

SECTION 3: EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

Why evaluate?

Since you and everyone involved in Talking About Mental Illness put a lot of time and effort into organizing and implementing the program, you probably want to know how well it worked. Did the students learn anything? How did the program affect their knowledge and attitudes? What did they particularly like or dislike about the experience? What would you change if you were to do it again?

Past evaluations: Summary and results

Evaluations were conducted of both the original Beyond the Cuckoo's Nest program at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry and later of the camh and partner programs in the three communities. These evaluations used questionnaires to measure students' knowledge about mental illness, as well as their attitudes toward people with mental illness before and after the presentation (pre- and post-test). Following the presentation, students were also asked to rate the presentation and were given a chance to answer some open-ended questions about what they liked and disliked.

Summary

In the spring of 2000, 278 students from eight secondary schools in the three pilot communities completed evaluation questionnaires. In all cases, school personnel implemented the evaluation. Students were surveyed before and after the presentation in some schools, and only after in others.

The pre-test measured students' knowledge about mental illness and their attitudes toward mental illness and people with mental illness. The post-test, measured the same variables as the pre-test to determine if there had been any changes. Students were also asked to rate the presentation and to comment about what they liked and disliked.

Results

In almost all cases, knowledge scores increased significantly following the presentation. Attitudes tended to become more positive toward people with mental illness at the post-test, but the change was not as great as for knowledge. This result is consistent with what is known about the difficulty of changing attitudes in a short period of time, and following a single intervention.

In the Comments section, students most often wrote that the most important parts of the presentation were the opportunities to hear people tell their own stories and to have their own questions answered. Following are some typical comments about what the students liked best about the presentation:

- It wasn't just people talking about something they never experienced, it was real people with real stories.
- I was able to hear different stories and the speakers were very open and answered our questions.
- I think that the stories were touching and they made me realize mental illness is as serious as physical illness.
- The interviews — because it helped me to understand how people with mental illness cope with their condition.
- Talking with the person who had experienced a mental illness and their family members.

Comments were less consistent about what students disliked, depending on the make-up of the presentation they attended. Following are some examples:

- I think with people my age they should have talked more about eating disorders and how we could prevent them.
- The presenters should have talked longer and should have had more question time.
- I didn't like the fact that the presenters read the information on the overheads instead of explaining it.

- Three people came in to talk about the same disorder (bipolar disorder).

How much evaluation should you undertake?

You decide how much evaluation to undertake. If you decide to use the pre- and post-tests, it's best if the pre-test be conducted approximately one week before any of the preparatory learning activities and under teacher supervision. It is important to complete the post-test within a week or two of the presentation, after the follow-up activities.

Let students know that, although the final results of the evaluation will be confidential (no names will be attached to their comments), it is important to have completed the identifying information on the top of the pre and post student questionnaires. It will make it possible to match students' responses and compare them before and after the presentation. If you need help administering the evaluation, contact members of the organizing committee. They will help you carry out the evaluation effectively and summarize the results.

Making evaluation a success

As the program gains popularity, the results of the evaluations can be helpful in encouraging other teachers and schools to consider hosting the program. Schools may be more willing to host the program when they learn other students benefited from having participated.

Teachers' responses can also help open up new opportunities for the program because teachers like to hear how other teachers incorporated the program into their courses and what their overall impressions were. The following are some tips for ensuring your evaluation goes smoothly and proves to be useful.

- Create enthusiasm by reminding students their responses will have a direct influence on the program's development, and that they can help improve the program for the future.
- Make sure to communicate the results of the program evaluation to everyone who participated in the program. Students, presenters and organizers will appreciate hearing about the outcomes; they will feel their investment of time was worthwhile.
- Make good use of the results by creating a summary of the key findings, including written comments. Don't ignore the critical comments. They can be essential to improving the program.
- Feedback does not only happen through formal evaluations. Comments received from teachers and students can be equally valuable.

Evaluation tools

On the following pages, you will find three evaluation forms: a student pre-test, a student post-test, and a teacher evaluation form. Please photocopy as many as you will need to distribute to the students and teachers.

Talking about Mental Illness

STUDENT EVALUATION — PRE-TEST

Today's Date: _____ School: _____

Teacher's Name: _____ Subject: _____

Female or Male Birth date: Day _____ Month _____ Year _____ Grade: _____

A. Please indicate how much you feel you **know** about each of the following. Circle the number that best describes your knowledge.

	None	A little	Some	A lot
1. mental illness in general	1	2	3	4
2. how people cope with mental illness	1	2	3	4
3. different approaches to help persons with mental illness	1	2	3	4
4. what it is like to have a mental illness	1	2	3	4
5. what it is like to have a family member with mental illness	1	2	3	4
6. the causes of different forms of mental illness	1	2	3	4
7. how to recognize signs of mental illness	1	2	3	4
8. different training and career paths mental health workers have	1	2	3	4

B. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Most people with a serious mental illness can, with treatment, get well and return to productive lives.	1	2	3	4
2. In most cases, keeping up a normal life in the community helps a person with mental illness get better.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3. People with mental illness are far less of a danger than most people believe.	1	2	3	4
4. Locating a group home or apartments for people with mental illness in residential neighbourhoods does not endanger local residents.	1	2	3	4
5. Locating a group home or apartments for people with mental illness in a residential area will not lower the value of surrounding homes.	1	2	3	4
6. People with mental illness are, by far, more dangerous than the general population.	1	2	3	4
7. Mental health facilities should be kept out of residential neighbourhoods.	1	2	3	4
8. Even if they seem OK, people with mental illness always have the potential to commit violent acts.	1	2	3	4
9. It is easy to recognize someone who once had a serious mental illness.	1	2	3	4
10. The best way to handle people with mental illness is to keep them behind locked doors.	1	2	3	4

THANK YOU

Talking about Mental Illness

STUDENT EVALUATION — POST-TEST

Today's Date: _____ School: _____

Teacher's Name: _____ Subject: _____

Female or Male Birth date: Day _____ Month _____ Year _____ Grade: _____

A. Please indicate how much you feel you **know** about each of the following. Circle the number that best describes your knowledge.

	None	A little	Some	A lot
1. mental illness in general	1	2	3	4
2. how people cope with mental illness	1	2	3	4
3. different approaches to help persons with mental illness	1	2	3	4
4. what it is like to have a mental illness	1	2	3	4
5. what it is like to have a family member with mental illness	1	2	3	4
6. the causes of different forms of mental illness	1	2	3	4
7. how to recognize signs of mental illness	1	2	3	4
8. different training and career paths mental health workers have	1	2	3	4

B. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Most people with a serious mental illness can, with treatment, get well and return to productive lives.	1	2	3	4
2. In most cases, keeping up a normal life in the community helps a person with mental illness get better.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3. People with mental illness are far less of a danger than most people believe.	1	2	3	4
4. Locating a group home or apartments for people with mental illness in residential neighbourhoods does not endanger local residents.	1	2	3	4
5. Locating a group home or apartments for people with mental illness in a residential area will not lower the value of surrounding homes.	1	2	3	4
6. People with mental illness are, by far, more dangerous than the general population.	1	2	3	4
7. Mental health facilities should be kept out of residential neighbourhoods.	1	2	3	4
8. Even if they seem OK, people with mental illness always have the potential to commit violent acts.	1	2	3	4
9. It is easy to recognize someone who once had a serious mental illness.	1	2	3	4
10. The best way to handle people with mental illness is to keep them behind locked doors.	1	2	3	4

C. As a result of participating in the program, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. The classroom activities and presentations held my attention.	1	2	3	4
2. I learned a lot from the presentations.	1	2	3	4
3. The presentations are a good way to learn about mental illness.	1	2	3	4
4. It is valuable for students to be able to ask presenters questions.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5. The experience of the presenters was relevant to people my age.	1	2	3	4
6. I learned some new information about mental illness.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel better about my ability to talk with someone with mental illness.	1	2	3	4
8. I feel that I know more about the emotions experienced by someone who has a mental illness.	1	2	3	4
9. In the future, I will feel more comfortable when I meet people with mental illness.	1	2	3	4
10. I would recommend this program to a friend who hasn't participated in it.	1	2	3	4

D.

1. What I liked **most** about the program was:

2. What I liked **least** about the program was:

3. If you have any further comments on the program or would like to make suggestions for the improvement of the program, please add them below.

THANK YOU

Talking about Mental Illness

TEACHER EVALUATION

We would appreciate your help in evaluating the Talking About Mental Illness program.

Your feedback will help us to improve it for the future.

Today's Date: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ Name: _____

Date of Program: _____

1. (a) Please name the students' courses that the Talking about Mental Illness program is being incorporated into:

- (b) Approximately how much time was devoted to the suggested classroom activities **prior to** the presentation?

_____ hours

- (c) Approximately how much time did you spend **after** the presentation debriefing?

_____ hours

Please describe:

2. How helpful did you find the classroom activities contained in the *Teacher's Resource*?

Not at all helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very helpful

Please list which activities you used:

3. In your experience, how closely did the suggested classroom activities complement the curriculum guidelines for your course?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very

4. (a) What did you hope your students would learn from participating in the program?

(b) To what extent were your expectations satisfied?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 To a great extent

5. Do you feel the choice of presenters (e.g., person with mental illness, family) was appropriate?

Yes No

Please comment:

6. Do you feel that the classroom setting was appropriate for the presentation?

Yes No

Please explain:

7. Please make comments and suggestions on the presentation you attended (i.e., length, depth, format, content, etc.).

8. What other tools or activities would you like to see included in the *Teacher's Resource*?

9. Overall, how would you rate the program?

1	2	3	4	5
Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

10. Any additional comments or suggestions?

THANK YOU