Relationships-based Approaches to Mental Health Promotion and Violence Prevention with Diverse Youth

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Acknowledgements

- Whole Centre for School Mental Health team!

- Co-creators of original Fourth R: David Wolfe, Ray Hughes & Peter Jaffe

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  - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
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  - Health Canada

Objectives

- Build a case for relationships-based approaches to promoting mental health and preventing violence among youth

- Provide an overview of the Fourth R and Healthy Relationships Plus programs

- Explore intersection between adherence to Evidence-Based Practice and flexibility in implementation

- Look at process and preliminary outcomes of adaptation for specific groups

The Fourth R

- A relationship-based approach to prevent adolescent violence and related risk behaviours

- Focus on skills development

- SEL approach

- Initial program aligned with Grade 9 Health Curriculum expectations

- Expanded to include many program components

Fourth R Health Curricula

- Consist of comprehensive teacher-friendly lesson plans

- Include learning strategies, activities, assessment tools and innovative methods for teaching healthy living concepts

- Integrate technology including the use of apps, websites and other media to engage students in the learning process

Research with the Quebec Cree… people with good relationships… less distressed

… these approaches are challenging and require leadership, support, relationships and patience

People with common interests interacting at multiple levels, within and across

Why relationships?

Emphasizing healthy relationship is a critical part of a trauma-informed approach

We re-live and re-experience social pain more easily than physical pain

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Why relationships?

- Impact on developmental outcomes undeniable

- Holds up to different ways of knowing

- Need to harness for intervention and growth

Go to: https://www.csmh.uwo.ca/research/what-is-the-fourth-r.html

Fourth R Skills

- Active Listening

- Assertive Communication

- Delay, Refusal, Negotiation

- Help Seeking

- Providing Support

- Apologizing

- Ending a Relationship

- Coping Skills

Fourth R Evidence Base

- Compared to students receiving the usual health class in their schools, students in the Fourth R reported:

- Decreased rates of physical dating violence perpetration

- Increased condom use among sexually active youth

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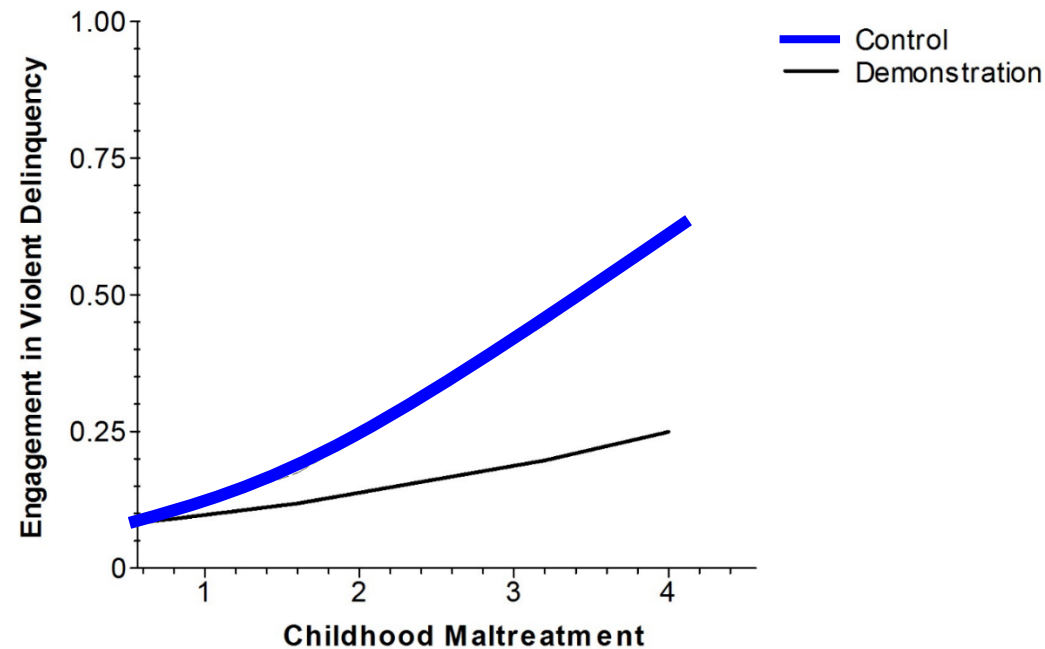Centre for School
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Fourth R Youth Demonstrated Increased Skills

- Negotiation Skills
  - Fourth R students were 2.2 times more likely than controls students to show at least one negotiation skill during role-play interaction

- Delay Skills
  - Fourth R female students were 4.8 times more likely to show at least one delay skill during role-play interaction

- Yielding to Pressure
  - Control students were 2.0 times more likely than Fourth R students to yield to pressure

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Protective Effect in Fourth R Schools

- The relationship between multiple forms of child abuse and violent delinquency was weaker in Fourth R schools

Crooks, C.V., Scott, K., Ellis, W., & Wolfe, D. (2011). Impact of a universal school-based violence prevention program on violent delinquency: Distinctive benefits for youth with maltreatment histories. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 35*, 393-400.

Fourth R Extensions

- Grade 8 program increases knowledge, awareness of impact of violence on others, and healthy coping strategies

- Sequential, developmentally appropriate programming key to effect social and emotional learning!

Crooks, C. V., Scott, K. L., Broll, Zwarych, Hughes, & Wolfe, D. A. (2015). Does an evidence-based healthy relationships program for 9th graders also show effects for 7th and 8th graders? Results from a 57 school randomized intervention. *Health Education Research, 30* (3), 513-519.

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Fourth R has significant Cost Benefits

- Costs calculated for four different case studies

- Ranged based on features of the setting and stage of implementation

- Costs ranged between $3 and $33 per student

- Significant cost savings associated with reduced delinquency and dating violence

- Savings primarily related to delinquency because youth on a trajectory for ongoing criminal activity has a lifetime cost of approximately $5,000,000

HRP – Emerging evidence

- RCT in Southwestern Ontario:

  - Decreased bullying victimization one year after intervention
  - Mediated by increase in help-seeking
  - Decreased cannabis among those with higher adversity scores

Exner-Cortens, D., Wolfe, D. A., Crooks, C. V., & Chiodo, D. (2019). A randomized controlled evaluation of a universal healthy relationships promotion program for youth. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology.*

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The Healthy Relationships PLUS (HRP) Program

- The HRP is a small group Fourth R program designed to promote positive mental health, and relationship violence and related risk behaviours

Healthy Relationships Plus Program

A Fourth R small groups program to promote healthy relationships and positive mental health
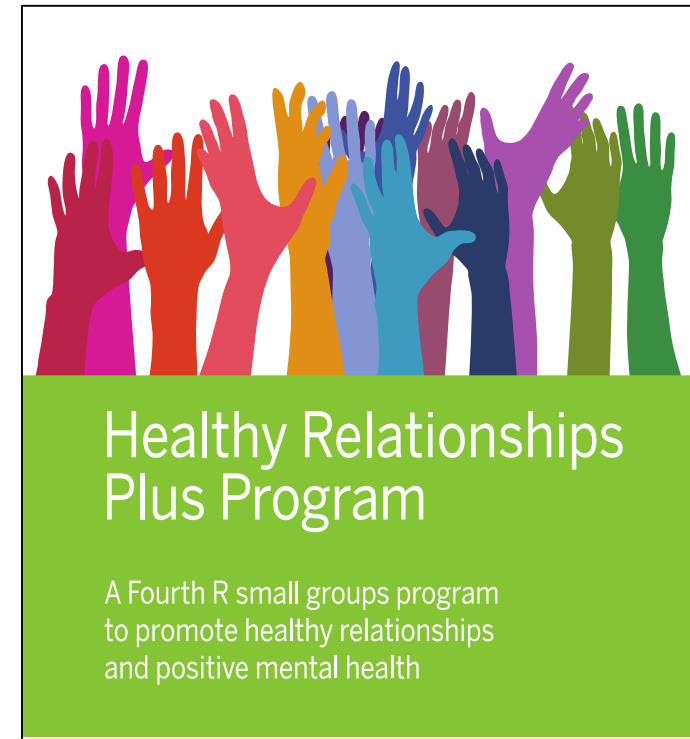
National Implementation Study

- HRP implemented in 75+ groups
  - Significant variability in settings and delivery
- Decreased depression, particularly for those with higher levels of depression at start
- Qualitative evidence of improved understanding and intentions for help-seeking and supporting peers

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Re-cap

- We know relationships are important

- We have these relationship-based programs shown to increase positive skills and decrease violence and related risk behaviours

- Educators and clinicians like them

- So we're done, right?

Implementation of Evidence-based programs

- Existence of evidence-based programs is a necessary but not sufficient criteria!

- Effective programs can sit and gather dust just as easily as ineffective ones
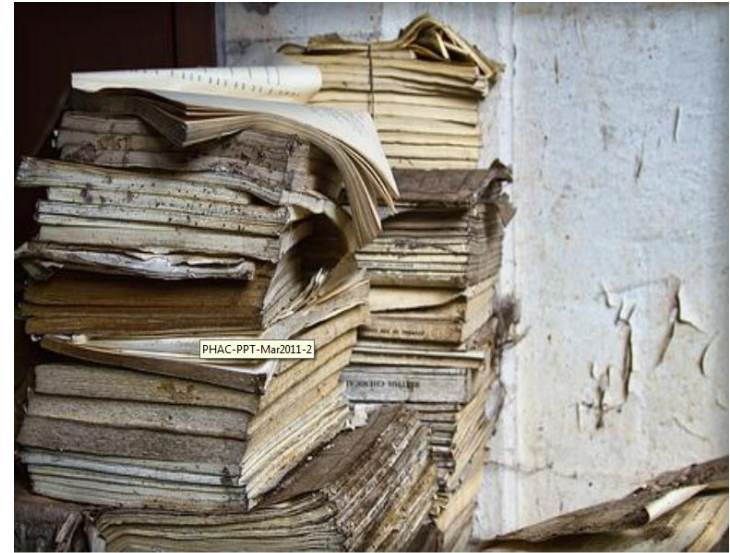
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Phase I: Ignored implementation
(2001-2010)

"We have created an awesome program that in the context of a rigidly managed, well funded Randomized Controlled Trial leads to desirable outcomes. You're welcome."

How to Draw an Owl
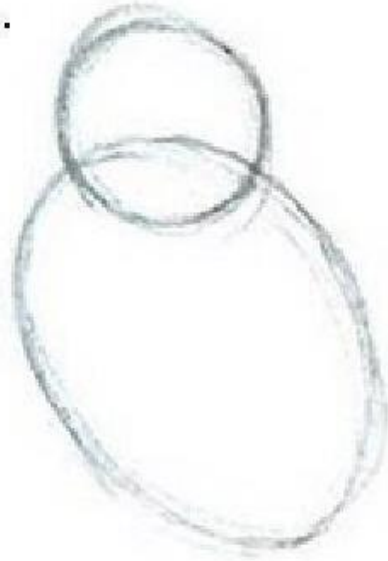
1. Draw some circles

2. Draw the rest of the owl

RE-AIM Framework for Complex Interventions

- **R**each

- **E**ffectiveness

- **A**doption

- **I**mplementation

- **M**aintenance

Glasgow et al, 2006

Phase II: Rigid and preachy
(2010-2015)

"This is what we did to get the good research outcomes, so if you want the good outcomes you have to do EXACTLY what we did"

HRP National Implementation Study – Important Group Level Variables

- Group size

- Mean age of student

- Age range of students

- Mixed or single gender groups

- Experience of facilitator

- Duration of intervention

- School-based versus community-based

- Aggregated risk level of group

- Presence of co-facilitator

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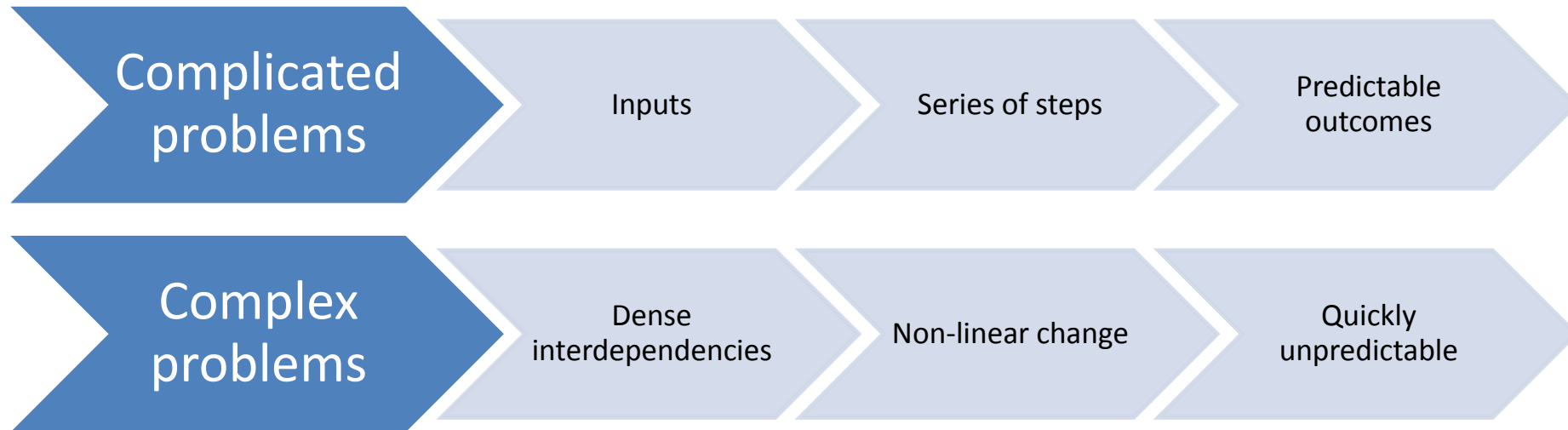
None of this mattered!

Complicated versus Complex Systems

Complicated problems → Inputs → Series of steps → Predictable outcomes

Building airplanes is a complicated undertaking

Complicated versus Complex Systems

| Complicated problems | Inputs | Series of steps | Predictable outcomes |

| Complex problems | Dense interdependencies | Non-linear change | Quickly unpredictable |

School-based interventions are complex by design!

Phase III: Flexible realism

"We know you are going to modify materials to best meet the needs of your students. Here are some thoughts about how to do that in an intentional manner."

The Importance of Implementation Quality

- Fidelity is the extent to which a program or set of procedures is implemented as it was designed or evaluated.

- Fidelity is associated with better youth outcomes across a wide range of programs – sometimes 2 to 3 times bigger impact!

- Fidelity includes:
  - Adherence to implementation guidelines
  - Completeness and dosage of implementation
 - Quality of program delivery
  - Degree of participant engagement

Core Components

– Manualized programs still have lots of ways to be adapted to fit the personality of the group and facilitator

– Most important core components are:

- **skills building –** provides them with opportunity to develop key skills and try in different contexts; increases self-efficacy

- **discussion** – helps youth develop the vocabulary they need and the comfort to use their skills

Making more adaptations – The Stoplight approach
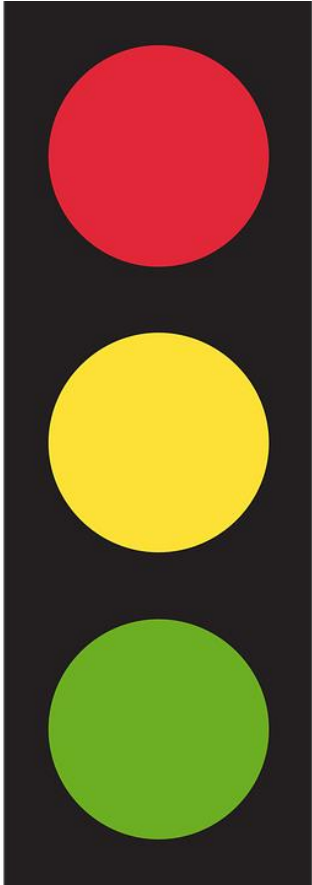
Unhelpful changes – avoid!
- Skipping skills development
- Adding materials with different underlying approach (e.g., scared straight)

Changes to make with caution
- Adding new videos and activities from other sources
- Do additions support the core messages and skills?

Changes to enhance fit for your group – go ahead!
- Altering role plays or letting group develop them
- Extending time for discussion (if you can accommodate)
- Adding material to address basic knowledge gaps

Importance of Monitoring

- In general associated with better outcomes

- Especially important when educators and clinicians are making modifications

Importance of Monitoring

Data-informed decision-making is a complex skillset!
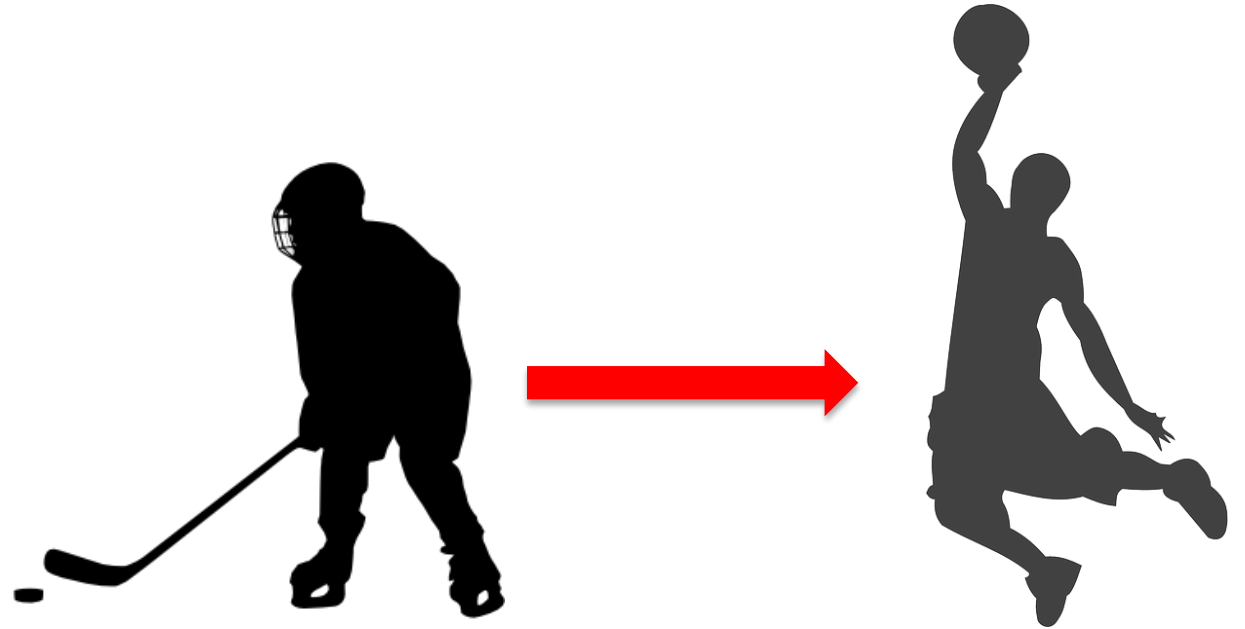
Adaptation at a Group Level

Fourth R for Americans

- Chosen by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as one of two programming options for their Start Strong initiative

- Process

- Outcome

Fourth R for Americans

Behavi~~ou~~r

What about other Groups?

- Groups who experience persistent inequities and disproportionate risk?

- We know very little about what works for vulnerable youth in real world settings!
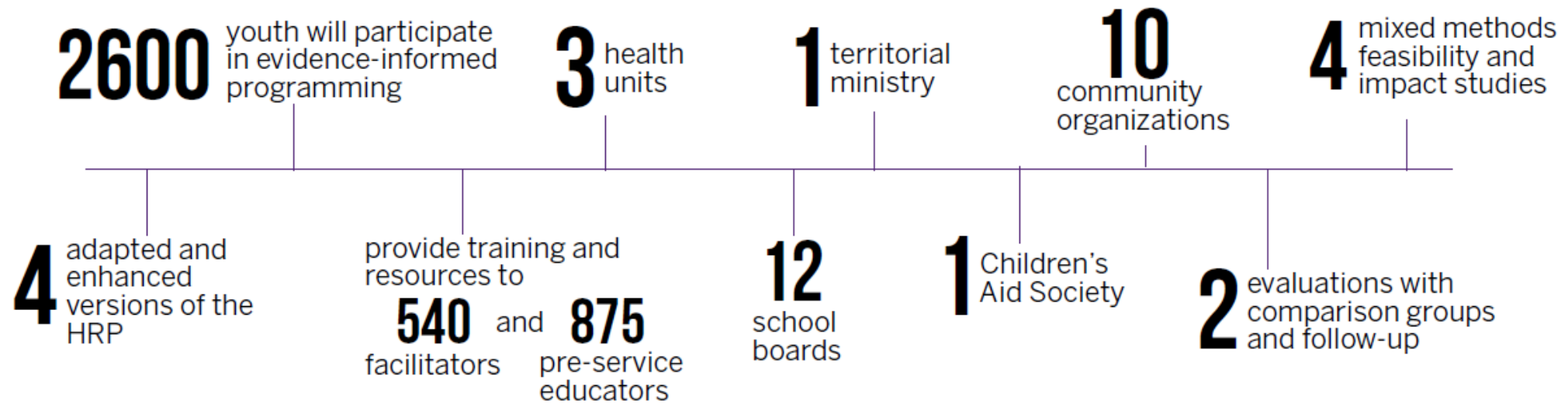
Is there a middle ground?

Implementation of an existing EBP

Adaptation of an existing program to meet community needs

Community-driven / locally developed programs

Preventing Teen Dating Violence and Promoting Mental Health through Relationships

PROJECT BY THE NUMBERS

2600 youth will participate in evidence-informed programming

3 health units

1 territorial ministry

10 community organizations

4 mixed methods feasibility and impact studies

4 adapted and enhanced versions of the HRP

provide training and resources to **540** facilitators and **875** pre-service educators

12 school boards

1 Children's Aid Society

2 evaluations with comparison groups and follow-up

Public Health Agency of Canada
Agence de la santé publique du Canada

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Principles of all Fourth R programs

- Relationship context

- Positive youth development

- Skills development focus

HRP-Enhanced

- Origin

- Development

- Piloting – 6 groups in two secure custody facilities

- Extensive feedback and documentation throughout

Healthy Relationships Plus Program - Enhanced

A Fourth R small group program to promote healthy relationships and positive mental health enhanced for vulnerable youth and youth in the justice system

Written by:
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Susan Dale
Ray Hughes

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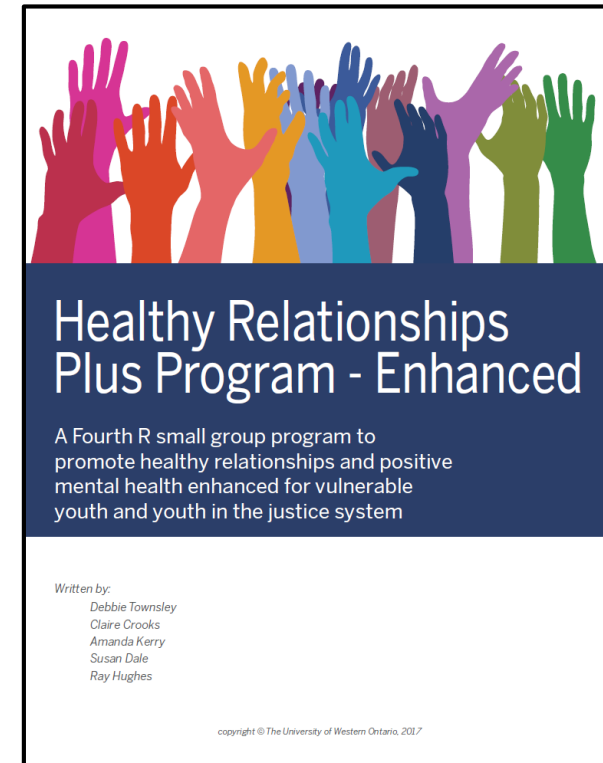
HRP-Enhanced – What's different

Enhanced to:

- Include a more trauma-informed lens

- Include more content on dating violence and sexual exploitation

- Address higher-risk scenarios

- Include safety planning more explicitly

- Counter maladaptive cognitions

- Address substance misuse from a harm reduction standpoint

- Integrate session-by-session mental health and coping strategies

Evidence

- Has been piloted in several settings

- Currently finishing a quasi-experimental evaluation in MB with youth corrections

- Strong qualitative data (from youth, clinicians, and administrators)

- Positive significant trends in teacher and youth-reported outcomes

Youth voice from the YJ pilot

Relevant content

- *"Most of this relates to my life because everything that it states in there, I've been through it all. So I don't know, it's like kind of like my life story. Everything related in some sort of way."* *(16 year old male)*

Interactive program

- *"I like how we're able to move lots or like use our hands instead of sitting around all the time and just writing. We're actually able to like go hands on with some of the activities."* *(18 year old male)*

Developed healthy communication skills

- *"It help me communicating in my relationship. I still yell, but not like as crazy. Before I would just freak out and just start crying. I actually talk about things now."* *(16 year old female)*

HRP-Enhanced within youth justice
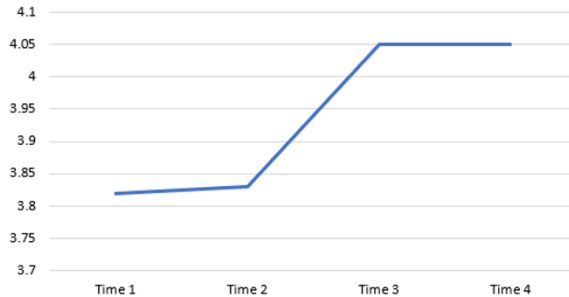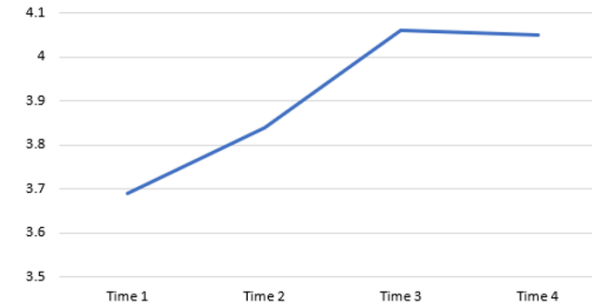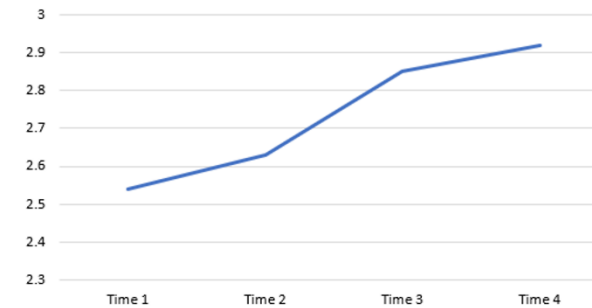
Next Steps

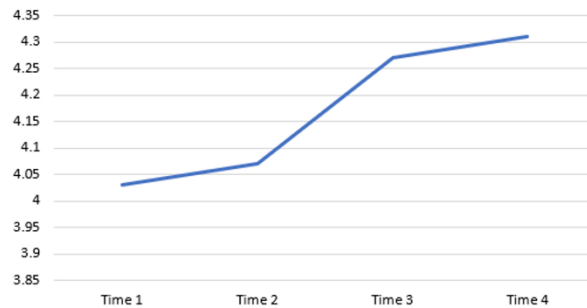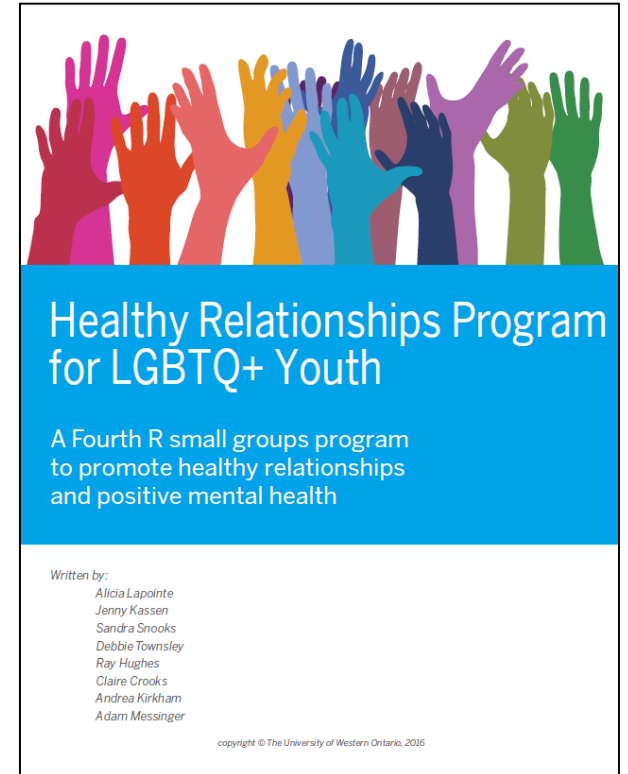- 20 HRP-Enhanced groups with comparison groups

- Pre, post, 3 month follow-up

- Range of protective factors and positive/negative outcomes

- Range of community, school, youth justice, and child protection settings

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HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth

- Three year development and pilot process in southern Ontario school board

- Initial version focused on preventing dating violence in same sex relationships

- Lessons learned

Healthy Relationships Program for LGBTQ+ Youth

A Fourth R small groups program to promote healthy relationships and positive mental health

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Adam Messinger

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Advice for facilitators

Dear facilitator,

"I want you to keep in mind **not everyone is on a binary, is sexual, only has one identity.**
There are many identities and many are on a spectrum. **People might get triggered.**
Respect their identity. LGBTQ+ people are people, once you take out the hate we're pretty much
the same. **Don't rely on LGBTQ+ folks to define and explain your questions.** Do research
first – hear the stories straight from LGBTQ+ people (i.e., YouTube, Tumblr, etc.)"

"Respect pronouns, **Do your research**, Genitals do not equal gender."

"Pronouns are a must, **Accept all genders/sexualities/romantic orientations**, **Listen**, **Treat
all with respect**, Love all."

"I need you to know that **pronouns are very significant to some people so please never
assume someone's pronouns** and always do the check in! I need you to know that **not all of us
students are walking, talking LGBT2Q+ encyclopaedias.** If you don't know a term, research
it instead of asking students."

"I want you to remember to **allow and remind students to leave whenever they feel
uncomfortable.** I want you to remember to respect pronouns, sexuality, genders of
students/people in general."

...and I am a part of this program

HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth

- Development of supporting videos

- Affirms, validates, and celebrates sexual and gender diversity, cultivates a caring and supportive community, and helps youth develop skills and strategies that promote healthy relationships

- Explores stressors unique to LGBT2Q+ youth, including identity and expression invalidation, stigma, prejudice and discrimination, internalized oppression, coming out, safety, and micro-aggressions

Pilot Evaluation

- Initial focus is always on feasibility

- Acceptability? Practicality? Perceived impact?

- Since 2015:
  - Session tracking sheets
  - Facilitator focus groups
  - Implementation surveys

Evaluation

- Youth participated in focus groups in the 2016-2017 school year

- Youth enjoyed participating in a structured program within their school-based clubs

- Furthermore, participants:
  - Appreciated opportunities to discuss topics in depth that might otherwise have been glossed over
  - Appreciated the program's identity affirmative focus
  - Found the skills very applicable - particularly for those who were experiencing challenges associated with coming out

Identity affirming

- I think I discovered a little more of myself. You know, I started kind of realizing, 'Hey, like, maybe there's more to gender for me personally'…kind of like figuring out who I am…because, you know, when you talk about…the spectrum and, you know, where you can fit. And, like, I was kind of imagining in my head and I was like, 'hey, this kind of makes sense'…just helping me personally with things like that.

Promotes coping skills

I feel like these lessons don't only teach us more about the community. They also see just how to cope with what could be going on at home. Because at home, like, it is just like a hellhole every time I go home. And so it's taught me how to cope with going home; it's taught me how to cope with my parents at home and I feel like it's done that for a lot of our other kids because a lot of our kids are in the same boat I am. They're either out and facing hell. They're out and they're facing some type of neglect, whether they're being blatantly ignored, or they're not out and they're terrified to come out. So…it really set up coping mechanisms for a lot of our kids…it opened up our club and let other kids know that, 'hey, you're not the only one going through this. There's somebody else out there who understands. If you need to talk to anybody we're all here and we'll listen to you and we'll support you.' And some of us even have a support system that, if it gets really bad at home, 'call me and I will set up a bed for you somewhere. I don't know, but you can come and bunk at my house if it gets really bad.'

Next Steps

Finding the Middle Ground:
What has worked for us and where do we go from here?

Future Directions for SMH Research

1. We need more Canadian intervention researchers in the field of school mental health

2. We need sturdier evidence-based practices

3. We need to develop implementation systems within schools, districts, and Ministries / Departments

4. More co-creation and co-evaluation with educators, clinicians, and youth

5. More creative methodologies

Closing thoughts: There are no shortcuts!

Questions and Discussion

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Research information: https://www.csmh.uwo.ca/
Program information: www.youthrelationships.org