

Carers Education Course Group Evaluation



FDAMH
LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

**Falkirk & District
Association for Mental Health**

April – May 2018

The Evaluation Process

As with previous courses three different methods were used for evaluation of the Carers Education Course: Evaluation Tree, Final Evaluation and the impact on participants Behaviour/Knowledge/Attitudes with regard to their role as carers.

During the first session of the course, participants were asked to place themselves on the Evaluation Tree and provide comments about how they feel and why they have placed themselves at that point. Then, once the course was completed, participants were asked to revisit the Evaluation Tree and once more place themselves upon the tree and provide comments about how they felt after completing the course and why they placed themselves at that point.

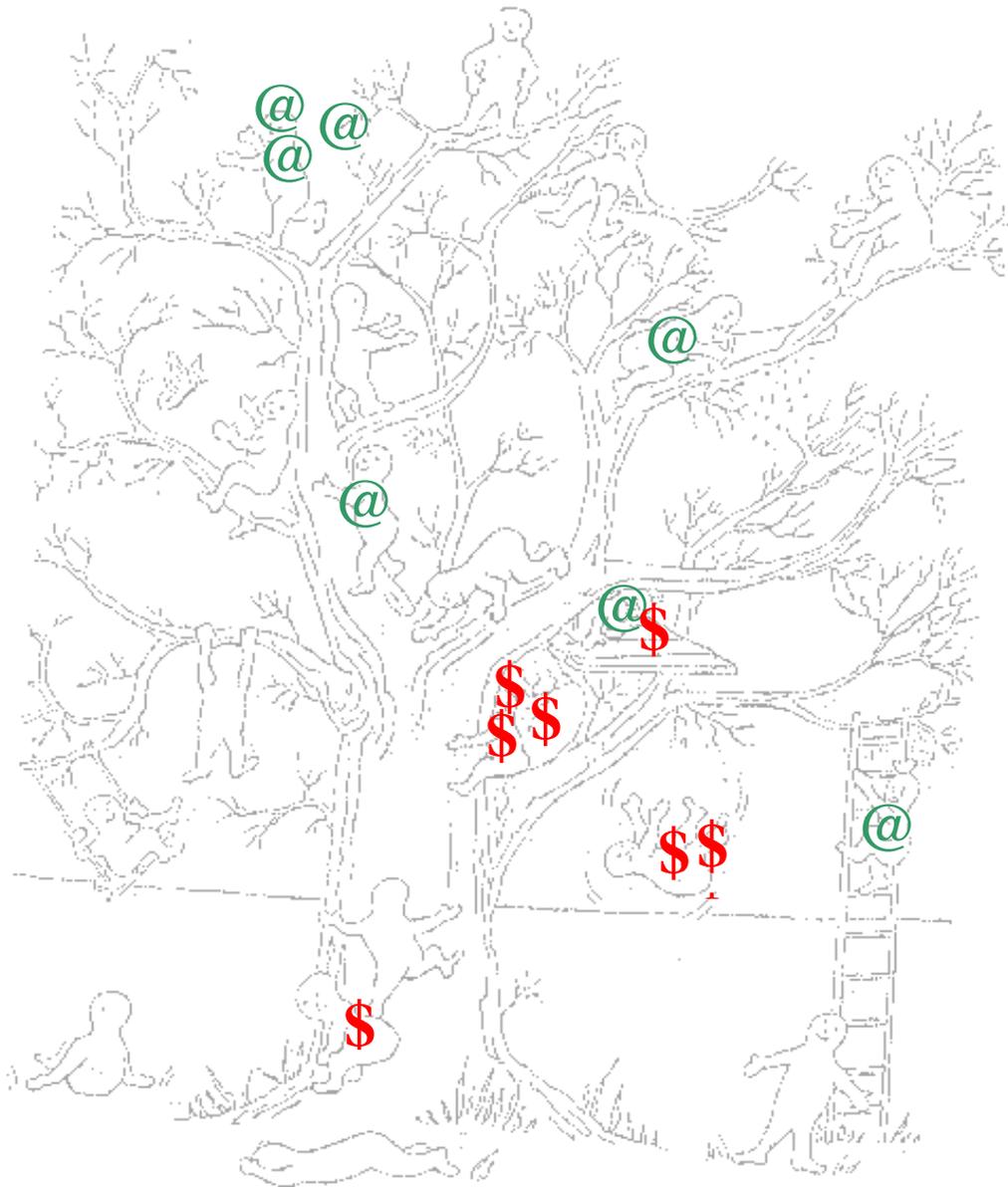
Participants were also asked in the final session to complete the 'Final Evaluation' form which asked them to consider how useful aspects of the course have been, how well presented the course has been and if they feel any changes need to be made.

The final Behaviour/Knowledge/Attitudes sheet was handed out on the second last session and participants were asked to consider how their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours have changed (if at all) since completing the course and what, if any, has been most and least helpful about the course.

The course began with 15 interested participants, 5 people did not/could not attend, and 1 person managed two sessions, but did not attend subsequent ones. Over the 7 weeks 9 people attended and there averaged 7 attendees and 7 participant's questionnaires are included in the evaluation summary.

The results of the evaluation process follow.

The Evaluation Tree



\$ - Indicates where participants felt they were prior to starting the Education Course.

@ - Indicates where participants felt they were after completing the Education Course

Before and after comments from participants explaining their placement on the tree:

Start “At the bottom of the tree, this week has been better, but waiting on the bubble to burst”

End “Feeling positive in myself and care for daughter. Proud of what I’ve achieved!!!!”

Start “Falling off the tree, I find I am so negative and feel useless”.

End “Nearly at the top of the tree and I feel more confident and don’t feel so much about negativity Now”

Start “Hanging on tight to the middle of the tree, trying hard to keep everything together”

End “Still holding everything together but with more hope and a clearer path with tools to help me to the top of that tree, looking up and further up now”

Start “Feel I keep falling back down after climbing up”

End “Learning to use new skills and with support and somethings to help me climb up the tree”

Start “Hanging on! Perhaps not to the tree but to my daughter, scared!”

End “Feeling much more positive and confident. I am good enough! Have let go of the tree”

Start “Hiding -unable to face reality”

End “More open towards help and able to communicate better”

Start “I am making steps to feel better and have been lower. Things have improved a wee bit recently”

End “I am feeling happier and calmer, New beginnings!”

Final Evaluation

7 evaluation forms were returned and have been summarised.

What has been useful?

The participants were asked to rate how useful or relevant the course topics have been: (1 = no use, 2=not particularly useful, 3=useful, 4=relevant, 5=very relevant).

1. How relevant to your needs were the sessions?	57% very relevant 28% relevant 15 % useful
2. What does mental health mean to you?	57% very relevant 28% relevant 15% not particularly useful
3. Recognising and managing stress?	57% very relevant 28% relevant 15% useful
4. Dealing with feelings of loss and change?	57% very relevant 43% relevant
5. Anger?	20% very relevant 80% relevant
6. Coping Skills?	80% very relevant 20 % relevant
7. Relapse?	33% very relevant 66 % relevant
8. Relaxation?	50% very relevant 50% relevant
9. Presentation of sessions?	100% very well presented

Behaviour/Knowledge/Attitudes – Thoughts and Feelings about the course

Have there been changes in your *Knowledge* since starting the course?

- 1) “Yes there have been changes in the way I reacted, also realise I can’t fix everything even though I want to. Take each day as it comes and be thankful”.
- 2) “I feel I’ve learned quite a lot, I’m so glad I came”.
- 3) “Not really”.
- 4) “Realising the extent of mental health issues in Falkirk. The “system” lets so many people down !!!”.
- 5) “I understand more how my daughter is feeling and how to help her more effectively”
- 6) “Other people comments and perspectives have been very helpful in how I face situation”.
- 7) “A greater understanding of the person I am caring for is feeling and how I may help and not hinder the situation.

Have there been changes in your *Attitude* since starting the course?

- 1) “I have become much more positive for the future,”
- 2) “I feel now got the right attitude to deal with any issues I might have”.
- 3) “Yes – I have more understanding of my husband’s thoughts and feelings”.
- 4) “More tolerant and aware of other people’s feelings. Don’t judge a book by its cover”.
- 5) “I have been more assertive and more positive”.
- 6) “Yes”
- 7) “I have tried to stop and think a bit more before I react to situations and try to calm myself down enough for a rational conversation”

“What changes in your *Behaviour* have there been since starting the course?

- 1) “I’ve tried to listen and not try to fix person or sort by talking or trying to solve a problem that isn’t there”
- 2) “ Yes, more patient and don’t jump in with both feet.”.
- 3) “ Yes- I have been more positive. I’m also trying to be a better listener and not to judge so quickly, particularly my husband”.
- 4) “More determined not just to give up with daughter’s problems. Keep hope alive”.
- 5) “Yes. People have commented on me being more relaxed and my attitude towards things. Also changed how I behaved towards my daughter”.
- 6) “Yes. To Stand back and listen calmly and talk things over, sometimes I can find I may have been less sympathetic than I could have been”
- 7) Yes, I am returning to the old me. Not hiding away, crying, at my wits end, struggling to get through the day. There is light at the end of the tunnel”

What was most helpful about coming on the course?

- 1) "The sharing of experience and hearing other people's problems and how they cope".
- 2) "It's made me more confident in myself and really enjoyed the group. They are an amazing bunch of people."
- 3) "Meeting other people who are in a similar position to myself. Sharing stories and thoughts have been very helpful".
- 4) "Meeting with others who understand and met some really nice people 😊".
- 5) "The help with changing my way of thinking".
- 6) "I liked when separated into groups sharing and the face to face advice from each other"
- 7) "listening to other people on the course-how they cope etc, facilitators suggesting and making me think I need to try to take care of myself"

What did you find least helpful or anything you would change for future courses?

- 1) "it was all helpful"
- 2) "nothing"
- 3) "honestly -nothing"

Any other comments/suggestions

- 1) "After constant battling with doctors, psychiatrist, psychologist, job centre, benefits office I went to FDAMH to see if they could provide any help for my daughter. The girl at the desk took me through to a room and asked me to fill in a form. I was shocked that I was getting to see someone straight away, no waiting weeks. When I saw Julie, I said I had filled in the form but I was here for help for my daughter. She said no I want to hear how you are - - -WHAT ME ??? why would anyone want to know how I felt. That just felt amazing, obviously tears followed. She was great, listened, gave me lots of information, and for the first time in weeks I felt happy. Then the carers course came up, popped into see Neil, told him the situation and he was very understanding. The course is in its final week and I will be sorry to leave such an amazing place, and meeting such lovely people. You all deserve recognition for the amazing job you are doing. I will organize some charity event with the group or on my own, to pay back how much you have helped. You have been my haven!!! You made my Bad Days Better and My Dark Days Brighter - Thank You xx."
- 2) "The course has always provided food for thought, with useful links to other resources. The informal chat within the group was very beneficial, its powerful to hear other's stories and share experiences. I'd like to learn more about mindfulness"
- 3) "Over the six weeks the course has run I've learned something positive & useful to help me understand both how I perceive things & others deal with issues"
- 4) "Neil & Susan are good at their jobs. Good insights into people and behaviours, nice and calm."

- 5) "Neil and Susan are fantastic people. Neil put me at ease from the start. I would recommend this group to anyone caring for someone with mental health issues. I thoroughly enjoyed the group and met lovely people and it has helped me in many ways".
- 6) "Thoroughly enjoyed the group and met some lovely people. Has helped me in many ways"

Conclusion

Participants comments suggest that the "meeting, talking and sharing" with others as the most valued part of the course. This is consistent with previous course evaluations.

The evaluation process and discussions produced a very usual response, in that people wanted to continue to meet and have contact with other carers. This particular group wished to have a "last session" so they could come together in a more informal and social setting. From this a number of contact details were shared and a whatsapp contact group was arranged independently by the group, as well as plans for informal chats and meet ups.

The course evaluations highlighted the benefits carers gain from the course content, the opportunity to meet other carers, the wish to continue connections with others and the opportunity to develop and influence support networks that work for them.

Always significant were the frequent comments about people's lives being changed for the better. I would like to attribute this to the openness and faith in the group process, the participants' own courage and curiosity to explore their potential to change, and the supportive group environment.

It was obvious to both trainers that the group were "vocal" and that they welcomed the opportunity to voice their experiences within the group. From the very start people were open and willing to participate which for the facilitators to observe and work with was excellent as learning from others in the group is one of the most beneficial outcomes of the course. Helping to alleviate the distress of the unknown, the 'what if's', the fears, and isolation carers can sometimes feel in their role are all benefits of this.

On the last evening the group had a surprise visit from the daughter and sister of a participant who wished to thank the facilitators and the group for helping "get my mum back" and "get my sister back". Of importance here, I suggest, is that the experience of caring that can be so stressful, demanding, isolating and overwhelming that a carer can "lose" themselves in the process. This particular carer had to have extended sick leave due to her inability to concentrate on her work, however shortly after the course finished she was able to return to work. The unexpected visit was a touching surprise and suggests the course came at the right time for many individuals within the group.

Another participant, a parent who has a teenager with mental health problems and subsequently school attendance issues, subsequently reported a teacher in a review meeting with her had noticed a change in her and commented to her about the difference in how she was presenting her concerns in their meeting. It is always nice to hear that the course can make a difference out with the group to the benefit of the wider network of family, friends and community.

I include this participant's comment below to demonstrate the range, depth and levels of change an individual can experience by joining others in the journey.

"The insights I gained helped me in a personal sense but also a professional one. As a secondary school teacher, it helped me understand the family dynamics involved in attendance and anxiety. I also see a place for mindfulness in the classroom and will seek out CPD opportunities for this. On a personal level, the course has also helped me cope positively with my son's recent diagnosis and my daughter's emotional struggles. I am able to see this as who they are and not a 'deficit'. It has also helped me look at situations from their point of view and appreciate how they experience the world."

As facilitators we are always touched by other's experiences, their courage and determination to look at their own situation from a different position with renewed hope for the future. Our surprise visit was a highlight and we were all moved by the experience and for me a clear indication of the power of people coming together and willingly sharing their stories.

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