

Holistic Retreat

Angel Faces was founded in 2003 to transform the lives of adolescent girls with severe, permanent facial burns and disfigurements.

The founder, Lesia Cartelli, envisioned an annual healing and skill-building retreat that would inspire and nurture a community of these girls so they could reach their optimum potential—to gain self-confidence, overcome the trauma of their injuries, conquer feelings of rejection and isolation, form meaningful friendships, and support each other.

During a seven-day residential retreat held in a private setting, the Angel Faces curriculum helps the girls:

- Identify trauma and loss issues
- Share and explore ways to facilitate emotional healing
- Express their struggles with the group through art therapy, journaling, and verbal expression in sessions led by two licensed psychologists
- Challenge blocking beliefs about themselves that may be limiting their lives.

The program also features sessions focused on the care and attention of the physical aspects of being a maturing young woman and skill-building practice:

- Personal instruction for applying corrective cosmetics
- Acceptance of self-image through massage and facial treatments
- How to handle staring
- Coping with difficult situations
- Goal setting and action planning.

Angel Faces is a retreat that truly focuses on the healing process within a holistic framework of mind, body, and spirit expressed in a safe environment.



A soft place to fall ...



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Angel Faces®

A Holistic Retreat for Adolescent Girls Recovering from Burn Injuries

Introductions and Methods

The primary aim of this study was to assess factors that might enhance the psychosocial adjustment of adolescent females with severe burn injuries and facial disfigurements after participating in a seven-day residential retreat.

Twenty-one girls attended the retreat and they were asked to voluntarily participate in answering questionnaires that would help to understand what effects the retreat had on their overall well-being. Participants were asked to complete the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, the Trait Hope Scale, the Children's Depression Scale, and the Children's Dermatology Life Quality Index.

Further, they were asked to answer some qualitative questions about any changes they have observed in themselves. Data was collected pre- and post-retreat.

Results

All twenty-one girls (n=21) completed the pre- and post-tests. To determine differences between pre- and post-retreat, repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. Results revealed significant differences ($p > .05$) on three measures:

- Analysis of the Trait Hope Scale were significant ($F=10.24$, $p=0.005$) indicating increases in hope of participant between pre-retreat ($M=53.24$, $SD=7.25$) and post-retreat ($M=56.05$, $SD=6.65$).
- Analysis of the Children's Depression Scale were significant ($F=7.01$, $p=0.01$) indicating decreases in depressive symptoms between pre-retreat ($M=8.62$, $SD=1.57$) and post-retreat ($M=6.00$, $SD=1.40$). The decrease in depressive symptoms indicates a positive result.



- Analysis of the Children's Dermatology Life Quality Index were significant ($F=9.10$, $p=0.007$). Quality of life scores decreased between pre-retreat $M=7.16$, $SD=1.07$, and post-retreat, $M=4.36$, $SD=0.99$, which indicates an increase in quality of life.
- Analysis of the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale were not significant ($F=3.51$, $p=0.08$) indicating little changes between pre-retreat ($M=22.33$, $SD=1.18$) and post-retreat ($M=23.72$, $SD=1.12$).



Conclusions

- 1) The data suggest that most participants reported feeling an increased sense of hope, an increased quality of life, and decreases in depressive symptoms from pre- to post-retreat.
- 2) Offering a seven-day retreat that is focused on a holistic framework approach of mind, body, and spirit can help young girls cope and heal from their trauma.
- 3) Further research is needed to develop appropriate interventions to enhance psychosocial adjustment in adolescent female survivors of severe burn injuries.



... a solid foundation ...

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Angels in Flight

Post-retreat, the Angels in Flight is a program offers the girls a virtual support system. Taking advantage of technology, the girls attend monthly "themed" programs planned according to the time of year and challenges the girls face.

For example, August finds the girls preparing for school, which for many can be a traumatic re-entry. October's Halloween session is especially important to help the girls through what might be a difficult time of year. Advice, direction, skill-reinforcement, encouragement, and coaching are provided by appropriate experts—and the girls themselves.

Angels in Flight is not only a powerful learning tool, but it is also the means to ...

- Continue the connection between the girls and Angel Faces
- Build community among the girls themselves
- Groom informal leaders within the growing community—allowing Angel Faces to strengthen its ongoing support to retreat attendees
- Develop girls who might be hesitant to attend the retreat because of self-esteem, travel, or physical issues, to connect more gradually until they are ready to fully engage.



The retreat experience and Angels in Flight program are poised for expansion and growth. There are many more girls who need the real-life, practical skill-building, and coaching Angel Faces provides.

From the Voices of Angels



"My dreams can be fulfilled."
"There are girls going through the same issues that I am going through."

"My feelings are okay, I am not alone. Everyone has stuff to deal with in their lives. Move up, move forward!"

"I have Points of Power, I can stand tall and be proud of who I am."

"Accept it and move on. I know that what happened is better for me. I'm trying to help my family get through the hardships because now I know how."

"I have become a happier person. After the first retreat, I saw a change in my personality. Now it shines."

"I have changed the way I see myself—inside and out."

"Trust the process and open myself up to everything we were doing. Being open-minded was what helped me heal and grow and not hold emotions in."



"I take staring different. I realize that people are concerned or curious, so I don't always have a bad attitude towards it."

"Be a lot more confident in what I do and don't worry as much about what other people might think."

"Angel Faces, because I knew you, I have been changed for good. I can confidently say, this was an amazing experience that every teenage girl from the U.S.A., Mexico, and Canada should experience!"

... for growth.