

## **Multicultural Wellness Education Final Report**

### **Description of Group**

This was a one off event as part of a Mental Health Project called 'Right Here' in Enniskillen, Co.Fermanagh. I had been asked to do this workshop as I used to work in the charity. I was delighted as it was an opportunity to build on the learning and techniques I learned in Capacitar. There were 18 people in total taking part. The title of the day was 'self-care when working with young people', and was for Youth Workers, those working with families of young children and others from various organisations e.g. HomeStart, SureStart, Women's Aid and groups working with Minority Ethnic Groups in the locality. The group varied hugely in age and previous experience of self-care and wellness practices; there were several women from the Indian community and the Philippines who had practiced Tai Chi and Acupressure in their own lives previously. Others in the group had not any background of any ancient philosophies, and early in the day I was challenged that this was all mumbo-jumbo when I was introducing boundaries and energy work. In order to work with this one particular woman I cited some of the recent academic work around the topic and some of the articles which had been sent to us at the last training. One of the women from the Indian community in the group said that the only reason those from the West felt confronted by these practices was that they are not used to them, but that they are part of everyday life where she is from. I encouraged the 'Doubting Thomases' in the group just to be with the practices, to see how they liked the day and to see if they themselves found a benefit from it. I encouraged them to look on it as time for them and a chance to learn some relaxation exercises, and that they would still work even if they perhaps doubted them. They agreed and then seemed to settle in the group more.

### **Brief History of what I did**

The duration of training was a full day (10 am – 4.30pm). The aim of the training was to cover how stress can 'sit' in the body and lead to fatigue and other ailments, exploring this with the group. I wanted to give to the group tools to prevent secondary trauma and compassion fatigue and also remind them of the need for care for the caregiver. In the morning time we did an icebreaker to get to know each other a little. This followed from an introduction by me of the day, what Capacitar wellness practices were and to get the group to think about stress and the impact of stress on their body, mind and spirit. The group did an exercise on flipchart to draw stress and where it sits in their body (negative stress). We then did some Tai Chi and the Finger Holds exercise. After this as many of the group were workers, more specifically helpers, we talked about Energy Boundaries, and did the Mosquito Net exercise. This was fun and the group really engaged well with this. An introduction to acupressure points was also covered. We then did the Leadership Dance before lunch. After lunch we did Pal Dam Gum to build on learning from Tai Chi, learn how to release stress and open body, mind, spirit. We then moved onto Emotional Freedom Technique and the final piece we did was the 'holds', both on self and then the group wanted to do this in pairs so this was an ideal exercise to finish the day on. To get some feedback the group did a closing circle to give feedback on the day generally and how they found it, and they then filled in their post-evaluation form.

### **Summary of Outcomes**

By the post-evaluation feedback from the participants, many wrote about how they re-learned the importance of looking after themselves. Much of the learning seemed to be based on feedback

body (or eliminate) it through movements which help create balance. Since many of the people were in helping roles an outcome of the group was that they experienced techniques to help deal with worry and emotional distress and could add these to their toolbox for use with themselves or those they are working with. As I had described it as a 'menu' of self-care practices which they could choose from, and by the end of the day many had one or two they said they would continue to use on themselves and in their life and community.

### **Evaluation**

The group were varied and I found it useful to have this variety within the group. When, in the morning time there were many challenges particularly with those who were not inclined towards the philosophies being proposed, it was a useful opportunity for the group to hear more about the practices and particularly how in the East practices such as Tai Chi or Acupressure are highly recognised and integrated into everyday life. I found the mixture of discussion, groupwork, movement and relaxation good, though I think if I was doing a training like this again I would spend more time at the start on the background of some of the practices, to enable questions to be answered if necessary from the outset and get that out of the way.

The group did pre and post evaluations of the training. This was useful and there was generally a move towards increased knowledge and reduced stress among the participants. Some of the comments from the written evaluations when asked if they benefitted from the day included the following:

- "From today we can take responsibility for our own mental health – these tools are so practical."
- "It was great information to take away and use in my work and personal life. It definitely wasn't the same as usual training we would do."
- "It has been a good way to have fun!"

**Comments from the closing circle included the following,** "This showed me how to be calm" and "It has been a real confidence boost for me today".

### **Personal Information**

After studying Biotechnology and a brief career in the pharmaceutical industry I went back to re- train in Health Promotion and gain my Masters in it, as I realised my passion as for people rather than drugs! I have previously worked in a research capacity for Queen's University Belfast and the Public Health Agency. Previous work includes work with young people (YouthAction NI, Brook

Sexual Health, Belfast), Community Groups delivering Breast /Cervical Screening Awareness Programmes, Alcohol, Mental Health and Women's health programmes. My current work on the CAWT Social Inclusion Project for the Southern Health and Social Care Trust involves working with vulnerable women including those with Cancer, living with Domestic Abuse and Mental health problems. I love learning and my newest adventure is becoming a trainer to deliver Mental Health First Aid and Cook it! as well as becoming more interested in mindfulness, meditation and I'm also a keen runner, hoping to do my first marathon in 2012