



# PhotoVoice: The Elder Experience

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# What is PhotoVoice?

PhotoVoice is a method of combining photography with grassroots social action...Participants are asked to represent their communities or express their points of view by photographing scenes that highlight themes...These photographs are collaboratively interpreted, and narratives can be developed that explain how the photos highlight that specific theme. These narratives are used to better understand the community and help plan health or social programs that address community needs.

Photovoice is often used by marginalized groups to provide insight into how they conceptualize their circumstances and their hopes for the future. As a form of community consultation, photovoice attempts to bring the perspectives of those "who lead lives that are totally different from those traditionally in control of the means of imaging the world" into the policy-making process.



This is the photo of a mural taken in the Mission in San Francisco. When I first saw this mural, a passage from the Bible came to mind, "Do not worry about your life, or about what you eat or drink; or about your body or what you will wear. Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap and yet their Heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:25-26).

Looking at the man in the photo you might assume he has some mental health issues - I mean he has a mouse on his head - but as you look deeper you notice a sense of peace and acceptance. This is how my savior Jesus Christ accepts me, even when all I can think about are my own needs. "Judge not lest ye be judged."

Thank you San Mateo County BHRS for allowing me to share my spiritual beliefs.

~ Alan



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# Agenda

## Day 1:

- What is PhotoVoice?
- Discuss Theme
- Brainstorming for Pictures
- Photography Basics


## Day 3:

- Showcase Exhibits
- Discussion
- Evaluations

## Day 2:

- Review/Discuss Photos
- Pick a Couple Photos to Work With
- Intro to Narrative
- Narrative Writing

Exhibit to be displayed at San Mateo County's May Mental Health Month Event.



# Brainstorming the theme: What does mental health mean to you?

- What is “good” mental health?
- What is “bad” mental health?
- What does it feel like being diagnosed with a mental illness?
- How do others respond to mental illness? Stigma? Stereotypes? Acceptance?



# Brainstorming the theme: What is your experience of mental health services?

- What was it like when you first started receiving services? How did you feel?
- Best experience accessing services? Worst experience?
- Any difficulties accessing services?
- Reaction of others when they find out that you receive mental health



# Brainstorming the theme: What about your experience accessing mental health services would you like to share with others?

- Are there experiences you've had that would encourage others to access services?
- Would you like to capture the benefits of mental health services?
- Assist in removing the stigma?



# Brainstorming: Symbolism

Use of symbols to represent ideas and emotions

**Symbolism** is the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. An action, person, place, word, or object can all have a symbolic meaning.

## Examples:

The dove is a symbol of peace.

A red rose or red color stands for love or romance.

Black is a symbol that represents evil or death.

A ladder may stand as a symbol for a connection between the heaven and the earth.

A broken mirror may symbolize separation





# Let's Brainstorm What Images We May Want To Capture for Our Exhibit

Theme: What has your experience been like as an older adult seeking/receiving mental health services?




# Day 2: Pick and Discuss Photos

## Narrative Writing:

- Putting the image and individual's experience accessing mental health services together in a paragraph using symbolism.

## Themes That Arose:

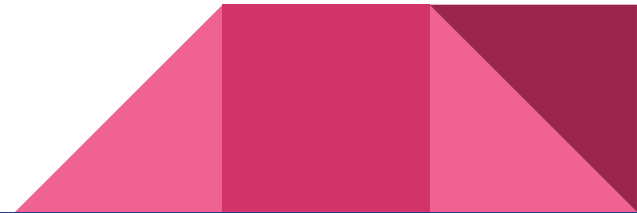
- Services/Assistance (St. Vincent de Paul, Central County Clinic)
  - The “sun breaking through the clouds” (finding the “right” medication and provider, wellness, accessing services)
  - Community, Acceptance (California Clubhouse)
- 

# Final Product

Presented at the May Mental Health Month event:



Image: The line outside of St. Vincent de Paul





"This is an image of St. Vincent de Paul in San Mateo. When I wake up in the morning I have a positive place to go. Smiling faces greet me. The volunteers all know my name. They give me food, clothing and haircuts. Someone cares about me and is making an effort to help me. Having structure and caring individuals in my life improves my mental health and brings me joy."

~Jon



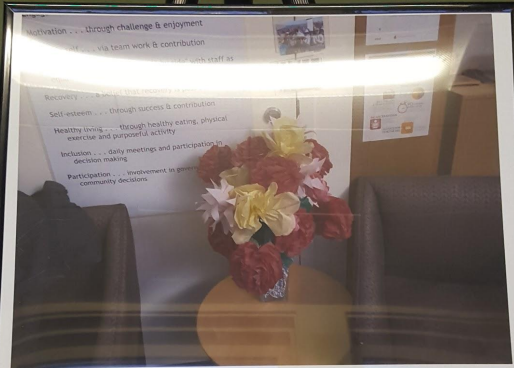
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Behavioral Health  
& Recovery Services  
Office of Diversity and Equity

Image: Paper flowers made by members of the CA Clubhouse with some of the principles of CA Clubhouse in the background





"This is a picture of some principles of the California Clubhouse and flowers made by clubhouse members. Going to the California Clubhouse gives me a sense of community. No one judges one another because of their illness. It can be difficult to find places to go that are free of stigma when you have a mental illness."

~Barbara



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# What Was Found

- There is a desire to share within this population
- Generally experiences were positive and hopeful
- Displays like these may be encouraging and inspiring for others and be therapeutic for the artists





# Q&A/Discussion

