LEARNING FROM YOUTHS’ NARRATIVES OF CHANGE AND PARENTAL TREATMENT EXPECTATIONS TO GUIDE OUTCOME MEASUREMENT: A FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SENSE OF SELF

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1. What changes do parents expect youth to make in Pine River’s program?  
   - Parents wanted youth to have greater self-confidence and greater responsibility.  
   - Parents hoped youth would develop a greater sense of self, including insight into the impact of their drug use.  
   - Parents expected youth to develop greater insight, including insight into the impact of their drug use.  
   - Parents wanted youth to engage in goal setting, reach their potential and make progress academically.

2. What are the main changes youths make due to their experiences in the program?  
   - Youths reported more insightful, future-oriented thinking.  
   - Their family functioning improved – families had closer relationships, more trust, and respectful communication.  
   - Youths had experienced loneliness, trauma, and abuse.  
   - Youths described relationships as unhealthy and distant.

RESULTS – Study 1 - Parents

PARENT EXPECTATIONS  
- Parents wanted to create a more supportive family environment for their youth with greater mutual respect and communication, and wanted their youth to rebuild damaged family relationships.  
- Parents had concerns that youth would refuse treatment, wouldn’t stay in the program, wouldn’t show any improvement or might get worse due to contagion.  
- Parents wanted youth to have greater mental wellness, including better coping strategies, emotion regulation, more joy, healing, and balance/stability.  
- Parents hoped youth would develop a greater sense of self, namely more self-confidence and greater responsibility.  
- Only 10% of parents felt observable behaviour, such as sobriety and youth using their time productively.  
- Parents expected youth to develop greater insight, including insight into the impact of their drug use.  
- Parents wanted youth to engage in goal setting, reach their potential and make progress academically.

RESULTS – Study 2 - Youths

BEFORE PINE RIVER  
- Youths described relationships as unhealthy and distant.  
- Youths had experienced loneliness, trauma, and abuse.  
- Emotional problems included: sadness, lack of self-esteem, emotional dysregulation and self-harm.  
- Youths described themselves as unMotivated and in denial.  
- Before PRI, youth engaged in destructive behaviours such as skipping school and stealing from friends/ family.  
- Youth used substances to suppress/cope with strong emotions and believed people in their lives did not understand why they were using substances.

METHOD – Study 1 - Parents  
- 28 applications were randomly selected from a pool of 638 parent applications to the program.  
- Seven questions related to parents’ expectations of treatment were selected for analysis.  
- Data were coded by four independent coders using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a consensus qualitative research strategy (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997).  
- In Phase One, each coder was assigned a group of five cases for independent coding before coming together to build a preliminary model through consensus.  
- In Phase Two, each coder was assigned another analyst’s phase one cases, as well as five new cases.  
- In Phase Three, all coders analyzed all 28 cases and built the final model collectively.

METHOD – Study 2 - Youths  
- First author engaged in program weekly for 8 months.  
- Staff explained project to parents, then youth.  
- Parental consent obtained for 24 of 34 youth (71%).  
- Interviews conducted with a total of ten youth.  
- Sample was 70% male.  
- NVivo software used to organize and code text.

INTRODUCTION  
- Since 60% to 80% of adolescents hospitalized due to mental problems have coexisting addiction (Swadi & Bobice, 2003), programs that treat both are essential.  
- Residential treatment is an intervention that has been shown to reduce youths’ internalizing symptoms as well as high-risk behaviours such as suicidality (Knobh, Harder, Zandberg, & Kindrick, 2008).  
- Research on residential programs is inconsistent in the outcomes reported, including: substance use, academics, criminality, emotional distress, social functioning, physical health, self-worth, autonomy, family isolation, abusive relationships (Baha, Homer, French, & Weisner, 2009; Shanle, Jasiukaitis, & Green, 2003; Harrison & Ashe, 2001; Spooner, Mattick, & Noffs, 2001, Hawke, Hennon, & Galliano, 2001).  
- Little is known about the outcomes of residential programs such as Pine River Institute, which combines multiple treatment modalities.

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS  
- Parents and youths discussed changes in relationships as the single most important outcome of treatment. Parents hoped for more mutual respect and communication, which youths discussed as well.  
- Parents expected youth to re-engage with positive peer relationships and discontinue negative ones, which aligned with youths’ narratives of change.  
- Parents and youths highlighted the importance of mental wellness as a treatment outcome; not as a reduction in the symptoms of mental health diagnoses, but instead as the development of positive mental health (e.g., joy, balance, enjoyment of life, coping, emotion regulation, etc.).  
- Both parties focused on youth developing a stronger sense of self, namely greater self-confidence, identity development and maturity.  
- These results highlight the multi-faceted nature of the issues faced by youth and the changes youth make.  
- Therefore, programs must measure more than behavioural outcomes, such as substance use.  
- Research on the process of change is continuing at PRI.

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