Creative expression: Healing through personal expression, social connections and greater purpose

Barbara P. Kresge, MS, OTR/L, CBIS
Kelly Redwine-DePierre, MS, OTR/L
with Brienne Bourn and Stephen Wiswell
What is Krempels Center?

- Community-based programming exclusively for brain injury survivors
- Groups offered address: physical and psychological health, functional and cognitive skill-building, social and communication skills, community connections, recreation, and creative expression
- Creative groups offered every program day, Open Art Studio offered 2x per week
- Multidisciplinary, allowing growth & recovery in all areas (OT, SLP, TR, SW, Psych, etc.)
- Everyone is an artist!
High Impact Creative Projects

Contain 3 ingredients:

- Opportunities for meaningful personal expression
- Strengthening of social connections
- Impacting change in knowledge & perceptions of brain injury
Meaningful personal expression

- Creative arts help enhance clients’ perceived control; build a sense of self, purpose and social support, aid in emotional expression, transform the perception of illness. (Kline, 2016)
- Making art “can serve as an intrinsic motivator to encourage client participation, while also enabling exploration of self-identity and a focus on abilities instead of disabilities”, (Kline, 2016)
- “Many important experiences are inexpressable, or, at best, expressible only indirectly and approximately” (Kline, 2016)
- “I never knew I was an artist!” Krempels Center Member
Meaningful personal expression con’t.

- Leisure activities buffer the impact of negative life events by:
  - Providing diversion
  - Generating hope
  - Restoring sense of self
  - Aiding in the reconstruction of a life story that is continuous with the past
  - Acting as vehicles for personal transformation

(Kleiber, D., Reel, H. & Hutchinson, S., 2008)
Strengthening Social Connections

- Smith (2007) noted a “positive interpersonal impact” from participating in creative activities in a social environment (requires self-awareness in social situations and a thoughtful understanding of others)
- Communication enabled through different medium than language
- Examples: Krempels Center Open Art Studio, Creative expressions groups, Photo Safari, Song-writing, Making musical instruments
- Set up of the environment can encourage or discourage social participation
Impacting Change in Knowledge and/or Perception of Brain Injury

- Utilizing creative processes to educate others about brain injury or to express/represent aspects of their lives as BI survivors
- May also be utilized to engage vulnerable groups in systems change (Lorenz and Kolb, 2009)
- Having a “say” implies power (Lorenz, 2010)
Creative activities address many therapeutic rehab goals!

- Physical
- Visual-Perceptual
- Cognitive
- Psycho-Social
- Promotes brain plasticity, and bilateral brain activation (Kline, 2016)
There's a story behind every mask and behind every mask there’s a person, a person that’s been touched by brain injury.

(Retrieved from: http://unmaskingbraininjury.org)
Unmasking BI con’t

The mission of Unmasking Brain Injury is to “promote awareness of the prevalence of brain injury; to give survivors a voice and the means to educate others of what it’s like to live with a brain injury; to show others that persons living with a disability due to their brain injury are like anyone else, deserving of dignity, respect, compassion and the opportunity to prove their value as citizens in their respective communities.”

(Retrieved from: http://unmaskingbraininjury.org)

• Kline (2016) reported that creating a “unique personal life story or narrative” helps to facilitate meaning making as well as a stronger self concept.
Unmasking Brain Injury Project

- An opportunity for self expression
- Impacts how the public may perceive brain injury
- Empowerment and creativity based on the survivor perception of self
Meet (Bumble)Brie
The mission of Unmasking Brain Injury is to provide awareness of the prevalence of brain injuries, and to give survivors the chance to almost say “Yeah, I have a TBI, but my story is so much more!”
I had two brain injuries & a few concussions. The first one was almost 20 years ago, in 1997, when I was hit by a drunk driver in January; I was in a coma for almost 3 months. The second one was 8 years later when I was walking up the stairs of my place on December first & my sweet, adorable little kitty, MooMoo, tripped me & I fell downstairs, breaking both of my arms & getting another brain injury.
I made my mask out of my weavings. I had a dream about doing a mask out of one of them, so I had to do it. Although the tie going over my eyes may make the public think that I am blind, but the greater symbol is over my mouth, because I don't/can't really talk. For me, making the mask was a Groovy use of my time. I mean, anybody who sees me & they don't know me, they're bound to think that I am deaf. This was my goal in making the mask. I have a Groovy idea about everyone & everything. That's why I enjoyed making the mask in the first place.
What I Want the Community to Know

We're not stupid; we're capable of working, learning, creating, hearing and understanding you. I hope that everyone can understand that we are all in this life together; no matter what my color looks like, diet, political view, sexuality, ethnic or religious ideas.
Now, let's watch the awesome video; and I hope that you like it too!
photovoice

photographs and essays from brain injury survivors
PhotoVoice at Krempels Center

- At Krempels Center, 11 participants, over several months
- Building a community within the community
- Culminating in multiple exhibits of the collection of work
- Our objective: To increase the public’s knowledge and understanding about the experience of living with a brain injury
A Participatory Research Method

- A visual methodology for social change
- Participants represent their lives, point of view and experience using photographs and texts
- Emphasizes importance of including those most affected by an issue and their communities in the process of knowledge development
- Participants regarded as “experts” in their own life
- Use of metaphor encouraged – “Visual metaphors create a bridge between the lifeworld of the survivor and the larger society, and foster new knowledge.”

(Lorenz, 2010)
Lorenz & Kolb, (2009) noted that participants in a similar PhotoVoice study protested the use of the word “recovery” b/c it implied desire to return to previous abilities and status.

They preferred the word “healing” b/c it describes continual if gradual progress over time, as they have continued to experience in their lives.
A Photovoice Path

1. Learn about Photovoice
2. (Select prompts)
3. Take photographs
4. Discuss photographs & reflect on experience
5. Write or dictate narratives
6. Choose photos for sharing
7. Option to invite people to share in discussion
8. Option to present & exhibit
9. Reflect & move forward
PhotoVoice Prompts

- What I lost due to my brain injury...
- Something that makes me unique is...
- My biggest challenge(s) is/are....
- My life as brain injury survivor feels like...
- The thing I desire the most is...
- One of my favorite things to do is...
- What gives my life meaning is...
- Artist’s choice...Choose any theme!
Incorporates all 3 characteristics

My life as a brain injury survivor feels like...

...this tree. It was burned 15 years ago when the old camp was burned down. But the tree came back. It still has its markings like the area where the bark is totally burned away and the lower branches are burned and brittle, but the top of the tree continues to grow and grow, it is ALIVE. The total package has changed but the life inside is still there and wants to grow. I may have changed on the outside with my injury – I need to use devices to walk and my memory is not the same but I also want to live and let the world know that I am ALIVE.
Sharing with the public at the Community Campus
At the Portsmouth Public Library
Lindsey Huntoon

Lindsey was a valued member of Krempels Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire for years. She is originally from Wenham, Massachusetts and also lived in Milton, New Hampshire. Sadly, Lindsey passed away last August. Lindsey is remembered by her family and friends for her feistiness, her independence, and her constant positivity. She was a lover of sports and of the outdoors and built herself a network of close family and friends throughout her life.

Lindsey acquired her brain injury from a fall. She acknowledged that her skills and abilities changed after her injury, but that they were still there. Lindsey encouraged people who know brain injury survivors, like herself, to treat them as capable human beings with abilities, feelings, hopes, and dreams.

Lindsey saw PhotoVoice as a unique opportunity to express herself in a different way. She hoped that her project would educate viewers about brain injury survivors while showing that you “can’t tell (everything) about a person from the outside.”
Meet Steve
THE
PHOTOVOICE
PROJECT
GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF BRAIN INJURY
THROUGH THE SURVIVORS’ EYES
The thing I desire most is...
One of my favorite things to do is...
What I lost due to my brain injury...

Brie B.
My life as a brain injury survivor feels like....

Brian B.
Something that makes me proud...

Patrick J.
PhotoVoice Tour
Discussion and Questions
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