

Exercise for use within Understanding Mental health and Mental Illness Module

Name of exercise: Labels, Feeling and Behaviour

Duration: 25-30 minutes

Equipment: Flip Chart Holder, Flip Chart Paper and Pens

Value: This exercise helps the participant to understand what people with mental health problems may experience because of the Stigma attached to their diagnosis.

Process:

1. Flip Chart Paper 1 entitled: LABELS
 - The group provide the trainer with all the negative labels they can think of that have been applied to people with mental health problems. Lay Person terminology is most effective (E.g. Nutter. Freak. Psycho. "Sandwich short of a picnic" etc.) These are written down on the Flip Chart Paper by the trainer.
 - NB. Such a process can take a lot of support from the trainer as the participants don't always feel that comfortable with this stage of the exercise. Refer back to and impress the Learning Agreement re: Confidentiality
 - Flip Chart Paper affixed to the wall.
2. Flip Chart Paper 2 entitled: FEELINGS
 - Ask the questions: How would these labels make you feel?
 - Write responses down.
 - NB...Often people put forward BEHAVIOUR at this juncture. Don't let this happen...but allow them to hold onto their idea for the next part of the exercise.
 - Flip Chart paper affixed to the wall.
3. Flip Chart Paper 3 titled: BEHAVIOUR
 - Ask the question...if you had one of these feelings because of the label....how might you behave?
 - Write down the responses
 - NB. Often participants want feelings to be written down here. Make sure this doesn't happen but instead add them to the FEELINGS Flip Chart Paper.

This exercise highlights to the participant how "normal" such feelings and behaviours are in response to the Labels attached.

It should be highlighted that because of the diagnosis the feeling and behaviours of people with mental health problems who experience these labels are seen often as manifestations of their mental illness. (E.g. Behaviour of "fighting"/ Screaming/ kicking out/ drinking alcohol/ taking drug/attempting suicide etc).

Also such behaviours can lead to more labels being applied...

E.g. Label: Nutter – Feeling: Depressed – Behaviour: Alcohol Abuse – Leads to new Labels (Eg "Alcy"/Pissh**d/ etc etc)

Discussion should allow for people to think how to best interrupt this negative cycle at specific junctures. (E.g. Challenging the labels/ assertiveness/confidence building training for mental health service users).