

The Journal

NOTE FOR THE TRAINERS

Writing up the journal will be a key element of workshops. Much of the material we cover has a deep impact on the participants. Some of it excites and encourages them...some of it is very uncomfortable and asks participants to face some issues or remember stories they would rather not. The emotional impact of the work can overshadow the very practical outcomes of some of the exercises and keeping a journal would be a good way for participants to reflect on their learning from each workshop.

Time needs to be made available in the programme to allow people to write. Not everyone is comfortable with words and with writing and it may be that the facilitators need to help some people find other ways of reflecting on their learning and recording the outcomes. It may be that some people will want to use audio or video tape or will find some other creative way to capture their reflections. The important thing for facilitators is not to assume that everyone is happy with the written word and to keep checking it out with them.

FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

As you go through the workshops there will be lots of thoughts and issues that come up for you. Sometimes they won't occur to you until a particular workshop is over... Sometimes there just isn't enough time to talk about the issues during the workshop... Sometimes you won't want to raise your issues in front of the whole group... For all of these reasons it is often helpful to try and keep a journal or a learning log.

This would be a separate notebook which you keep for recording your thoughts and feelings about what you are learning. It doesn't have to be like a diary where you have a page for everyday.

A journal acts as evidence of all the work you are doing. It is often very useful to look back and see what you have accomplished and how things have become a lot clearer over time. It is also good to be able to look back and remind yourself of some of the important topics and issues which you have been thinking about for weeks, months or even years before.

You could use the log to

- Reflect on the effect of what you are learning on an aspect of your life
- Record areas where you found the workshops difficult or challenging
- Record a question which you want to take to someone...one of the Better Futures team or another person

- Record a question or area for further thought later
- Write down a confusion you have, or something you just don't understand
- Reflect on what you are learning about yourself as a person – new abilities, learning and confidences you have
- Try to reflect on what all this new learning means for you in a personal way and any changes you might want to make
- Reflect on what new areas of learning and thinking you might want to pursue

The following questions may be useful starters for each journal entry

- **What did we do?**
- **What have I learned from this?**
- **How might I apply what I have learned?**
- **How have I applied it?**
- **What would I do differently next time?**

We have included some pages for you to use as a journal. They are designed in a circle because every time we learn we engage in this sort of circular process of having a new experience, reflecting on the new thing, acting in a new way as a result and then having again new experiences.

LOOKING IN...

- **Who we are and how we'll work together**
- **What works for us and what works against us**
- **What we want and how we'll get it**

In this section we are asking people to begin the very difficult process of imagining that life could be different in the future...indeed to begin to think that life could get better.

Never underestimate the size and complexity of this task. Many of the people who will attend the workshops have spent several years trying to deal with their illness and the effect it has had on their lives. Some people will have lost their jobs; some will be struggling with very little money; many people will have had experience of the strain that long term mental ill health puts on their relationships and their family life. Often people will have had experience of being hopeful before only to have that hope dashed because of a recurrence of their illness. For others there have been years of trying to make things different. They have filled in job applications, gone for interviews...and discovered that lack of understanding and prejudice against people with a history of mental ill health has

blocked their path. The result of this has been that some people on the course may already feel defeated by circumstances that they cannot control.

In the middle of these kinds of situations the idea of people imagining something different is a tall order and so the facilitators will need to be very aware of this and to find ways of encouraging and supporting people to begin to hope again. This will be different for every person in the group but there are some general “rules” to help with this:

- Listen carefully to what people are saying and allow them to say it
- Take people’s concerns and experiences seriously
- Stick with them after they say it...
- Keep offering them the opportunity to imagine better

Remember that one of the things you are trying to do through these workshops is to encourage people to take a bit of a stretch. A good facilitator will offer people the challenge and support them to explore it.

This is the most difficult section of the course but careful and sensitive facilitation will make it the most rewarding for the participants.

WORKSHOP 1

FOR THE TRAINERS

Who we are and how we'll work together

AIMS

- To create the right environment so that people can begin to feel safe enough to work together
- To establish groundrules for the group so that people know what is expected
- To get to know each other and begin to share some of ourselves
- To give an overview of the workshops and of the Better Futures project

Setting the scene

As we said at the beginning of the pack, creating the right environment for these workshops is crucial.

We suggest that you make use of the ideas at the beginning of the pack

- Have music playing to welcome people in and to create a light, relaxed environment
- Make sure that there is tea, coffee, juice and the best biscuits you can afford. Treat people as if they were guests in your home rather than clients that you work with.
- Decorate the room...use balloons and streamers to create colour and fun
- Give people little gifts...a few sweets on the chair or a card with an inspirational quote...these things really help make people feel welcomed and valued.

As well as welcoming people to the workshops these little things send a signal to people that something different is about to happen...that these workshops are going to be different from other groups they have attended.

Whatever you do, make sure that it is sustainable and that you continue the practice throughout the course of the workshops.

Suggested programme for w/shop 1 (trainers and participants)

- 10.45 Coffee
 Photographs to be taken
- 11.00 Welcome and Introductions
- 11.30 House Keeping
- 11.45 How we are going to work together
- Our expectations – Hopes and Fears poster

 - Groundrules
- 12.30 Overview of the programme and course materials
- 12.45 LUNCH
- 1.45 What we bring to this course
- Gifts Poster and Community Chest
 - Gifts stuff – Judith Snow
- 2.30 Relaxation
 Journal
 Summary of the day
 Last words
- 2.45 Finish

FOR THE TRAINERS

Introductions

As with all of the exercises...

- **Explain what you will do**
- **Explain why you are doing it**
- **Explain how you will do it**

For many people the first meeting of any new group is an extremely stressful time. They worry about what sort of impression they will make; what people will think of them. Very often, they are extremely worried about whether or not they can cope with the demands of the course.

It is important that participants feel that they are there as individuals rather than just part of the group “people with severe and enduring mental ill health” - so, in the introductions ask people things about themselves.

Some examples of things you might ask people – only ask 1 question!

- What they are passionate about
- The title of the last book they read
- The title of the last CD they bought
- The best place they’ve ever been on holiday
- All about their name – what does it mean? Are they named after anyone? Do they like their name
- If they were stranded on a desert island, which 2 things would they need to have with them?

When doing introductions you are trying to break the ice and make people feel at ease. In these workshops you are also trying to impress upon people that they matter and that the workshops will be addressing their needs and aspirations

We often take polaroid photographs of people when they arrive and stick these on a poster. The information from the icebreaker is then added to the poster. This helps people remember names and begins the job of helping people get to know each other.

HOPES AND FEARS

FOR THE TRAINERS

People will have all sorts of hopes, fears and expectations of the course. Some of these fall within the scope of the aims and the contents of the course others are completely out of it and are things that cannot be reasonably expected to happen. An example of this would be that some people come expecting that we will deal with some of the clinical aspects of their illness or provide some kind of therapy; other people might think that we are offering a supported employment scheme.

It is really important that trainers are clear about the focus of the workshops and that they are honest with people about what they can expect to get out of the group.

Hopes, Fears and Expectations

Why

To be clear about the purpose of the workshops and to come to an open, honest and realistic understanding of what the Better Futures workshops offer.

How

Each person will be given some post-it notes and given around 5 minutes to write one hope, fear or expectation that they have about the workshops. Only one issue should be written on each post-it, but each participant can have as many post -its as they need. The post-its are anonymous.

People should then stick their post-its to a poster prepared by the trainers.

The trainers will take some time to sort out the notes and try and group them according to the issues they cover. These issues will then be addressed by the trainers and discussed by the group so that a clear understanding of the purpose of the training emerges.

AGREEING GROUP GROUNDRULES

FOR THE TRAINERS

Suggest to the group that setting the groundrules is a bit like putting the straight edges of a jig saw in place. Until you've done that, it's really difficult to imagine the size of the jigsaw or to get any idea of what it will be like. The straight edges let you begin to understand the scale of the task and they help you to feel that the job is manageable...that you just might be able to make some sense of the hundreds of different pieces in front of you!

Agreeing groundrules for a group has a similar effect. People see the boundaries of the workshops; they begin to see how the work will be done.

For trainers and participants

AGREEING THE GROUP GROUNDRULES

Why

To give the group an opportunity to agree groundrules for how they will work together in an inclusive, respectful and empowering way. This is also the opportunity for individual participants to check out any concerns they have at this point about the course

How

We will give you between 5 and 10 minutes in small groups to agree groundrules. To help you come up with groundrules, it might be useful to think about the kind of things the trainers or other participants would have to do to make you feel at ease and part of the group.

Another way of doing this is to think about the the things the trainers or other participants might do which would make you feel uncomfortable and anxious – and make sure we all know not to do them.

It is also worth giving some thought to additional supports individuals on the course might need and how we organise this – someone might need a lift to the venue, someone might need help with taking notes or writing up their learning log, someone may be shy and need support to speak out in the big group.

Someone in the small group will have to take a note of the groundrules your group agrees and report them back to the big group. You can take a note of the final list of groundrules agreed on the next page.

INSERT GROUNDRULES PAGE

Thinking about Gifts

For the trainers

Many people attending the workshops, especially if they have been around the mental health service system for a long time, will almost unconsciously regard themselves as a collection of symptoms and their illness will dominate their view of themselves. Other people will only be able to see the difficulties of their situation and will be burdened by their sense of failure or of being at fault for these difficulties.

It will really help participants if they can be encouraged to think differently about themselves. The idea of seeing themselves as having gifts will be difficult but the extract from Judith Snow's book might help people to begin to see themselves in a different light and to value different qualities about themselves

Drawing a Gifts Poster

Insert template for Gifts Poster

WHY

To give participants an opportunity to explore the wealth of talent, skills and resources they bring to the group.

To encourage them to see the personal and individual contribution they can make.

HOW

Working in pairs and following the template given each participant will draw up a gifts poster for themselves. They will help each other think about the following areas

What's my identity? – this includes information about age, gender, titles and important roles in your life e.g. a 40 year old woman; an aunt, a sister, a godmother, a colleague, a friend etc...

What are my hobbies, interests and passions – this should list all the areas of interest the person has

What are my skills, talents and resources? – list everything the person can do, is good at and enjoys. Also list the people the person

know who might come in handy, together with any equipment or resources they have access to e.g. you know someone who has a karaoke machine, you can drive a van, your brother in law is a painter and decorator...

What are my gifts? – what do the people who like you say about you? How do others who are positive about you describe you?

GIFTEDNESS

“ ...all people are gifted. This thought sounds strange to us because we are used to understanding gifts to be special talents that only a few individuals possess... if a person can play classical piano at age 4 or run 26 miles in one day without breathing very hard at the end of it or add a long column of five digit numbers without a calculator - if someone has such talents as these they are gifted.

But ...everyone has gifts - countless ordinary and extraordinary gifts. A gift is anything that one has or does that creates an opportunity for a meaningful interaction with at least one other person. Gifts are the fundamental characteristics of our human life and community.

There are two simple gifts that all people have and that every other gift depends on. The first is presence. Since you are here you are embodying the possibility of meaningful interaction with someone else.

Secondly you are different from everyone else - in countless ways. Difference is required to make meaning possible...human interaction arises from presence and difference. you are different from the next person in hundreds, perhaps thousands of ways - in your body, your thinking, your experience, your culture, your interests, tastes and desires, your possessions, your relationships, and more. therefore you are a bundle of hundreds, perhaps thousands of gifts. So is everyone else.”

Judith Snow “What’s really worth doing and how to do it” Toronto Inclusion Press

COMMUNITY CHEST

Why

- To encourage participants to see themselves as part of a group that has a wealth of skills and resources that can be used to help and support the members of the group
- To help participants feel that it is possible to think differently about themselves and the other participants

How

The facilitators will talk about the game of Monopoly which had a Community Chest. If any player landed a Community Chest card it was usually something that would be useful to them as they played the game.

In the same way participants will be asked to prepare a Community Chest made up of the gifts already identified in the Gifts Posters. This will encourage the participants as they go through the course.

When the gifts posters have been completed the facilitators will ask each participant to share one of the gifts (more than one if they would like) on their poster.

The facilitators go round the room and record the gifts on flip chart. At the end of the exercise the facilitators will remind the group of the wealth of talent and the gifts that are present in the group.

Better Futures – Workshop 2

Thinking about getting in...

The focus of the work for this week is thinking about how people can prepare themselves for getting back into the

swing of things. As we discussed in the previous workshop it can be very difficult for people with long term mental health issues to believe that things can be different. Often, they feel that people do not understand their situation. Some people have said that it is cruel to encourage them to have hope and they feel that they are being set up for failure.

The experience of Better Futures is that it is most helpful to people to be completely straight about the difficulties that lie ahead. It helps to be as specific as we can about what those difficulties are but to also have the optimism that makes it possible to believe that, with the right help and support, these difficulties can be overcome.

The question springs to mind...

“How do you eat an elephant?”

“One bite at a time!”

In this workshop we are very deliberately looking at the blocks people have to “getting in”. We are not trying to provide solutions to these difficulties. We want to get them out in the open so that we know what we’re dealing with. We want to try and break the elephant down in to bite sized chunks.

11am **Welcome and run
through names again**
11.10 **Thinking about “getting
in”**

- **How do you eat an Elephant?**
- **What are the blocks?**
- **What's working for you**

12.30 **LUNCH**

1.15 Something to help you focus/ give you energy/keep you going –

DREAMING

- **Postcards exercise**

2.15 **Journal**

2.30 **Last words**

Exercise

Why

- To help participants be clear about the things that stand in their way when trying to move on with their illness.
- To separate the “chunks of the elephant” and have a clearer idea of what they are up against when trying to make changes in their life.

How

Ask the participants to work in small groups and think about the things that seem to be in their way when they try to make changes in their life.

On a sheet of flipchart paper, ask them to think about blocks that are external; stigma and other people's views of mental health; internal; doubts and fears about yourself and practical; experience, qualification and "wellness"

<i>EXTERNAL</i>	<i>INTERNAL</i>	<i>PRACTICAL</i>

When the groups have finished get them to feedback into the big group.

The trainer should then help the group to look at the blocks that they cannot do anything about e.g. Stigma and discrimination; and the blocks that they feel they might be able to influence and do something about.

Having looked at the blocks, it is now important to look at what people have going for them.

Repeat the discussion process, this time thinking about the things that help them get along. Again, think about it in terms of the external, internal and practical.

<i>WE ARE...</i>	<i>WE HAVE...</i>

As a big group, take time to consider the qualities, skills and courage you have found in your group.

Dreaming

“Moments of dreaming help us stand up under days of work”

Pablo

Neruda

We’ve seen that even although we have some great things going for us there are some substantial difficulties in our way and the road to a better future will often take courage and perseverance.

Everyone needs something to keep them going when things get hard and for many people the dream of something better in their life inspires them and gives them strength along the way.

Often people with mental illness find it difficult to dream...they feel a hopelessness about their life that makes it almost impossible to contemplate something better. The next exercise is designed to encourage people to dare to dream again.

Wish you were here?

Why

To encourage people to begin to dream. Holidays are one of the things that most people have in common. By allowing ourselves to imagine we take the first step to achieving our dream

How

Participants are asked to imagine that they are on holiday in a place where they have never been but have always wanted to go. They are then asked to draw a postcard from that place, drawing the scene on one half of a piece of flipchart paper and writing on the other. They are asked to answer these questions:

- Where are you?
- What are you doing?
- How are you feeling?

When the postcards are completed all the participants will be asked to present their postcard to the group, sharing the answers to the questions.

There is something very inspiring about having a dream in the first place. Our dreams tell us something about who we are.

Although it may not be possible to have our dreams come true they give us clues about the things that are important in our lives.

What does your dream tell you about yourself? How can you find ways of building the things that are important and inspiring into your life?

Could you take a chance and let your dreams guide you?

Workshops 3 + 4

These workshops are designed to help participants think about what they might achieve through Better Futures. It will help people become clearer about the direction they should take e.g. education or employment, and it will provide those who are feeling a bit “stuck” with some ideas about how to move forward.

The focus of the workshops is to encourage people to recognise and build on their strengths and personal preferences. For many people the sense of achievement and enjoyment in their life will have been overtaken by the difficulties created by their illness. These workshops are about looking back to a time when things were different and people felt more in control of their lives and using those experiences as a springboard to the future.

Programme

- 11.00 Welcome back – any news from anyone?
- 11.20 What brings out the best in you? |
- 12.30 Lunch
- 1.30 Brainstorming Practice
- 1.45 People, Places and Activities
- 2.30 Journal

2.45 Last words

Exercise

Bringing out the best in me

Why

- To encourage participants to remember previous experiences when they have known enjoyment or success; to learn from those experiences and to take that learning forward.
- To create a shared history and experience of success within the group.

How

In groups of 3 or 4 discuss the following questions:

- Talk about something you have enjoyed in your life and something you have achieved
- Think about the skills you have which have helped you make that achievement
- What difficulties did you face?
- What do you need support with?

As the group discusses the questions the facilitators will record statements and will help the groups to draw out individual and common difficulties and find new ways to tackle these.

For the trainers

This next exercise involves the group in brainstorming ideas for individual participants.

The trainers should:-

Divide the group into two smaller groups and give each group 1 minute to come up with as many uses as possible for an everyday object e.g. the inside of a ballpoint pen. At the end of the minute the groups should count the number of ideas they have and declare those to the big group.

Trainers should then explain the rules of brainstorming

- No judging – this will inhibit creativity
- Write down everything people say
- Write everything down that people say
- Freewheel – build on ideas eg a brick could be used to hold open a door; hold open a window; hold open a cupboard...
- Have more than one person writing

Repeat the exercise having explained the rules about brainstorming. Choose a different object e.g. a paper clip. Ask the group how many ideas they can come up with and give a prize (a sweetie or something similar) to the winning group.

The purpose of brainstorming is to create energy and generate lots of ideas in a very short space of time. Many of the ideas will be unsuitable but there may be a few gems to choose from.

After having been ill people are often short on ideas and so to stimulate the group's excitement and energy and generate ideas is an important strategy in supporting them to imagine a better future.

Exercise

What works for you?

Making Connections; Generating ideas

This exercise will run over into workshop 4. Every participant in the workshops should have the group's help to complete this piece of work.

Why

To give participants a technique to help them be creative when considering their next steps around employment or education.

How

Participants will work in small teams. One person will tell the group about themselves and will answer the questions in the exercise, one person will coach and one person will record. Each participant will be given 30/40 minutes to work through the sequence

Step 1 - Refer to the gifts poster you made in the first week

Insert template for Gifts poster

Please note that there is no room on this poster for details of anyone's illness or labels. Your team do not need this information and if you insist on telling them it will stifle their creativity.

Step 2 – thinking about what does and doesn't work

Thinking about yourself, take no more than five minutes to give your team mates as much information as possible about the following:

What creates enthusiasm, enjoyment and fulfillment?		
PEOPLE	PLACES	ACTIVITIES
What creates boredom, frustration, anxiety and misery		

Step 3 – brainstorming ideas

You have now had 15 minutes or so to give your team as much information as possible about yourself.

The person who has been keeping the graphic record now hands you the pen. The coach and this person now join the team members to be the brainstormers.

The brainstormers now have no more than 5 minutes to come up with as many ideas for activities and employment that they can possibly think of, based on the information you have given them. You must write them all up on flipchart as quickly as they say them. Say nothing...just write.

<p style="text-align: center;">IDEAS From the brainstormers...</p>
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Step 4 –grabbing the best ideas and making them work

Your team have now done their bit. You give the graphic person back the pen and take a few minutes to reflect on the ideas they have come up with and pick the best ones – those which have made you think “oh, maybe...”

Circle all the good ideas and then work through them one at a time. With the help of your team, try and get a first step or a plan of action

<i>Good Ideas</i>	What I could do	Overcoming the blocks	What I'm going to do...

Before going home people should get themselves connected to a “buddy” who will give them some support and encouragement as they take the first steps.

In Workshop 4 we will review this week’s work and here how people got on as well as working on the plans for those who have not yet been through the process.

Programme workshop 4

11.00 Welcome and hearing about the action plans for last week

11.20 Recap of the process and remaining people get their

plan done

- 12.30 Lunch
- 1.30 Feedback from group
- 1.45 Planning and preparation for visit
 - Arrangements
 - Questions
- 2.15 Journal
- 2.30 Last words
- 2.45 Finish

WORKSHOPS 5,6&7

Aim of the workshops

- To give participants practical, up to date information on employment and further education opportunities in the local area.
- To give participants information about how their benefit income may be affected by a move into employment or further education

GETTING IN...

These three workshops are designed to provide participants with the practical information they will need to help them get into work or in to further education. We would suggest that you keep the definition of work and education as broad as possible to include voluntary work and all sorts of further education courses, from floral art to quantum physics!

Information about employment and education varies from place to place and it would be best to arrange for someone with local knowledge to address your group. At the end of this section there is a list of the kinds of people you might want to approach.

There are a few things to consider when inviting outside speakers.

- Keep the shape of the workshop as far as possible. Allow time for news, for writing up the journal, for whatever the rituals are that have become important to the group.
- Make sure that you have briefed the speakers properly. It is important that they are clear about the topic you want them to address and that they tailor their presentation to suit their audience.
- Some of the people on the course will have some difficulty in concentrating for more than 10 - 15 minutes. Tell the presenter about this and ask them to consider it when they speak. It may be useful to ask the presenter to be prepared to have several short breaks in the course of their presentation.
- Think about whether it makes more sense to invite a presenter to the workshop or to take the participants to the presenter e.g. it might help give people an idea of the work done at the local One Stop Shop if you go there to meet with the employment adviser and look around. The Further Education College may be happy to have you visit, see the facilities on offer and speak to the Admissions Officer while you are there.
- It can help the session if you have taken some time in the previous week to consider questions to ask the presenter. It is useful if the facilitators have a few questions ready to help get some discussion going.

We have included information on benefits in this section. Many people who have severe and enduring mental health issues rely on state benefit for their income. The nature of their illness makes it difficult for them to be sure that they can sustain full-time employment or education and initially it would be difficult for many people to earn the equivalent of their benefit income. The conditions around part-time work or study are complicated and so people fear that their

benefits will be reduced and their income affected. The regulations around the number of hours people can work or study while claiming benefit change frequently and so it makes sense to have someone with specialised knowledge of the system.

It can be helpful to ask a benefits or welfare rights officer to hold a “surgery” so that people can have time to discuss their particular situation regarding benefits.

These workshops have a quite different feel to the first block. Some people feel that, at last, the course is doing what they thought it would do and are full of questions for the presenters. Not everyone shares that response. For some, it is a sign that the course is moving along and they fear that they will be asked to commit to a course of action that they are not at all sure of. They are still “looking in” and they may need more time before they can seriously contemplate “getting in”. The facilitators need to be sensitive to where people are at each stage of the course. They should be prepared to encourage those who are keen to move on and walk some more of the way with those who are uncertain about what lies ahead.

Workshops 8-10 STAYING IN

The purpose of these 3 workshops is to

- Look at practical issues such as appearance, behaviour and language and to understand that these things are particularly important when people have labels like “mentally ill”
- Encourage people to take responsibility for keeping themselves well
- Allow participants the opportunity to discover what being well means for them
- Demonstrate that staying well is within their grasp

- Enable participants to identify their early warning signs and to identify strategies for coping with these.
- Support participants as they prepare for the workshops to finish
- Develop an action plan for the future.

Programme

• Welcome and News	
• Feedback on last week's workshop	
• Introduction	
• First Impressions	Exercise
• What do you notice about people the first time you meet them?	Group discussion
• Judging a book by it's covers	Presentation
• Judging a book by it's covers	Exercise
• The things that matter...(although sometimes we wish they didn't!)	Presentation
• What's in this for me?	Exercise
• Learning Log/Journal	
• Last words	
• Finish	

Introduction

This workshop is all about the impact of people's preferences and prejudices on our lives. In previous workshops, we have spent time thinking about people's perceptions of mental illness and we saw that the society in which we live has a stack of preconceptions about people with mental illness or emotional distress. (See "Social Perceptions")

As well as these preconceptions we also have to consider the day to day judgements and values we assign to people because of how they look, how they speak and how they behave. There are strict codes of appearance and conduct that exist, but are unspoken, in our everyday interactions with people.

Living with mental illness puts a great deal of pressure on people in their day to day lives. Getting through the day can take all of your energy. Keeping yourself and your clothes clean and tidy can just take too much of an effort. Sometimes your illness can affect your behaviour and you may acquire mannerisms or quirks that seem very strange to other people. It may be that you have a bi-polar disorder and the extremes of your illness leave you vulnerable to ridicule or misunderstanding. The effect of all of this is that you not only have to deal with your illness but also with the prejudice and misunderstanding of people in the community.

In addition to this, if you want to enter the world of work a great deal depends on the impression you make at an interview or through some other selection process. So it is important that we give some consideration to how we present ourselves so that we give ourselves the best possible chance for success.

Many of us want to resist the urge to classify and judge people by their outward appearance and feel that it is shallow to be preoccupied by such things. Nevertheless, the impulse to check people out and to make assumptions about them is very strong. We all do it. The very least we can do is be aware that we do it and be prepared to examine our own prejudices.

Exercise

First Impressions

Why

To allow people to understand the importance of first impressions and to see that they operate for everyone

How

In small groups (no more than 4 people) think together about their first impressions of two people who are significant in their life and whom they know fairly well. These people should not be family members.

It would be good if everyone thought of one person they liked a lot and one person they did not like very much.

Think about the first time you met the people you are thinking of. What struck you about them BEFORE you spoke? What is the first thing you remember about them?

Was it something they wore?

Was it the way they looked?

Was it a smell or a tone of voice?

What did you think of them? Did you like them?

Were your first impressions accurate?

Are your first impressions often right?

The facilitators will take responses from the group and draw out the similarities and differences in the responses.

Group Discussion

Following on from the exercise the discussion should open out and people are invited to talk about the things they notice about people the first time they meet.

The facilitators will record the information on flipchart under the headings

FIRST IMPRESSIONS <i>What do you notice about people the first time you meet them?</i>	
What I like...	<i>What puts me off...</i>

After the discussion, the facilitators will summarise the information looking for examples of appearance, language and behaviour.

Exercise

Judging a book by its covers...

How well do you know me?

Why

This exercise highlights the implications of making assumptions about individuals and groups and explores how our assumptions can determine how we speak, react to or treat other people.

How

Ask participants to form pairs and have a conversation about what both participants like to do in their spare time, focussing on one another's interests, passions and hobbies.

When participants have finished, ask the pairs to sit apart from one another and hand each participant a questionnaire to fill in about their partner.

Explain to participants that they should attempt every question, even if their conversation did not cover that area.

When both participants have completed the questionnaires ask them to swap questionnaires and mark their partner on the accuracy of their answers – one point should be awarded for each question answered correctly.

Discusson

- **What did it feel like when your partner got the answer wrong?**
- **What can we learn about making assumptions?**
- **What conclusions can we draw from this exercise?**

It's important to say that we all make assumptions...we have to. But we have to be aware that our assumptions can often be wrong

QUESTIONNAIRE

- **Most watched TV programme?**
- **Favourite item of clothing?**
- **Most read newspaper or magazine?**
- **Favourite holiday destination?**
- **Type of music listened to most?**
- **Favourite drink?**
- **Favourite food?**
- **Favourite pastime?**

Presentation

The things that matter - although sometimes we wish they didn't...

Through these exercises we have learned that

- First impressions are important
- That everyone makes assumptions all of the time
- That if you have labels people judge you harshly

Appearance
Behaviour
Language

These three things are the most obvious things about us. When we go into any new situation these are the things people will notice about us. If people know that we already have labels then they may be watching us carefully to see if anything we do or say confirms their preconceptions.

We need to become a society where people are valued for their differences and where the outside, superficial appearance of a person is not the most important thing about them.

But we are not there yet, and until we are, choices have to be made about how far we are prepared to accommodate other people's prejudices. It may be that we decide that we

need to think about how we dress; how we speak and how we behave.

In areas like the job market where competition can be fierce it seems to make sense to play the game a bit, to make that we are clean and tidy when we turn up for an interview. It can't do any harm!

Exercise

What's in it for me?

Why

To consider any issues that may be around in relation to personal presentation.

To work with a trusted colleague in the group to devise strategies for dealing with the issues.

How

Working in pairs with someone you trust, think about any areas of you appearance, language or behaviour that you might consider working on.

Come up with some ideas and strategies for tackling the issue.

Write them down, be prepared to try them

WORKSHOP 9

Aims

- **To encourage participants to take responsibility for being well by understanding the early warning signs they experience**
- **To help participants develop strategies for acting on the early warning signs**

Programme

<u>Welcome and News</u>	
Feedback from last week's work	
Introduction	
Taking Care... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring your “early warning signs”• Heeding the warnings	exercise
<u>Imagining better</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More thoughts on being well	exercise
<u>Learning Log</u>	
<u>Last words</u>	
Finish	

Introduction

The impact of a severe and enduring mental illness on your life can be overwhelming. When you are in the middle of an episode, you are experiencing the symptoms of the illness; the effects of the medication and the difficulties that often arise in your relationship. All of these can make you feel that you are at the mercy of your illness. It is in control of you and you feel powerless in the face of it.

That is how it seems, but for many of us the illness did not suddenly blow up from nothing. There were signs along the way which, if you had been able to read them, would have warned you that all was not well. Perhaps you hadn't been getting enough sleep or you had noticed that your appetite wasn't so good. Maybe your concentration was slipping or you were finding it difficult to stand too much noise or busy-ness. Each of us has our own particular set of triggers and in this workshop we will explore our individual warning signs and use our expertise as a group to devise strategies for staying well.

Exercise

Why

To discover our own “early warning signs” when we begin to feel unwell. To work out ways of acting on our early warnings to encourage us to take responsibility for staying well.

How

Working in pairs, take time to answer these questions. You may want to think about them on your own for a few minutes and then come back and share the results with your partner.

When people have completed the questions we will then take some feedback in the bigger group. Together we will work on some strategies for coping with the symptoms and managing your illness.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- What are the first signs for you that you are becoming unwell?
Think about what happens to
 - your body
 - your thoughts
 - your behaviour
- How would other people know you are becoming unwell? What do friends, family and carers notice first?
- How do you feel when you realise that you are becoming unwell?
- How do other people tell you that they are concerned about your mental health?
 - Think about the words they use
 - Think about their tone of voice
 - Think about their attitude towards you
- How do you usually react where people tell you about their concerns?
- What would make it easier to hear about their concern?
- If you ignore the first signs how does your illness progress?
- How long does your recovery take?
- If you act on your first signs how does your illness progress?
- How long does your recovery take?
- Why do you think that you (or other people) are often reluctant to act on the early warning signs?

Exercise

Why

To use the information from the first exercise to make a statement about the things that keep us well. This statement can be used to help us maintain good health or could help other people know what is important to us when we are unwell and help them give us the kind of support we need.

How

Using the answers to the questionnaire, take time to think about the most important bits of information there.

Gather that information into a statement that will describe the things that keep you well and will help others know how best to support you when you are unwell. Work on the statement on your own and then share it with a partner.

Ask them to tell you if the statement is clear enough and for any suggestions they might have to make things clearer.

Imagining Better...More thoughts on being well

Take time now to produce a statement that will help you say clearly what you need in order to stay healthy and safe.

Is there anything you would include to help other people know how to keep you healthy and safe?

Is there someone who should keep this safe for you or are there people you would want to share this with?

What would you want them to do with the information?

TO KEEP ME HEALTHY AND SAFE...

Better Futures – Workshop 10

11am	Welcome and any news
11.15	Where have we been? A journey back through the past 9 weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What have we learned?
12.00	Break
12.15	What's next? A plan for action
1.00	Celebratory Lunch and presentation of certificates

For the Facilitators

Workshop 10 is about ending one thing and moving on to the next, allowing what has been learned to influence and inform what happens next.

It is a difficult workshop. Endings are always difficult and many people who experience mental distress find that situations or relationships come to an abrupt end or they fade away in a haze of confusion and misunderstanding. So, this presents us with an opportunity to end things well and to demonstrate that the end of one thing means the beginning of something new.

The review of the workshops should be led by the facilitators who will summarise the key points from each workshop and lead people into considering the questions for reflection.

Better Futures has been all about doing something different, taking a stretch and rising to a challenge and so it seems perfectly right that participants should be thinking about action.

Everyone should leave with at least one thing they will pursue and an idea of how to get support to achieve their plans.

Facilitators need to ensure that people have phone numbers or the information they need to contact people or take the first steps in their action plan.

The workshops should end with a celebratory lunch and the presentation of certificates to participants.

For participants

We are now at the end of this series of workshops and the main task for workshop 10 is to review what has gone before.

Why

To remind you of the work covered on the course and to provide an opportunity to think about what you have learned in each workshop.

How

The facilitators will lead you through a review of the series of workshops.

We would like you to take some time to think about the past 9 weeks and what you have learned. Perhaps it would help you if you looked back over your journal and thought about the course under these headings

- What have you learned from the workshops?
- What has challenged you most?
- What has excited you most?
- Are there things you feel “stuck” on
- If you were to take away only one thing from your experience on Better Futures what would that be?

Working in groups of no more than 3 or 4 people, think through these questions. Share your experiences and your learning.

If you can, give some practical examples of what you have learned on the course.

We will feed the information into the big group and try and summarise the key learning from the course.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Personal Development Plans

Why?

To find ways of taking our learning from the course and using it to produce a definite plan for what to do next.

How

Bearing in mind the outcome from the review of our learning, participants should address the questions below.

You need to spend some time on this individually and then work with one or two people whom you know and trust on the first steps part of the Action Plan.

What am I going to keep the same?

What am I going to change?

What challenges will I face in making these changes?

How am I going to get support to overcome these challenges?

What are my first steps?

<i>What I will do</i>	<i>Who will help me?</i>	<i>When will I have it done?</i>	<i>Do I need a buddy?</i>

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When thinking about the first steps you should make them small, achievable and SOON!
Research shows us that if we don't do something within the first 48hours you won't do it!