

Towards Flourishing for All

What is Toward Flourishing for All?

Towards Flourishing for All is a mental health promotion tool which is an adaptation of the curriculum materials developed for the Towards Flourishing project, a partnership between the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Healthy Child Manitoba and the University of Manitoba. The aim of the Towards Flourishing Project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada was to strengthen the mental health of families through the existing Families First Home Visiting Program in Manitoba. The adaptation, Towards Flourishing for All, is a tool that can be introduced to any adult wishing to enhance their mental health and well-being.

Towards Flourishing for All is about helping people to be as mentally healthy as possible and introduces four topics related to positive mental health: flourishing, changes and expectations, coping strategies and reaching out. These four topics explain the building blocks of positive mental health and help the person to see the benefits of incorporating mental health promotion strategies in their lives. It also introduces ten evidence-based, everyday strategies for promoting positive mental health. The everyday strategies cover a range of domains of positive mental health including: emotional, psychological, social and physical well-being.

Who is the intended audience for Towards Flourishing for All?

Towards Flourishing for All is intended to be used by a broad range of healthcare service providers who support and assist adult clients in achieving improved levels of mental health and well-being. Thus far, Towards Flourishing for All has been introduced to a limited group of service providers to gather initial feedback. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) field tested the tool within the WRHA

Community Mental Health Program. Anecdotal feedback collected from staff who used the tool indicated that Towards Flourishing for All was well received by mental health clients. Further evaluation of the tool will inform the development of a revised edition that can then be more widely distributed and will include guidelines regarding the orientation or training required to implement and use the tool.

How should Towards Flourishing for All be used?

The tool should be introduced by the service provider in sections and not simply given to the client as a “handout” or workbook. The tool is intended to be used flexibly within an established helping relationship so that it may address the most relevant topics for the client and so that the helper can introduce everyday strategies that fit the client’s needs and wants.

The four mental health promotion “topics” are written in a style that guides the conversation between the service provider and client. At the end of each topic, there are evidence-based mental health promotion interventions called “everyday strategies”. The client can choose one or more strategy from the list to try. The helper can then use the everyday strategy instructions and handouts in the second half of the workbook to support the client’s use of the strategy.

Towards Flourishing for All can also be introduced to small groups using selected sections of the material.

What have we learned about Towards Flourishing for All so far?

Feedback from the mental health staff who have used the tool stated that the strategies are easy to understand and very practical.

Towards Flourishing for All...cont'd

One of the strengths of the tool cited was the holistic approach and the “fit” that the tool had with other mental health promotion and wellness planning tools, although it was identified that the Towards Flourishing for All tool was more specific and practical than many of the existing tools. The ability to use small portions or sections of the resource was also identified as a strength.

Some potential weaknesses of the resource included that not all of the content in the book was appropriate for all populations (i.e. for clients with low literacy levels or those clients in crisis).

Towards Flourishing for All is “person driven” and clients were more engaged in this process than they have been with other tools and resources. Clients who used the resource benefitted from being able to envision how they could flourish in certain areas of their life, even if they were struggling with significant mental health issues, which provided a new found hopefulness in some clients. The flourishing plant in particular, was a strong metaphor for taking care of one’s mental health in a way that allows one to flourish like a well-tended plant. This idea gave hope that there may be another way to live. One client specifically related that they had not viewed themselves as having the potential “to flourish” like a plant and had only viewed themselves as either “existing” or not existing. This was a profound learning.

Strong topics for discussion in group settings were related to the social domain and included the sections on “I Belong” and “Connecting with Others. For example, guests at the Crisis Stabilization Unit identified and shared many ideas that helped one another see where connections might happen for them. As a result of a group brainstorm, they were able to identify community resources that they had not yet

engaged with, and subsequently made a plan to visit those agencies together to bolster their confidence and support in reaching out.

Users of the tool appreciated the opportunity for genuine reflection that the resource afforded and welcomed the opportunity to make choices about what strategies they would engage in with regard to enhancing their mental well-being. It was suggested that the front cover of the resource be more gender neutral as some could perceive it as having a greater appeal to women.

An unanticipated benefit that staff encountered was that the Towards Flourishing for All tool helped to promote their own mental well-being since the strategies are relevant and helpful for everyone in the population; staff believed the tool was a great workplace wellness resource.

Due to the positive response of Towards Flourishing for All, the Crisis Stabilization Unit is moving forward with the process of embedding the topics and everyday strategies in their daily programming through groups and individual work.

Is training required to use Towards Flourishing for All?

Feedback from staff who have used the tool thus far have not indicated that they required more training than what was provided in a brief 1.5 hour introductory orientation, however, all of these staff have used similar types of tools and all have some level of training in mental health.

Future evaluations of the tool will inform what level of training or orientation is required for service providers who wish to use Towards Flourishing for All.