

Vocational Empowerment Photovoice

Workbook



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Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

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For Sasha Bowers,

For your bright light, big ideas, and loving heart.

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Session 1: Introduction to Vocational Empowerment Photovoice

Vocational Empowerment Photovoice provides an opportunity for people to explore their current interest in pursuing a work goal. Many people who experience a mental illness find that working in a chosen career enriches their lives. Others have jobs that provide some pleasure and daily structure, while others still have chosen to not participate in any work activities. The choice is yours. This program will help you in making decisions about your vocational directions.

Goals of the Program

We will support you to:

1. Learn about the Photovoice process.
2. Explore your motivation and interests related to work.
3. Document your thoughts and feelings about your working life using Photovoice.
4. Complete two photo missions.
5. Connect with others who share your questions about working.

Your Commitment to the Photovoice Group

We ask that you:

1. Attend all sessions of the Photovoice program.
2. Complete all assignments.
3. Participate in discussions.
4. Treat others with kindness and respect.

The Leader's Commitment to You

We will work to do the following:

1. The group leader(s) will treat you with kindness and respect.
2. The group leader(s) will assist you in completing any assignment given that you do during the group.
3. The group leader(s) will provide you with the support you need to attend and participate in the group.

What is Vocational Empowerment Photovoice?

What is Vocation?

The word “vocation” means a few different things:

1. Vocation can mean a particular type of work—an occupation, a business, or a profession, as in, “My vocational goal is to become a teacher.”
2. Vocation can mean a strong desire to follow a particular activity or career, even if it does not lead to regular employment for pay. For example “I work as a sales clerk, but my true vocation is as an artist.”
3. Vocation sometimes refers to a divine call to spiritual service, as in “My vocation is to serve inner city youth.”

What is Empowerment?

Empowerment is the belief that one has control over one’s own life. Empowerment involves taking responsibility for oneself, including one’s own health and wellness, and often includes speaking up or advocating for both oneself and other people. In the process of working on their recovery, many people with a mental illness gain a greater sense of empowerment in their lives.

What is Photovoice?

- Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through the creation of photographs and narratives designed to capture an important aspect of their community experience.
- Photovoice puts cameras into the hands of people living in the community to give them the opportunity to act as agents of change.
- Photovoice uses the impact of photographs and narratives to increase awareness of a situation (problem or strength) and to promote needed changes.
- “Photovoice is a method that enables people to define for themselves and others, including policy makers, what is worth remembering and what needs to be changed.” (Wang, C. 2006)
- For many people, Photovoice gives them a greater sense of belonging in their local communities and support networks.

What is Vocational Empowerment Photovoice?

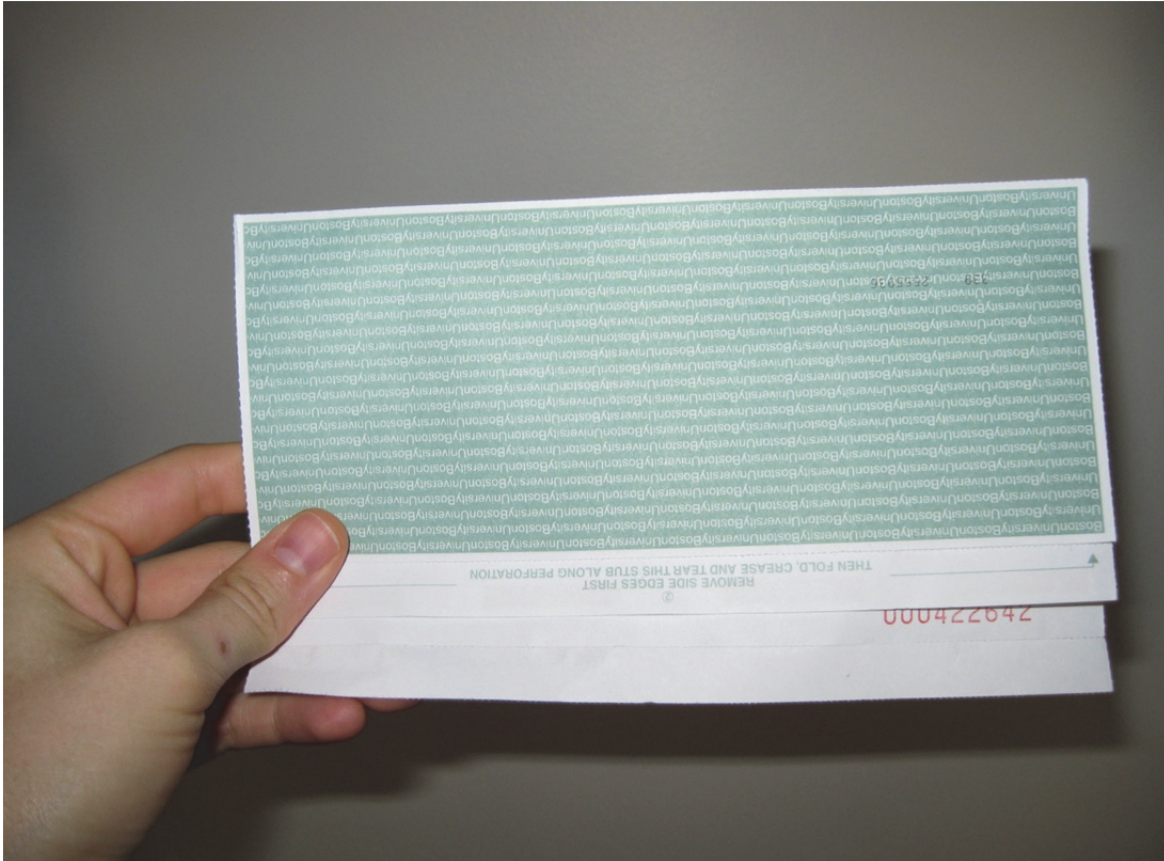
Vocational Empowerment Photovoice is a process by which you can take charge of your own decision-making about a meaningful vocational life through photographs and narratives.

Photovoice has a few main goals:

1. To help people reflect on strengths, problems, and experiences.
2. To promote conversations about important issues about work.
3. To give people a greater sense of belonging in their local communities and support networks.
4. To educate others about people's experiences and their community.

Photovoice Example 1

Below is an example of a Photovoice photograph and narrative.



Paycheck

Since I became sick, I wasn't capable of holding down a 40-hour job. I felt bad about myself, because I was always able to work before. I got my identity from work – my ego was tied into what I did for a living. As time went on, I started working part-time in 10-hour shifts. I was so ecstatic to be handed this little piece of green paper – my first pay stub. I still have setbacks now and need to take a few days off here and there. But, overall, I make it to work each week, encouraged by the connection and courage I get from being in the company of others.

Photovoice Example 2



My Wheels

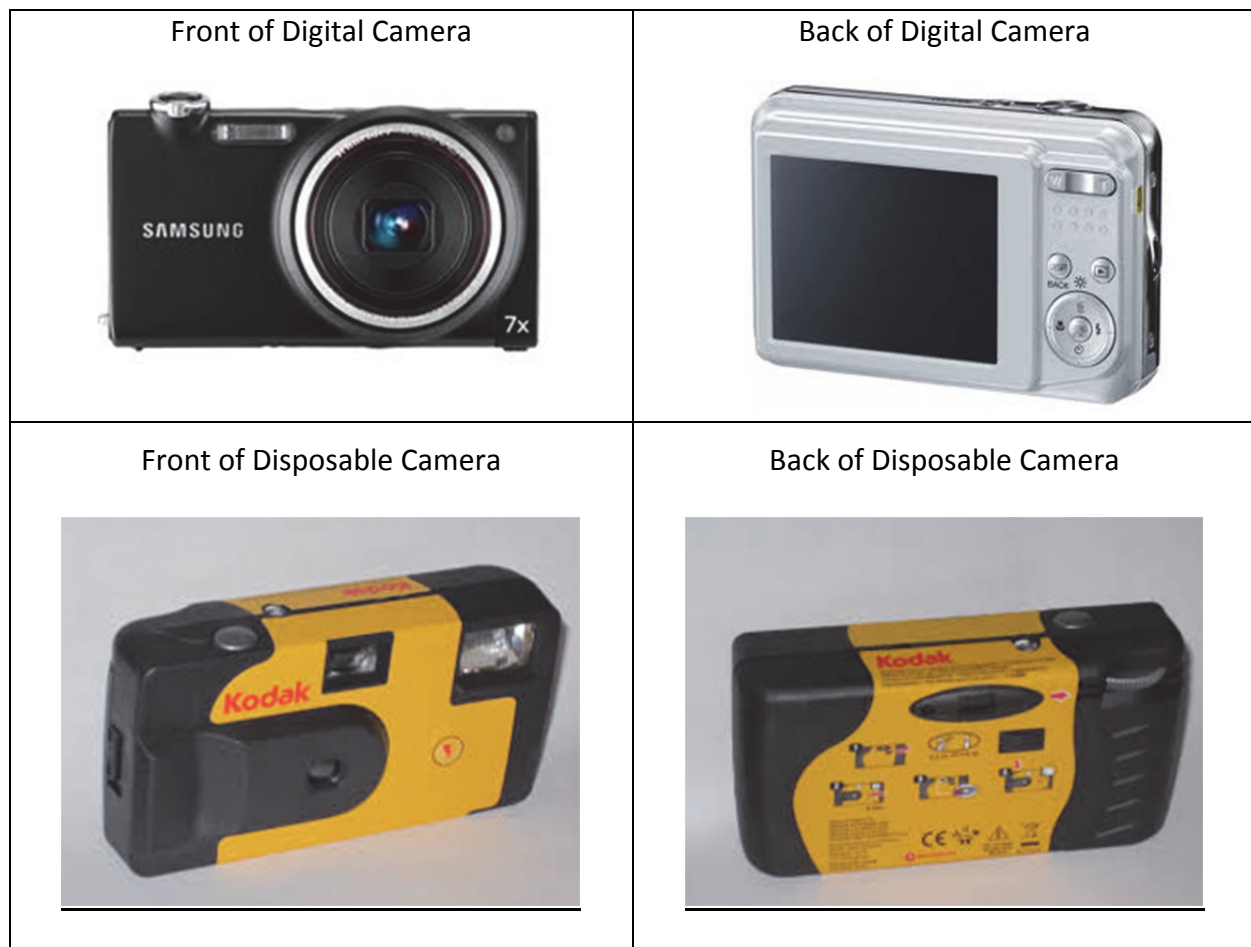
This is the bicycle I take to work. I ride it to and from my job. Not only am I working, but my bicycle does the work of giving me exercise as well as transportation. We've been through a lot of elements together – the drizzling rain of spring, the scorching heat of summer, and the icy roads of winter. It reminds me that, even though keeping my job despite the symptoms of my mental illness can be challenging, there are ways that I can stay healthy and active. Every morning I ride to work and take the evening trip home, I have a little challenge that I can overcome with the support of my bicycle.

Taking Pictures

- One of the most enjoyable parts of Photovoice is taking pictures. No experience with photography is necessary. Beginners and experts alike can capture images that “speak” to them.
- We will give you a camera to use, or you may like to use your own camera or phone. If it is digital, make sure to bring the connection cord to each session with your camera, so we can download the digital pictures.
- **Bring the camera to EVERY session.** If digital, we will download pictures that you want to present and help you turn them into a Photovoice creation.
- If you prefer, you can email us your pictures or bring them in a flash drive.
- The group leaders will be available to help you learn and practice using the camera.
- As part of the group, we may go outside in the neighborhood as a group and practice using the camera by taking pictures of whatever interests you.
- It is critical to follow all safety and ethical guidelines while taking pictures for the Photovoice program.

How to Use a Camera

1. Think about the picture you wish to take. You can walk to a nearby site or create a photograph in your home.
2. Turn the camera on. The on/off switch may be a small button on the top of the camera.
3. Make sure your camera is set to the setting for “taking pictures” and not “viewing pictures.”
4. Look at the screen on the back of the camera, if there is a screen, or look through the viewfinder. Take your time to frame the picture as you want it.
5. Push the big button (usually on the top of the camera) to take the picture.
6. On a digital camera, there is no film to wind, so you can take another picture right away. If your camera is disposable, you may need to advance the film.



Ethical and Safety Guidelines

Below are some basic guidelines to help keep you safe and to help you respect others' privacy.

1. Always **ask permission** if you are taking a photo of a person or a person's possessions, like a tree or a car in someone's yard. It is nice to **introduce yourself by first name** if you are approaching a stranger.
2. If you wish to use a photograph of a person in your Photovoice creation, it is important to get a release form signed by the person. The release form is included at the end of the workbook. The group leader will provide extra copies.
3. If you want to take a picture of a child who is under age 18, you need to obtain the **consent of the child's parent/guardian** to take the picture. Have the parent or guardian fill out the release form.
4. Be sensitive. Remember that most people would **not** want to be photographed in embarrassing situations, like when they are crying, losing their temper, eating, using drugs, panhandling, kissing, or in other intimate moments.
5. It's OK to prepare and use a "staged" shot to capture a scene, idea, or emotion if you think it would be difficult to obtain the shot "naturally."
6. **Pay attention to your environment!** Don't sacrifice your safety for a picture. Make sure to pay attention to your footing when you are setting up a shot so you don't accidentally step off a curb, into a hole, or into traffic. Consider taking someone with you when you are out taking pictures, particularly if you are taking pictures in places or neighborhoods where you could be vulnerable to crime.
7. There may be certain places that do not permit you to take photographs of them; for example, federal buildings, gyms, and certain stores. In these places, you will need to find a person who has the authority to give you permission to take a picture.

I agree to follow the guidelines above as I take pictures for our Photovoice projects.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____