Participatory Action Research with Young Adults: Experiences and Lessons Learned

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Benefits of Active Participation in Research

- Relevance of topic
- Quality of Research (Viswanathan et al, 2004)
- Dissemination and diffusion
- Researcher Education
- Young Adult Consumer
- Community capacity to partner in research
Challenges to active participation in research

- Achieving sufficient level of trust
- Challenges researcher education and experience
- Lack of infrastructure and/or funding for bridging the gap
- Unrealistic consumer expectations
Unique to Youth/Young Adults

- Developmental Turbulence
- Lack of awareness of the concepts of empowerment and recovery
- Adults and the generation(s) gap(s)
- Lack of experience
Our Experience at the RTC
Obstacles

• Lack of professional experience
  – Professional interactions
  – Independence, opportunity to take initiative
  – Dress code

• Psychosocial/developmental turbulence
  – Emotional turbulence
  – Housing
  – Personal relationships
Obstacles

• Young adult’s limited resources
  – Transportation
  – Wardrobe
  – Limited support network

• Medications and treatment side effects
  – ECT and memory loss
  – Medication transitions, cognitive function
Obstacles

• Lack of empowerment
  – Result of child mental health system
  – Lack of ownership of their mental health condition and how it might affect their work
Best Practices (Lessons Learned)

• **Communication**
  – Training
  – Be patient, be concrete
  – Consistent encouragement without being patronizing
  – Feedback: it is about the job, best employee

• **Consistency**
  – Be firm with schedule
  – Regular group meetings
Best Practices (Lessons Learned)

• Strengths-based approach
  – Task matching
  – Voices4Hope example
  – Ongoing conversation
Best Practices (Lessons Learned)

• Supports and reasonable accommodations
  – Physical space
  – Recording meetings, note taking
  – Employment specialists
  – Internal mentoring
  – Support without “mothering”

• Handling times of crisis
  – Hospitalization
  – Emergency contact, know their treatment team
Nadia’s Story

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