

# An Exploration of Youth Engagement in a Community – Based Program for Mental Health Promotion

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# FACULTY DISCLOSURE

The presenters of this session have NOT had any relevant financial relationships during the past 12 months.



# CONFERENCE RESOURCES

Slides and handouts shared by our conference presenters are available on <https://www.integratedcareconference.com/> and on the conference mobile app.

All sessions will be recorded and posted to <https://integratedcarelearning.talentlms.com/> shortly following the conference.



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this session, based on the results of this study, the participant will be able to:

1. Identify the features of a community – based program for mental health promotion for young people that promote or discourage participation.
2. Identify common experiences of those young people who engage in the program.
3. Reflect on the potential need for welcoming, community-based, safe spaces for this population within their own community.

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# PUBLISHED ARTICLE

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# RATIONALE

## Adolescent and Youth Mental Health

- 10% to 20% of children and adolescents experience mental disorders (WHO)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  of all mental illnesses develop by mid 20s (WHO, 2015)

Young people with a mental health issue often do not seek services (Salaheddin & Mason, 2016).



# RATIONALE

## Mental Health Service Use Concerns

- Lengthy wait times
- Many youth feel uncomfortable to go
- Often do not attend



# BACKGROUND AND SETTING

2012

Small city in Atlantic Canada

Strengths-based intervention

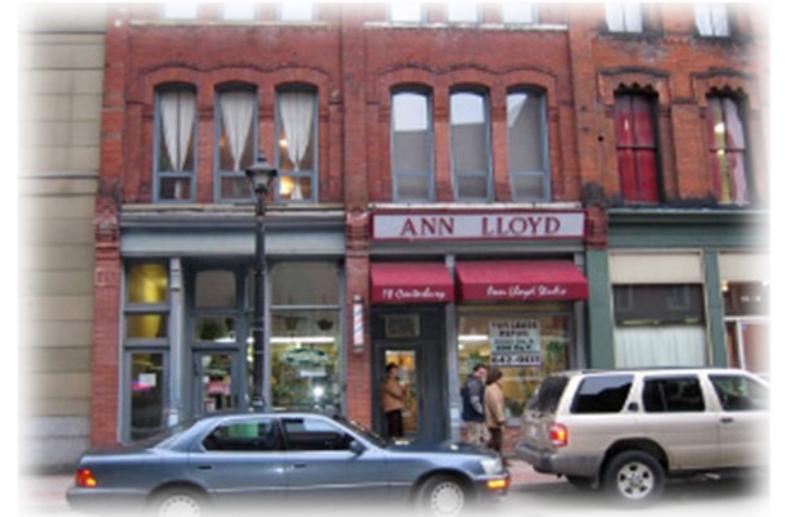
For 16 to 29 years



# BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Conveniently located in an older building in the city hub

Designed to be an innovative community model for expansion across the province (Riley & Hawe, 2006)



# BACKGROUND AND SETTING

A drop-in, community-based psychosocial mental health centre that focused on:

- Recovery through education
- Engagement
- Goal setting
- Enhancing positive social relationships to improve emotional, social, and psychological well-being.



# BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Members self-refer, self-identify & self-define their mental health concern.

Part of the local community mental health program.

Staff complement included mental health clinicians, peer support workers and clerical staff.



# RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the features of the program that promote or discourage participation?



# STUDY OVERVIEW

## Qualitative Study

- Narrative Inquiry
- Open ended questions focused on participants telling their story of why they came to the Centre, their experiences, and what affected their continued attendance.
- Thematic Analysis

REB approval

Funded by health authority



# RECRUITMENT

## Recruitment Plan:

- Posters, social media, text, e-mail, and word of mouth from clinicians
- Plan: 16-20 individuals
  - Mix of regular attenders and dropouts



# RECRUITMENT

## Result:

- 10 Participants
  - 6 males and 4 females
  - Aged 19 to 29 years.
  - Were or had been attending Centre regularly
  - Unable to recruit members who dropped out



# WHO ATTENDS



Photo by kira schwarz from Pexels

## Feeling Isolated: Feeling alone and/ or unprotected

Um, it's really **anxiety provoking for me to go out**. I have really bad **agoraphobia** and if it weren't for school and work I wouldn't go out. I tend not to go out anyway. ...**I lost all my independence** and I was **slowly isolated from the friends** that I did have because of **how abusive my ex was**. But once I made some more friends, you know, things, at [the CENTRE], things went really well for me. (P 10)



# WHO ATTENDS



Photo by Liza Summer from Pexels

## Traumatized: Life has been devastating

[A family relative] **slammed this great big metal horse swing... into the back of my head** and... my dad told me stories about him and this other buddy, **head butting me as a game when they were drinking** as if to cause brain damage [when I was 2 years old].  
(P 2)

# Findings: Engagement Categories, Themes, and Subthemes

## I. TURNING POINT: REASONS FOR COMING

1. Motivated to Work on Goals: *Pushing themselves to meet their goals*

## II. FACILITATORS OF ENGAGEMENT AND BEYOND

1. Creating a Safe Space: *A comfortable place to be*
2. Building Trust: *I feel safe, secure and not judged*
3. Encouraging Growth: *Helping to push my boundaries*
4. Helping Members Connect: *Making new friends*
5. Helping to Transition Forward: *I'm working on my goals now*

## III. CHALLENGES TO ENGAGEMENT

1. Centre Focused: *Staff Overlooked their Responsibilities to the Members*
  - a. Members concerned about confidentiality: *Feeling exposed*
  - b. Members feeling judged: *Am I being rejected? Why Do I Deserve That?*
  - c. How the staff engage is critical: *Being prepared for change*
2. Participant Centered Challenges
  - a. Challenges of Member Dynamics: *Who and how many members attend make a difference*
  - b. Personal Struggles: *My own stuff affects my going to the CENTRE*
3. External Factors: *Weather, Finances, and Physical Space: Things beyond my control get in the way of my going there*

## IV. BENEFITS OF ATTENDING: FINDING MY WAY

1. Feeling Safe and Developing Trust: *The CENTRE is there for me*
2. Building Community
  - a. Enhancing Interpersonal and Life Skills: *Feeling more positive and confident with people.*
  - b. Finding Someone Like me: *Realizing that I am not the only one with a mental health issue.*
3. Process of Building a Way Forward; A Purposeful Life
  - a. Building a Truer Understanding of Me: *Growing to Like Myself*
  - b. Finding Purpose and Giving Back: *Doing something positive for myself and others*
  - c. Feeling Hope and Setting Goals for the Future: *Looking forward to a more positive future*
  - d. Taking control/ Feeling Empowered: *I am able to do things differently*
  - e. Developing Insight into the Effects of Attending: *If I hadn't gone, I think I'd be in a really bad place.*

# Category I:

## Turning Point: Reasons for Coming

### Theme 1: Motivated to Work on Goals: *Pushing themselves to meet their goals*

...it helped me in a way **to just be, live for myself** and like do things on my own and like.... And just **independently go there to make myself better** rather than have all these people above me direct me and make me go to all these places.... **Like I wanted to get better** and I wanted something, **I needed all the resources I could get.** (P 9)

# Category II:

## Facilitators of Engagement and Beyond

### Theme 1: Creating a Safe Space: *A comfortable place to be*

I needed it because I didn't have work to go to, you know what I mean, **I had nowhere else to go that was positive**, you know what I mean? ... the people like the guests **there can really bump up my self-esteem a lot**. I find I get a lot of compliments there from the staff too, you know what I mean, that I don't... that I never really got at work when I had that mental breakdown... (P 4)

# Category II:

## Facilitators of Engagement and Beyond

### Theme 2: Building Trust: *I feel safe, secure and not judged*

She's a good woman [staff member], you know like, just that instant, you know, like, when you are there you **feel really safe and secure** and you know it's confidential, you know, **she's really trustworthy**. She's, she's like your own personal shrink. It's really cool and she's helped me out through a lot of stuff. (P 6)

# Category II:

## Facilitators of Engagement and Beyond

### Theme 3: Encouraging Growth: *Helping to push my boundaries*

So when I was going to [the CENTRE], you know **the cravings went away**. The drugs are no longer in my life now, **I just want to turn my life around...** then when I started doing better, like where I am at right now, at the group home, **when I started going to [the CENTRE] and I enjoyed it**, I stopped hanging around with those friends. (P 1)

# Category II:

## Facilitators of Engagement and Beyond

### Theme 4: Helping Members Connect: *Making new friends*

Yeah, just, hmm, just really vibes from, cause ... if someone [in art room] was drawing there and I was drawing here and we had our right side of our brains working, you'd stop for a second, be oh, hi, I'm [name]. **And you'd start conversation and make a new friend. ... your energies kind of collide a little bit and you make a friend. (P 9)**

# Category II:

## Facilitators of Engagement and Beyond

### Theme 5: Helping to Transition Forward: *I'm working on my goals now*

[The staff were] trying to nudge me, cause I more often than not, kind of just, like, see something on the resume or something like that and worry. And they'll be like, 'it's probably nothing. **Try it anyways'**. **So it's like, ok, so it's a little confidence boost, while, while giving me a push** (chuckles) off the diving board that I need sometimes... Cause I get nervous, well and a bit of a procrastinator at the same time. **So, it's good for that, that they're good to kind of give me a nudge** (P 7)

# Category III:

## Challenges to Engagement

**Theme 1: Centre Focused: *Staff Overlooked their Responsibilities to the Members***

### Subthemes:

- a. Members concerned about confidentiality: *Feeling exposed*
- b. Members feeling judged: *Am I being rejected? Why do I deserve that?*
- c. How staff engage is crucial: *Being prepared for change*

# Category III:

## Challenges to Engagement

**Theme 1: Centre Focused: *Staff Overlooked their Responsibilities to the Members***

**Subtheme C: How staff engage is crucial: *Being prepared for change***

It's hard to adapt to changes at the CENTRE when **I don't know what's happening...**I was getting to know this person and now there's someone else.... **I don't really adapt to change all that well (P 7)**

# Category III:

## Challenges to Engagement

### Theme 2: Participant Centered Challenges

#### Subthemes:

- a. Challenges of Member Dynamics: *Who and how many members attend make a difference*
- b. Personal Struggles: *My own stuff affects my going to the CENTRE*

# Category III:

## Challenges to Engagement

### Theme 2: Participant Centered Challenges

#### Subtheme B: Personal Struggles: *My own stuff affects my going to the CENTRE*

but, now I think I was just shocked, reclusive state of mind that I just didn't really reach out for help as much as I should...parents split, girlfriend left, few family members passed away...just little by little bit, like brick by brick stuff, that just...I don't know, affected me deeply at the time (P 7)

# Category III:

## Challenges to Engagement

**Theme 3: External Factors: Weather, Finances and Physical Space:**  
*Things beyond my control get in the way of my going there*

Whenever I can. I haven't been going for a while because I lived at [place] with Mom and Dad. *[If this person did not have a ride], it was a "4 ½ hour walk" to get to the CENTRE.*  
(P 6)

# Category IV:

## **Benefits of Attending: Finding My Way**

### **Theme 1: Feeling safe and Developing Trust: THE CENTRE is there for me**

I gave a little information, like very little, **to see if I can trust them...** I just stopped talking to certain people, a couple people I really liked cause they, **they were trusting, they were trustworthy, they earned it...I don't trust anyone.** That's me personally, that's how I grew up.  
(P 5)

# Category IV:

## Benefits of Attending: Finding My Way

### Theme 2: Building Community

#### Subthemes:

- a. Enhancing Interpersonal and Life Skills: *Feeling more positive and confident with people*
- b. Finding Someone Like me: *Realizing that I am not the only one with a mental health issue*

# Category IV:

## Benefits of Attending: Finding My Way

### Theme 2: Building Community

#### Subtheme B: Finding Someone Like me: *Realizing that I am not the only one with a mental health issue*

I was really timid and a little bit scared and hesitant and just anxiety ridden really... trying to meet all the people, get their names, but I was excited to be in like, a room full of people with other mental illnesses and stuff and even some had opiate addictions and I've never met anybody with an opiate addiction before (P9)

# Category IV:

## Benefits of Attending: Finding My Way

### Theme 3: Process of Building A Way Forward: *A Purposeful Life*

#### Subthemes:

- a. Building a Truer Understanding of Me: *Growing to Like Myself*
- b. Finding Purpose and Giving Back: *Doing something positive for myself and others*
- c. Feeling Hope and Setting Goals for the Future: *Looking forward to a more positive future*
- d. Taking control and Feeling Empowered: *I am able to do things differently*
- e. Developing Insight into the Effects of Attending: *If I hadn't gone, I think I'd be in a really bad place*

# Category IV:

## Benefits of Attending: Finding My Way

### Theme 3: Process of Building a Way Forward: *A Purposeful Life*

#### Subtheme C: Feeling Hope and Setting Goals for the Future: *Looking forward to a more positive future*

Yeah. I mean it gives me a sense of hope for my own future. And a lot of times we talk about goals at [the CENTRE], like, just goals for life, you know. It's really fun to get to talk about your life goals. And it's really neat to see how things actually pan out. (P 10)

# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Many youth experience multiple mental health challenges.

All participants experienced **significant trauma**.



# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED

There is a clear need for more **welcoming, community-based, safe spaces** that promote *trust, encourage growth* and a *sense of belonging*.

**Trauma-informed and healing centered engagement** approaches to care could be integrated throughout the mental health system.



# THANK YOU!



# SESSION EVALUATION

Use the CFHA mobile app to complete the evaluation for this session.

