A Place to Belong:
Reflecting on the development, implementation, and assessment of a psychoeducational/support group pilot program for female ABI survivors

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Presentation Outline

- Meet SARBI
- Why women’s programming?
- Putting the pilot program together
- Implementation: Here we go!
- Assessing the SARBI Women’s Program (SWP) Pilot
  - Formative evaluation plan
- What’s next?
  - SWP
  - Moving female ABI programming forward
The Saskatchewan Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured (SARBI)

- Helping survivors of moderate to severe ABI realize the best possible quality of life through ongoing support and psychosocial rehabilitation.

Why Women’s Programming?

- Research literature
  - (see, for example, Bay, Sikorskii, & Saint-Arnault, 2009; Colantonio et al., 2010; Howes, Edwards, & Benton, 2005; Harris et al., 2012; Mukherjee, Reis, & Heller, 2003; Tarconish, 2011; Trudel, 2006)
- Professional experience
- Client need

“We Need a Place to be With Other Women”
  – SWP participant
Developing the SARBI Women’s Program

• Program Philosophy (Guiding Principles):
  ▫ Holistic health
  ▫ Feminist approaches to health and healing
    • (Evans, Kincade, & Seem, 2011).

• Mission Statement:
  ▫ The SARBI women’s program is committed to helping female ABI survivors achieve optimal social, emotional, psychological, sexual, and physical well-being through engagement with a supportive and empowering community of women.

• Program Goals:
Female ABI survivors achieve optimal social, emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing.

Program Philosophy

- Holistic Health
- Feminist Approaches to Health and Healing

Mission Statement

Helping female ABI survivors achieve optimal social, emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing through continued engagement with a supportive and empowering community of women.

Program Goals

- Social Connection and Support
- Female Empowerment
- Self Esteem
- Body Image
- Healthy Relationships
- Sexual Expression
- Physical Health
- Emotional Regulation
- Personal Growth
• Program Format
  ▫ Two weekly meetings over five weeks (10 modules)
  ▫ Each module targets a specific program goal
  ▫ Standard delivery format

• Example: Body Image Module
  ▫ Goal: To encourage the development of positive body image by deconstructing beauty norms in the media and focusing on the aesthetics of uniqueness.
Beauty in the Media:
Exploring media representations of beauty: what/who is included and excluded?
Screening/discussion of the Dove® ‘Evolution’ Video

Exploring Real Beauty:
Mirror, mirror activity and discussion

Home Facials
Snack and Chat (chocolate fondue)

Daily Feedback Form
Program Implementation

• Fall, 2012
• Participants:
  ▫ 5 female ABI survivors
    • Moderate to severe brain injuries
    • Mean age = 52.4 years (range: 36-64)
    • Mean years post-injury = 23.2 (range: 6-42)
    • Low community integration, restricted social networks
  ▫ Program development team / staff support
• Deviations from program plan:
  ▫ Screening of ‘Magic Mike’

Formative Assessment of SWP Pilot Project

• “...conducted for the purpose of acquiring information to be used to improve program design and delivery” (Hodges & Videto, 2005).

Client Feedback

• Relevance
• Acceptability
• Satisfaction

Critical-Interpretive Analysis (Good,

• Interpersonal and intrapersonal program processes
Formative Program Assessment
Findings

- Client Feedback Data
  - Relevance of Program Goals:
    - Support for most program goals
    - Least relevant: Pursuing Healthy and Satisfying Sexual Expression*; Self Esteem 2: The Role of Social Relationships
      - *Group discussions produced conflicting evidence

- Acceptability of Daily Modules
  - All modules reported to be enjoyable

**Did you enjoy today’s session?**

- Community Building *
- Celebrating Womanhood**
- Self Esteem 1: Thinking Positively
- Self Esteem 2: Social Relationships**
- Body Image
- Sexual Expression
- Physical Health
- Emotional Health and Regulation

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
• All modules reported to be interesting

![](chart1.png)

• Variability in reported knowledge / skill acquisition
  - Physical health module particularly low

![](chart2.png)
### Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses: Most Liked Aspects of Daily Module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Sample Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of food and activities</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>“I liked the compliments card activity and the candy crafts”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being with others / Bonding</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>“Being with friends”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking and sharing with others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“Gabbing and laughing with others.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General enjoyment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“All good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Learning about ways of being healthy”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses: Least Liked Aspects of Daily Module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Sample Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing to report</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>“I liked everything”.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There was nothing I didn’t like”.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“When I have to go home”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments on Organization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“The messiness”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Nothing, except maybe the mess”.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Not knowing the time”.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses: Improvement Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Sample Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing to report</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>“Nothing. It was a good session.” “Nothing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the time / resources devoted to particular activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“Talk more at length about womanhood”. “More laughter yoga!”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extend meeting length</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“More time.” “Make the sessions longer”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add additional sessions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“More sessions like this!” “Add more session.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

○ Global Program Satisfaction
  • Highest possible ratings on quality of service and global satisfaction

How would you rate the quality of the service you received?

Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience with the SARBI women’s program?
• Additional Client Satisfaction Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy belonging to this group of women?</td>
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<td>Make new friends?</td>
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<td>Warm, welcoming environment created?</td>
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<td>Recommend to other female survivors?</td>
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<td>Continue to be involved with future events?</td>
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<td>Topics interesting and relevant to your everyday life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help to manage the challenges of life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel better about your life or yourself?</td>
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- Interpretive Analyses
  - Processes operating within the program space:
    - 1 – Accessing the therapeutic benefits of self-expression
    - 2 - Developing a sense of belonging
    - 3 – Engaging in identity work
• 1 – Accessing the therapeutic benefits of self expression
  ▫ Narrating traumatic life experiences
    • ascribe meaning to traumatic experiences; achieve empowering sense of ‘meta-control’; infuse life with hope
      ▫ (Frank, 1995; Good, 1994; Mattingly, 1998)
    • improves mental, emotional, and physical health
      ▫ (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999; Smyth, True, & Souto, 2001)

• Sharing experiences of oppression, delegitimization, and disempowerment:
  • Recognizing how social inequalities and oppressive practices contribute to personal suffering
  • Finding one’s ‘voice’ / engaging in empowering acts of resistance
    ▫ (McLeod, 1994; Kim, in press)
• 2 – Developing a sense of belonging
  ▫ Expressions of fondness, respect, and value
    ▬ (Goodenow, 1993)
  ▫ Recognition of shared experiences and characteristics
    ▬ (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996; Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012)
  ▫ Linked to improved physical, psychological, and emotional health
    ▬ (see, for example, Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Cohen, 2004; Lee & Robbins, 1998; Hagerty & Williams, 1999; Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996)

• 3 – Identity work
  ▫ Pursuing a more positive sense of self through key identity enhancement strategies
    • Examples:
      • Redefining the meaning of impairments and limiting threats to self
      • Engaging in favourable peer comparisons
      • Establishing a strong, positive sense of identity linked to wellbeing and increased quality of life
        ▬ (Cooney et al., 2009)
Conclusions and Future Directions

• Strengths of the pilot program:
  ▫ addressed important goals, offered valuable learning activities, promoted therapeutic and empowering acts of self-expression, provided a meaningful space of belonging, and facilitated the development of a more positive sense of self.

• The future of the SARBI Women’s Program:
  ▫ Refining the program
  ▫ Offering long-term support through ‘Alumni Nights’

• Suggested ways forward in female ABI programming: Key projects:
  ▫ Evaluation of existing and emerging programs
  ▫ Improving knowledge transfer within the female ABI service community
  ▫ Exploring diversity within the female ABI population
References


Accessing the Pilot Program Report in its Entirety:

- Coming soon to www.sarbi.ca!