Balanced Life: Designing a Wellness Group for Older Adults with Depression and Anxiety

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Introduction to Aging Issues

• Growth of 65+ population

• Physical health issues

• Need for best practice models

The population in the U.S. is getting increasingly older!

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Wellness Examples in Long-Term Care & Assisted Living

- Social
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Intellectual

What are other examples of wellness interventions with older adults?

International Wellness Examples

- Peer support for GLBT 75+ (Amsterdam)
- Dance Therapy for people with dementia & physical impairments (Czech Republic)
- Promoting Preventative health and mental health care for persons with mental health issues (Spain)


Personalize Wellness

- Individual values
- Gender role and sexuality
- Age cohort
- Ethnicity and cultural beliefs
- Spirituality
Benefits of Wellness

- It nurtures self-worth, value and hope
- Encourages discussion of strengths
- Wellness can be used in skills-teaching
- Improves quality of life
- Focus forward

A Wellness Program for Older Adults

- Developed at a psychiatric hospital to address physical wellness and metabolic syndrome
- Recruited multi-disciplinary staff
- Offered four times

Zechner & Kirchner, 2013

The Balanced Life Program*

A 10 week interdisciplinary group intervention for older people diagnosed with mental health issues

*New Jersey Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services
Group Summary

- 8-10 Participants
- 2 Facilitators
- Rotating guest speakers
- Closed group
- Strengths-based and holistic perspective.

Examples of Topics:

- Intellectual Wellness:
- Social Wellness:
- Environmental Wellness:
- Sexual Wellness:
- Physical Wellness:

Manual Excerpts
Participant Feedback

• “This group reminded us that we are still human beings.”
• “Good to have perspectives on different areas of life.”
• “Look at the whole picture of your life and try to improve.”
• “Shows you where you want to go in life.”
• “We always talked about how to apply wellness.”
• “Never saw a presentation like this…”
• “Talking about our past experiences and how they contribute to it [wellness]”

Challenges & Lessons Learned

• Transportation and logistics
• Cognitive processing may be slower
• Group facilitator must believe in wellness and possibility for growth
• Importance of gathering outcome data

Creating a Wellness Intervention

How can you apply the information to your own setting and create a plan for a wellness intervention for older adults?
Recommendations

• Use multi-dimensional wellness
• Incorporate positive psychology concepts
• Utilize participants unique qualities
• Identify staff, community and participant strengths
• Collaborative effort across disciplines
• Develop a plan
• Identify and track outcomes

Final Thoughts

Older adults can be partners in the process of care, not passive patients, and bring their talents, strengths and life skills to wellness

Ronch & Goldfield, 2003

Selected References

• SAMHSA(2005). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Among Older Americans: The State of the Knowledge and Future Directions.