



Minding Our Bodies

physical activity for mental health

Issue No. 3

P R O J E C T N E W S

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Ready, Set,

go!

Get Physically Active

The Minding Our Bodies project has been very active during the past eight months. In mid-April we held a full-day training session for the staff and volunteers from our six pilot sites. From May to October, the pilot sites planned, developed and launched their physical activity programs. We started collecting data from the pilot programs to help us evaluate and improve the toolkit and we shared our preliminary findings in a poster presentation at the 2009 Making Gains in Mental Health and Addictions conference.

The final report from our project evaluation will be published in February 2010, followed in March by the public release of a revised version of the toolkit to help community mental health and addiction service providers promote active living and develop physical activity programs for people with serious mental illness.

Looking to the future, we've begun to prepare for phase 2 of the Minding Our Bodies project: Eating Well for Mental Health. Read on for details.

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Search Community Mental Health Services

Program Snapshot

From May to October 2009, six community mental health organizations in Ontario used the Minding Our Bodies toolkit to plan, develop, implement and evaluate their own unique physical activity programs. Early reports indicate that all six have been very successful. Our evaluation consultant has been collecting program data throughout the six-month pilot phase using an online reporting tool. Now she is visiting each site to observe the programs in action, interview key informants and conduct focus groups with the participants, program leaders and their community partners.

The final evaluation report will include detailed case studies to highlight each program and analyze their



unique successes and challenges. These case studies will be posted on the Minding Our Bodies website early in 2010 to share the lessons learned and inspire other organizations to follow their lead. In the meantime, we're warming up with a program snapshot from one of our pilot sites.

Search Community Mental Health Services provides community support, social/recreational programs, counselling and crisis response services to the rural setting of Strathroy and the surrounding county of West Middlesex. As one of three non-funded pilot sites, Search was faced with the challenge of building a physical activity program with very little financial support. They needed to engage with the community to find the necessary resources. Search began by partnering with the Strathroy-Caradoc Family YMCA, Middlesex Hospital Alliance, Strathroy-Middlesex Assertive Community Treatment Team, Strathroy-Caradoc Recreation Department, and the Strathroy and Area Seniors' Centre. Middlesex Community Living provided an aerobics instructor.

Search's physical activity program, Search for Fitness, offered a variety of activities each week, including a trip to the YMCA, aerobics at Search, tennis, circuit training, yoga, aqua-fit classes at the Lions outdoor pool and trying EA Sports Active, a personal trainer program for the Nintendo Wii. A dietitian from the Middlesex Hospital Alliance also ran a bi-weekly nutrition workshop.

Most participants were referred to Search for Fitness by a case worker or counsellor at Search. Individuals were screened by staff to increase the likelihood of commitment to the physical activity program. At the beginning of the program, each participant set their own personal goals and these goals were continuously revisited by the facilitator, Melanie Harman.



Search for Fitness participants learning Tai Chi.



Search for Fitness members earned incentive gear through participation.



Search for Fitness aerobics class.

The program used an incentive-based approach to motivate people, first to join and then to work towards personal goals. All new participants received a free pair of running shoes and a physical activity and nutrition binder. As individuals came to classes and participated in the program, they reached new incentive levels that included items such as Active 2010 products (shirts, water bottles, pedometers and more), a T-shirt or a gym bag.

4Imprint's (Windsor, ON) One-to-One program sponsored \$500 in free product that included T-shirts and duffle bags with the Search for Fitness logo. In addition to the T-shirts and duffle bags, Search was able to acquire free access to the city pool, five discounted YMCA memberships and free ACTIVE 2010 merchandise.

Preliminary results from the program are promising. Two multi-week sessions have been run, with both

All new participants received a free pair of running shoes and a physical activity and nutrition binder when they signed up.

groups filling up, while a waiting list has been started for a third session. Participants in the first group provided great peer support for participants in the second group. The staff has noted that this type of group support has been critical to the success of the program and its participants. Nutrition education has also been a very important component to the program.

Attendance in the Search for Fitness program has been very high and positive changes are being observed in the participants. One member quit smoking, another lost 24 pounds and some reduced their counselling sessions as their self-confidence increased.

Tracking their own progress in the Search for Fitness binders has been highly motivating and the incentives are important – great prestige is attached to the T-shirt and participants are proud to wear them.

Participants in the evaluation focus group expressed a commitment to maintaining their activity and dietary habits after completing the program.

Way to go, Search!

Meet the Minding Our Bodies Team

Projects are often most successful when the team members believe in the project goals and practice what they preach. Our team believes in keeping active and we participate in a wide variety of activities. Here's the line-up for the Minding Our Bodies: Physical Activity for Mental Health project team!

Chris Ardern is an assistant professor in the School of Kinesiology and Health Science at York University, where his focus of study is human movement and the relationship between physical activity and health. Chris keeps fit by playing basketball and squash.

Kendal Bradley is our project manager and she loves moving. Whether it's running, biking, yoga, soccer, football, swimming or Frisbee, Kendal does not like to sit still.

Lesley Davidson is senior vice-president of Health, Fitness and Recreation at the YMCA of Greater Toronto. Lesley is an avid sports fan who loves to play hockey, soccer, baseball, golf and tennis with her active eight-year-old son.

Louise Daw, our program developer, says, "I love anything fast, like spinning and inline skating, but I also to like to chill doing yoga."

Nancy Dubois is our evaluation consultant. She likes to ride her stationary bike while she is on teleconferences or when she needs to read.

Scott Mitchell, director of knowledge transfer at CMHA Ontario, stays active by walking, cycling to the office, fencing and working in the garden.

What do you like to do to keep active? How does physical activity help your mental health? Post your physical activity success story in the Community Forum at www.mindingourbodies.ca.

Do You Have Expertise in Physical Activity and Mental Health?

Join our "Ask the Expert" panel for Minding Our Bodies

Our website is intended to support organizations that are in the planning stage or already engaged in delivering physical activity programs for people with mental illness.

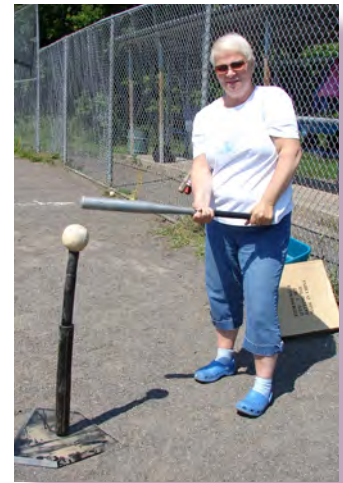
We want to do this by developing a community of practice. One of the resources available is the Ask the Expert panel.

We're inviting individuals with expertise in physical activity and mental health or related disciplines to participate as members of the Minding Our Bodies expert panel to help us respond to questions from program staff and volunteers.

Areas of expertise we're looking for include:

- the connections between physical activity and mental health;
- planning, developing and implementing physical activity programs;
- the connections between nutrition and mental health;
- planning, developing and implementing health promotion programs for special populations, including ethno-cultural groups and people with disabilities;
- evaluating mental health and physical activity programs.

If you have expertise in any of these areas and you are interested in participating in the Minding Our Bodies project, please contact Kendal Bradley, project manager (see contact information on page 8).



Batter up! A Search for Fitness participant gets into the swing.

Minding Our Bodies, Phase 2: Eating Well for Mental Health

The Ministry of Health Promotion has approved our Healthy Communities Fund application for the second part of the project, Minding Our Bodies: Eating Well for Mental Health. Building on the physical activity toolkit developed in the first part, we'll be creating new resources and promoting partnerships to increase the capacity of mental health service providers in Ontario to deliver healthy eating programs in their local communities. The project will provide strategies and tools to help organizations develop effective and realistic programs that promote mental health through active living and healthy eating.

Minding Our Bodies: Eating Well for Mental Health will be designed to:

- improve availability and access to community resources that support healthy eating;
- help individuals overcome barriers to healthy eating and physical activity;
- improve diet and build healthy eating skills in individuals with mental illness;
- help prevent diabetes, heart disease and other chronic conditions in high-risk populations;
- help people with serious mental illness and co-existing chronic diseases to actively participate in their own care through self-management;

- create new opportunities for people with mental illness to work as peer support workers in their local healthy eating program. These work opportunities can build employment skills and improve self-esteem to help promote recovery.



Free Pedometer Offer!

The Minding Our Bodies project is creating an online directory of physical activity programs in Ontario for people with mental illness. This directory will meet three goals of the program: to provide examples of existing physical activity programs for others who are interested in starting a new program; to allow organizations and individuals to find physical activity programs in their area; and to create an online community of practice that allows organizations to share resources and to learn from and support each other.

If your organization currently has a physical activity program for people with mental illness, visit the Minding Our Bodies website and add your program

description. We will send you a free set of 20 pedometers. For details, visit www.mindingourbodies.ca/program_directory.

If you don't already have a physical activity program but you want some pedometers to help you get started, don't worry. After the toolkit is launched in March 2010, for a limited time when you sign up for a Minding Our Bodies account and indicate that you are planning to start your physical activity program, we will mail your organization a set of pedometers.

Sharing What We've Learned

On November 3, 2009, Minding Our Bodies presented a poster at the Making Gains in Mental Health and Addictions conference in Toronto. Approximately 425 people registered for this conference, including educators, clinicians, community mental health service providers, families and caregivers, people with lived experience, researchers and health promoters.

Susan Roach, a lead from the Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre pilot project, presented at the conference with Kendal Bradley and Scott Mitchell from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario. Susan discussed the great successes her pilot site has experienced over the past six months and how they plan to sustain the program. Susan was able to discuss some of the challenges her group has faced and how her group has overcome them. Susan also shared some of the materials that her group created, including a newsletter and a Peer Specialist Activity Buddy Training Manual.



Participants of Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre's Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life program.

More information on the Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre's program is provided below. To request a copy of the Activity Buddy manual or the poster presentation, contact susanroachcentre@kwic.com.

Activity Buddies Help Peers to "Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life"



Testing out the new gym that Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre created from a basement storage room.

The Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre has created a program that has helped the whole organization become more physically active. A key component of the Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life pilot program is the training of peer specialists to provide peer leadership at the centre and to assume formal roles as activity buddies.

The Peer Specialist Activity Buddy Training Manual describes their responsibilities. Activity buddies will help in developing a culture within the centre that values physical activity. During member meetings, they'll encourage and support their

peers to incorporate physical activity in the monthly activities calendar. The buddies will help motivate and encourage their peers to participate in physical activities at the centre. They'll be leaders in initiating and supporting physical activity during lulls or free time at the centre.

Activity buddies will also be involved in the development and delivery of a peer-run healthy lifestyle education program. The goal of the program is to help participants assess the benefits that physical activity could provide them and to introduce them to others who have experienced the benefits of becoming physically

active. Additionally, information on understanding and addressing medication-related weight gain, which can be a barrier to activity, will be available to participants.

Activity buddies will also be matched, as required, with individuals who have an interest in connecting with existing opportunities in the community but face barriers related to their mental health, such as anxiety about meeting new people. The buddies will be trained to enable them to partner with and to mentor the individual to bridge them into community activities. The activity buddy will help participants pursue their interests, support their ongoing participation, and motivate and encourage them.



Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life participant playing Frisbee.



The Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life group dances to stay active.



Strike!...The Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life team take bowling lessons.

A key component of the Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life program is the training of peer specialists to provide peer leadership at the centre and to assume formal roles as “activity buddies.”

More information on Haldimand-Norfolk Resource Centre’s Get Moving, Get Fit, Enjoy Life program will be made available in 2010 through the Program Directory on the Minding Our Bodies website.

How to Get Involved

Here are a few ways to get involved in the Minding Our Bodies project:

- Sign up for the Minding Our Bodies newsletter.
- Add your physical activity program to the Minding Our Bodies online directory.
- Share your personal success story about being physically active and how it helped you.
- Join our Ask the Expert panel and share your knowledge about mental health and physical activity.



Hockey buddies... Two Gerstein Centre participants get on the ice.

Visit www.mindingourbodies.ca for details.

Dates to Keep in Mind!

- February 2010:** Release of the Minding Our Bodies project evaluation report and pilot site case studies
- March 2010:** Launch of the Physical Activity for Mental Health Toolkit
- May 5-8, 2010:** 3rd International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health, Toronto. Conference themes include: sedentary behaviour and health, promising practices in physical activity interventions, physical activity and inactivity guidelines, disparities in physical activity and health.
<http://www.cflri.ca/icpaph/>
- June 13-16, 2010:** Public Health in Canada: Shaping the Future Together, Toronto. Key priority areas include chronic diseases, food systems, mental health and mental illness and many more.
<http://www.cpha.ca/en/conferences/conf2010.aspx>



Minding Our Bodies

Kendal Bradley, Project Manager
kbradley@ontario.chma.ca

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 2301
Toronto ON M5G 1Z8
416.977.5580 x 4133

