

Carers Education Course Group Evaluation



**Falkirk's Mental Health Association
(FDAMH)**

April – May 2019

Summary of Evaluation

Introduction

As with previous courses three different methods were used for evaluation: Evaluation Tree, Final Evaluation, The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) and the impact on participants Behaviour/Knowledge/Attitudes about their role as carers.

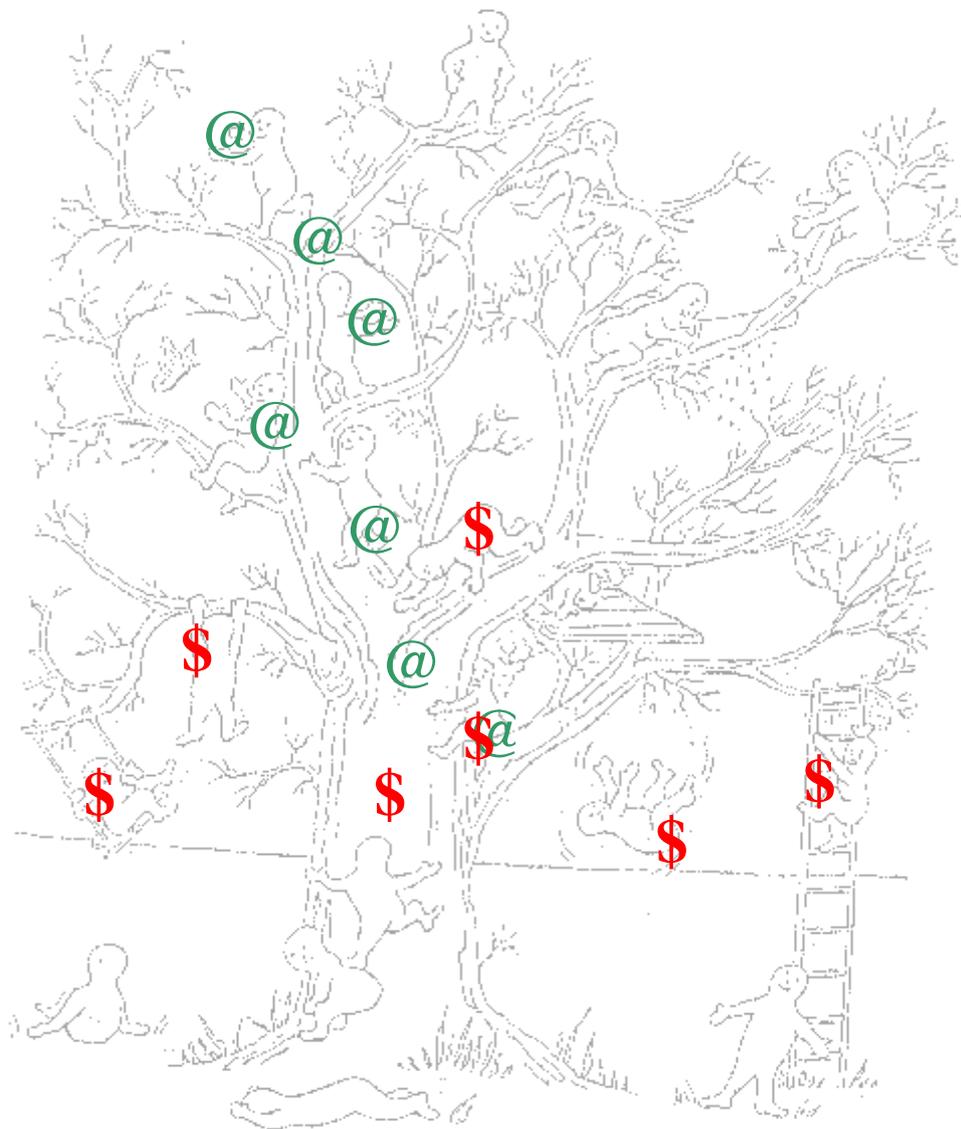
During the first session of the course, participants were asked to place themselves on the Evaluation Tree and provide comments about how they feel and why they have placed themselves at that point. The WEMWBS was also completed at the first session and then, once the course was completed, participants 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. The WEMWBS was also completed and people were asked to comment on their movement over the 6 weeks of the course.

Participants were also asked in the final session to complete an 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, 3 people did not attend, and 1 person managed 1 session, Over the 7 weeks 11 people attended and there averaged 9 attendees and 10 participant's questionnaires are included in the evaluation summary.

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

Evaluation Tree: Before and after comments from participants

- \$ "On the swing between light and shade and depends on each day's ups and downs"

■ "Half way up and making progress and small changes in my attitude"
- \$ "Middle of tree as I do cope quite well but at times feel like I am slipping down"

■ "Nearly at the top and climbing as feeling more open and positive"
- \$ "On a shoogly branch when everything seems to be going ok then a slip/fall but still going up"

■ "Further up but still very aware that this is very depended on how my daughter is coping"
- \$ "A third of the way up and a bit stuck and can't make it further up but hopefully won't slide down"

■ "I'm further up the tree, not hanging on for dear life, but not quite able to stand up or climb any further"
- \$ "I'm on the ladder and not quite reached the tree but almost there and feeling like I am making progress".

■ "I'm making progress and moving up the tree and positive I can make more progress"
- \$ "Just hanging and holding on as today has been an angry day"

■ "Further up and making a little bit of progress".
- \$ "Feels like sometimes I'm climbing up to a safe level then come crashing down to earth again to start over"

■ "Felt like now I can climb the tree and be happier where I am and can now pull myself back up"
- \$ "Changes daily with ups and down the norm"

■ "A bit further up but ups and downs still"
- \$ "Hanging upside down by my foot from a high branch"

■ "Still hanging from a branch but managed to get the right way up. I'm not hanging from one foot anymore and have more control"
- \$ "Hanging on sometimes falling, sometimes able to jump to the next branch but might fall".

■ "Further up the tree and more settled and have more empathy and feel more in control and a bit better"

Final Evaluation

10 final evaluation forms were returned and have been summarised below.

What has been useful?

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

Session Topic	Relevance to participants
What does mental health mean to you?	60 % very relevant 40 % relevant
Recognising and managing stress	60 % very relevant 30 % relevant 10 % useful
Dealing with feelings of loss and change	60 % very relevant 30 % relevant 10 % useful
Anger	60 % very relevant 10 % relevant 30 % useful
Coping Skills	50 % very relevant 40 % relevant 10 % useful
Relapse	40 % very relevant 40 % relevant 20 % useful
Relaxation	50 % very relevant 20 % relevant 30 % useful

Overall, how relevant to your needs were the sessions?

60% very relevant, 40% relevant.

Overall, how well were the sessions presented?

100% very well

Is there anything you would change or think should be changed for future courses?

“Very minor point - folk should be encouraged not to stick to same chairs for every session. I enjoyed hearing different perspectives, but there are still a couple of folks in the group that I didn't talk to on a one-to-one. Appreciate, however that some people are more comfortable staying in the same seat. Maybe try positioning chairs in a different way sometimes?”

“Relaxation – I'm partially deaf and wear hearing aids – so I lip read to help – you can't lip read with your eyes shut☺”

“The course was really good for me, the only thing I would change is allowing the participants to discuss their situations more and seek support for others”

Other comments

“I thought Neil and Susan made you feel relaxed and were very helpful throughout the course”

“Neil and Susan are very knowledgeable and empathetic - without being patronising. The challenge that both are able to provide is thought provoking and really helped. It felt comfortable to share issues/experience without feeling that people were either judging, trying to offer a fix or feeling sorry for me. I don't need pity – sometimes just a bit of space and a reminder that although it's hard for me and I need to look after myself, it's also hard for the person cared for. They don't want to be unwell. Susan and Neil provide a good balance of safe space for discussion and challenge about unhelpful attitude/behaviours. Thanks”

“The course is very worthwhile. Neil and Susan are excellent facilitators”

“Fantastic, really helpful input/support/suggestions and I feel grateful to have been part of the group and really benefited from the understanding, kindness and feeling listened to. A very helpful and positive experience. Susan and Neil are full of positive advice and have lovely positive energy that passed onto us all, thank you”

“Excellent sessions with lots of individual participation”

“I think the course was well balanced and contained and it was good to hear different people's experiences and situations”

“Neil and Susan were excellent trainers and their follow up support has been outstanding. I knew nothing about Mental Health or indeed the work of the FDAMH until recently and from my recent experiences within the NHS, the FDAMH work has been the most supportive and helpful. Big thank you to Susan for listening to me post the sessions and helping me through this stressful time”

“The format/topics covered on the course was well pitched and acted as a catalyst for the group to discuss their own circumstances/situations. The relaxed environment

allowed the group to talk easily. I would not propose changing the format as if it was overtly prescriptive people would not be able to discuss their own feelings/thoughts”

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale

For the 10 completed WEMWBS there was a total positive movement of 100 points (an average of 10 points per person). Whilst this is a good number and positive there can be no conclusion or analysis to this as the individual responses vary greatly depending on the day they have had and on how the cared for person has been. It is used more as a tool to offer people a way to look at their mental wellbeing and thereby making the concept more accessible.

Thoughts and Feelings about the course

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

“Greater understanding of impact of mental health issues”

“Awareness of not being alone and sharing helps. How to deal with potential anger and stress issues when they arise out of frustration. Being non-judgemental and how this benefits the relationship when this is understood”

“Yes – theory re CBT and various triangles and causes of behaviour”

“Yes, it has increased my knowledge of mental health awareness and ways of dealing with the stress and emotions as a carer”

“Yes”

“Realising that there are methods of handling many situations”

“I have realised how challenging being a carer can be and refreshed myself on coping strategies”

“The course has helped me understand the impact that my friend’s mental health issues has on me. This new knowledge will hopefully help me protect myself and so be able to care for my friend more effectively”

“Take care of myself more, understanding that you can’t sort everything”

“I understand now that I need to accept the new normal...whatever that might be. I can recognise now when something my partner says or does is behavioural rather than the illness. I try very hard to put some of the tools into practice daily and I know now, when to shout for help”

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

“Yes! I now try to be more relaxed and calmer which reduces anger and anxiety for both of us. I do understand it’s not how the person with health issues wants to be by choice and I keep this thought in my mind when times become hard”

“Not sure. I think yes, in terms of my attitude towards my situation and where I am with it (in terms of loss, change etc), but think it might take me a while to process and act or not!”

“Yes, without realising, I had built an emotional wall/barrier as a coping mechanism which I feel I have now overcome”

“I now try to think about what the person I care for are thinking or feeling”

“My attitude has changed slightly, and I am more relaxed. I am not sure whether this is due to the course or that we have been going through good period and there have been no further occurrences during the period of the course”

“Not really”

“Yes, most definitely calmer and more positive”

“Before the course I just wanted to make my friend “all better”. I think I have now accepted that I can’t “fix” her, but I can help and support her”

“More positive attitude now, more get-up and go and wanting to go and do a lot of things now I kept putting off or couldn’t be bothered to do”

“Yes, massively, I never thought much about mental health and the impacts. Since my partner took ill, I found that attending the course has made me much more sympathetic to the illness, to people who have it and to those that care for them. I use different language than I did before when describing symptoms etc”

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

“I now take a step back and try to judge when to stay quiet and listen and when to contribute”

“Yes. I’m being more assertive in taking more time for me. It’s quite tough as it’s not always the easy option but think that it’s helping me be a better partner and more able to cope and understand. I’ve started activities again – rather than just going to work for a break!”

“Yes, I am more aware of how the person I care for is probably feeling and I am now supporting them in a more positive way and communicating with empathy but also being more assertive when needed”

“I am a lot calmer and less emotional. I feel more in control”

“My behaviour is slightly less “being on the edge” all the time. I am now allowing my daughter to have her own freedom but with the knowledge that my wife and I (and family) are still there if she needs help”

“Have been less angry”

“Much more relaxed”

“I now see that taking a step back, listening calmly and stopping to think helps me to make more appropriate responses”

“Not as angry anymore, thinking about things before opening my mouth, understanding other people’s feelings more”

“Yes, I try to understand what is going on in my partner’s mind more, how I can help without losing sight of myself. I know when to ask for help and not to feel bad if I can’t cope”

What was most helpful about coming on the course?

“Talking and listening to others in similar situations. Facilitators led by example in remaining calm throughout and non- judgemental – as we should be practicing and doing”

“Realising that I’m not alone in this position – although every member of the group is in a very different situation”

“Being challenged to think about where I am within my situation and that I’m actually not helping by doing nothing”

“The knowledge and personal experiences from both Neil and Susan. Also, the shared experiences and different opinions/perspectives of the other group members/carers”

“Sharing experiences with each other – realising that although we have different circumstances there are similarities”

“Knowing I am not alone”

“Meeting people with similar situations and realising that I am not alone”

“The understanding, support and advice. being part of a group. feeling relaxed and not judged”

“Guided by Neil and Susan the discussions and sharing of experiences”

“Understanding myself more and taking care of myself. Being more aware of other people’s feelings”

“Meeting Susan. I found her very calming, understanding and so very helpful. It is great to know that she is just phone call away...I felt so isolated and alone prior to the course, meeting the team and knowing they are there has helped me greatly”

How did you experience the trainers?

“Neil and Susan obviously have a lot of knowledge and experience in this area and personal experiences. They kept the course flowing throughout and provided some excellent information throughout.”

“Great”

“Really appreciated their honesty and knowledge”

“They both brought calmness and experience towards helping the group share their own experiences and helped gel the group together”

“Very good – acted as a good catalyst for discussion. Distilled various people’s thoughts”

“Both Neil and Susan put a lot into the course and were very evidently committed to what they were doing, and took personal risks to help the process”

“Fantastic, very relaxed atmosphere. Very positive and supportive. Neil and Susan made the group feel relaxed, they supported us all and went out of their way to offer advice and understanding our feelings”

“Both were supportive, well informed and calming”

“Thought they made you feel very relaxed and presented the course well”

“Both are excellent trainers and did a fabulous job”

What did you find least helpful?

“One of the coping mechanism wheel exercises. Not sure if I didn’t quite understand it or if it just didn’t quite work”

“Everything was helpful, enjoyed every part of the course. Very interesting and appropriate”

“Sometimes maybe a wee bit too much jargon”

“It was all helpful”

“Thought everything was helpful throughout all the topics we spoke about as a group”

“I would like to have talked more at the sessions....and to have heard more about the other folks there”

Any other comments/suggestions

“I’m not sure how this would work but some form of role-playing scenarios. In industry I’ve seen some very short films where the actors initially play the scene and get things wrong. After viewing the film all students are asked what they thought the actors got wrong and what they might do differently. Then the same short film is replayed, however this time the actors played the role and didn’t make any wrong manoeuvres. Very powerful in the messages being delivered as you could see yourself in the actor’s roles making the same mistakes.”

“Well worth attending. Looking forward to the re-connect session”.

“I didn’t want the course to end. I found talking openly and honestly in a calm and relaxing environment with people in a similar situation was very helpful and felt everyone understood each other’s situation. It would be good to be part of a support group for moral support when feeling isolated in difficult situations”

“I wasn’t sure what to expect at the course. I had expected that at the start we would explain each person’s individual circumstances which didn’t happen however through time we have”

“Course went at a nice pace”

“Course has been very helpful and refreshing. Really pleased to be given the opportunity to be part of it. The follow up session with nibbles was incredible way of showing us all support being a carer can be very isolating, I did find this very helpful and friendly and a good laugh. Loved the meditation/relaxation and pebble.”

“I was very tired after each meeting. I’m not sure it this was due to it lasting 2 hours or due to the emotionally demanding content”

“Nope”

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.

Another response, consistent with previous courses was for some form of follow up or other courses to be run. Although meeting the aims and objectives of the education course and in general the expectations of participants there is an obvious “gap” in continued learning around the area of mental health and the caring role.

Course participants were in general confident to voice their opinion on most topics which helped to generate interesting discussions and these very valuable contributions are often what people remember most of all. As facilitators we do try to generate a safe enough space for people to use and voice their unique perspectives. As one participant commented at the end of week two she said the group felt “warm and fuzzy”, which I think implies she felt supported in the group space, and certainly helped create a feel good factor.

More than once it was mentioned how people felt supported by others in the group and how they were surprised how similar their experiences were despite the actual mental health condition they were dealing with was different.

It was most heartening to hear participants say how they had noticed other participants change through the duration of the course as quite often the person themselves does not see how they have changed.

The course evaluations highlighted the benefits carers gain from the course content and most importantly the opportunity to meet other carers,

Significantly there were the frequent comments and examples shared of people doing things differently and how they were feeling more in control of how they were handling their situation. These seeds of change feel like gifts for facilitators and the small steps to carers taking better care of themselves and in the process their capacity to care about the person they attended to help.

Changing how people view their life and the role they find themselves in takes effort on participants part and a degree of trusting that change can happen with different skills, knowledge and a shift in attitude or perspective. I would like to attribute these changes 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.

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25.05.2019