

European Psychiatric Nurses conference 2019

A method to give voice to young people with experience of mental ill-health

Senior lecturer Lindgren, Eva, Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden (Presenting Author)

Gabrielsson, Sebastian, Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden

Kostenius, Catrine, Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden

young people

fokus group

promote mental health

Working partnerships with service users

Concurrent

Mental ill health has increased among young people, and mental issues have broad negative impact on young people's well-being, health and education. Therefore, a positive learning environment in school might be the most effective intervention to promote mental health. As young people are considered experts on their own everyday experiences, it is vital to give young people and involving them in research concerning their health.

The aim was to explore the use of art exercises within focus groups to understand how mental health can be promoted from young people's perspectives.

14 Scottish and Swedish young people aged 15-21 participated in four focus groups (FG). The overall question was: How can schools promote mental health and have a role in supporting early intervention in young people with mental health issues? In order to capture their experiences they received two assignments; Dream exercise - What does a 'mentally healthy school' like? and Heart exercise - what should be the values, ethos, culture, 'feeling' of a mentally healthy school? Using colored pens the young people were encouraged to disclose their experiences while they were drawing.

The young people voiced their dream scenario of a 'mentally healthy' school via words and sentences e.g. acceptance, judgmental support from teachers; have someone to talk to. The heart exercise encouraged the young people to focus on what they anticipated in such a school, e.g. access to support; be treated as an equal; feel respected. When the FG ended, the young people expressed gratitude that adults had listened to them.

The exercises in FG gave the young people an opportunity to share their life experiences and voice their opinions. In combination with drawing pictures together, they narrated about negative experiences and lack of support and their views on how school can promote mental health.

1) value and appreciate young people's perspective 2) reflect on the use of art exercises as a means to broaden FG participation and recognize how the method in itself can increase confidence speaking about mental health

Bergmark, U. & Kostenius, C. (2009) 'Listen to me when I have something to say' Students' participation in research for sustainable school improvement, *Improving Schools*, 12(3), 249-260.

Collishaw, S. (2015). Annual Research Review: Secular trends in child and adolescent mental health. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 56(3), pp 370-393

Rowling, L. (2009). Strengthening "school" in school mental health. *Health Education*, 109(4), 357-368