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LIVING E-MOTIONS

Emotional education through visual storyliving for people with
mental health challenges



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EDITORIAL

This summer, the Living eMotions team met at the University of Maribor, Slovenia. During the two-days meeting, we had the chance to set the framework of the Living eMotions training curriculum, supervise the design of the project's website and the training platform, and make the first arrangements for the piloting of the training program.

In October, the mental health professionals in charge of testing the training program will attend a training event in Glasgow.

Over three days, Louise Christie from Scottish Recovery Network will introduce them to the course. They will discuss the content and approach and then 'practice' aspects of the sessions proposed.

We take this chance to invite you to have a look at our website www.living-emotions.org

Soon we'll be back with more news!

The Living e-Motions team





WHY STORIES AND STORYLIVING ARE SO IMPORTANT

The sharing of stories of lived experience has been closely linked to the development of the recovery approach. Sharing our stories allows us to visualise our experiences over time and to reflect on the long-term journey of recovery with its ups and downs.

Sharing our recovery stories can also help to challenge misconceptions:

- Stories showing very clearly that people can and do recover
- Stories recognise the fact that people in recovery are experts by experience
- Stories offer hints and techniques on recovery

Developing and taking control of your own story can be an empowering experience and is an essential part of the recovery process. By thinking about our experiences, we are able to look for things that have worked and gone well, as well as the difficulties, distress and challenges.

This is especially important and powerful as many people spend time being assessed and assisted by mental health professionals and social services. Naturally, the conversations are often focused on the negative effects of poor mental health.

As a result of repeating these conversations over time, the problems and difficulties begin to define who the person is. For example, the person's 'story' might become 'I have this diagnosis'; 'I am someone with a drug problem' or 'I am someone who has had a traumatic experience'. While these facts are true, they are not the whole story – or the whole person.



The fact is that many people with mental health problems have had to face severe hardships – yet they’ve survived. So it’s clear they have exceptional resilience and strength. But for as long as they stay focused on the negative effects of mental ill health, it’s unlikely they’ll see these positive qualities. And that can hinder recovery.

Thinking through and sharing recovery stories has a lot to offer us. It promotes and supports our recovery and wellbeing and helps to create positive identity and meaning in life as well as being an empowering experience. We also know that stories of lived experience and recovery are important in changing negative attitudes to people living with mental health problems and in demonstrating that recovery’s real. Hearing stories of lived experience and recovery is inspiring to others living with mental health challenges and can help to connect them to others who can support them to take control of their own recovery.

Living e-Motions will support people through this process of understanding and owning their own story of recovery. Through this, they can take control of their journey through life and use their lived story to inspire and support others on their recovery journey.

You can find examples of Scottish people’s reflections on their recovery stories [here](#) and watch a recovery stories film made by people in Dundee Scotland [here](#)

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES?

Emotions are important and basic in human experience, but they can become dysfunctional when they interfere with a person's ability to behave in an adaptive manner.

In the past months, the team behind the Living eMotions project has been conducting a needs analysis in order to identify the most common difficulties in emotion regulation in individuals with

mental health problems and assess the degree to which mental health professionals are familiar with certain aspects of this topic.

We constructed a questionnaire that included both open and closed-ended questions that assessed familiarity with different aspects of emotion regulation in individuals with mental health problems and the professionals working with this field. Since the training will integrate different strategies helpful with diminishing negative emotions and enhancing positive ones

(i.e., emotion regulation), we were also interested in assessing to what extent are people with mental health problems familiar with some of these strategies (knowledge) and which ones they already use (usage).

According to our results, people use all of the strategies to a much lesser extent compared to their knowledge of the strategies. The respondents were the least familiar with strategies of emotion regulation such as mental body scanning, worry time, thought observing and letting go, and cognitive coping cards. Similar results were also obtained when trainers were asked about their knowledge of different emotion regulation strategies. Additionally, they reported having less knowledge about the reattribution technique.

What about you? Are you familiar with techniques that can help you manage difficult emotions?

We would like to give you a short introduction to the five emotion regulation strategies that were less known by the participants in our survey.



EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES

MENTAL BODY SCANNING

- 1 Take a comfortable position, eyes open or closed, as you wish. Focus on your breathing, taking notice of how the air goes in and out of your lungs. Without losing the focus on the breathing, take your mind to the different parts of your body and notice any sensation you feel. Move from your toes, towards your feet, calves, knees, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck and your head. Take enough time for each body part, while continuing to breathe consciously in a relaxed manner.

COGNITIVE COPING CARDS

- 2 Try to identify some thoughts or actions that are helpful when you are feeling upset and write them on a card. It can be anything from reminders that the situation will pass, reminders of the actions that help you (for example, take a deep breath) or some calming thoughts. Use it when you feel overwhelmed.

REATTRIBUTION TECHNIQUE

- 3 When you are feeling upset, stop and try to identify the thoughts that are crossing your mind. Try to come up with alternative explanations of the events that distress you.

WORRY TIME

- 4 Schedule worry time for each day of the week. Put it on your agenda. Start by setting aside 15-30 minutes a day. That will be your worry time. Remember that it is best not to schedule worry time right before you go to bed.

OBSERVING THOUGHTS AND LETTING GO


- 5 This guided mindfulness exercise takes you through a practice of observing your thoughts, letting them come and go without engaging with their content. It uses the metaphor of “placing” your thoughts visually on the sides of buses as they pull in and out of a bus stop.

Do not forget that knowing the strategies is not enough – we also need practice

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A large, semi-circular orange graphic at the bottom of the page, containing the website URL and a disclaimer.

www.living-emotions.org

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