

Combating Prejudice and Discrimination

through **PhotoVoice Empowerment**

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Workbook



Second Edition

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Class 1: Overview of the Photovoice Program

Introduction

Welcome to our class, entitled *Combating Prejudice and Discrimination through Photovoice Empowerment*. You are participating in an important and exciting program in which you will learn how to document and address with pictures and narratives the prejudice and discrimination experienced by people who live with a mental health condition.

Purpose and Goals of the Photovoice Program

The purpose of this class is to teach you how to express, with pictures and words, the ways people diagnosed with a mental health condition experience and deal with prejudice and discrimination. You will use a camera to take pictures of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward people with mental health conditions in your community. You will write brief narratives that explain and expand on your pictures. The final product of this class will be a collection of photographs and narratives that are framed for display. The class will discuss who might benefit from seeing these works and where they could be shown.

Specific goals of the class:

1. Learn about the process of Photovoice.
2. Learn about prejudice and discrimination as experienced by people who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.
3. Document in pictures the experience of prejudice and discrimination.
4. Write narratives that increase people's understanding of how to deal with 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 those of others.
5. Ask for help when you need some help.
6. Finally, support one another. The Photovoice experience is essentially a group experience.

Exercise: How Do I See Myself?

Before we go to look at the world around us, with our cameras, let's first take a look at how we see ourselves. Here is an exercise where we examine commonly endorsed beliefs some people with a mental health condition may have. Please check the appropriate box to show whether you agree with the belief or not.

Commonly Endorsed Beliefs You May Have	Agree	Disagree
I will never get better or recover.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am to blame for what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am crazy and always will be.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I cannot trust myself because of what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I cannot be trusted because of what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have no control over my actions now.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am unpredictable or dangerous.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am unable to get or keep a regular job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will never be able to have meaningful relationships or a family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can lose control at any moment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will be unable to care for myself because of what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now, count how many "Agree" or "Disagree" boxes you checked. Write in the totals below:

TOTAL **Agree:** _____ **Disagree:** _____

Questions

How many statements did you agree or disagree with? Are there any statements you agreed with you would like to share?

Example of Photovoice

Now let's look at a couple of examples of Photovoice and see if we can begin to change our perspectives about the way we look at the world and our place in it. Here is an example of a Photovoice piece that was created by a person who once took this class, just as you are doing now.



“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 (and 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.”

Example of Photovoice

Here is another 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.”

Benefits of Photovoice

Class

1

(pg 5 of 6)

Now that you have a sense of what Photovoice is, try to imagine how this Photovoice class may make a difference in your life and possibly other people's lives.

Questions

1. How might participating in this Photovoice class help you personally?
Please think of the ways it may help you think, feel, and behave differently.

-
2. Who else may learn from the Photovoice work you will be creating as part of this class?

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.

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 the class leaders 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 interruptions, 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 your pictures are ready for uploading 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 would like the assistance or support of an instructor, please just give a signal and one of the class leaders will accompany you out of the classroom. The class leaders also are happy to meet with students privately outside of class to discuss anything that may have come up in class that you would 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 need to come from a place of compassion and respect for each individual’s opinions and perspectives.