they try it out. But it may not change things in the long run. For example, people may know more about stress after the workshop than they did before. But they may not do any of the things they learned about to reduce their stress.

When you do a project, you will have to decide if you want to look at short term effects or long term effects of what you tried out. Which you pick depends on your research question.