

HerCircle: Executive Summary of the Outcomes and Impacts of the Pilot Program, November 2015

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1. Pilot Objectives:

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

Program Objective 1: to provide an 8-week program of Healing and Solidarity Circles to a minimum of 8 participants, each session with a duration of 2 hours.

Program Objective 2: to provide art therapy exercises with a trained therapist during the sessions.

Program Objective 3: to explore avenues for collaboration and create new partnerships with referral organizations to further support women in their pathways.

IMPACT OBJECTIVES:

Impact Objective 1: help the women to build social connections.

Impact Objective 2: facilitate healing and build confidence and self-esteem.

Impact Objective 3: support women in their pathways out of exploitation (this may relate to housing, employment, or support networks).

2. Pilot Snapshot:

PARTICIPANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of participants-4• Living with mental illness-4
DURATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 weeks• Number of sessions: 4 Duration of sessions: 2 hours
STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharon Duthie Jenny Lord
PROGRAM MANAGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emily Hanscamp
REFERRAL AGENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch Housing WIRE• Project Respect Empowered Pathways CASA House
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psychoeducation, Art therapy, Mindfulness, Community building
HERSPACE VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation manager - Lalitha Nair• Finance Manager - Medha Dissanayke• Communications Manager - Lauren Ferris.• Graphic Designer - Sai Chalermson, Matthew Lord• Other volunteers - 3

3. Data Collection Tools:

To assess the program and impact objectives were collected through:

- Interviews with the program manager, facilitators, and feedback from other referral agencies;
- pre and post-program questionnaires and goals and outcomes worksheets from participants;
- de-identified case notes from program staff;
- quotes from participants as recorded by program staff;
- demographic data from intake forms.

4. Evaluation results:

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

Program Objective 1: Was partially met with the program having a lower number of participants than expected with 4 attending. The 8-week program was delivered on time with 2 hour sessions each week.

Program Objective 2: Was fully met with the program content incorporating art therapy group work and mindfulness practice with two facilitators with specialised expertise in the area.

Program Objective 3: Was fully met as five new referral pathway partnerships were established, indicating interest to collaborate in future programs.

IMPACT OBJECTIVES:

Impact Objective 1: Social connections were built through HerHealing, fostering a community of women in which they shared a sense of solidarity. The women's shared experiences, interests, and collective experience of the group allowed them to retain ongoing connections outside of the group.

Impact Objective 2: There was an increase in self-confidence and esteem, supporting the women to better self-advocate toward meeting their life goals and needs.

Impact Objective 3: HerHealing did support pathways out of exploitation mainly by increasing an awareness of rights, safety, choices and options in women's lives, and through building life-skills to take action on these.

SPECIFIC CHANGES REPORTED BY PARTICIPATING WOMEN:

An Increase in:

- Social connectedness
- Self confidence
- Self expression
- Goal planning skills
- Self-acceptance
- Emotional awareness
- Increased self respect
- Mental health strategies

A decrease in:

- Impacts of trauma: anxiety, stress, nightmares, panic attacks, flashbacks etc.
- Depressive symptoms
- Safety risks, exploitation and trauma

Partnerships Made		
TOTAL NUMBER OF AGENCIES CONTACTED	35	WIRE; Launch Housing; Sacred Heart Project Respect; St Kilda Crisis Centre
TOTAL NUMBER OF AGENCY MEETINGS	5	WIRE; Launch Housing; Sacred Heart Project Respect; St Kilda Crisis Centre
TOTAL NUMBER OF AGENCIES WHO RESPONDED WITH REFERRALS	5	WIRE; CASA House; SECASA; Launch Housing Project Respect; The Urban Alchemist

5. Data Collection Results

Data Source 1: Post-program questionnaire	
CATEGORY	SATISFACTION RATING ON A SCALE OF 1-5 WHERE 1 IS 'NO, NOT AT ALL' AND 5 'YES, VERY MUCH'
Empowering experience	100% of the participants gave a rating of 5
Achievement of individual goals	50% of the participants gave a rating of 5 remaining 50% gave a rating of 3
Reduced effect of the experience of trauma	50% of the participants gave a rating of 4 remaining 50% gave a rating of 3
Increase in self confidence	100% of participants gave a rating of 4
Learned a range of coping strategies	100% of participants gave a rating of 4
Build positive connections	50% of participants gave a rating of 5; remaining 50% gave a rating of 4
Address issues such as housing, employment, social isolation	50% of participants gave a rating of 4; remaining 50% gave a rating of 3
Recommend the program to others	100% of participants gave a rating of 5

Satisfaction rating on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is highest rating

Data Source 2: Indiv goals worksheet		
INDIVIDUAL GOALS	PRE-PROGRAM RATING	POST-PROGRAM RATING
Different ways to express self and feelings	0	6
Build self-esteem and confidence	0	5
Achieve goal planning	0	4
Learn to have positive experiences	0	4
To respect myself more	1	6
Positive self talk	1	7
Safe housing	1	10
Moving forward emotionally	2	8
Feeling good	2	5

Satisfaction rating on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is highest rating

Data Source 3: Empowerment Star		
MOST SIGNIFICANT GOALS	PRE-PROGRAM RATING	POST-PROGRAM RATING
Social connectedness	1	8
Safety	5	9
Healing	2 & 7	7 & 10
Acceptance and acknowledgement of journey	1	Did not complete

6. Recommendations for future programs

The following recommendations emerge from the evaluation of this pilot program.

1. **Length of the sessions:** Two hours did not provide enough time for the activities. It is recommended that the group be 3 hours in duration.
2. **Group size:** Due to the social isolation and issues with anxiety and depression that these women face it can be difficult for the women to attend a large group. It is recommended that future groups be run with a minimum of six women and maximum of eight.
3. **Type of referrals appropriate for the group:** For the women to engage in the activities and benefit from the program, they need physical and emotional safety in their lives. It is recommended that the group be made available to women who are in a physically safe environment.
4. **Pre-group planning and intake interviews:** It is recommended that the pre-group interview be given more time to enable discussions with the referral agencies and to determine if the group will be appropriate for that individual person.
5. **Sustainable sources of funding:** Considering its significant impacts, it is recommended that sustainable long-term funding be sought to ensure that this program is delivered on a regular basis.
6. **Having a strong individual counselling component of HerSpace:** Due to the challenges in attaining sufficient referrals, it is advised that HerSpace focuses on building up this program first prior to implementing the second round of this program. We can assume 1 in 3 women from the HerHealing program will be interested in being part of the group, and this would create 5 referrals from the outset, ensuring the success of the program, in addition to referrals from strong partnerships already established.

