



Minding Our Bodies

physical activity for mental health

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PROJECT NEWS

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Passing the Torch!

The Physical Activity Toolkit Is Released and the Eating Well for Mental Health Project Picks Up Speed

The wait is over. The Minding Our Bodies Toolkit is now available to everyone! On March 30, 2010, the physical activity toolkit, directory of programs and online community of practice were unveiled on the Minding Our Bodies website (www.mindingourbodies.ca). See our special four-page insert, "Unlocking the Toolkit," for an introduction to these free resources. Find out how the toolkit can help you start or sustain a physical activity program for people with mental illness, and how you can join the Minding Our Bodies community of practice to learn from others and share your own expertise.

We're also picking up steam on phase 2 of the Minding Our Bodies project, Eating Well for Mental Health. See inside for a taste of what we've got planned.

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Eating Well for Mental Health: An Update

The second phase of the Minding Our Bodies project is well underway! Eating Well for Mental Health is an exciting and important project. We want to increase the ability of the mental health sector to deliver programs that address healthy eating and food security for people with mental illness.

For this project, CMHA Ontario has partnered with YMCA Ontario, York University's Faculty of Health, the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario and the Ontario Public Health Association's Nutrition Resource Centre. The project is supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion through the Healthy Communities Fund.

Eating Well for Mental Health is intended to:

- Increase individual and organizational understanding of the role nutrition plays in physical and mental health
- Build capacity in the community mental health sector to provide life skills training to enable people with mental illness to plan, budget, shop and cook in a health-conscious, budget-savvy way

- Raise awareness of food security issues
- Improve access to healthy food options
- Create new opportunities for peer support workers in the planning and delivery of healthy eating programs
- Strengthen local and provincial partnerships among organizations with a shared interest in preventing and managing chronic disease and promoting mental health

Eating Well for Mental Health is currently in the research and planning stage. We have engaged York University to conduct an in-depth literature review, and we've hired a program developer and a dietitian to carry out an environmental scan. In the coming months, we will be hiring an evaluation consultant, developing an "eating well" module for the Minding Our Bodies Toolkit, delivering a one-day training workshop, and running pilot programs in six different organizations across Ontario.

Learning from the Literature

Under the direction of Mazen Hamadeh, Jesse Solomon and Ziv Zukier at York University are completing an extensive literature review. The first objective of the project is to compile evidence of the relationship between nutrition and mental health, and the second is to analyze the evidence of effective practices in healthy eating interventions for people with serious mental illness.

The literature review is intended to help us:

1) make the case for healthy eating programs in community mental

health, by demonstrating the need and providing evidence of the benefits

2) develop a better program and toolkit module, by learning from research and from the experience of existing programs.

The literature review will include "grey" literature (documents not formally published) as well as research evidence in peer-reviewed science journals. It will build on previous initiatives in this area, including work completed by the Dietitians of Canada as part of the Canadian Collaborative Mental

Health Initiative; the Government of Ontario's healthy eating strategy; and the Feeding Minds project by the Mental Health Foundation (UK).

So far, the literature review has revealed a very large body of evidence in this field.

A preliminary analysis suggests that being involved in a healthy eating program is beneficial for participants' mental as well as physical health. An executive summary of the literature review is expected to be available in late spring, 2010.



Unlocking the Toolkit!

Minding Our Bodies is an innovative project designed to build capacity within the community mental health system to promote physical activity to support recovery and prevent chronic disease.

“Unlocking the Toolkit” provides an overview of the Minding Our Bodies project and highlights the online resources that are available to help organizations start or sustain a physical activity program for people with mental illness.

Why focus on physical activity?

Despite the known benefits of physical activity interventions for people with mental illness, organizations meet many barriers preventing them from developing and delivering evidence-based physical activity programs. Thus, programs are neither commonplace nor well integrated with other services delivered by community mental health care providers.

The Minding Our Bodies project provides strategies and resources to help organizations overcome these barriers, so that more physical activity programs can be created and sustained.

For more information about the benefits of physical activity for people with mental illness, see the literature review (www.mindingourbodies.ca/literature_review) and Making the Case (www.mindingourbodies.ca/toolkit/making_the_case).

What progress has been made?

Over the past two years, Minding Our Bodies’ accomplishments have included:

- Increasing awareness of the project, engaging the broader community and sharing project learnings through our newsletter, website, and conference presentations
- Hosting a one-day training session for workers, consumer leaders, and volunteers in the field of mental health
- Developing resources to promote physical activity programs
- Creating an online community of practice to support program development and knowledge exchange
- Coordinating six 6-month pilots across Ontario to increase physical activity levels, access to local resources, and social inclusion for people with mental illness
- Conducting an evaluation to improve the toolkit and inform the future of the project

What Did This Project Demonstrate?

- Physical activity can be important on the path to recovery
- Programming can promote peer support and leadership development
- Physical activity can act as a gateway to other health promotion activities
- Networking and partnering can build capacity and support mutual learning

Contents for the Minding Our Bodies Toolkit

The toolkit provides a range of easy-to-use resources to help your organization create sustainable physical activity programs for people experiencing or recovering from serious mental illness. Developed for use by community mental health agencies, consumer/survivor initiatives and any other organization working with persons who have mental illness, the toolkit is adaptable to each organization's setting and needs. It is designed to offer support for a variety of implementation scenarios rather than a single, fixed program.

1. Making the Case for Physical Activity

The resources in this section lay a groundwork for developing a physical activity program. They describe the benefits of physical activity, introduce key terms and definitions, and explain the basic components of fitness. The final PowerPoint file, which can be customized for your own presentations to partners and potential funders, makes the case for integrating physical activity programs into mental health service settings.

In this section:

- Benefits of Physical Activity
- Types of Physical Activity
- Physical Activity Basics
- Making the Case

2. Getting Your Program Started

Get your initiative off to a good start by taking the time up-front to plan for success! This section guides you through program planning and preparation, discusses motivation and behaviour change techniques, and offers ideas to help you engage and encourage your participants.

In this section:

- Program Planning
- Preparing for the First Step
- Motivating Participants



A symbolic skipping rope was cut to launch the opening of the Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre's physical-activity room.

3. More Hands On Deck

Explore the benefits of community collaboration. This section focuses on building and sustaining effective partnerships, especially in the sports and recreation sector. It also highlights the value of using trained peer support workers as mentors for fellow consumers.

In this section:

- Partnerships
- Peer Support
- Volunteers

4. Getting the Word Out

Once you've developed or adapted a physical activity program, spreading the word can help your initiative gain traction. A strong communications strategy can attract new partners, new participants, and new sponsors. Send a clear message about the value of physical activity for mental health to stretch your program's reach and reduce stigma in the community.

In this section:

- Awareness within Your Organization
- Building Local Community Awareness
- Social Marketing and Health Communication



CMHA Thunder Bay kept everyone informed with their Minding Our Bodies bulletin board.

5. Measuring Your Success

Learning what worked well and what could have worked better is vital to maximizing program effectiveness and ensuring long-term sustainability. This section clarifies the value of evaluation to strengthen your program and introduces the basic concepts.

In this section:

- Why Evaluate?
- Evaluation Basics

6. Sustaining Your Program

Sustainability includes four key components: sustaining awareness of the issue among decision-makers and key influencers; continuing the physical activity program itself; supporting individual behaviour changes; and keeping your partnerships active. Activities to keep your program goals alive may include finding new financial support and advocating for physical activity plans and policies in your organization, local community and beyond.

In this section:

- Funding Options
- Influencing Physical Activity Policy

7. Resource Directory

The Minding Our Bodies Toolkit includes a database of ready-to-use resources to help you plan, implement, evaluate and sustain your program. The directory includes links to external resources created by government and non-profit organizations, new resources developed by the Minding Our Bodies team, and resources created and shared by mental health agencies with physical activity programs who have joined the online community of practice.

Some examples of resources within the directory are:

- Weekly Activity Journal
- Informed Consent Waiver Form
- Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire
- Ready-to-Use Walking Programs



The Search 4 Fitness team swims together at the local pool.

Program Directory

Whether you're planning a new physical activity program or looking for fresh ideas to sustain your current initiative, the Minding Our Bodies program directory is a great place to start. This database of physical activity programs for persons with mental illness provides program information, partnership ideas and promising practices.

Monthly e-Bulletin

Stay up to date with the latest information about physical activity and mental health, emerging research, coming events, training workshops, funding opportunities, seasonal tips, and new resources available on the Minding Our Bodies website to help you plan, deliver and improve your health-promotion programs. The monthly e-bulletin is designed for program leaders, health promoters, and others with an interest in the connection between healthy living and mental health. *Subscribe online at www.mindingourbodies.ca/newsletter/subscriptions.*

Community of Practice

The Minding Our Bodies community of practice is a place to connect with staff and volunteers across Ontario who share a common interest in physical activity programs for people with mental illness. Ask a question. Share your story. Start a discussion. Learn from your peers. *Join the community by signing up online at www.mindingourbodies.ca/user/register.*



Who Is Involved?

Minding Our Bodies: Physical Activity for Mental Health has been a collaborative and inclusive project. Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario and the Minding Our Bodies team would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the successes of the project during the first two years, especially:

Our Project Partners

YMCA Ontario and York University

Our Advisory Committee

Representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association, Ontario; Canadian Mental Health Association, Champlain East Branch; Heart and Stroke Foundation

of Ontario; Mood Disorders Association of Ontario; Ontario Physical and Health Education Association; Ontario Public Health Association (Heart Health Resource Centre); Parks and Recreation Ontario; and the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

The Pilot Sites

Canadian Mental Health Association, Thunder Bay Branch; Gerstein Crisis Centre; Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre; Community Resource Connections of Toronto; Search Community Mental Health Services; Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre; and all the partners and supporters of the pilot sites, whose contributions were invaluable

Our Sponsor

The Ministry of Health Promotion, through the Communities in Action Fund

For More Information

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The CMHA Ontario project team celebrates the launch of the Minding Our Bodies Toolkit!

Learning from Experience

Evaluation of the Physical Activity for Mental Health project resulted in case studies highlighting the successes and challenges of the six pilot-site programs. Lessons learned during the pilot phase have been woven into sections of the online toolkit to illustrate how some of the ideas can work in practice.

Quotes from participants, peer workers and program managers speak to the power of physical activity to bring people together and build self-confidence. The final evaluation report is available on our website at www.mindingourbodies.ca/about_the_project/evaluation.



Meet the New Project Team

As the Minding Our Bodies project moves into phase 2, Eating Well for Mental Health, we've signed up some new players to ensure the right mix of knowledge, skills and experience for us to develop our healthy eating program. Read on to learn more about our talented team and their favourite snack foods.

Lynn Gates earned her MSc in Community Nutrition and is passionate about social justice issues. Lynn is the Program Developer for this project and has been working on the environmental scan, looking into Ontario's various programs and resources to identify both strengths and gaps. Lynn finds it hard to choose her favourite snack but says it is probably apples because they are convenient when travelling (but too crunchy in meetings).

Mazen J. Hamadeh, an Assistant Professor of Nutrition in the School of Kinesiology and Health Science at York University, will be supervising the Minding Our Bodies literature review. Mazen completed his PhD in Human Nutrition, then pursued postdoctoral work in exercise physiology, gender differences in metabolism, and nutritional interventions in ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a.k.a. Lou Gehrig's disease). Mazen's favourite snack food is banana and dark chocolate, with tea.

Jessica Kwik is a Knowledge Exchange Associate at CMHA Ontario. She is coordinating the community of practice for Minding Our Bodies, intending to encourage

sharing through the e-bulletin and e-mail discussion list. She is searching for recipes to make granola bars to replace the store-bought products she eats now. (She promises to share when she finds the one that is healthiest *and* tasty.)

Donna MacCandlish is Director of Strategic Partnerships for the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario. MDAO's role in this project will be to share its experience running peer-led educational programs, help integrate the consumer perspective, and participate in disseminating project resources. There are very few foods that Donna dislikes, but at the top of her list are "all things green."

Cindy Scythes is a Registered Dietitian and manager of the Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC), a project of the Ontario Public Health Association. Prior to joining NRC, Cindy spent 18 years as a Public Health Nutritionist. NRC's role in this project will be to share existing evidence-informed nutrition toolkits from the Community Food Advisor program. NRC will help review materials to ensure that the nutrition information presented is reliable. Cindy's favourite snack is cherry tomatoes, especially fresh off the vine.

Jesse Solomon is currently completing his Master's thesis in Nutrition at York University. Jesse's role in this project is to perform a literature review to assess the need for nutritional interventions, and to evaluate past and present nutritional intervention programs for individuals with mental illness. His favourite healthy food is a fruit smoothie.

Karen Trainoff is a Registered Dietitian whose passion is good food and living life in a healthy and balanced way. With a background in nutrition and mental health, Karen enjoys exploring the connection between food and mood. Karen will be working with the team to produce a comprehensive healthy eating module for the Minding Our Bodies Toolkit as well as prepare and deliver training workshops. Karen's favourite snack is seaweed salad.

Ziv Zukier graduated from York University with an Honours BA in Kinesiology and Health Science. Ziv is currently working on the literature review. His favourite healthy snack food is granola with non-fat yogurt and fresh fruit.

Healthy Eating Programs: Who, What, Where, When and How?

These are just some of the questions we asked community mental health and addiction agencies across Ontario during our environmental scan, which was led by Lynn Gates, our Program Developer, and Karen Trainoff, our Dietitian. Using an online survey, we have gathered information about barriers and challenges that organizations face when developing, implementing and sustaining a healthy eating program. We discovered strategies and practices that organizations use to run such programs. So far, we have received information from more than 50 organizations. For those with a program, we asked

What works? What doesn't work? What lessons has your organization learned? Or, if the agency did not have an eating program, we asked What are the barriers? What are the anticipated risks? What do you need to get a program running?

The second part of the scan will involve a series of key-informant interviews with program leaders from a diverse set of organizations. There are many different types of eating programs, some working to raise awareness and knowledge (e.g., impacts of medication) or build skills (e.g., cooking or label-reading) and others to increase access to food (e.g., running

community kitchens). Knowing that, we are looking for examples of many different types of programs, including psycho-educational programs, community gardens and kitchens, and peer-support groups.

Also, to cover our bases, the team is reviewing existing healthy eating programs outside of the mental health field, including programs sponsored by government, other non-profit organizations and professional associations.

If you have any information about programs or activities for people with mental illness that relate to eating well, please contact us.

Dates to Keep in Mind!

The Minding Our Bodies: Eating Well for Mental Health project will be sponsoring six pilot programs, to run in Ontario between August and December 2010. If your organization is interested in applying, visit our website at www.mindingourbodies.ca and sign up for the e-bulletin to receive more information as it becomes available.

June 7, 2010: Pilot application forms available

July 2, 2010: Pilot application submission deadline



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