



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Submitting author: Ms Liz LEUNG

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A New Me 從「身」出發: Project of Improving Self-image and Encouraging Socialization for Youth with Early Psychosis

Leung YY(1), Cheng KN(1), Lo WY(1), Yan WCE Dr.(2)

(1) Occupational Therapy Department, (2) E.A.S.Y. (Early Intervention Service for Psychosis) team, Department of Psychiatry, Kowloon Hospital

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Introduction

Studies had found that presence of psychiatric disorder in adolescents was associated with decreased self-esteem. Youth with early psychosis (YEP) often had distress in building up peer relationship. 'A New Me' project was designed to boost up their self-esteem through enhancing them to rediscover and reconstruct their sense of self with support from volunteers.

Objectives

'A New Me' was intended to (1) facilitate YEP to build up self-images, improve self-esteem and make connection with peers; (2) facilitate volunteers, who acted as buddies in the whole process, gaining experience of connecting with YEP.

Methodology

This E.A.S.Y. collaborative project, consisting of 5 image-building workshops, community experiential-learning activities and a graduation ceremony, was held from July to December 2017. 6 YEP, who were referred from EASY clinic of Kowloon Hospital to occupational therapy department, 4 volunteers and 2 peer-image-consultants were recruited. Peer-image-consultants provided workshops on skin-care, cosmetic, hair-style and clothing to facilitate participants to build up new images. Participants then joined 2 sessions of community experiential-learning activities. Finally, relatives and friends of YEPs were invited to join the graduation ceremony. Qualitative feedback from participants was collected through debriefing sessions and questionnaires.

Result

A total of 6 YEPs, who were all students aged from 16 to 19, were recruited. All participants reported that they got positive changes, especially on confidence and mood, after participated in the project. They were more confident to reach out to peers after changing their images and gaining experiences of building peer relationship. One YEP reported that she was passive in social interaction in school before. After

joining the project, even her classmates recognized that she became more sociable and cheerful. YEPs' relatives and friends also recognized and appreciated their positive changes during this period. Volunteers reported deeper understanding on YEP and gained more confidence in connecting with them. Peer-image-consultants expressed that they gained job satisfaction and motivation in pursuing their life goals, such as joining marathon and picking up new challenges in their career.

Conclusion

Self-image building and peer relationship building experience would be the first step to engage youth with early psychosis and connect them with others so as to resume their life roles in the community. Connection with volunteers and peers also contributed to the success of this project.