



ABOUT LIVING E-MOTIONS



WELCOME TO LIVING E-MOTIONS

Living e-Motions is a project funded through the Erasmus+ programme. It brings partners from Spain (Fundacion INTRAS), Estonia (Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre), Slovenia (University of Maribor) UK (Scottish Recovery Network) to develop a training course which uses storyliving to assist people living with mental health challenges to understand and manage their emotions and take charge of their recovery.

The goals of the Living e-Motions project are for the students to:

- Experience an improvement in key competencies and abilities needed in daily life – such as communication, empathy, self-management, organisational skills, problem solving and self confidence
- Learn to verbalise their emotions and gain benefit from this
- Increase social contact, inclusion and a sense of belonging
- Have a greater sense of self-control, personal safety and wellbeing
- Discuss and think about their mental health experiences from a different/positive perspective
- A deeper understanding of their skills and strengths and a commitment to the recovery process

The curriculum developed is focused on emotional education but uses story living as a practical way for students to explore their emotions and how they manage them. The curriculum is designed to be used by people experiencing any type of mental health challenge and who want to improve their quality of life.

This resource has been designed to help you plan and deliver courses and/or workshops. The resource is just that. A resource for you. It is not a step-by-step instruction manual. The resource provides information and guidance on the type of learning experience envisaged and the role of the trainer and facilitator. It then suggests a series of sessions which will take learners through a process of increasing understanding, developing and sharing their story and using their story to drive their recovery and inspire others.

The sessions, exercises and discussions provided can be adapted by you to ensure that the learning experience meets your needs and expectations as well as that of the people you will work with.

We encourage you to share your experiences of delivering Living e-Motions and any new exercises or discussions developed. This way we can all support each other to ensure a great, impactful learning experience for all.

WHAT IS LIVING E-MOTIONS?

We all have mental health. Good mental health is as important to living a full life as good physical health. Anyone can experience mental health challenges at some time in their lives. Therefore, we all need to learn to live with and manage our emotions. People living with mental health issues tell us how their experiences can result in them losing control of their feelings and losing confidence in social skills when interacting with other people. This adversely affects their wellbeing and quality of life.

The idea of emotional education is, therefore, at once deeply relevant and widely neglected. The challenge is to create a programme which takes people on a journey where they better understand and manage their emotions and as a result lead more fulfilling and satisfying lives. Living e-Motions seeks to do this by using storyliving to enable people to explore their experiences and emotions and develop the tools and confidence to use them in a positive way.

WHAT IS STORYLIVING?

Putting feelings into words has therapeutic effects. Story sharing is a powerful recovery tool for people living with mental health challenges. It is a way for us to explore our experiences and inner worlds. To talk about our emotions, recognise their complexities and learn to live with and manage them. It also provides an opportunity for people to show that we can all experience mental health issues and breakdown some of the attitudes and discrimination that hinders recovery and excludes people from society.

Storyliving takes this a step further. Learners will develop and share their story but will also learn to 'live' their story by using their experiences and learning to support their own recovery journey and inspire others. In this way they will recognise that they are 'experts by experience' and that they are the protagonist of their own story. Through storyliving learners will share their reflections on their own emotions and recovery experiences on camera; opening up their story to themselves and the rest of the world.

WHAT IS RECOVERY?

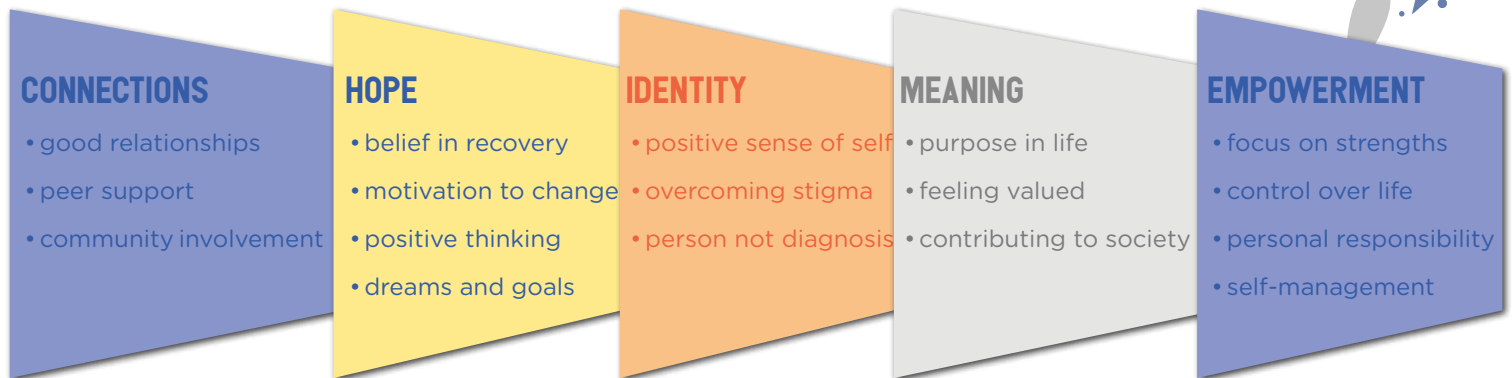
In Living e-Motions we have adopted a recovery approach which emphasises and supports the person's potential for recovery, even where some difficulties might persist.

Anyone can experience mental health problems but with the right support people can and do recover. Recovery means being able to live a good life, as defined by you, with or without symptoms (Scottish Recovery Network).

We have adopted the CHIME framework which sets out five components of recovery or what helps people recover.

Conceptual framework for personal recovery in mental health: systematic review and narrative synthesis. M Leamy et al, BJP 2011, 199:445-452

Full details at the end of this section.



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We have adopted this framework not only because it is a very useful way to explore personal recovery but also because it is based on an analysis of people’s narratives about their own recovery. This means that it is rooted in the ‘lived experience’ of people living with mental health challenges and is particularly relevant to the Living e-Motions course which uses storyliving.

THE LIVING E-MOTION LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Living e-Motions course has been designed as a participative, group learning experience. Key to the course is our belief that:

- All learners will have lots of bring to and well as learn from the course
- The learners will learn from each other
- The role of the trainer is to facilitate this group learning experience
- The trainer will lead the process but does not have to be ‘the expert’

ROLE OF THE TRAINER

This requires an approach which is more about facilitating a group learning process than delivering a set course. While the trainer does not need to be an expert



in the topic matter, we do recommend that they have experience of delivering group work or using participative training approaches. If there are any concerns this could be addressed by having two trainers who co-facilitate and can support each other. Working with two facilitators also provides an opportunity for people to develop their group work and participative training skills. The Living e-Motions trainer (or facilitator!) plays a key role in creating the environment where people feel safe and supported to explore their lived experiences and emotions, and to share with others. In doing this the trainer (facilitator) should model the behaviour that create a positive and safe environment. This will involve:

- Recognising that different learners are at different stages in their recovery journey and some will be more confident than others in sharing their story
- Making intentional use of your own lived experience/story to show that change is possible, that recovery is a process and that sharing stories can promote and instil hope
- Encouraging and supporting all learners to empower themselves and participate in the group and its discussions
- Inviting, respecting and validating the experiences shared and highlighting strengths and skills identified during the process
- Reacting to difficult feelings and behaviours with compassion and curiosity rather than irritation or defensiveness
- Avoid making judgements
- Being aware of your own needs and how you can maintain your wellbeing

CREATING A LEARNING GROUP

The role of the trainer (facilitator) is to plan the sessions and to ensure that the learning environment supports the full participation of all.

There can be a temptation to go straight into learning material and into sharing stories when a new group comes together. However, it is essential to take some



time to manage how the group gets established; even where learners already know each other. This will allow you to explore how learners would like the group to run and to clearly articulate your role as facilitator rather than expert. The first session suggested contains a series of discussions and exercises which will support the group to get to know each other, discuss hopes and fears, create a safe and positive environment and consider how they will support themselves and others during the learning experience.

When establishing the group, it will be important to ensure that learners understand the purpose of the Living e-Motions course and the group learning process. You may want to emphasise:

- During the course members of the group will explore and share their recovery stories to benefit them and others. This means we focus on people and their lives not just on medical diagnosis and symptoms
- During this process people will be encouraged to draw on and share of themselves. It is important that they should only share what they are comfortable with and that their wellbeing is at the centre of considerations
- The primary purpose of the course/group is to learn through the exploration and sharing of stories. This is an empowering process and also one which is joyful and fun but it can also be challenging and emotional at times. The group can support each other but it cannot provide therapy. Learners are to be encouraged to think about how they can support their own wellbeing and contribute to the peer support provided by the group.

MANAGING GROUP DYNAMICS

The ethos Living e-Motions is that learners have lots to contribute to the group learning experience – probably more than they imagined possible. The storyliving method is also about self-exploration, responsibility, control and self-advocacy.



Therefore, the group learning experience is a key factor in the success of the course.

The trainer (facilitator) will guide the group in the learning process but should not feel that they are responsible for all that happens in the group. They do not have to deal with any issues that arise or decisions that need to be taken on their own. Instead the trainer's (facilitator) role will be to encourage and support the learning group to take responsibility for the group and deal with any issues that arise as a group. For this to happen it needs to be embedded into any group from the start and the trainer (facilitator) can make this happen by:

- Taking time at the beginning of the course for people to get to know each other as fellow learners and share what they are looking for from the course and as part of a learning group (Group Agreement)
- Making sure there is an open conversation about how people want the course to run and the behaviours they expect of each other. We suggest developing a group agreement. When doing this it may be helpful to consider the values underpinning story sharing in Session 4.
- Checking in with the group agreement regularly to make sure that is still relevant and that people are happy with the way things are running
- Resisting the pressure (or the urge) to resolve any issues or conflicts that emerge and encouraging and supporting the group to work things through and take collective decisions
- Noticing when the discussion is losing focus or the group dynamic feels challenging and using gentle questions to encourage and support the group to get back on track with the topic and/or exercise
- Not assuming the role of the expert. As a trainer (facilitator) you have expertise but you and learners are also all experts in their own experience. Avoid taking decisions that can be taken by others and the group and model that it's okay to say "I don't know"



The experience of a Living e-Motions group should be empowering and fun as well as hard work at times. As trainer you will know your group best and are well placed to make informed judgements about content, tone and pace.

THE LEARNING PASSPORT

One of the goals of Living e-Motions is that students gain a deeper understanding of their skills and strengths and that this will help them to move on in their life and recovery. This may be onto further education and learning, into volunteering and community activities or into work. It also may be that the person decides to pursue an interest. What is important is that by the end of the course the student has identified and developed a good understanding of themselves and what they have to offer others and society.

In Session 7 students will be asked to reflect on their learning during the course and produce a Learning Passport. Many of the exercises and activities will provide them with material which they can use in drafting their Learning Passport. This short document will capture their qualities, learning and skills and their ambitions for the future. Even where students are not sure what they will be moving onto it is important that they take some time to complete their Learning Passport. This will provide them with a record that they can use and adapt over time and will ensure that they are reminded of their skills, strengths and qualities, even when they are feeling under pressure or unsure of themselves. In Sessions 7 there is more information about the Learning Passport, a suggested template to use and a completed Learning passport for reference.

RECORDING RECOVERY STORIES

During the Living e-Motions course students will be supported to develop their own recovery story and to identify the strengths and skills they have gained through their lived experiences of mental health problems. Towards the end of the course they will also spend some time considering what they would like to share about their story, why they want to share this information and who they would like to share it with. This process is an important part of students being

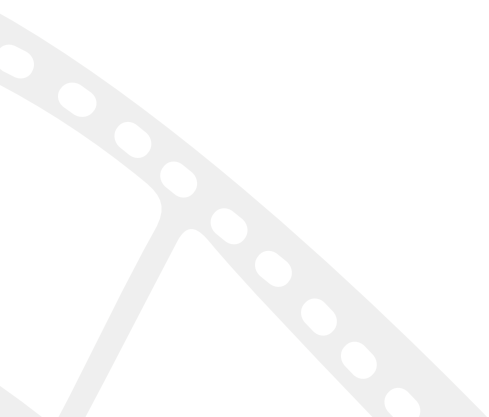


able to reframe their experiences of mental health problems as something which adversely affected their life but also led to learning and discovery.

The final session of the course includes time for the students to share the short story they have developed with the group. One of the interesting aspects of the Living e-Motions course is that it suggests that students' stories are recorded and, if they consent, their stories shared more widely. We believe that the person sharing their personal story of recovery can gain a great deal from this as they are being open about their lived experience and sharing their learning with others. These stories when shared more widely can inform attitudes and beliefs about the experience mental health problems and challenge stigma and discrimination. They also inspire others to see that recovery and living a good life is possible and a reality.

We suggest that you introduce the recording of stories as a possibility in Session 3 'My recovery story' but emphasise that students do not need to make a decision on this until the end of the course. It is likely that some students will need a little time to think this through. However, the experience of the course and their learning during it should encourage them to record their story. There will be a number of example of videos on the Living e-Motions website for you to use as a reference and to share with students.

Where students do not want to record their story on video you could explore using audio, writing, art and music as a way for them to share their story with others that feels more comfortable with them.





CHIME FRAMEWORK

CONNECTEDNESS

- Peer support and support groups
- Relationships
- Support from others
- Being part of the community

HOPE AND OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE

- Belief in possibility of recovery
- Motivation to change
- Hope-inspiring relationships
- Positive thinking and valuing success
- Having dreams and aspirations

IDENTITY

- Dimensions of identity
- Rebuilding/redefining positive sense of identity
- Overcoming stigma

MEANING IN LIFE

- Meaning of mental health experiences
- Spirituality
- Quality of life
- Meaning life and social roles
- Meaning life and social goals
- Rebuilding life

EMPOWERMENT

- Personal responsibility
- Control over life
- Focusing on strengths

