

Well-Being Blossoms.

This project aimed to support women by increasing confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing through four workshops. I have facilitated four workshops with women attending a support group with Carmdas, 'Carmarthen Domestic Abuse Service'.

The workshops included participatory games from Augusto Boal (2002) and The Geese Theatre Handbook (2002), aimed to build trust, bonds, connections with a sense of community (Prendergast and Saxton, 2013, p.45) by facilitating playful games and activities. The intended outcomes will involve of raising participants well-being, confidence and self-esteem individually and as a group.

Aims.

Bring women together in a workshop environment that inspires and supports participants' creative outlets, focusing on their joys in life and creating new outlooks and possibilities to grow and develop. In doing so, the aim is to increase their self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing.

Facilitate games and activities that encourage participation and connection within the group. Create new friendships and bonds through play, fun and laughter.

Step out of stressful mindsets and participate in play that moves you out of the negative or stressful mindset.

Objectives.

I will prepare workshop plans that develop and follow on from the previous workshop aiming to strengthen trust and connection between participants.

Applying the Drama Spiral Ring, Baim. C. (2020) aims to keep the workshops light-hearted, encouraging laughter and joy to build on expressive play and fun. The intention is to avoid triggering participants with uncomfortable content.

Therefore, this project will be filled with playful games that effortlessly encourage participation and collaboration in a non-judgmental environment supporting bravery, expression and creativity.

The workshops will be person-centred. 'person-centred counselling' is a 'humanistic' approach created by psychologist Carl Rogers who worked with clients by providing supportive environments and conditions to help individuals discover their 'true selves'.

Applying the three stages of the person-centred approach meant supporting the person to find 'self-actualisation' (bacp.co.uk, 2023).

My workshop will support the participants' journey in finding another side of their 'true self' by providing opportunities to be playful, laugh and remember this humanistic quality.

If an exercise is not received well or is out of their comfort zone, they will be praised for attempting it.

This information will help me understand the groups boundaries enabling me to build and develop the next workshops that support participants moving through boundaries with joyful ease.

Alongside building and evolving workshop content, the workshop plans will be flexible, supporting participants' journeys while at the same time keeping it open to new members to join in and reaffirming each time the confidentiality within the workshop group.

Intended Outcomes.

Participants will have bonded and made new friendships through positive, playful experiences where they see themselves and each other in a new light, having fun, collaborating and being part of the workshop that builds on participants creating within the experience a positive bond towards wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence.

Participants can reflect on their input within the workshops as a positive affirmation of their current and future selves inspiring new possibilities, avenues and pathways in their lives, supporting new discoveries of individual skills and abilities that may not have surfaced.

The need for the work.

Domestic abuse is illegal (CarmDas) and occurs within our cities, towns villages, and communities. Domestic abuse does not discriminate; it can happen to any person; in some cases, once a subtle type of behaviour begins, the pattern of cohesive abuse sets in unknowingly to the victim, (Gatewayshelter.org).

Domestic violence and abuse ranges from the physical, mental to emotional and spiritual which effects the victims

The physical symptoms can be broken or 'sprained bones', bruising and marks on the body. Other physical reactions can form as 'chronic fatigue' and 'shortness of breath', unable to relax to the point that the body spasms and muscles are tense.

Mental effects include depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, unwanted thoughts and drug and alcohol abuse can be bought on by the effects of domestic abuse known as post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD.

Emotional effects can include of feeling hopeless, unworthy, losing trust, and lack of motivation (Joyfullheartfoundation.org).

I have chosen to run wellbeing workshops to support people who have experienced domestic violence and will have experienced any of the symptoms mentioned. Hence, I see the importance of empowering participants through applied drama games and activities, improving confidence through play while providing space where they are heard and valued.

The Geese Theatre Company.

The Geese Theatre Company is a current theatre company that works within the criminal justice system and provides "group work projects and performances". They work alongside convicted criminals with the intending to "encourage positive change" of their actions (geese.co.uk. N.D).

Geese theatre company created a play called 'Stay', a performance about the breakdown of a 'couple's relationship' involving coercive control of the male partner. The performance uses the 'Duluth model of power and control' to highlight the male character and his partner through his 'controlling behaviour' and 'emotional and physical violence'.

This has led to 'Stay' performance being used as a training platform for professionals working to support domestic violence and abuse victims. The training is available for 'probation staff, police officers social care services, health education and social care. In addition, third sector services' that rely on charity funding (Geese.co.uk, N.D).

Acknowledging the Duluth model of power and control means I have a broader understanding of participants. This enables me to be more self-aware of my words when facilitating, while supporting their input and participation.

Applied Theatre for Military Personnel.

Self@arts is a community artistic program that supports military personnel through the practice of performing arts. Providing a space where participants have support with their 'recovery' by increasing their 'sense of self' and wellbeing.

This company holds a space for participants to connect the mind and body, in doing so begins their journey to heal trauma and envision positive futures through applied theatre practice.

Self@arts applies the 'pedagogy' of Jaques Lecoq, a movement teacher and Cecily Berry, a voice coach, for participants to connect to their bodies and voice and begin to express and transform creatively through movement and voice (Fewester and West, 2022).

Military personnel were offered respite and release from their experiences through therapeutic arts, alongside possible medical advice.

They provide workshops for 'general wellbeing' void of labelling participants with a condition to increased wellbeing with a creative journey.

Self@arts affirms the aim of this project's workshops, which is to increase confidence and wellbeing through creative games and activities, with the intended outcomes of raised wellbeing and self-esteem, a sense of belonging to a community, and new bonds and friends made. Focusing on building confidence, no labels related to triggering a trauma from reliving the past.

I decided to use Self@arts as an example of how applied drama can be utilised as a therapy to support and heal psychological conditions brought on by trauma.

Self@arts provides workshops that enable healing with the expression of the mind and body through an arts and drama setting providing support for military individuals living with trauma.

I can see how this content overlaps with my project as I am working with participants who are survivors of domestic abuse and are living with PTSD. Therefore, I found self@arts approaches towards supporting and helping individuals find their 'true self' relatable to my project.

Ethical considerations.

Transactional Analysis and the Drama Triangle.

Definition of Transactional Analysis: a person's behaviour changes between three characteristics. The parental- critical and nurturing, adult- rational and childlike- intuitive and dependent personality from early years (Hawker, 2017).

Definition of the Drama Triangle: relationships interchange in the triangle and take on unhealthy roles. The rescuer- wants to fix a situation the way they see it. The persecutor- blames others, and the victim- feels powerless and helpless.

When people are engaged in the drama triangle, the situation cannot be looked at objectively. The importance of making clients aware of this model supports them in making choices (Hawker, 2017 P N).

This has been a useful ethical tool to apply as I have been creating workshops, researching the subject content, and facilitating with participants. The model has taught me how professionals working with women's aid/CarmDas, are aware of keeping themselves and their clients ethically safe, avoiding any unprofessional judgements, opinions and possible resentments, enabling the professional to provide the client with information, solutions, choices and support.

The Drama Spiral.

Meeting with CarmDas project workers we discussed the value and need of increasing confidence, wellbeing and self-esteem their clients. I explained how this would be achieved by creating workshops that involve collaborative games and activities.

The importance of keeping the workshops fun and light-hearted was stated by CarmDas staff, this helped me decide to keep within the outer rings of the drama spiral to avoid triggering participants.

Baim suggests The Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020, p.120) as an ethical tool, supporting workshop creation, content and my facilitation aims. Facilitating activities in the two outer rings, 'Games and creative activities' and 'fictional and distant stories', helped to steer away from traumatic personal stories.

The workshops.

My workshop dates with CarmDas. S.O.D.A- Survivors of Domestic Abuse.

1st: 16th March 2023.

2nd: 30th March 2023.

3rd: 13th April 2023.

4th: 11th May 2023.

Beginning the first workshop the participants were asked whether they wanted to have wellbeing workshops as part of their S.O.D.A morning group. The answer was yes. The first workshop was a warm-up session, introducing participants to the workshop.

Reflecting-for-action, (Thompson and Thomspson, 2018, p.11) I aimed to disperse any possible fear around what was expected from the group in something that was possibly new and unknown. Intent on assuring participants there is no wrong or right answer in this safe space we can experiment and have a go. This enabled the workshops content to be positive and light-hearted with fun games and activities that supported participants to engage with ease, focusing on the group's positive connections and similarities of each other. This ethos is carried on throughout the whole project.

As the workshops progressed, Reflecting-in-action, (Thompson and Thompson, 2018, p.11) I observed trust amongst the group was beginning to form, we were becoming familiar with each other, and a possible new identity was beginning to bloom. Introductions were more open, and I could see the group bonding through sharing their individual number of 1-10 of present feelings.

This prompted me to introduce a wish for you and for the world, and or, a friend. This activity was aimed to bring power to participants as individuals, as they may be having a bad day, but they can still create wishes for themselves and people they care about.

Facilitating within the outer rings of the Drama Spiral, Baim (2020) directs focusing on play, with activities and games to inspire laughter for the physical and emotional body, therefore supporting the increase of wellbeing.

Being highly aware that participants have experiences of trauma with repercussions that affect the mind and body, the workshops aim was to create physical emotional and social interactions within a safe space, catering for possible conditions for fight or flight responses within a positive space.

Acknowledging participants may feel overwhelmed and vulnerable, as trauma creates a 'physical sensation' that is, fight or flight, which becomes the enemy (Van Der Kolk, p.249). This means emphasising a relaxed space to build trust to play, releasing tension and stress through games and activities which bonds the group.

Reflecting-on-action (Thompson and Thompson, 2018, p.11) supports the development for the next group meeting. I made decisions on what to add to the workshops that kept the playful pace and continued to increase confidence and wellbeing.

One activity the group did not enjoy happened in the 3rd week. This showed the participants were not yet at a level of expressing themselves freely. The group laughed about the game's absurdity and in a wonderful way the activity fulfilled its purpose. This helped me gauge how much and how little to add to the next workshop.

Feedback from participants helped me focus on where to grow certain areas of the workshops aims and intended outcomes instilling confidence that wellbeing was being restored.

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