WOMEN’S GROUP TO PROMOTE CONFIDENCE AND SELF ESTEEM

Another amazing project we funded was a weekly group for women in partnership with Gedling-based charity, WeRHere, who support young people and their families.

‘Mind’, the charity committed to promotion of better mental health, states the following: “Low self-esteem is not a recognised mental health problem, but if you have low self-esteem, it will have an effect on your mental health”

If left unaddressed, the impact of continuing low self-esteem can be catastrophic for individuals and families. Holding negative beliefs about yourself lowers your resilience and ability to cope with the stresses of life. This can place you at higher risk of developing mental health problems such as eating disorders, depression or social phobia.

All of the members of our group had been referred by WeRHere’s partner agencies, having been identified as individuals who would greatly benefit from such a group intervention. Participants were from residents of Gedling borough, but most particularly from Pheonix Farm and Netherfield, both designated as priority neighbourhoods in the area, because of the challenges experienced in terms of crime and deprivation.

For further elaboration, and some examples of the inspiring outcomes, please read on..

Launching in late September 2013, the purpose of the group was to support the emotional growth of the individuals involved by providing opportunities to participate in group activities in a safe environment, changing perspectives by examining factors influencing self-perception with the aim of enhancing confidence and self-esteem.

Over a period of eleven weeks, the group met each Monday afternoon to discuss and explore their personal sense of self.

During the course, members considered the impact that their negative life experiences had had on their self-perception, such as abuse and violence - physical, psychological and emotional.

Meeting together over an extended period gave a substantial amount of time to enable establishing a new personal frame of reference, with a diverse range of
activities used to enhance opportunities for self-development, giving time for reflection and reconfiguration of perspective.

All of the participants reported a substantial positive increase in their self-esteem.

One of the group members was a lady of 67 years of age who had experienced a traumatic break down in her marriage after 43 years.

At the first meeting, she was open about her sense of heartbreak and the devastation that her abandonment had had on her self-esteem.

The moving self-esteem poem ‘Me’ in the photo was written by this lady when the group used narrative and poetry to express feelings in one of the workshops.

This lady had spent her life caring for her partner with no real outside interests. By week 11, she was speaking about herself in a different way and had joined a class at a local college. She has also now gained the confidence to have one-to-one counselling, something she could not have contemplated when first joining the group.

Another member, a parent of five, described herself as “transformed”.

‘ME’

If I could not speak, I would still be me.
If I could not hear my name, I would still be me.
If I could not see my face, I would still be me.
Now my husband loves another, I am still me.

Who is me?
Me is heartbroken.
Me is lost.
Me has no identity.
Me is a new reality.
Me is self.
To live for oneself seems selfish.
The self esteem for which I yearn,
Me is here to learn.
Throughout the course, the group were privileged to see this woman – who, from her own admission, was very sad and never smiled - grow and flourish as she planted her roots in new and fresh soil to promote her growth.

Her new found confidence has had a profound impact on her whole family. Upon starting the group, she had spoken about difficulties experienced in her relationship with her parents through childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. The work in the sessions enabled her to open a new dialogue with her family around these issues and a new relationship has begun to form within the family.

She has indeed found her voice.. definitely a result from her newly enhanced self-esteem.

In addition, she had been taking medication because of her depression and anxiety. One of her major issues was an inability to sleep. At the final session, she shared that her sleep problems were resolved and that this is having an extremely positive impact on her emotional health as she is no longer facing a constant battle with fatigue and exhaustion.

Other members of the group also experienced positive changes in their self-esteem, all agreeing that the course had developed a platform for them from which to build a stronger more confident sense of self.

For more information about our charity partner, We R Here, and more heartwarming stories, please follow this link to their website, and take a moment to read the story on the home page.. [http://www.werhere.co.uk/](http://www.werhere.co.uk/)