Exploring the value of a therapeutic recreation intervention designed to support youth identity and narrative reconstruction in mental health services

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Today....

- Introductions
- Principles of Recovery
- Overview of Adolescent Mental Health
  **what makes them a unique population**
- Evidenced Based Program
  - A slide BYBS Original Program
- Wrap-up, Questions & Evaluation
**Lauren Cripps**

Lauren Cripps is preparing to defend her PhD at Brock University, where she has been teaching Therapeutic Recreation for the past 7 years.

Lauren’s doctoral work has focused on the role of therapeutic recreation in mental health services for adolescents.

Lauren’s areas of interest include the role of leisure in recovery from mental illness; recovery oriented therapeutic recreation practice; positive psychology; the therapeutic use of animals; and innovative therapeutic recreation program design.

Lauren's research is inspired by her four children and co-created with Dr. Colleen Hood.
Colleen Hood

Colleen Hood is a professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Brock University. Colleen's areas of interest include leisure and well-being; leisure and recovery; trauma-informed therapeutic recreation practice; recovery-oriented care for people with mental health issues; and the role of leisure in coping and adaptation.

Colleen is a registered psychotherapist, she trained at Toronto Institute for Relational Psychotherapy.

Colleen Hood and Cynthia Carruthers are co-authors of the Leisure and Well-Being Model of Therapeutic Recreation!
Principles of the Recovery Model
Living well with mental illness

“...the establishment of a fulfilling, meaningful life and positive sense of identity founded on hopefulness and self-determination”

(Andresen, Oades, & Caputi, 2003, p. 588)
Recovery is NOT...

1. Recovery is **NOT** a linear path the way it is often described in the literature
2. Recovery is **NOT** synonymous with cure!
3. Recovery is **NOT** an outcome
4. Recovery is **NOT** a return to our premorbid state
5. Recovery is **NOT** a pre-measured recipe, it is a process of trial and error. It involves taking risks and being vulnerable enough to embrace change
Elements of Recovery

1. Accepting illness
2. Managing symptoms
3. Resuming control and responsibility over one’s life
4. Renewing sense of hope and commitment
5. Re-defining sense of self (establishing a positive identity)
6. Experiencing positive emotions and satisfaction
7. Being involved in meaningful activities
8. Exercising citizenship and sense of agency
9. Overcoming stigma
1. Accepting illness

- Accepting illness is integral to engaging with the process of recovery.
- Facilitates the reduction of internal tensions
- Allows opportunity to (re)build a positive identity
- Provides space for an identity that includes but is not defined by illness
2. Managing symptoms

Involves both biological and psychological interventions, most often supported by primary physician as well as allied health professionals

• Pharmaceutical intervention
• Coping skills
3. Resuming control and responsibility over one’s life

What is the life you want? What do you need to do to get there?

• The only person making decisions to move forward is the client...commitment to self is necessary, we often have more control then we give ourselves credit for
• Recognize that change is hard, but possible
• Small achievements facilitate the possibility of bigger ones
Hope is central to the process of recovery, without it, we cannot believe in the possibility of a better life!

- Clients are often ambiguous or resistant to the term – our role is to help them connect to the sense of help (and spirituality) that they are already demonstrating.
5. Re-defining sense of self

Discovering and connecting to a new story of self...

• Positive identity formation

• Must include illness without being defined by it

• Best facilitated by the engagement in meaningful activities that give purpose outside of medical appointments and reminders of chronic symptoms
Positive emotion fosters resiliency, which is central to navigating adolescence.

Positive emotion builds enduring resources and is, to some extent, within the control of the client.
Finding out what we like, what we’re good at and what makes us feel good is the starting point for living well

• Meaningful activities facilitate:
  – A sense of purpose in everyday life
  – Connections with others
  – Distraction for everyday challenges
  – Resiliency
8. Exercising citizenship and sense of agency

Client's need the opportunity to feel as if they make an important contribution to our community and a difference in other people’s lives.

- Individuals that demonstrate altruism on a regular basis tend to describe a greater sense of meaning in their lives to experience greater levels of happiness overall.
9. Overcoming stigma

Connects back to positive identity formation

- Social stigma
- SELF STIGMA
- Stigma facilitated by our health care providers!
Overview of Adolescent Mental Health
Recovery in the adolescent life stage is a journey of self-development that still encompasses the complex characteristics of change as reviewed BUT...

...In addition to recovery related needs,

**EFFECTIVE ADOLESCENT SERVICES MUST ALSO INCORPORATE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS INNATE TO THE POPULATION**
What does that look like?

IN ADDITION TO THE KEY ASPECTS OF RECOVERY...

1. Accepting illness
2. Managing symptoms
3. Resuming control and responsibility over one’s life
4. Renewing sense of hope and commitment
5. Re-defining sense of self (establishing a positive identity)
6. Experiencing positive emotions and satisfaction
7. Being involved in meaningful activities
8. Exercising citizenship & sense of agency
9. Overcoming stigma

THERE ARE KEY DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS IN ADOLESCENCE...

1. Identity
2. Autonomy
3. Intimacy
4. Sexuality
5. Achievement
How are adolescent development and recovery connected?

Adolescent Development

- Identity
- Autonomy
- Intimacy
- Sexuality
- Achievement

Recovery

- Managing symptoms
- Accepting illness
- Resuming control over and responsibility for one’s life
- Renewing sense of hope and commitment
- Redefining sense of self
- Experiencing positive emotions and satisfaction as a result of engagement in life activities
- Being involved in meaningful activities and having expanded social roles
- Exercising citizenship/sense of agency
- Overcoming stigma

Leisure
Therapeutic Recreation uses interventions that enhance the value of leisure and develop resources that support living well with mental illness.

**Broad Goals of TR for Adolescents:**

1. To engage in purposeful free time activities that support achieving development tasks (identity, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality and achievement).

2. To support the development of capacities necessary for navigating mental illness and recovery.
1. Engagement in purposeful free time activities

Purposeful engagement in free time experiences can lead to:

1. Increased motivation
2. Effective coping strategies
3. Increased positive emotion
4. Cultivation of personal strengths and capacities
5. Opportunities to develop friendships and social connections
6. Enhanced sense of competency
7. Opportunities for self-development
8. Exercising autonomy through CHOICE
2. Development of recovery related capacities

- To increase emotional regulation and tolerance for discomfort
- To support one’s connection to hope and optimism
- To engage in purposeful self-care practices
- To foster self awareness and self acceptance leading to a positive identity
- To enhance social skills and self-confidence
- To foster a sense of community
- create opportunities to be of service and develop valued social roles
Structure of the Program

- **Section I**: Understanding Narrative and the Role of Re-Storying in Living Well
- **Section II**: Exploring and Discovering Personal Strengths
- **Section III**: Using Strengths Daily to Create a Preferred Life
- **Section IV**: Creating a Strengths–Based Narrative
Overview of Adult Program...

Understanding Narrative
1. Introduction to Narrative
2. Looking at Both Sides of the Story

Discovering Strengths
3. Incorporating Strengths into Your Story
4. Multiple Intelligences
5. Colors of Personality
6. Discovering Strengths through Leisure

Using Strengths
7. Examining Leisure Interests
8. Using Leisure to Express and Develop Strengths

Creating Strengths-Based Narratives
9. Creating Strengths-Based Alternative Stories
10. Setting Values Based Goals
11. Turning Lemons into Lemonade
12. Putting It All Together
Translated to Adolescents...

Understanding Narrative
1. Introduction to Narrative and Acceptance
2. The Tree of Life – Looking at both sides of the story

Discovering Strengths
3. Incorporating Strengths into Your Story
4. Strengths! Multiple Intelligences & Colours of Personality
5. Discovering Strengths through Leisure

**Using Strengths**

Creating Strengths-Based Narratives
6. Creating Strengths-Based Alternative Stories
7. Turning Lemons into Lemonade
8. Wrapping it all up!
Greater detail regarding the program will be provided during the session – We thank you for your understanding!

**Please Note ALL SLIDES containing program images or specific details of sessions have been removed from the Delegate handouts due to a publishing agreement for the Be Your Best Self Program...**
Session 1: Introducing Narrative and Acceptance

The purpose of this session is to introduce clients to the program, to each other, and to the general concept of narrative. In addition, it is important in this session to engage clients in the idea of shifting narrative so that they will want to continue in the program.

Session Goals:

- To facilitate understanding of the purpose and expectations of the Be Your Best Self Program.
- To facilitate understanding of the concepts of life story and narrative.
- To facilitate understanding of the concept of acceptance.
Session 2: 
The Tree of Life - Looking at Both Sides of the Story

The purpose of this session is to encourage clients to consider dominant and alternative stories and the impact of how they think about their own life experiences. In addition, clients will experience the process of identifying how illness or disability affects them (dominant story of limitation) and how they can start to look for alternative aspects of the story (strengths discovered as a result of challenge).

Session Goals:

- To facilitate understanding of the concepts of dominant and alternative stories.
- To facilitate awareness of strengths associated with illness/challenge.
Session 3: Incorporating strengths into your story

The purpose of this session is for clients to complete the second half of the tree of life activity (started in previous session). In addition, clients will begin to explore (brainstorm) what strengths are and why they are important to identify.

Session Goals:

- To facilitate understanding of the concepts of strengths.
- To facilitate awareness of the benefits of using strength in daily life.
- To facilitate awareness of personal strengths.
Session 4: Strengths! Exploring the Multiple Intelligences and Colours of Personality

The purpose of this session is for clients to understand the theory of and evaluate the results of their multiple intelligences scale and colours of personality scales. In addition, clients will be given the opportunity to connect these results back to activities which might support highlighting their strengths.

Session Goals:

- To facilitate awareness of multiple intelligences
- To facilitate awareness of colours of personality
- To facilitate awareness of personal areas of strengths
Session 5: Discovering your strengths through looking at leisure

The purpose of this session is for clients to understand what leisure is, and the value it holds. In addition, clients will have the opportunity to connect personal strengths to preferred leisure activities.

Session Goals:

- To facilitate awareness of the concept of leisure
- To facilitate awareness of personal strengths associated with preferred leisure activities
Session 6: Creating strengths based alternative stories

The purpose of this session is to begin to describe their best self, through highlighting the strengths and capacities previously discussed and support the development of a “strengths based alternative story”.

Session Goals:

- To facilitate awareness of the role of alternative stories in living well
- To facilitate understanding of the concept of best life possible
- To facilitate awareness of the importance of thinking about what one wants their life to look like
Session 7: Making lemonade out of lemons

The purpose of this session is to give clients the opportunity to understand the role of growth as a result of challenge. This session connects back to acceptance of circumstance and the development of hope for the possibility that something good can result from challenge.

Session goals:

- To facilitate awareness of the definition of post traumatic growth (PTG)
- To facilitate awareness of self-discoveries arising from difficult life events
Session 8: Wrapping it all up!

The purpose of this session is to review the process of the program and connect the sessions together. This session will provide clients with the opportunity to explore the overarching concepts of the program and summarize what they have learned.

Session Goals:

- To facilitate awareness of the scope of the Be your best self-program
- To facilitate the ability to summarize what has been learned
Questions?

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Our Life Story...

“Life hangs on a narrative thread. This thread is a braid of stories that informs us about who we are and where we come from and where we might go.” (Anne Pellowksi, 1977)

• Being human involves creating meaning and using language to shape personal experiences into stories, or narratives.

• The sense of having a personal identity starts with the act of storying our experiences in the world so that they can be shared with others and reflected on for new self-understanding.

• When we become narrators of our own stories, we produce a sense of self that joins us with others and permits us to look back selectively to our past and shape ourselves for the possibilities of an imagined future.

• We have stories that we tell about specific events in life (micro-narrative) and we have the overall story of our life which is made up of a set of smaller stories. This larger narrative is referred to as self-narrative.

Acceptance helps to reduce what one experiences as negative in everyday life

The process of acceptance focuses primarily on the feeling aspect of experiences

The way we tell the story of our life and our ability to practice acceptance can determine our ability to move forward life with hope and positivity!

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Strategies for Acceptance:
1. Letting feelings or thoughts happen without the impulse to act on them.
2. Observe your weaknesses but take note of your strengths.
3. Give yourself permission to not be good at everything.
4. Acknowledge the difficulty in your life without escaping from it or avoiding it.
5. Realize that you can be in control of how you react, think and feel.
Once upon a time what happened did happen - and if it had not, I wouldn't be able to tell this story...

Imagine if there was a way you could take back the power your thoughts and feelings had over you, that was less exhausting than arguing with how you DON'T want to feel?

If there was another way to relate to your painful thoughts and feelings, would you be willing to try it?

Thinking about your own journey thus far, please complete the following sentences on the back of this page...
The thoughts I'd most like to get rid of are:

The feelings I'd most like to get rid of are:

The sensations I'd like to get rid of are:

The things I've tried to distract myself:

Things I've avoided to keep myself from feeling bad are:

Did my efforts help painful thoughts and feelings LONG TERM?

If there was another way to relate to your painful thoughts and feelings, would you be willing to try it?