



Mental Health Matters

for Violence Prevention Project

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Communities Conference, Oct. 31, 2007

by

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People who've historically felt they do not have political power often overlook the **personal power** they can develop.

A traditional view has persisted to suggest that law enforcement, public officials, psychiatrists, counselors and others should be held more responsible than others – average citizens -- for improving lives and changing communities most affected by violence.





WHY Mental Health Matters *for Violence Prevention:*

- Everyone is potentially affected by violence (directly/ indirectly); There are bio-psycho-social consequences
- Intervention: Acknowledgement of Victims; Individuals, families and communities need support to heal
- Prevention: Prevention resources can help reduce # of potential perpetrators; Can promote awareness and personal power, facilitate change and increase # of change agents.

***It might feel
like a jungle out
there sometimes***

&

***make you wonder how to
keep from going under.***

For Help/Referrals

Call 211

Don't Ignore Warning Signs of Distress...

Project Sponsor:

See "Mental Health Matters" at
www.leflorecommunications.com

For info on workshops, contact:
cip@leflorecommunications.com



**In Milwaukee, we
displayed the following
posters during the
Summer months of
2007 in the Shops of the
Grand Avenue Mall,
Downtown.**

You can...



See it.



Hear it.



Feel it.

For Help/Referrals – Dial 2-1-1

or 1-866-211-3380

Don't Ignore Warning Signs of Distress...

Project Sponsor:

See "Mental Health Matters"
and "Essay Contest" at

www.leflorecommunications.com



**Psychological
Slavery
does Just as
Much
Damage**



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Understanding the Continuum of Mental Health Issues

- Nearly half of all Americans have a psychiatric disorder at some time in their lives -- usually depression, problem drinking or some kind of phobia (Archives of General Psychiatry)
- One in every five Americans experiences mental health issues or mental illness in any given year (U.S. Surgeon General's Report).

Understanding the Continuum...

A comprehensive 1999 U.S. Surgeon General's Report defined mental health issues as marked by:

Alterations in thinking, mood and behavior that cause distress or impair a person's ability to function.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, published by the American Psychiatric Association, cites five categories of psychological/psychiatric diagnoses:

**Adjustment
Affective (mood)
Anxiety
Behavioral and
Thought disorders.**



Understanding the Continuum...

Violence in both physical and psychological forms can damage lives -- the minds and spirits of human beings – and communities.

- Unnecessary murder -- killing that is not required for biological survival (not done in self-defense, etc.)
- Anything that opposes the life force, including that which kills spirit.



Understanding the Continuum...

“There are various essential attributes of life – particularly human life – such as sentience, mobility, awareness, growth, autonomy, will. It is possible to kill or attempt to kill one of these attributes without actually destroying the body. Thus we may “break” a horse or even a child without harming a hair on its head,”

*M. Scott Peck, author of “The Road Less Traveled,”
“People of the Lie” and other books, wrote.*





Three Primary Theoretical Models

Mental illness is real, as the **Medical Model** suggests that certain conditions may have a genetic or organic component.

Certain kinds of abnormal behavior result from biological disturbance (including brain damage from prolonged substance abuse or severe injury) and may be accompanied by forms of psychological disturbance.

Theoretical Models... A Paradox?

The **Environmental Approach**: American Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz claimed that most of what the Medical Model calls mental illnesses are not illnesses at all but rather “**problems in living**” that arise from difficulties with adapting to life, dealing with change and coping (the manner in which people deal with and manage stress in their lives).

Szasz indicated that by labeling deviations as “sick” deprives individuals of responsibility for their behavior – “they can’t help it” – a passive role that impedes a return to normal and productive behavior.





Theoretical Models...

The **Youth Futures Model** is a dynamic process for promoting collaboration and community empowerment based on several premises.

There is recognition that **preventing risky youth (and adult) behavior requires addressing risk and protective factors** within the context of social ecology:

- **Individual attributes**
- **Family and Peer**
- **Community**
- **School and work settings**
- **Media and religion, etc.**

An integrated/holistic approach

- Addressing bio-psycho-social factors to shed light on risks
- Behavioral Science principles that support/facilitate healing, change, growth
- Perspectives that combine evidence-based research and grassroots approaches to prevention/intervention
- Solutions through shared leadership and responsibility by individuals, communities, officials/experts and larger systems.

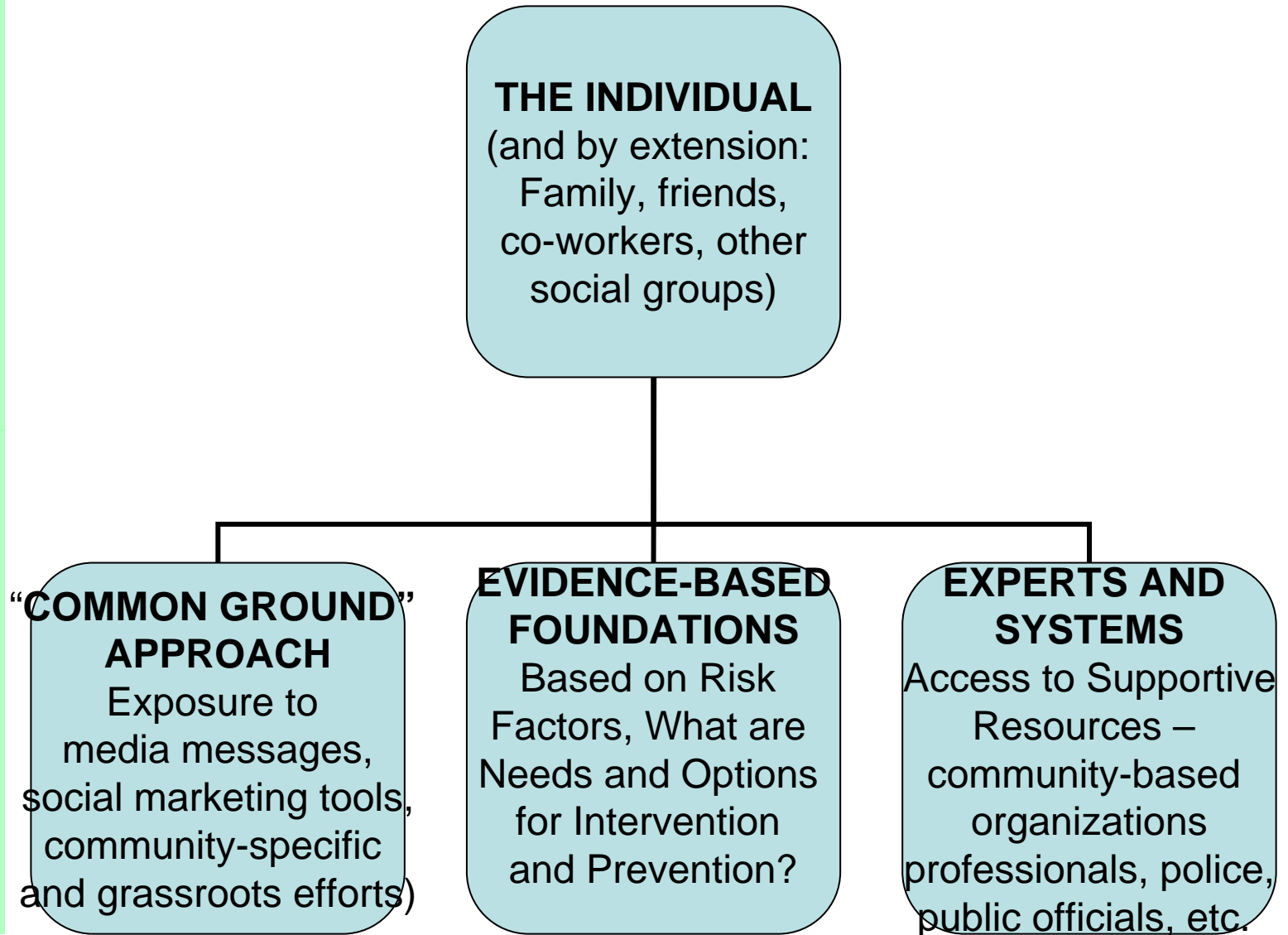


Project Components

- **Linkages to internet resources and telephone contacts** (offered by a local help line and resource directories) for information and referrals to behavioral health and counseling services.
- **Opportunity to participate in educational workshops on mental health and violence prevention** (and separate trainings available for staff at community-based organizations).
- **Exposure to learning from the experience of families affected by violence**, who are available to speak to various groups.
- **Access to articles and educational materials from diverse professionals, activists and other resource contributors** through the project website.
- **Ability for youth and adults to participate in a creative contest** (essays and art relevant to mental health awareness and violence-prevention themes; the theme for essays is: "How I am Demonstrating the Change I Want to See in the World").



HOW Mental Health Matters Project Makes Impact





The Mental Health Matters for Violence Prevention Project supports individuals and families in being part of problem-solving, rather than just depending on the so-called “experts.”

Personal power evolves from acceptance of personal responsibility and willingness to learn and change.

Mental Health requires acknowledgement of – and openness to -- one’s need to grow.

Making a Difference as Change Agents

Many patterns of dysfunction that may be accepted in the mainstream society as “normal” deserve closer scrutiny. (It is not “normal” – and should not be expected -- that young black males are likely to die in their 20s due to senseless violence).

A strong need exists to shift perceptions, and reduce the stigma and barriers to seeking help for mental health. A need for parity in insurance coverage for mental health, and greater emphasis on prevention in schools and the community.

Individuals and groups all have potential as change agents, to make a difference in their immediate environment.

Communities can become empowered through shared leadership from diverse stakeholders, with ownership by different participants engaged in problem-solving at the level where they have influence.





The Need for a Mental Health Movement

Due to the persistence of **various assumptions, stereotypes and stigma**, there is limited understanding about the continuum that defines mental health issues.

Ultimately, attending to our own mental health is one of the most proactive approaches to being part of the solution.

A great need exists for more public awareness of mental health as opposed to just mental illness.

After all, “mental health” is a positive term that emphasizes wellness rather than illness. We need to reflect on realities of life: People will experience problems, encounter different life stages that may require struggle, but also can learn, change and grow to become more conscious, and heal from difficult experiences to gain greater maturity and appreciation for life.



The Need for a Mental Health Movement...

*In his ground-breaking book, “The Road Less Traveled,” M. Scott Peck begins with the profound truth that ‘**Life is difficult.**’*

*This is a great truth because the process of solving problems in life is often painful due to the accompanying emotions we experience such as sadness, fear, frustration, etc. **We can either moan about the problems of life or work toward solving them.***

There is a difference between unnecessary/neurotic suffering and the genuine suffering that can help us grow as a result of facing and solving problems in life....

The Need for a Mental Health Movement...

M. Scott Peck defined **Discipline** as the basic set of tools – techniques of suffering – required to solve problems:

Delaying gratification: Sacrifice, and the process by which we learn to meet and experience pain first, and then can enhance the joy of pleasure.

Acceptance of responsibility: Accepting responsibility for one's own decisions: Neurotics often assume too much responsibility and people with character disorders shirk responsibility, often blaming others.

Dedication to truth: We all have a worldview – “maps” -- that must be constantly updated and revised as we find ourselves exposed to new information. Being truthful requires genuine self-examination, a willingness to be personally challenged by others, and honesty to oneself and others.

Balancing: Many times we function with rigid, set patterns of behavior. Flexibility is required to handle conflicting requirements and make adjustments based on different life demands.



Final Thoughts....

The strength, willingness and energy to apply the techniques of Discipline are facilitated by love, which Peck defines as the will to extend oneself for the spiritual growth of oneself and/or others.

The opposite of extending oneself – many forms of laziness -- may in fact be among mankind's original sins, Peck said.

The words of 1960s activist Eldridge Cleaver ring true: “If you are not part of the solution, then you (may be) part of the problem.”

