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Combating Prejudice and Discrimination

through **PhotoVoice Empowerment**

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Workbook



Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

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Cover photo: from “Taking Off the Blinders,” Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation PhotoVoice Project, 2005

“This drain calls to me because of all the hurtful things people have said to me over the decades about my mental illness. In sum, I have been told that I am a drain on the nation, a drain on society, and a drain on multiple individuals’ resources. Over the years, I have come to believe this, which has become a drain on me. Education about mental illness (the effects of trauma) should be able to reach out to the general public as well as healthcare professionals. Knowledge and understanding can be powerful weapons in combating stigma.”

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PhotoVoice: Focusing in on Stigma, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Introduction

Welcome to the class, *Combating Prejudice and Discrimination through PhotoVoice Empowerment*. You are participating in an important and exciting course in which you will act as an investigator documenting with pictures and narratives the presence and experience of prejudice and discrimination for people who live with mental illness.

Purpose of the Class

The purpose of this class is to teach you how to express, with pictures and words, the experience of prejudice and discrimination for people diagnosed with mental illness. You will use a camera to document images of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior in your community and write brief narratives that explain your picture. The final product of this class will be a collection of photographs and narratives that are framed for display. The class will decide where to show their work.

Goals of the Class

Specific goals of the workshop:

1. Learn about the process of PhotoVoice.
 2. Learn about prejudice and discrimination as experienced by people who have been diagnosed with mental illness.
 3. Document in pictures the experience of prejudice and discrimination.
 4. Write narratives that increase people's understanding of the experience of prejudice and discrimination.
 5. Learn how people cope with ignorance, prejudice, and discrimination in their lives.
 6. Organize presentations of your work.
-

Suggestions for Participating in the PhotoVoice Class

Here are a few suggestions for getting the most out of your experience in the PhotoVoice class:

1. First of all, relax and enjoy the class.
2. Participate in discussions and exercises. Share your ideas. Ask questions.
3. Write notes in this workbook. There are many worksheets where you can jot down your thoughts and ideas. You also can write down some of the ideas of your fellow students.
4. Let your self-expression flow! PhotoVoice is about finding your own voice. Don't compare your photographs or narratives to others.
5. Ask for help when you need some help.
6. Finally, support one another. The PhotoVoice experience is essentially a group experience.

Example of PhotoVoice



“This drain calls to me because of all the hurtful things people have said to me over the decades about my mental illness. In sum, I have been told that I am a drain on the nation, a drain on society, and a drain on multiple individuals’ resources. Over the years, I have come to believe this, which has become a drain on me. Education about mental illness (the effects of trauma) should be able to reach out to the general public as well as healthcare professionals. Knowledge and understanding can be powerful weapons in combating stigma.”

—from “Taking Off the Blinders,” Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation PhotoVoice Project, 2005

Example of PhotoVoice



Don't Close the Doors on Me

“Often I am stigmatized because of the scars on my arms. People close the door before getting to know the true ‘inside’ of me. Sometimes I feel the causes of the battle scars were easier to recover from than the cruelty from everyday people and the health care professionals judging me. They make an assumption that I am dangerous or scary without ever getting to know me. There are reasons I have these scars. It would be a perfect world if people did not judge one another because of someone being different, just because they did not have an understanding of the issue. Educating the everyday public and health care providers on why and how things like this happen will lessen the stigma. Understanding something usually takes away most of the mystery—people are not as afraid.”

—from “Picturing My Health,” Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation PhotoVoice Project, 2005

Benefits of PhotoVoice

Now that you have an image of what PhotoVoice is, describe the benefits you think PhotoVoice might have for you and your community.

1. How might participating in PhotoVoice help you personally?

2. How might your PhotoVoice project help a community of other people diagnosed with mental illness?

3. Who else might your PhotoVoice project help? How might it help?

PhotoVoice Class Roles and Responsibilities

Role and Responsibilities of Class Leaders

1. Class leaders will teach and support students to the best of their ability.
 2. Class leaders will treat all students with respect.
 3. Class leaders will provide extra help to students who need extra instruction or support.
 4. Class leaders will meet the responsibilities described for students in the class.
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Role and Responsibilities of Students

1. Students are expected to try to attend all classes. If you are unable to attend a class, please let someone know.
2. Students are expected to participate in class discussions and to allow space and time for others to participate. It is important that everyone has the chance to be heard, so please listen when others are speaking. To avoid people talking over one another and interruption, please raise your hand when you have something to share.
3. Students are expected to try to complete all in-class and homework exercises. Due to the limited amount of time we have together, it is important that cameras are turned in for processing on the scheduled day.
4. Confidentiality of information disclosed in class is essential to the creation of mutual trust and the integrity of the PhotoVoice group process. What is said in class should remain in the class. However, we cannot guarantee that every student will abide by this standard, so please carefully consider the information you choose to share with the class.
5. Treat your fellow students and the instructors as you wish to be treated—that is, with kindness and respect.
6. It is possible that issues in class may stir up some strong feelings. If at any time you feel that you want some “breathing room,” just take a break. If you choose to do this, please leave class quietly and return when you feel better. If you’d like the assistance or support of an instructor, please just give a signal and one of us will accompany you out of class. We also are happy to meet with students privately outside of class to discuss anything that may have come up in class that you’d like to discuss further.
7. Due to the subjective nature of the PhotoVoice experience and the pictures and stories that will be shared, feedback on one another’s photos and stories will come from a place of compassion and respect for each individual’s opinions and perspectives.