SUPPORTING YOUTH WITH MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES TO BE THE AGENTS IN THEIR OWN LIVES

Achieve My Plan (AMP)
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Objectives

• Overview of mental health stigmatization processes
• Working with diverse youth with mental health needs
• Overview of the Achieve My Plan project
• Review youth engagement techniques
• Share Colleen’s experience with AMP
Stigma

• **Social stigma**: prejudicial attitudes and discriminating behavior toward a young adult by others who are influenced by the young adults social behavior or by knowledge about the young adult’s mental health diagnosis.

• **Perceived stigma**: Experience of individuals with mental health diagnosis; individual’s perception of societal or individual discrimination.

Moses, 2010
Stigma and Empowerment

- Adults: poorer treatment outcomes, smaller and less supportive networks, shame, lower self-esteem and sense of self-agency

- Young adults: Especially pertinent: Preoccupation with social image, peer acceptance, and identity consolidation

Moses, 2010
Study

• Qualitative study: 56 interviews with young adults between ages 12 and 18 with on average 2 diagnoses

• Do you feel treated differently by others?

• School setting:
  – Teacher-student relationship is crucial for academic success, psychosocial adjustment
  – Teachers, counselors, school staff
    • 10 reported being treated particularly well, high expectations and exceptional support, reaching out, willingness to flexibility and accommodations
    • 16 reported being treated negatively: being underestimated, lower expectations, disliked, avoided, unfairly blamed
    • Reports of discrimination from peers and family members

Moses, 2010
Study

- Web-based anonymous survey of 90 youth between the ages of 14 and 22 conducted by Kris Gowen and Janet Walker from RRI, Portland OR
- 86% reported having been treated negatively
- 78% responded that they were treated negatively because “they assumed that you had problems that would never get better”
- 53% reported that stigmatization has large impact on their lives
- 33% reported moderate impact
- Youth who said that they were more impacted by negative treatment had higher levels of negative self-stigmatization

Gowen, Walker, 2009
Who treated you most unfairly?

Gowen, Walker, 2009
Study

- 86% experienced positive stigmatization and these youth also had more positive feelings about themselves
- 75% reported feeling good about themselves because they were having a mental health condition and/or how they were coping with it; but only 22% said that they were having this feeling often and 52% reported having these feelings sometimes
- Reasons for feeling good: Proud for overcoming challenges, learning something they can use to help others, stronger and better person

Gowen, Walker, 2009
Working with Diverse Youth in Transition

• As we encounter youth from many different backgrounds and with different social identities, how aware are we of our own history and our assumptions, biases, and prejudices toward some youth and families?

• Diversity includes:
  – Racial and ethnic diversity
  – Socioeconomic class
  – National origin
  – LGBTQ youth or parents
  – Religious and political beliefs and affiliation

• Need to consider intersectionality – the effects of multiple social identities and their combined meanings
What do I need to know and do?

• What do I know about the lives of youth from cultural backgrounds different from my own? Impoverished youth? Immigrant youth? LGBTQ youth? Or youth from families with different worldviews?

• How do I adapt my work to meet the needs of diverse youth? Do I know where to find information and advice about the racial and ethnic diversity of youth I am encountering and how can I develop skills in providing culturally responsive services?

• Am I tuned in to the over-representation of youth of color in more restrictive settings and the challenges facing low-income families who want to participate in their children’s treatment?
AMP and Diversity

• AMP emphasizes youth self-determination and an empowerment-orientation in working with youth
• Protective factors include strong kinship ties (Joe, 2006)
• Some families and youth prioritize loyalty to parents and parents’ wishes
• Many youth may not have had opportunities to consider their own future goals, esp. if they have participated in compliance-oriented services such as foster care or juvenile justice
• We need to explore what youth want and how that reflects or differs from parents’ priorities and help youth to manage the differences
Interventions with Diverse Families

- As a service provider, do I know who the young people I work with define as family and what are their preferences for family involvement in services?
- Do I seek to connect young people and families to culturally-specific agencies that use approaches that are holistic and rooted in traditional teachings?
- Do I pursue interventions that incorporate cultural activities and the development of positive cultural identity?
Immigrant Families

• As of 2010, 24% of youth in the U.S. are from immigrant families, with higher rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidality.

• For effective work with immigrant families, am I thinking about protective factors such as respect, loyalty to family, and the development of biculturalism?

• Do I seek ways to facilitate youth-family communication where there are generational differences to build understanding and appreciation of strengths? (Chapman & Pereira, 2005)

• Do I focus my interventions on promoting a strong sense of positive cultural identity to reduce the depressive effects of discrimination?
Young People who Identify as LGBTQIA2-S

• Families with a young person who identifies as LGBTQ may experience varying levels of acceptance and support when using mental health services

• We can promote LGBTQ resiliency by:
  – building positive identity, reducing stigma, and
  – promoting strong relationships with peers, supportive families, positive role models, and adult allies (Gamache & Lazear, 2009)

• Do I seek to connect young people with developmentally appropriate supports specifically designed for LGBTQ young people?
Self-Assessment

- Am I aware of families’ different cultural beliefs about mental health and have I clarified their expectations of treatment outcomes?
- Do I respond with humility and reflection and seek clarity where I don’t understand?
- Do I know where to seek culturally relevant and specific services and supports?
- Am I working to support the development of positive ethnic and cultural identity as a protective factor?
The Achieve My Plan (AMP!) Project

• Began over 8 years ago
• Is a research project to develop and test an intervention to increase youth participation in planning
  – Advisory Board--Youth, caregivers, providers, research staff—create materials/intervention, advise on research, make presentations
• The current study is a randomized controlled trial, which means that we are using both an intervention and control group.
  – We are working with youth who receive Wraparound services in the Portland Metro-Area.
The AMP! Intervention

- The AMP Intervention
  - Consists of a coaching curriculum and team meeting structures that, together:
    - Facilitate youth setting goals and making a plan to achieve those goals
    - Prepare youth for participation in the team meetings
    - Help organizations structure meetings that foster youth engagement
    - Enhances the Wraparound approach
Challenges that some Youth Face

• Constantly changing living arrangements and being shuffled to different treatment facilities. Example: “Amy” & “Tiffany”

• Many youth hold hectic schedules and have appointments every day of the week. Some examples: therapy meetings, skills training, CASA meetings, occupational therapy, extracurricular activities (ex: sports, choir, clubs, volunteering, etc.)
Youth Engagement Techniques

• Purpose: to prepare the youth for what’s going to happen at his/her team meeting and how he/she can contribute.
  – Prepare items/goals to contribute to the plan
  – Review the agenda before the meeting
  – Explore options to handle uncomfortable topics outside the meeting
  – Plan what to say for each agenda item
  – Practice communication skills for the meeting
  – Plan what to do to stay calm and focused
  – Plan how to get support—if needed—during the meeting
Preparing for the Meeting

• Go over the agenda items with the youth prior to the meeting.
• Help the young person plan what they would like to say about their goals and activities as well as the other agenda items.
• Help the youth choose who will lead which items on the agenda.
• Talk about positive communication skills.
• Role play & practice.
During the Team Meeting: Ground Rules

• Stick to the agenda (use the parking lot)
• Speak directly to each other, not about one another
• One person talks at a time
• Be respectful of everyone’s voice and ideas
• No side conversations
• AJAA- Avoid Jargon and Acronyms
• Focus on strengths and solutions
• Don’t assume you know what others are thinking. Ask them
• End the meeting with everyone clear about commitments and next steps.
Youth Goals & Activities

• **Long-term goals:** Something the youth is interested in exploring over the next 3-5 years.

• **Activity criteria:** Something the young person can start right away and complete within the next month, something that his/her team will likely support, and is related to his/her long-term goals.

  - **Avoid Leading!** The goals & activities should be something that the youth finds personally meaningful.
Dream Wheel/Narrow Down

- Demonstration: Ryan & Colleen
Colleen’s Experience with AMP!
AMP Recap

• Help the young person plan and prepare for upcoming team meetings
• Help the young person identify some achievable activities that they can work on that are related to their goals
• Use ground rules during team meetings so the team’s time together is productive and on-task
Final Questions?
This Month's Speak OUT!

A study of 251 teenage girls revealed that those who exhibited certain behaviors online, such as presenting themselves in an overtly sexual manner in social networking profiles, were more likely to meet strangers offline. This month, Pathways RTC asked our young writers, "What do you think is the best way to prevent youth from engaging in risky online behaviors?"

Read our writers' responses and voice your opinion!

New Publication: Things People Never Told Me: When You Start Living on Your Own from Foster Care. There Are Some Things in Life that People Seem to Forget to Tell You About

This compilation of suggestions about finances, health care, employment, and relationships from foster youth transitioning to adulthood is aimed at equipping other youth leaving foster care with the necessary tools to become independent and successful adults.

New Publication: Strengthening Family Support for Young People with Mental Health Needs in the Transition to Adulthood: A Tip Sheet for Service Providers
Thank you!

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions:

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