

# Youth empowered



At 17, Dale Beaumont experienced one of life's greatest tragedies, the death of his brother. Six years on, the 23 year old has overcome the loss, pain and guilt associated with the accident to become the co-founder and general manager of an international youth development company, Empower U.

MEAGAN JONES REPORTS

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Around the same time Dale lost his brother, his childhood friend, Brent Williams, also encountered a life-altering event. Two weeks after his HSC he was held at gun point outside a local nightclub.

To cope with the loss of his brother, Dale, a natural born sportsman, threw himself into his Competitive Sports Aerobics training and went on to become Australia's youngest male to compete at the top level. While the next two years saw him achieve much both academically and in his chosen sport, he realised he had not yet dealt with his brother's death. He teamed up with Brent to study various fields of personal development and find some answers to his questions.

"My personal development studies

helped me understand that Lee's death was something I had no control over. When people lose someone close to them there's a sense of guilt and responsibility that maybe they contributed in some way to what happened. Through some of the programs I did, I was able to distance myself from that and understand that it wasn't something I needed to hold onto and feel guilty about. Also that it's ok, that everyone has things happen to them in their lives but it's not what happens to us that's really important, it's how we choose to respond that determines our level of success or failure.

"Once I discovered that, I made the decision that I still wanted to do a lot of things in my life and that I didn't want this to be something that was

going to hold me back. I wanted to be able to look back on my life and say I did, rather than I wish I had. I think a lot of times when people have things happen in their lives they use it as an excuse as to why they don't do what they really want to do. So instead of using it as an excuse I was able to use it as a motivator, to help me to get where I wanted to go a lot faster."

While the boys found the development studies empowering, they realised it wasn't really tailored for young people so began to write their own program specifically targeting 13 to 21 year olds. The result was the founding of international company Tomorrow's Youth and the acclaimed youth program, Empower U.

Since its humble beginnings in a

backyard garage, Dale and Brent have now worked with over 5,000 teenagers, teaching them practical life skills not focused on in school and helping them discover what they want out of life and how to overcome any obstacles holding them back.

Dale says the major issue facing young people today is the sense of being overwhelmed with the sheer number of options and choices available to them. "If we go back 30, 40, 50 years ago, people went to school then they'd go out and get an apprenticeship or join the general workforce or go to university and then get a job and they'd probably work in the same job for 30 or 40 years, buy a house, get married, have some kids and retire with a pension. That was pretty much their life.

"Now there are so many different options and choices for young people, they can't even see their life more than a month in advance let alone in 10, 20, 30 years. I think that being overwhelmed really causes a lot of stress, a lot of pressure and also causes a lot of the other problems we see today. It really comes down to a lack of direction. They



don't really know what they want and they don't have a clear plan of what they want to achieve and other distractions come up like drugs and alcohol and fast cars. All these different things we hear in the media are symptoms of a deeper, underlying issue. Young people today are really overwhelmed and don't know what they want to do with their life." Dale believes traditional education needs to be combined with the teaching of practical life skills like goal setting, communication, leadership, money management and problem solving if tomorrow's youth are going to be successful in tomorrow's society. "Academic success alone, while very important, isn't necessarily going to guarantee you a successful future," says Dale. "You can have all the top marks — and unfortunately there's a lot of pressure from schools and parents to perform academically — but come out lacking the skills and that's why one third of all people who start university drop out within the first six months. "They have the academic skills to get them into university, but often don't have the emotional skills or the maturity or mindset necessary to survive in an environment like university where often there are no rules and there are no specific objectives to meet. It's more a case of personal leadership and there are a lot of young people going into university, especially at this time of year, who lack those skills and hence they face a lot of challenges." Following the success of their program in Australia, Dale and Brent decided to tap into the Asian market and see if their program could cross the cultural

barriers to help the youth of Singapore. They found that when it comes down to it, teenagers are basically the same the world over. "I think the same principles apply worldwide. At the end of the day, everyone on the planet wants to have the most amazing life they can and a lot of times we hide behind different masks to avoid appearing vulnerable. When you can brake down some of those defences, it gets them to open up and think about who they really are and what they really want." Dale says the most rewarding aspect of their work is seeing the transformation in the lives of the teenagers they work with. "We had a couple of teenagers say they were on the verge of committing suicide, that they'd had enough of the world and were literally at a point where they wanted to die and the program helped them to completely turn their life around. We've had a young person come through our program who is now worth \$1.5 million, we've had another guy who started three health food shops, we've had a girl who started a skin care business and a girl who finished her high school certificate with a 99.3 UAI. So we've had academic successes, financial successes, relationship successes and emotional successes and that's what really drives us now." For parents or teenagers interested in Empower U, Dale and Brent will be running the two-day program in Brisbane in April. For more information check out their website at [www.tomorrowsyouth.com.au](http://www.tomorrowsyouth.com.au) or call 1300 732 782.

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