

Telling Our Stories: Journeys of Recovery in Communities of Color

National Alliance of Multi-ethnic
Behavioral Health Associations

Alternatives Conference

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Objectives

- Empower consumers to tell their stories in their own words
- Instill hope that recovery is possible and provides an understanding of what helps and what hinders the healing process.
- Raise awareness of how culture, language, historical trauma, socioeconomic status, and other related factors impact clinical outcomes.

Objectives

- Create opportunities for dialogue within communities of color to address the myths and reduce the stigma and shame surrounding mental illnesses
- Influence policymakers to increase resources for an improved mental health workforce

In the beginning

Develop a project that focuses on hope, resilience and recovery.

A project designed for the community to be used, shared, and owned by the community

How the project began.....

Developing the stories

- Selecting photography as the medium of choice
 - Powerful tool to capture images
 - Cost effective
 - Readily accessible to all communities
 - Easily edited

Selecting the storytellers

- Person must be far enough into their journey of recovery to safely tell their stories publically
- Must have compelling story to tell
- Agree to be photographed and recorded
- Agree to share their stories with the public

Selecting the photographer

- Experience working with communities of color
- Has a sensitivity to taking photographs that are respectful of the consumer
- Recognized as a competent photographer
- Ideally of same ethnicity to provide opportunity for photographers of color to be involved in project

Selecting the interviewer

- Ability to communicate effectively
- Strong interview skills
- Sensitive to mental health issues
- Ability to be flexible and follow the path chosen by the consumer
- Ideally from same ethnic community to help elicit stories

Process of getting stories

- Contact community based organizations
- Provide information on project
 - 1) Overview of the project
 - 2) Selection criteria for the consumers
 - 3) Nomination form
 - 4) Consumer consent form to be considered for project
 - 5) Consent form to participate and be photographed
 - 6) Copy of interview protocol.

Preparing the photographers

Host conference call to review project

- Discuss format – use digital photography
- Take minimum of 100 images in various settings that represent the person's life
- Potential settings include the place person received services, work, home ~ any setting that provided insight into their journey of recovery
- Advance notice should be given if images are taken outside of agency
- Need consent form if person other than storyteller is used

Special issues

- Images must be respectful
- If taking image that references a difficult period in person's life, discuss with person in advance to get permission.
- Do not ask person to recreate situation that could be traumatic just to get “dramatic” image
- Inform person that he/she can refuse to have any or all pictures taken

The Interview

- Inform the person that they will be recorded. This helps capture information that may otherwise be lost
- Be familiar with questions but do not stick rigidly to script and allow the story to flow naturally
- If a major issue has not been covered, go back to capture story
- End on positive note – ask what they hope for the future, what message would they give to other consumers?

Special issues

- This is not a clinical interview but clinical issues will be discussed
- Use discretion in asking questions
- Remind person he/she can choose to not answer a question

Putting it all together

- Transcribe interview and select major issues in person's life. Create script for slideshow
- Select photos that reflect the narrative
- Edit to slide show of 3-5 minutes ~ depending on project
- Add music that reflects the slideshow

Our Stories

Video

Stella Ho

A journey to recovery

Stella Ho

Telling her story....

Q & A

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