Citizenship and Mental Health:
A Mutual Support Group and Focus Group in a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology Day Hospital Context

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Introduction

What is Citizenship?

Citizenship in mental health is a measure of the strength of the connection of people with five dimensions: rights, responsibilities, the roles and resources that society offers, and relationships. Relationships involve close bonds, supportive social networks, and community living[1,2,3,4]. To achieve full citizenship, people must be guaranteed access to effective rights and the corresponding responsibilities as members of society. People also need to have the knowledge and practical skills to access resources and the ability to develop roles and relationships in the community[4].

What is Personal Recovery?

Personal recovery has been defined as "*a profound personal and unique process to change their attitudes, values, feelings, goals, abilities and roles in order to achieve a satisfactory, hopeful and productive way of life, with the possible limitations of your illness*"[5] (Figure 1). Personal recovery differs from clinical recovery, which mainly focuses on reducing symptoms and improving functioning levels[6,7]. Although clinical improvement has an impact on personal recovery, health workers can go further by cooperating collaboratively to support mental health service users in living a satisfactory, hopeful, and productive life[8].

Figure 1: Recovery framework

Objectives

In accordance with the Personal Recovery model, therapeutic success in mental health goes beyond symptomatic alleviation and includes exercising rights, assuming responsibilities, and developing new roles. We set out to investigate how citizenship is tied to Personal Recovery in mental health by implementing a Mutual Support group and a Focus group in a child/adolescent psychiatry and psychology day hospital setting.

Figure 2: Topics of the weekly sessions
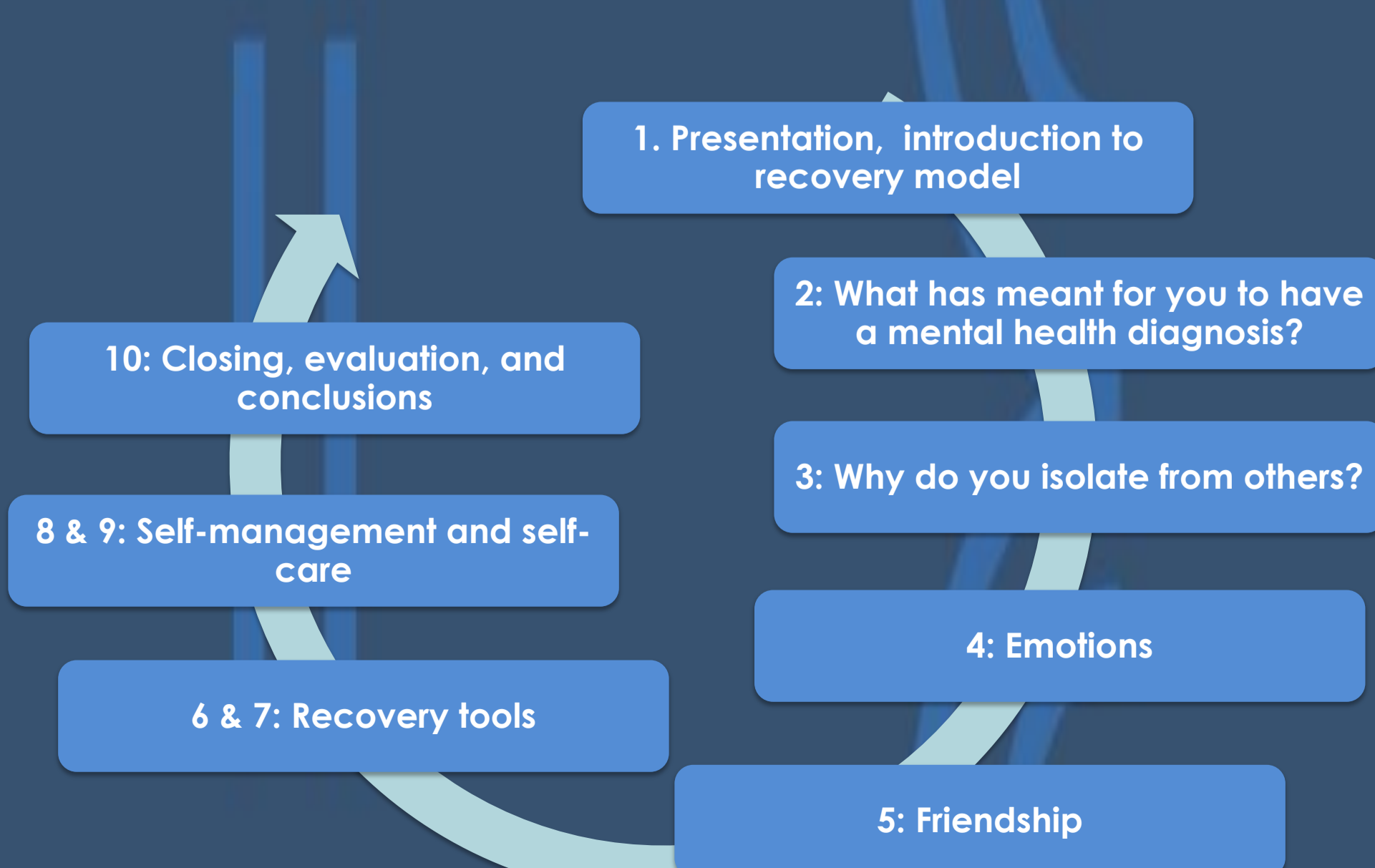
Methods

Unicentric, longitudinal study on the implementation of a mental health intervention, including assessment of user satisfaction and other outcomes in mental health.

Mutual support group

Eligibility criteria - Users

✓ Adolescents 12-17 years of age admitted to the Children's and Youth Day Hospital at the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, Hospital Clinic of Barcelona (Spain).
✓ At least one diagnosis of: psychotic, affective, anxiety, autism spectrum, eating, or behavioural disorders.
✓ Any nationality or origin but residing in Spain
✓ Able to communicate in Spanish and/or Catalan.

Parents or legal guardians had to be available to sign an informed consent.

Eligibility Criteria - the Mutual support technician

✓ 18 years of age or older
✓ First-person experience with a mental disorder diagnosis
✓ Completion of an official course in mutual support
✓ Previous experience working with adolescents
✓ Any nationality or origin but residing in Spain
✓ Able to communicate in Spanish and/or Catalan

Format of the intervention

The Mutual support group consisted of 10 sessions of approximately 1.5 hr each held once a week. The topics of the weekly sessions are included in Figure 2. Each session consisted of four activities and break times (Table 1). The Mutual support group included users as well as a Mutual Support Technician and a Social Worker/Counsellor, both of whom co-led of the sessions.

Table 1: Mutual support group components

Activity	Participants	Length
Meeting space/ice-breaker activity	*Users* *Mutual Support Technician* *Social Worker/Counsellor*	*30 min*
Break	*All*	*5 min*
Presentation of the central topic	*Mutual Support Technician* *Social Worker/Counsellor*	*10 min*
Exercises/space for debate and reflection	*Users* *Mutual Support Technician* *Social Worker/Counsellor*	*30 min*
Break	*All*	*5 min*
Sharing and final conclusions	*Users* *Mutual Support Technician* *Social Worker/Counsellor*	*10 min*

Outcomes

The Social Worker/Counsellor and the Mutual Support Technician administered INSPIRE, RAS-DS and Group Therapeutic Factors during the first and final week of the group (Table 2).

Table 2: Outcomes assessment tools

Scale	Outcomes
Inspire	*Support received by users from health professionals.*
RAS-DS	*Self-assessment scale offering a structured opportunity to reflect on progress in recovery.*
Group Therapeutic Factors	*Degree of importance of eleven group therapeutic factors in the improvement process.*

Focus group

Eligibility criteria for users was the same as for the Mutual Support Group.

The Focus group explored the possibilities of the citizenship model in the Spanish mental healthcare system.

Results

The Mutual Support group was successfully implemented. Twelve adolescents were recruited; they had a median age of 14 and 50% were females. The most prevalent diagnoses were post-traumatic stress disorder and mood disorders. INSPIRE and RAS-DS scores improved post-intervention.

The Focus group lasted an hour and included seven adolescents, all female with a median age 15. Discussions focused on the interaction of their citizenship and their recovery process, ability to fulfil roles, and interaction with peers, among others. (Table 3)

Table 3: The five Rs of citizenship

Dimensions	Questions
Rights	• *Do you have the same rights as other people without a diagnose?* • *What relationship do your rights have with mental health?*
Responsibilities	• *How do you exercise your responsibility as student* • *What would happen if you made public at school that you have a mental health problem?*
Roles	• *To what extent can people with severe mental disorders play certain roles in society?* • *What would you think if the president of your country had a mental health disorder, or the director of your school?*
Resources	• *Does having more resources (e.g., financial stability) matter or not for your mental health?*
Relationships	• *Do you think the relationships you had as a child or now influence your mental health (e.g., parents, family, friends). If so, in what way?*

Conclusions

Mutual Support group programs are feasible in the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology Day Hospital setting. The five dimensions of citizenship may be applicable to Personal Recovery in mental health.

Conflicts of Interest and Funding

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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