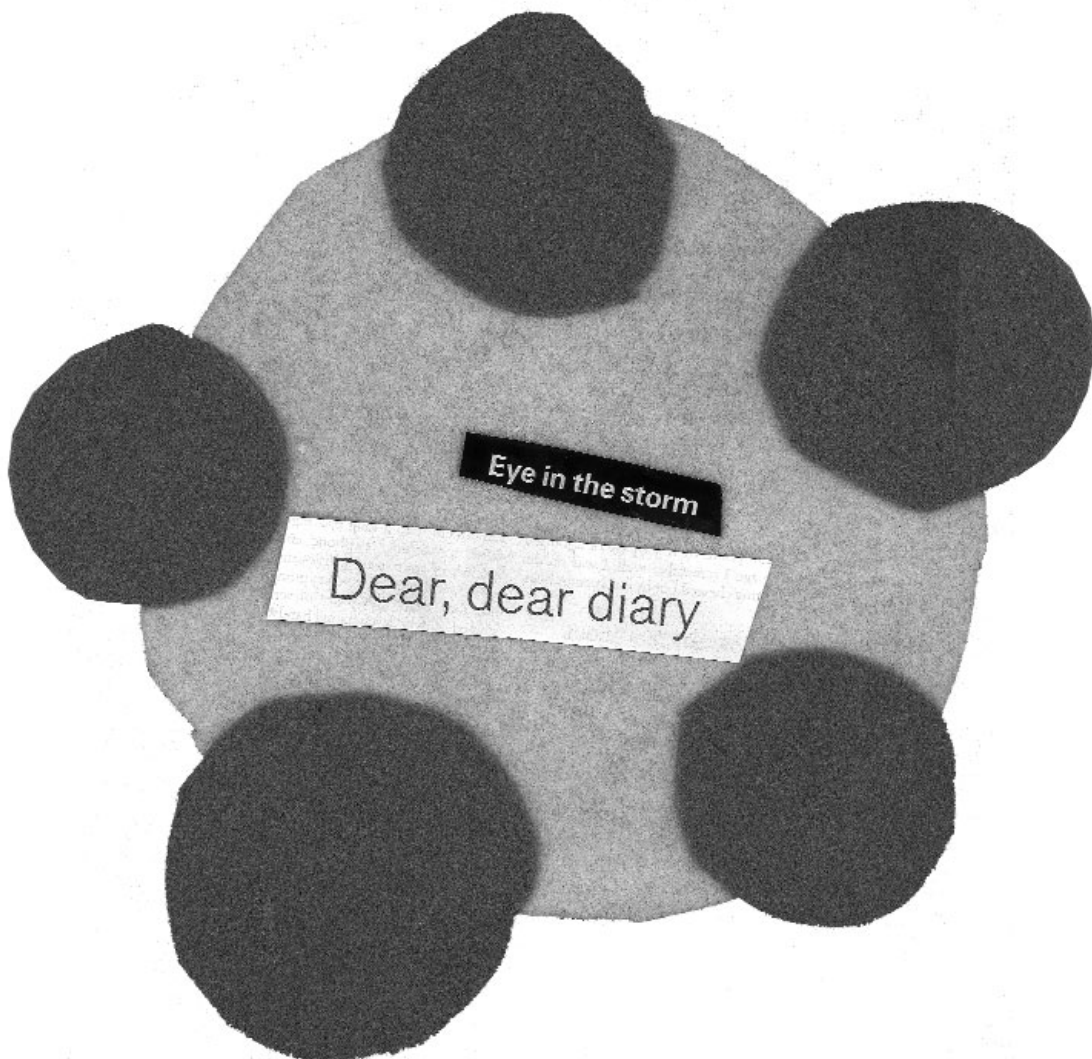


Talking About Body Image, Identity, Disability, and Difference

A Facilitator's
Manual



This handbook is designed for use with the
Building Bridges workshops.
It includes information, activities, and resources.

Carla Rice, Lorna Renooy,
Hilde Zitzelsberger, Ani Aubin,
and Fran Odette



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Talking about Body Image, Identity, Disability, and Difference: A Facilitator's Manual

What some reviewers have said:

"This manual is a much needed resource. It imparts valuable insights and experiences, ensuring that facilitators who are interested in working with people with differences and disabilities will be equipped with the knowledge and methods to facilitate groups addressing complicated issues related to body image and identity. The array of motivating activities in this manual are designed to encourage meaningful participant engagement in significant topics that influence their daily lives and interactions. Congratulations on a wonderful manual".

Heather Beveridge, MSW, Cleft Lip and Palate Program, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON

"The *Building Bridges Project* has produced a very valuable guide; the manual is full of good ideas and carefully laid-out programmes. Anyone who is born with or acquires a disability or a different-looking face or body knows how difficult it can be to sustain and nourish positive self-esteem. In today's appearance-conscious and perfection-obsessed society, it can be difficult to feel good and behave confidently - and there are many cultural forces that militate against such an achievement. Negative stereotypes are widespread in the media - and are widely believed - and discrimination is commonplace, though sometimes unwitting, in school and work.

The workshops they describe are grounded in solid social psychology practice and within a very inclusive philosophy. Among the many points of value in the programme, I particularly liked the comprehensive explanation of why workshops for people with disabilities can be so enriching - because they enable people to really appreciate that they are not alone. I also liked the programme's emphasis on workshop activities to empower participants to reduce their sense of isolation by learning new strategies for managing difficult social situations. The process for planning and running the workshops is well described and the importance of maintaining group cohesion after the workshops conclude is well stressed - always a major challenge!"

James Partridge, DSc, Chief Executive, Changing Faces, London, UK

Building Bridges: Who We Are

Building Bridges is a partnership project of the Disability and Physical Differences Initiative of the Body Image Project at the Regional Women's Health Centre, Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre and AboutFace International, a community-based organisation and the only group in Canada providing services to persons with facial differences. Our focus has been to examine everyday experiences related to appearance and abilities of adult women and men living with facial and physical differences or disabilities. Project activities such as research, workshops, support groups, and outreach have been designed to create opportunities for individuals to share stories, knowledge, and practical ideas; look at what has worked well in social interactions; and build on their existing knowledge and skills. The project builds bridges between and across our perceived differences, and among established and emerging communities of people with differences and disabilities.

Acknowledgements

Many people helped and encouraged us in the development of *Talking about Body Image, Identity, Disability, and Difference: A Facilitator's Manual*. A special thanks first to the women and men with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities who have shared their experiences and from whom we learned so much. Your contributions were invaluable.

Continued commitment and guidance from Anna Pileggi, Executive Director of AboutFace International and Carla Rice, Manager, and Hilde Zitzelsberger, Coordinator, at the Body Image Project, Regional Women's Health Centre have been critical to the completion of this project.

We would like to thank volunteer reviewers whose suggestions and insights were extremely helpful in shaping this resource.

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Why a Manual on Body Image, Identity, Disability, and Difference?

In our society, a great deal of importance is placed on our appearance and physical abilities. Social ideals of acceptable and desirable face and body features, shapes, and capacities are associated with health, competency, independence, and success. Disability or difference is often viewed as a personal tragedy or problem, rather than part of broader social issues of diversity and inclusion. As a result, people living with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities are often subject to negative or inaccurate perceptions of their bodies and lives, encountering judgmental comments, intrusive stares, and questions about their bodies (Keith, 1996). These are commonplace, occurring in interactions with family, friends, strangers, medical practitioners, teachers, colleagues, and others. Stresses and challenges involved in experiencing negative perceptions can leave people feeling vulnerable in social situations. At the same time, however, individuals develop creative strategies to navigate these interactions.

This manual is based on a series of workshops that the *Building Bridges Project* has run to create opportunities for people with physical differences and/or disabilities to share stories, knowledge, and practical ideas about interpersonal interactions. Impetus for our workshops came from the recognition that there are few places for adult women and men living with difference and disability to openly and safely discuss the influence of challenging social interactions on their bodies and lives. Our workshops were developed to provide a place for people with disabilities and differences to discover and further expand knowledges and skills they may already possess in handling stressful situations and maintaining a sense of body and self despite others' perceptions.

Our workshops have been developed by, for, and with people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities. Significant concerns and interests of people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities with whom we have worked have been the following:

- 'Re-defining' and 're-authoring' oneself after experiencing various forms of unwanted attention and/or harassment;
- Reducing a sense of isolation and marginalization by connecting with and hearing from others about their experiences and how they navigate difficult situations in their daily lives;
- Remembering and affirming one's capacities to deal with others' responses to difference and disability; and
- Having a meaningful opportunity for self-growth, to augment self-esteem and

self-confidence, and to build a sense of community across difference and disability.

Drawing on our experience in conducting *Building Bridges* workshops over the past three years, we wrote this manual to make it possible for others to undertake designing and running similar programs. Reflecting on our experiences with designing, organising, facilitating, and supervising workshops, we have incorporated what we have learned from our practice and most significantly, what we have learned from the women and men who have participated in the workshops.

This manual was developed to provide opportunity for people beyond the reach of the *Building Bridges Project*. It is intended as a facilitator's guide to:

- Create space and opportunity for individuals to share stories, knowledge, and practical ideas;
- Look at the significant skills that people already use to negotiate stressful and challenging interactions; and
- Build on people's existing knowledges and strengths together.

A key aspect of the manual is the cultivation of a positive identity, not in spite of difference and disability, but through incorporating one's bodily difference into one's positive sense of identity.

Who Might Use the Manual

The manual is intended for any person working with people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities, including facilitators, educators, counsellors, support workers, advocates, and therapists. It is a useful guide for group facilitators and program developers who are members of, have contact with, and/or want to support communities of people with difference and disability.

Activities in this manual are flexible enough to be used in a wide range of settings with any group that is focused on themes of body image, identity, and difference. Facilitators are encouraged to revise and adapt the activities to best suit the people with whom they are working.

Overview of the Manual

In the development of this manual, we have drawn on individuals' experiences in and knowledge about interpersonal interactions. The manual is a synthesis of material from:

- Stories shared by people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities who participated in *Building Bridges* workshops and support groups;

- Reflections of facilitators running our workshops and groups;
- Perspectives of other facilitators, educators, and counsellors working with people on issues of body, identity, disability, and difference; and
- Academic and clinical research on appearance, self-esteem, and social interaction.

There are five sections in this manual:

1. The first section, 'body image, identity, and difference', addresses our understanding of body image formation and the relationship between body image and identity. We also discuss the role that appearance and physical difference play in social interactions, and why workshops on body image specifically for people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities are important. We believe it is crucial that you read this section before planning your workshops to enrich your understanding of contexts and histories that shape people's experiences of body and self.
2. The second section, 'Building Bridges workshops', outlines the purpose of this work and methods that underlie the workshops and groups. As well, we talk about ways that facilitators and participants can support, validate, and facilitate group members so that they can meaningfully participate within the group. We feel it is important to pass on what we have learned about facilitation so that participants can access their own knowledges and experiences, explore options, and construct solutions that work for them in their own lives.
3. The third section, 'planning the workshop', discusses some issues regarding group membership and running groups for people with diverse differences and disabilities, including creating a comfortable and accommodating environment. It also includes workshop details such as a general outline of the schedule for a two-day workshop.
4. The fourth section, 'running the workshop', includes the activities we have developed and adapted for working with people with differences and disabilities. If you are planning to conduct a two-day workshop, we suggest doing the activities in the order presented, as each activity builds upon the next. However, depending on your institutional/organizational constraints and participants' needs, you can use the activities in different ways to build your own workshop or group.
5. The fifth section, 'after the workshop', looks to ways facilitators and participants have maintained on-going contact to build a sense of community.

We have included at the back of the manual an introductory interview guide, a workshop evaluation form, and participant journal pages. We also list valuable resources and organizations that have assisted us in the design, development, and implementation of these workshops. We encourage you to adopt and adapt these tools to create your own programming.

Body Image, Identity, and Difference

What is Body Image?

Body image is the inner picture of outer appearance—a person’s perception of his or her body. Called “the view from the inside” this picture often has associated thoughts, feelings, and actions. While body image is an inside view, it is shaped by the outside world, by messages about our bodies that we pick up in interactions with others.

Others’ and our own perceptions of our bodies have a powerful impact on how we see ourselves. Body image is shaped over time and in different relationships and places by many things:

- How we learn to feel about our bodies—through messages from family, friends, and influential others;
- What happens to our bodies over time—physical changes and how others respond to them;
- How our culture(s) defines attractiveness and ability—social value placed on our bodies, including our looks, differences, and abilities.

Many women and men develop body and self image concerns as a result of these messages. Body image problems range from negative perceptions and dissatisfaction with looks, ability and/or physical difference, to depression, feelings of isolation, and problems with eating. Some body image concerns are:

Negative social perceptions: dealing with looks or questions about our appearance or physical abilities, and the feelings of isolation or ‘not belonging’ that can result from perceptions of difference;

Conflicted perceptions of body changes: dealing with changes in our looks or abilities, and others’ responses to these changes;

Body dissatisfaction: not liking our bodies/parts of our bodies, feeling ‘not good enough’ or ‘less than’ because of our looks or abilities;

Body harm: hurting our bodies by punishing exercise, bruising or cutting ourselves, numbing ourselves by drinking too much, misusing drugs, bingeing, or not eating, or by neglecting our basic needs (for food and rest).

What is the Relationship between Body Image and Identity?

How the culture values or devalues our appearances, physical differences, and disabilities has a significant impact on our developing body images and identities. Contemporary western society values a certain ideal of the 'body beautiful'. The influence of advertising, for example, is very powerful. We learn that we should aspire to achieve images of 'ideal' and 'standard' bodies. We may judge ourselves, or be judged by others, on how our appearance and abilities do or do not measure up to these beauty ideals and body norms. For many people with physical differences and/or disabilities, images of 'standard' and 'perfect' bodies are difficult, if not impossible, to attain. At the same time, positive images of physical difference and disability are rare. The lack of positive images of different bodies can make it difficult for those of us with differences and disabilities to develop or maintain a positive sense of self and potential.

How do body images become an important part of our identities? Children develop awareness of their bodies at home, in medical settings, and at school, gathering cultural meanings assigned to bodies and forming body views through taking in others' perceptions of their looks and abilities. Body images become a basis for people's identities in interactions with family, peers, medical practitioners, teachers, and strangers. This occurs when they grasp how others label their bodies, and begin to understand the personal and social significance of labels to their sense of identity and possibility. Body and self-images are created in the interplay between people's internal views of themselves and the views of others that they internalize (Jenkins, 1996), whether the communication concerns their colour, gender, size, or physical differences and abilities.

Why are body image and identity important? Messages from others about appearance, ability, and desirability can shape people's perceptions of their bodies and themselves. Individuals internalize negative judgements about their bodies and lives. They may have learned to view their bodies as inadequate, unacceptable, and a source of stress and anxiety. Adolescence, in particular, can be a difficult time for most people as they adapt to their changing bodies, develop a sense of identity, belonging, and future directions. Having a facial difference, physical difference, or physical disability can intensify these experiences. From their experiences, many people learn to separate their bodies from their selves, view their bodies and lived experiences as different from others, and disregard their own knowledges and strengths.

What Role Does Physical Difference Play in Social Interactions?

Bodies are our main instruments for expressing ourselves. We use our bodies in communicating and connecting with other people, whether through our touch, movement, looks, or conversation. When we communicate, much of our attention is directed at the central part of the face—a triangle formed by the eyes, nose, and mouth (Cole, 1998). Both face and body play a key role in how we relate to each other because we rely on facial expression and body language a great deal to tell us about the emotions of others.

Here, we are primarily referring to the experiences of sighted people. Sighted people look at a person when speaking to her or him, and when listening. Whether or not the person smiles, whether s/he looks directly at us or glances away are clues about what s/he is thinking or feeling. Yet, for people who are low vision, blind or deaf-blind, appearance can also play a significant role in communication. There are many ways we communicate with other people in our surrounding world, through looking at others and being looked at, through talking with and listening to others, and through our physical contact. For people who are low vision, blind or deaf-blind, body difference may be perceived through any or all of the above, including words, gestures, spatial movement, touch, and/or looks.

Coming into contact with a person who has a physical difference, facial difference, and/or a physical disability may be a new experience for some people. Many are unfamiliar with facial and other physical differences and may have many misconceptions about what it means to live with one. Others may be overwhelmed by questions such as “What happened to her face?” or “He must have suffered terribly.” People may be unsure of how best to behave. They may feel uncomfortable and awkward, and they may look to the person to take the initiative with the conversation (Robinson, Rumsey, and Partridge, 1996). People are also curious and particularly, we are interested in appearance. Many people may feel they can ask someone with a difference or disability personal questions they would think inappropriate to ask others without a physical difference.

There can be a lot of stress when a person with physical differences or disabilities feels vulnerable, or unsure of how others will respond to his/her appearance. People develop a number of strategies to manage social interactions throughout their lives, which they themselves may identify as effective or not within their current life. Some strategies may be:

- Withdrawing or avoiding social encounters;
- Using concealing make-up and clothing or changing body movements to ‘pass’ as someone without a disability or difference in public places;
- Countering hostility or negativity in others by being defiant/aggressive;
- Trying to make others comfortable by smiling, being polite, and answering questions;
- Using humour to put the other at ease and deal with our own feelings;
- Actively taking the initiative and sustaining the interaction (recognizing others’ and our own responses, moving beyond the initial response, and seeing from outside ourselves); and
- Practicing a variety of strategies depending on our reading of what is possible in each situation.

The exercises in this manual provide opportunities for participants to re-examine, re-evaluate, and refine skills they use in a range of social interactions. Through understanding the perspectives of others and themselves in social interactions, participants can recognize the responses they already use, think through the potential and limits of those responses, and identify new options for actions. In this way, individuals can make

conscious choices about how to respond in different situations. For example, sometimes we may want to avoid uncomfortable social situations; sometimes we may want to educate others; and sometimes we may want to protect our privacy. Each of these options is valid. The strategy chosen may depend on people's awareness of the responses they already use, their reading of others' willingness to change their behaviour, and their knowledge of a range of options available to them for navigating the encounter.

Building Bridges Workshops

The purpose of the workshop is to provide opportunities for individuals:

- to share stories, knowledge, and practical ideas with others who have similar concerns and experiences;
- provide and give support;
- learn from one another; and
- discover and build on existing strengths and skills in social interactions.

The workshop sessions incorporate a variety of adult learning techniques such as individualized exercises, small group work, discussions, and large group activities including drama and story telling. While we began these workshop sessions using “skills development” and “solutions-focused” methods, we increasingly adopted a “narrative approach” in our facilitation. Facilitators working from a narrative perspective view participants as having expertise and skills in the challenges of living with body differences, but that this knowledge may be hidden by dominant stories that portray them as inadequate in some way (Silvester, 1997). From our perspective, because it views participants as possessing unrecognized skill in the challenges of living with difference, a narrative stance more fully supports people in discovering their own knowledges, and in building on capacities for action that may already work for them in their own lives. Telling stories about their experiences within a group context moves participants to recognize the collective knowledges and skills that are present within the group.

Workshop Methods

Telling Our Stories

“Telling our stories” within a group context assists participants to:

- access and validate their own understandings of themselves and their bodies;
- understand their worlds better by making it possible for people to more richly describe their experiences;
- explore social situations, past and present, that have been challenging;
- listen to many voices of experience and look at experiences as a ‘whole’ while gathering insights from others’ stories; and
- become more significantly aware of the knowledge and skills they already have and to problem-solve together, to discover ways of dealing with situations, which expands choices and leads to action.

Key elements of story telling involve:



Each individual acts in and interacts from the context of his or her life. Use of open questions and structured dialogue focusing on people's responses to difficult interactions encourages participants' to step into the neglected terrain of their lives, inviting description and explanation on who, how, why, what, and then what. Story telling enables people to see themselves as authors in their own lives. Others' reflections on their stories amplify participants' awareness of knowledge and skills they already use to handle difficult situations. When people recognize the ways their stories resonate with each other, this creates movement, or new understandings of common experiences and new energy for action.

Through telling stories and witnessing story tellings, participants are able to remember and reclaim the knowledges and skills that they already possess, gain insights, and identify alternative actions that work for them within their own lives. Most activities are designed so participants can look at what has worked well in social interactions and what they could do differently. Participants experiment, through drama or writing for example, with responses to challenging situations with others who have 'been there'. By sharing stories, storytellers can gain insight about the strengths and limits of their responses from listeners' insights. As a group, participants learn from and build upon each others' skills and strengths. Many participants have commented that they have felt more empowered through recognizing their abilities to make choices and by expanding their choices within interactions.

Exploring Connections between Thoughts, Feelings, Intentions, and Actions in Social Interactions

There is an interrelatedness between how we see ourselves, how we think others see us, and how this may play itself out within social interactions (Changing Faces, 1997). Within social interactions, our thoughts, feelings, body reactions, as well as our own intentions and actions can be good teachers.

For example, a series of questions in a workshop context may be:

"How do you respond when someone is staring at you on a crowded bus?"

"What are the thoughts that go through your mind and how do you feel?"

"Are your feelings physical? If so, what are your body sensations or reactions?"

Where and what are you feeling?"

*"How do your thoughts, feelings, intentions, and body reactions affect your actions?
What do your responses reveal about your intentions toward others?"*

"What do your responses reveal about your knowledge of living with physical differences and/or disabilities?"

*"What do your responses reveal about your skills in negotiating social interactions?
What can we do with our responses?"*

A key aspect of the *Building Bridges* workshop method is to support participants in recognizing and validating their own knowledges by the questions facilitators ask and the ways they phrase these questions. Throughout the exercises in this manual, we provide lists of possible questions that can be used in the context of the workshops. These are not intended as facilitator scripts. Instead, we offer a range of questions to assist facilitators in helping participants to access what they know about dealing with difficult encounters and to share this knowledge within the group.

In this way, individuals can examine the connections among their thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions in social interactions. We also encourage participants to consider the thoughts, feelings, and possible intentions of others involved in the interactions.

Facilitator's Approach

We know that valuable perspectives are gained by living with a facial difference, physical difference, and/or disability. An essential feature of the *Building Bridges* workshops has been the skill of facilitators to guide but not control the workshop process. In this way, participants themselves can craft and occupy a space that is supportive of their own ways of knowing and being in their daily lives.

Taking a narrative approach to group work, facilitators begin from the assumption that people in the workshop have knowledge, skills, and insights about moving through difficult situations, and that these knowledges can provide helpful alternatives for actions. Narrative facilitators uncover people's stories by taking a curious or "not knowing" stance, asking questions without having preconceived ideas or theories about what the outcomes should be (Drewery and Winslade, 1997). Facilitators look for the meaning and effects of problems in people's lives and listen for alternative stories, or examples of their responses and actions in constraining circumstances. Their expertise lies in helping people develop meaning and understanding, and inviting them to reflect on the relationships among their thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions in social situations.

The facilitator's role is to build a collaborative group learning process. Facilitators are influential not by imposing interpretations or making interventions but through using their questions and reflections to guide participants toward the knowledge and skills they have of their lives that are relevant to addressing the challenges at hand.

Participants are encouraged to be active members within the group and take an active role in the group process. Facilitators of *Building Bridges* workshops have found that the more they “decentre” themselves by not taking the expert role (White, 2002), the more the participants in the group speak openly, and direct the focus according to their own interests, desires, and solutions. This stance is critical to support individual’s abilities to move towards reaching the preferred results they define for themselves within the workshops. The activities are designed to build opportunities for group members to give and receive direct and frequent support and validation within the group.

■ Support

Support participants to share their own understandings of their bodies and selves and life situations within the group. Facilitators support the group members to recognise and validate their own knowledges. They assist group members to connect what they already know with new insights and understandings about themselves and others. Finding ways to cope and strategize within social situations is an on-going process. It is important to refrain from framing the ways participants cope as good or bad and encouraging success through ‘survivor’ stories or ‘heroic’ tales with uniformly positive endings. Telling stories where obstacles are always overcome perpetuates the myth that one must always be strong, and stresses success and/or failure rather than viewing experiences as opportunities for growth and learning. Through approaching all experiences as opportunity for gaining insight, participants can recognise and share their vulnerabilities as well as their strengths and find accounts of their lives that are suitable to them.

■ Validate

Validate the lived experiences that a participant brings to the workshop. Facilitators encourage participants to speak from their experiences so that they can validate their own experiences and have their experiences validated by other people in the group. Group responses are structured and facilitated to give participants the tools to witness, affirm, inspire, and motivate each other. In this way, participants have opportunities to learn from each other as opposed to having facilitators who serve as models who inspire and motivate. Facilitators are “decentred” in this process, which means that people are recognized as having expertise and “primary authorship status” over their own lives. Participants, not facilitators, hold knowledge and skills generated over the course of their lives that can become important tools for addressing the predicaments they face (White, 2002).

■ Facilitate

Facilitate participants’ confidence and abilities to share the realities, their joys and challenges, of their lives with the group. This is important, as many people with differences and disabilities may have limited opportunities to learn or talk about their bodies and selves, to reflect on how they experience social interactions that influence their thoughts, feelings, and responses, or examine possible intentions and actions within social situations. Facilitators encourage group members to

take responsibility for their learning and recognise the opportunities for others to learn from them within the group context.

Encouraging individuals to share with others who have similar concerns and experiences helps end feelings of isolation. As a group, participants then can begin to identify unrecognized capacities and skills in themselves and others. This helps participants to begin to challenge their perceptions of themselves and builds a sense of commonality and community across physical difference and disability.

Facilitators with Insider Knowledge

In our *Building Bridges* workshops, women and men with facial differences, physical differences, and/or disabilities are facilitators. A workshop facilitator with insider knowledge of living with a facial difference summed up her role in this way:

Speaking as a woman with a facial difference, I believe that it is essential that women living with physical disabilities and facial differences understand that being different is not only negative, but that it has many positive sides (i.e., empathy, strength, courage, etc.). Through the Building Bridges Program, the participants are reminded of what they already know and possess—their survival skills, their inner strength, their communication skills, and their ability to adapt to challenging situations. We offer support so women may become more comfortable with their bodies and their lives. Through our program, they understand that they are not alone.

We strongly recommend having at least one facilitator with lived knowledge of physical difference and/or disability. Having facilitators who can become part of the group and working through issues with participants, while remaining aware of group process, is highly effective. For example, many people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities have learned that they should not speak of the difficulties that they encounter in their day to day lives. Facilitators who can share their own challenges of living with difference and/or disability support others to speak of their painful situations and vulnerabilities. In this way, facilitators with lived experience of physical difference and/or disability can act as role models, mentors, and advocates. Participants in our workshops have commented on how comfortable they were made to feel by the facilitators and how much they appreciated the personal sharing by the facilitators.

Planning the Workshop

Group Membership

Our groups are designed for adults, age 16 and over. Participants may be individuals with facial differences (vascular birth marks, cleft lip and palate), physical differences (burn injuries, dermatological conditions, mastectomy) and physical disabilities (mobility disabilities such as spinal cord injury, sensory such as low vision, blindness, hard of hearing, chronic illness such as multiple sclerosis). Facial and physical differences and/or disabilities can be present at birth or acquired through injury or illness, and may be visible or hidden. People with facial and physical differences may not identify themselves as having a disability. However, there often are overlaps in concerns and issues in social interactions.

Outreach

Getting the Word Out

Outreach for our workshops employed the strategies outlined below. We have found that information should be provided quite early before the start date of the workshop in order to reach potential participants.

- Outreach was done with key contacts in the health care and human service professions, local community organizations, government ministries, persons with disabilities, and the media such as newspapers and magazines. The Directory of Disability Organisations in Canada has a comprehensive listing of organisations across Canada and organised by province, and can be ordered from the Canadian Abilities Foundation. (See Appendix C: Resources for more information.)
- Potential participants and referral sources were reached through telephone contact, TTY, letters, faxes, e-mails, and flyers.
- Covering letters with several flyers on brightly coloured paper were sent in targeted mailings to various service providers.
- Announcements of workshops also were posted in community-based agencies' newsletters and on various website and listservs, for example, the AboutFace website, Canadian Abilities Foundation website, Ontario Women's Health Network, and DAWN Ontario.
- We have found that 'word of mouth' techniques to increase participation are highly effective.

There can be difficulty locating potential participants. We know the great need and benefit for people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities to connect with others. Yet there may be difficulties for individuals in identifying with a stigmatized group and participating in sessions that address difficult social interactions. Networking with and through coordinators and others with physical differences and/or disabilities who are connected to communities in regional areas where the workshops were held has greatly assisted participant awareness, comfort, and interest. Establishing a personal connection with a person with a facial or physical difference and/or disability has been one of the most effective methods of outreach and intake for established and newly emerging communities of people with differences and disabilities.

Issues related to Group Membership

■ Size

From our experiences and discussions with participants, we have found the eight to ten participants per group works well, although groups can be smaller in size. We have found that a small group size (five participants and under) can make it more difficult to maintain and guide group discussions.

■ Gender

We have run groups that included women and men. Women and men with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities experience stigma and challenges in social interactions. Yet experiences of ones' body and self may differ due to social expectations of appearance and abilities that are specific to each gender. While it is possible to run a group that includes both women and men, differences in issues and experiences related to gender as well as group comfort and participation should be investigated and considered in planning the workshop.

Some individuals may want to be in a group that deals more specifically with their concerns related to gender and facial and physical difference and/or disability. Based on feedback about our workshops from participants, many women have voiced a desire to participate in groups for women only, in order to feel more comfortable in discussing their concerns. Further, we have found that women seemed more able to express anger and stronger feelings in a woman-only context.

■ Working across diverse disabilities and differences

Looking different in a society that emphasizes conformity to idealized standards of beauty and ability and what is considered 'normal' poses extra challenges to being accepted for 'what we look like' by others and by ourselves.

It is important to recognize and address some possible issues that can arise in running a group across difference and disability. These issues include respect for differences and acknowledgement of affinities.

Respect for Differences

Sometimes individuals with facial or physical differences might feel that they do not belong in a group of people with diverse disabilities and/or physical differences because of feelings of “not being as disabled” as other group members. They may express guilt about talking of their experiences, feeling that their pain or challenges are not as valid as others’ feelings or difficulties. On the other hand, participants with more visible differences and disabilities can sometimes invalidate feelings and experiences of other group members. This is usually unintentional. For example, non-supportive responses could include telling someone that his or her facial difference is “not so bad” or evaluating another’s experience with statements such as “You’re beautiful and are not in a wheelchair like me. You have nothing to complain about.” Comments such as these are based on social comparisons, which can recreate a cultural hierarchy of disability and difference in the group that has the potential to undermine everyone’s participation. To address this situation when it has occurred, our facilitators have posed the following questions to the larger group:

“Has your body ever been compared to anyone else’s?”
“What was the situation and what was your response?”
 (Feelings, thoughts, intentions, and actions)

Usually all participants can connect to past interactions where their bodies were compared or where their experiences of appearance and difference were invalidated. A facilitator might use participants’ examples as ‘illuminating moments’ to underscore that we live in a culture where bodies matter, and where physical differences make a difference in how people are treated. Growing up in this culture, we learn to compare and comment on each other’s bodies. While others may say or do things that hurt us, the intent is not always malicious. We feel this is an important message; often people personalize others’ reactions to their appearance, project meanings into situations, or because of their histories of negative treatment, see themselves as lacking the ability to choose their responses. This is not to say that their concerns and reactions are not valid, but that facilitators encourage participants to view situations from multiple perspectives and in larger contexts.

Some group members may have specific needs related to others’ respect for their differences. For example, participants who are hard of hearing might ask for group members to speak up and speak one at a time. Individuals who use augmentative or alternative communication devices may need more time to speak within the group than individuals who communicate verbally. Extra time for group process also may need to be built in to allow for communication of Deaf and other group members who require an interpreter or communication assistant. Participants who have visual disabilities may ask each participant to say his/her name before speaking and request larger print materials. We suggest encouraging participants to discuss with the group what they need to participate in the group. A general consensus to respect the uniqueness of each individual in the group should be established and agreed upon by all participants at the beginning of the workshop. This helps group members to build a level of trust and safety with one another.

Acknowledgement of Affinity

Having a difference or disability does not mean we are immune from cultural misconceptions about what it means to live with one, especially if we have had little contact with communities of people with disabilities and differences. We have found that participants who have had little prior engagement with these communities may feel afraid or intimidated by being in a group with other members with difference and disability. To address fear of body difference, we frame our discussions in terms of participants not making judgements—positive or negative—about each others' experiences but validating their own and others' experiences as they, or others, name them.

In terms of her experience within a cross-disability group, one co-facilitator has said:

The most wonderfully enlightening thing I learned was that a cross-disability group was possible. I believe that this was possible, in part, because of the facilitators' acknowledgment of the potential discomfort that a cross-disability group could bring. 'Hierarchy' issues do come up. Yet, there is common understanding and mutual empathy between participants that made them bond as all had been marginalized because of their physical appearance in some way. It is important to acknowledge differences in experiences and feelings but also to emphasize similarities among individuals' experiences. ...Not only do the participants become sensitive to issues of cross-disability but also they learned that their 'community' is greater than they had previously thought. I believe that this awareness will create a stronger base for change in society.

Even if the nature of the physical difference or disability varies, an important aspect of the workshops is to acknowledge affinities that exist across differences in experiences, developing shared understandings of challenges of living with differences and disabilities.

■ Creating a Comfortable and Accommodating Environment

Workshops require planning to accommodate a variety of physical differences and/or disabilities. Through our work with stakeholders with various disabilities, we have learned to accommodate differences in ways that maximize potential for participant participation and growth.

We suggest that you ask participants during the introductory interview and within the workshop what they need to feel physically and emotionally comfortable in order to participate in the group. Paying respectful attention to individuals' needs builds trust among group members that this is a place for them and facilitates participants' abilities to create a comfortable and accommodating space for themselves. We recommend that you plan to incorporate participants' feedback and input into program design and delivery so that your next workshop is even more accessible and accommodating to the group.

Physical Access

The building and room in which the workshop is held must be accessible to all participants, including those who have limited mobility, tire easily, or who use wheelchairs and scooters. This may include a building with elevators with Braille marked buttons for people with visual disabilities, absence of steps, and sufficient hallway and room space to accommodate people who use wheelchairs and scooters.

Doors to the building and washrooms should be power operated. When it is not possible to have automatic doors, ensure the door has a lever handle and is not spring-loaded so that it is easy to swing open and manoeuvre through with a wheelchair, walker, or scooter.

Accessible washrooms are very important and should be a priority consideration in choosing the workshop location. Have one or more if possible, as having only one accessible bathroom may mean line-ups at breaks and lunch. If possible, ensure that the washroom is close by the workshop room.

Flexible seating arrangements with chairs that can be easily moved allow group members to have a choice of where to sit and to sit comfortably together.

Levels of lighting should be considered. For individuals who are blind or low vision, adequate levels of lighting are necessary. Those members who are Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing may need interpreters to sit in their range of vision, away from the glare of windows.

Have a range of options for any printed materials such as large print (not less than 18-point font) or computer disk so that the information is accessible for people with various communication needs.

Access Services: Attendants, Note Takers, and Interpreters

Experienced attendants, interpreters, and/or note takers should be hired to meet group members' needs such as personal care, writing, communication, and other disability-related needs of participants. Attendants, interpreters, and/or note takers do not actively participate in group activities but support group members to participate. Locate access staff who can be trusted to keep discussions confidential. Because experienced people are busy, they should be booked far in advance and their costs included in the workshop budget.

Local Independent Living Resource Centres, Ontario chapters of the Canadian Paraplegic Association, regional chapters of the Ontario March of Dimes, attendant services outreach programs, and services for students with disabilities at colleges and universities will be helpful in finding attendants, interpreters, and note takers. A place to begin to locate interpreters is your regional chapter of the Canadian Hearing Society, which includes the Ontario Interpreter Services.

For other sources of information and access services, consult the Directory of Disability Organizations in Canada. This directory, compiled yearly by the Canadian Abilities Foundation, has a comprehensive listing of organizations in provinces across Canada. (See Appendix C: Resources, for information about this directory).

Timing and Pace of Activities

The energy level of the participants needs to be considered in determining the length of the workshop. From our experience, we have found that this is difficult to predict in advance so that we have had to be flexible within workshops based on participants' feedback. Participants' needs for breaks, refreshments, and bathroom visits should be worked into the workshop schedule.

Participants using augmentative methods of communication may need more time to express themselves. Again, facilitators should raise the issue of respect for participants' different modes of communication at the beginning of the group, and ask group members to agree to accommodate participants' time needs.

Give plenty of time for the group to take their coats off and get settled prior to the workshop. We ask participants to arrange their transportation, if possible, so that they arrive 15 minutes early and can leave after the workshop's conclusion.

Transportation

Ideally, the location of the workshop would be easy to access by car and bus routes, and have availability of parking spaces designated for people with disabilities. Some participants with physical disabilities will use accessible buses, which have set drop off and pick-up times. At the beginning of the session, it is helpful to ask participants about their pick-up times so that the workshop is comfortably completed prior to time that they have to leave so that they are not missing workshop activities. For participants who rely on accessible transportation, the time they arrive or leave the workshop may be out of their control.

Environmental Sensitivities and Allergies

The question of environmental sensitivities and allergies should be raised at the introductory interview and within the group. We request that participants do not wear perfumes or strong scents in consideration of those who have sensitivities and allergies. We also ask that participants let us know if they have any food allergies or special food-related requests.

Confidentiality

Communities of persons with facial differences, physical differences, and/or disabilities are often small even in a large city, in which members might know each other or know of each other. It is important to stress the need for confidentiality from participants. As well, facilitators, attendants, note takers, and interpreters must respect confidentiality of group members.

Costs

Financial accessibility of the workshops for potential participants must be a consideration given that many people with physical differences and/or disabilities often do not have the funds to attend workshops. In planning a workshop, consider securing adequate funding for the workshop through grants, agency budgets, or donations to pay for overhead costs (administrative support, facilitators, program materials, food, attendants, interpreters, room rental, etc.) and budget accordingly.

Involving the Participants

Pre-Group Interviews

Prior to workshops, potential participants are invited to meet with co-facilitators to discuss the purpose and format of the workshop, logistics, and how to prepare for the sessions. Participants are able to ask questions, address any fears or concerns, and clarify expectations. In this way, potential participants can assess their level of comfort and determine whether their participation in the group will be helpful to them at this time.

During introductory interviews, facilitators encourage participants to identify their hopes, desires, or aspirations for the group and discuss what they need to feel comfortable such as needs for access (attendants, interpreters, etc.) and emotional comfort. We ask participants to keep a journal for one week prior to the workshop, and throughout the workshop as a way to increase awareness of their thoughts, feelings, purposes, and responses to social situations they identify as challenging or difficult.

Our workshop facilitators believe the comprehensive screening process allows for participants to connect with at least one of the facilitators prior to the group and facilitates cohesion between the group members. The introductory interview was also used to convey the purpose and process of the workshop and to mutually determine if the group was a right fit for each potential participant. When facilitators and participants mutually decided that the group was not the right choice for them, they were given referrals to individual counsellors or to groups specifically geared to their more pressing issue. One participant commented in her evaluation that “The rapport between participants was exceptional, people were well matched.” Her words reinforce the need to assess adequately participants’ abilities to interact with one another and the degree to which people will be able to participate.

Due to concerns about ‘hierarchies’ of disability and difference within the group, we spend time discussing the make-up of the group with potential participants. Education about issues, commonalties, and differences has been a significant part of the intake strategy. Facilitators believe that this encourages the participation of some participants who might otherwise not participate as freely. The intake process has assisted us in offering a safer and more open space, allowed for an increased level of intimacy, and enabled some participants to become more vocal. The introductory interview guide we used is provided (See Appendix A: Introductory Interview).

Evaluation of the Workshop

At the end of each workshop session, participants are invited to talk about their experiences within the group. Questions are related to group process and group learning. Some questions to facilitate discussion may be the following:

“What has been valuable for you?”

“What has not been helpful for you?”

“What have you learned?”

“Can you compare your self-identified hopes, desires, and aspirations to what has been achieved to this point?”

We have found that allowing participants opportunities to express their needs and interests, and giving facilitators the flexibility to listen to those needs and adapt the workshop accordingly has been highly successful.

In addition to group discussion, we ask the group to fill out anonymous written evaluations of their experience at the workshop conclusion. The evaluation forms we have are included (See Appendix B: Workshop Evaluation Form).

Writing may be difficult or impossible for some participants. In order to promote confidentiality and more meaningful evaluations, attendants rather than facilitators assist participants as needed with completing the evaluations.

Written evaluations may be important for two reasons. First, feedback from participants permits evaluation of what worked well and what needs to be changed or adjusted in future groups. From this, the workshop design and activities can be revised in order to make the workshops more relevant, effective, and meaningful to participants. Second, if the group is funded through public money or grants, evaluations provide information to the funding agency or organization and may justify the need for continued workshops.

Building Bridges Workshop Session Plans

Day 1

Developing Awareness and Identifying Skills

9:30—10:00 a.m. Arrival and Coffee/Refreshments

10:00—10:35 a.m. Welcome

I. Introduction of co-facilitators

Names, interests, some personal disclosure, why you are doing this workshop, etc.

II. Logistics: Washroom, breaks, lunch, smoking, etc.

III. Goals for day one and overview of workshop:

- 1) Providing opportunities to explore thoughts, feelings, intentions, reactions to, and actions in certain social situations
- 2) Review creative and effective ways of dealing with these situations

We will do this through:

- 1) Sharing experiences (voluntary but important for growth and learning) and;
- 2) A variety of activities to keep it interesting while providing opportunities to learn more about ourselves.

IV. Ice Breaker: Introduction of participants

Using the first letter of your name, think of a word that starts with the same letter and is a quality in yourself that you feel good about. (Provide example.)

10:35—11:00 a.m. Group Discussion

Group Rules: What Makes a Successful Group? and Witnessing and Participating in the Group (Activity 1)

11:00—12:00 p.m. Group Activity

Making Stories Using Small Significant Objects (Activity 2)

12:00—12:30 p.m. Individual Exercise followed by Group Discussion

Me Inside and Out I or II (Activity 3 or 4)

12:30—1:15 p.m. **LUNCH**

- 1:15—1:45 p.m. Group Discussion
Our Bodies, Our Selves (Activity 5)
What is body image? How is it developed? What are the connections between body image and self-esteem?
- 1:45—2:30 p.m. Small Group Discussion, followed by Large Group Discussion
Expressing Agency: Our Intentions and the Actions We Take (Activity 6); or
Recreating Situations and Skills: The Tools We Use (Activity 7)
- 2:30—2:45 p.m. **BREAK**
- 2:45—3:30 p.m. Individual Activity
What Are My Preferred Results? (Activity 8)
- 3:30—4:00 p.m. Summary of the Day
I. Closure: How are you feeling? What have you learned?
II. Evaluations: Each participant completes a workshop evaluation form.

Day 2**Redefining Difference: Finding the Power in Being Different**

9:30—10:00 a.m. Arrival and Coffee/Refreshments

10:00—10:30 a.m. Welcome

I. Goals for day two:

- 1) Continued opportunities to explore thoughts, feelings, intentions, reactions to and actions in certain social situations
- 2) Review creative and effective ways of negotiating these situations

II. Check in of day one: How are people feeling? What do you need to enhance your comfort or support your participation in the workshop?

10:45—12:30 p.m. Activity

**Telling Our Stories through Story Circle; or (Activity 9)
Telling Our Stories through Drama (Activity 10)**

12:30—1:15 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:15—2:00 p.m. Group Discussion followed by an Individual Written Activity

**How Would I Know?; or (Activity 11)
Letter to Myself (Activity 12)**

2:00—2:20 p.m. Group Activity

**Where Do We Go From Here? Group Action Plan
(Activity 13)**

2:20—2:35 p.m. **BREAK**

2:35—3:00 p.m. Group Activity

Imagining the Future (Activity 14)

3:00—3:30 p.m. Closure

I. Compare self-identified goals to what has been achieved to this point.

II. Final evaluations: Each participant completes a workshop evaluation form.

Running the Workshop

Activity 1

What Makes A Successful Group?

- Purpose:**
- To introduce the concept of telling our stories
 - To engage the group in sharing their stories with one another in order to establish connections and build group trust
 - To structure group members' responses to each other using a method that supports, validates, and facilitates participants

Format: Group Activity

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, markers, masking tape, and handouts

Method:

Introduction to Group Rules

We are all here for our own reasons. We all have unique life histories, and those histories have helped to form our opinions. Groups offer a chance to share the richness of experiences. We can learn a lot from each other.

Groups work well when members feel comfortable and positive about sharing their thoughts and feelings. During this program, we will talk about many of our experiences, including those that happen during our daily activities. I would like this to be a safe and accepting place where we feel free to share with each other.

Think about any groups you have been a part of—this could be family, peer groups, classes, recreational groups, sports teams, etc. What has been a positive experience for you in a group? Why? What has been a negative experience? Why?

Ask the group to discuss what they feel makes a successful group. Members should come up with and agree upon group rules. On a flip chart, the facilitator would record on a flip chart the group's answers to the following questions:

- *What do you think we need to do to make this a safe place where everyone feels safe to talk about her experiences?*
- *What does a 'safe' place mean to you?*
- *What do you, as an individual, need?*
- *Are there any ways that we as facilitators will know if you are feeling unsafe? What cues can we watch for? What might you say?*

Tape the flip chart pages to the wall for reference and constant exposure.

Here are some ideas and guidelines. Participants should bring these up, but in the event that any are missed, the facilitators could add them.

Attendance and arriving on time. This way, you won't miss anything.

Confidentiality rules! What is said in this room, stays in this room.

Speak from your experience.

It is important to participate in activities and discussions for growth. Try it, you might like it! But remember, you always have the option to pass.

Try to speak one at a time, as this shows respect for others' feelings and experiences. This is important for people who are visually impaired and/or hard of hearing. Also, it is important that everyone has a chance to speak.

Listen with an open heart and open mind. We may all have physical differences, but we likely do not share all the same opinions. It is important that each of us has a chance to be heard and understood.

Each of us can help create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere.

A sense of humour always helps.

Each of us shares responsibility for doing this work and monitoring the ground rules.

Introduction to Witnessing and Participating in the Group

In this group you are given the opportunity to tell stories of your life before witnesses and to witness others telling stories about their lives. Group members will respond to each other's stories with retellings of what they have heard.

When you respond as a witness to what others have said, you do not need to recount the whole of what you heard, but focus on those aspects of the other's experiences that interest you most. The following questions can help to guide your responses:

1. Identify the aspects of their stories that interested you

As you listen to others' stories which aspects caught your attention or your imagination?

What struck a chord for you?

3. Describe the significance of what you heard

What did the person's story suggest to you about his/her values, beliefs, purposes, intentions, hopes, dreams, and desires?

4. Speak from your experiences

What is it about your own life that accounts for why this aspect of the story caught your attention?

Do you have a sense of which aspects of your own experience resonate with this story?

5. Acknowledge your movement

How has listening to this story moved/changed you?

Where has this experience taken you?

How have you changed as a result of listening to this story and responding to it in the way you have?

When introducing the process of group witnessing and participation, facilitators need to be very careful to stress that group members' responses should focus on participants' knowledges, skills, strengths, beliefs, desires, purposes, and intentions in relation to difficult social interactions. Rather than giving emphasis to the problem, this approach stresses the multiple facets of each person that they bring when dealing with challenging situations.

It is not the witnesses' job to give opinions about other people's lives, or to make positive or negative judgements about them. As a witness, your task is to engage with group members in conversations about what you heard and about your responses to what you heard, and link and build on each other's insights. If you want to comment on what others have said, try to focus on their understandings, skills, strengths, values, intentions, beliefs, and hopes in relation to the challenging situation. You may also want to think about what you have learned and/or how you have changed as a result of listening to others' stories.

(Discussion of being a witness adapted from White 2002).

Considerations for Facilitators:

Traditional skills development groups teach people how to enhance their assertiveness in and outside the group. While we began *Building Bridges* groups using this approach, we gradually moved toward a narrative stance that appreciates the inter-relatedness of people's accounts and encourages them to actively engage with each other's story telling. **This approach helps facilitators and participants shift from evaluating each other's stories to allowing ourselves to be affected and moved by them.**

All participants have responsibilities as members of the group. It is important for facilitators to emphasize that participants are invited to comment on group activities and interactions, including what is and is not working for them in the group. For example, one participant might try to speak but is constantly interrupted by another participant who tends to dominate the conversations. This participant might want to discuss her need to express herself. Another participant might want to express his appreciation for others' willingness to listen and respond to his story.

Facilitators generally do not intervene on participants' behalves. However, we have found it useful to revisit the list of rules and guidelines for responding to group members that were agreed upon by the group. If, after going over the rules, changes are not made by the group members themselves, the facilitator intervenes in a very diplomatic way.

Activity 2:

Making Stories Using Small Significant Objects

- Purpose:**
- To introduce the concept of telling our stories
 - To engage the group in sharing their stories with one another in order to establish connections and build group trust

Format: Group Activity

Time: 1 hour

Materials: A personal object of significance that each participant brought with him/her to the workshop

Method:

Significant Object Description

Have the group sit in a circle and in turn, each participant briefly describes the object he or she brought to the group and its significance.

Building a Story

This activity gives people freedom to introduce themselves as they wish, to share as much or as little as they like, and to focus on what is important for them in their lives. Participants tell their 'story' either to the whole group or to a smaller group, emphasizing the significance of the object to themes they want to explore in the workshop. It is a good idea for one facilitator to begin the process, and then facilitate the storytelling around the group until each person has had a chance to talk about him/herself.

Considerations for Facilitators:

Often emotions, tears, and laughter are expressed as individuals discuss their object's significance, which moves personal disclosures beyond a cognitive level. While this exercise facilitates disclosures, participants can choose the level of disclosure with which they are comfortable. This exercise provides a means for participants to quickly gain insight into each other's lives, how they feel about themselves, and their personal values and beliefs.

During the introductory interview, the facilitator asks each participant to bring to the workshop a small personal object, whose significance could be shared with the group.

Activity 3:

Me Inside and Out I

Purpose: • A creative activity for participants to explore body- and self-perceptions. The purpose is to assist participants to gain awareness of their relationships to their bodies and selves and to question socially conventional ideas of what is acceptable and non-acceptable in appearance and ability. This exercise starts establishing, for some people, a new relationship with or new way of seeing and feeling about their bodies.

Format: Individual exercise followed by group discussion and participation

Time: 30 minutes or longer, depending on time constraints

Materials: Handouts of flower drawing, colored pencils or markers

Method:

Give participants a piece of paper with the appropriate image (see flower handout, following) on it. Ask them to write down their name, and at least five things they like or value about their 'inner selves' on the inside of the image. The 'inner' self may refer to qualities, values, interests, intentions, and purposes the person holds. Each of these will need to be explained and examples given before participants are asked to complete the task. For example, facilitators can ask group members:

- What is a personal quality? (A capacity or characteristic unique to you)
What qualities do you possess?
- What is a value? (A principle or quality that you hold as valuable, prized, or esteemed in your relationships, e.g. honesty, kindness)
What values do you possess?
- What is an interest? (Something that captures your attention or engages your curiosity; a concern or passion of yours)
What interests do you have?
- What is an intention and purpose? (Your resolve to act in a certain way, the purposes you want to accomplish or attain, an aim or goal for yourself)
What intentions and/or purposes do you hold?

People construct a sense of self from messages that they receive from others in the diverse social relationships they enter into throughout their lives. One of the ways people with body differences are marginalized in our society is through the negative messages, spoken and unspoken, received in interaction with others. While rejecting looks or critical commentary are common experiences for some partici-

pants, affirming messages and connections are also features of people's relational lives. Sometimes people's connections to their qualities, values, intentions, and purposes can get buried when these are not affirmed in their various relationships. This is why focusing on qualities that people can name and experience as their own is so important.

The second part of the exercise is to ask participants to do the same on the outside of the image, to describe what they like or value about their 'outer' selves. 'Outer' refers to their physical attributes, including aspects of their bodies, clothing choices, and/or any technologies or devices that they use to enhance their abilities. This will also need to be explained before participants complete the task. Let participants know that this will be shared with the larger group.

Post the flowers on an accessible wall. During the workshop, encourage participants to circle, at their leisure (before the workshop begins, at lunch, during breaks), what they like about another person's 'inside' and 'outside', and also add in writing what they have liked about his/her 'inside' and 'outside'. The purpose of inviting the group to write on people's flowers is to have other people acknowledge what they have noticed was attractive and desirable about participants' bodies and selves. This can give wonderful re-enforcement to participants who have shared themselves with the group.

Considerations for Facilitators:

While it may be difficult for some participants to list what they like about themselves on the 'inside,' in our experience, most cannot think of 'outside' physical attributes or aspects of their bodies that they like. Because most participants find it very difficult to list body parts that they like or find attractive, facilitators may need to let participants know that finding this exercise difficult is common and okay. Listing any body parts such as toes, fingertips, or bellies can be part of this exercise. Most participants generally do not mention their physical differences as parts of their bodies that they like.

This exercise makes people aware of their lack of connection with their bodies, their differences, and how they feel about their bodies. For example, participants have said: "I don't usually think of my body, even less about what I like about it. I don't even want to look in the mirror or have photos taken of me." It is extremely important for facilitators to understand that this lack of connection is not a negative or unhealthy response on the part of the individual, but an expression of agency in a world that overvalues bodies and undervalues persons. It is an example of one creative capacity people with body differences may develop to disconnect their sense of self from their sense of body to protect that self from others' intrusive looks, words, and touch.

If you are conducting these workshops with men, beautiful may not be an appropriate word because of its gendered connotations (women are seen as beautiful, and men as handsome in our society). When working with men, try to stay with words

such as 'like' and 'admire'. Rather than a flower, you may want to consider using an alternative image.

Positive Value in Difference and Disability

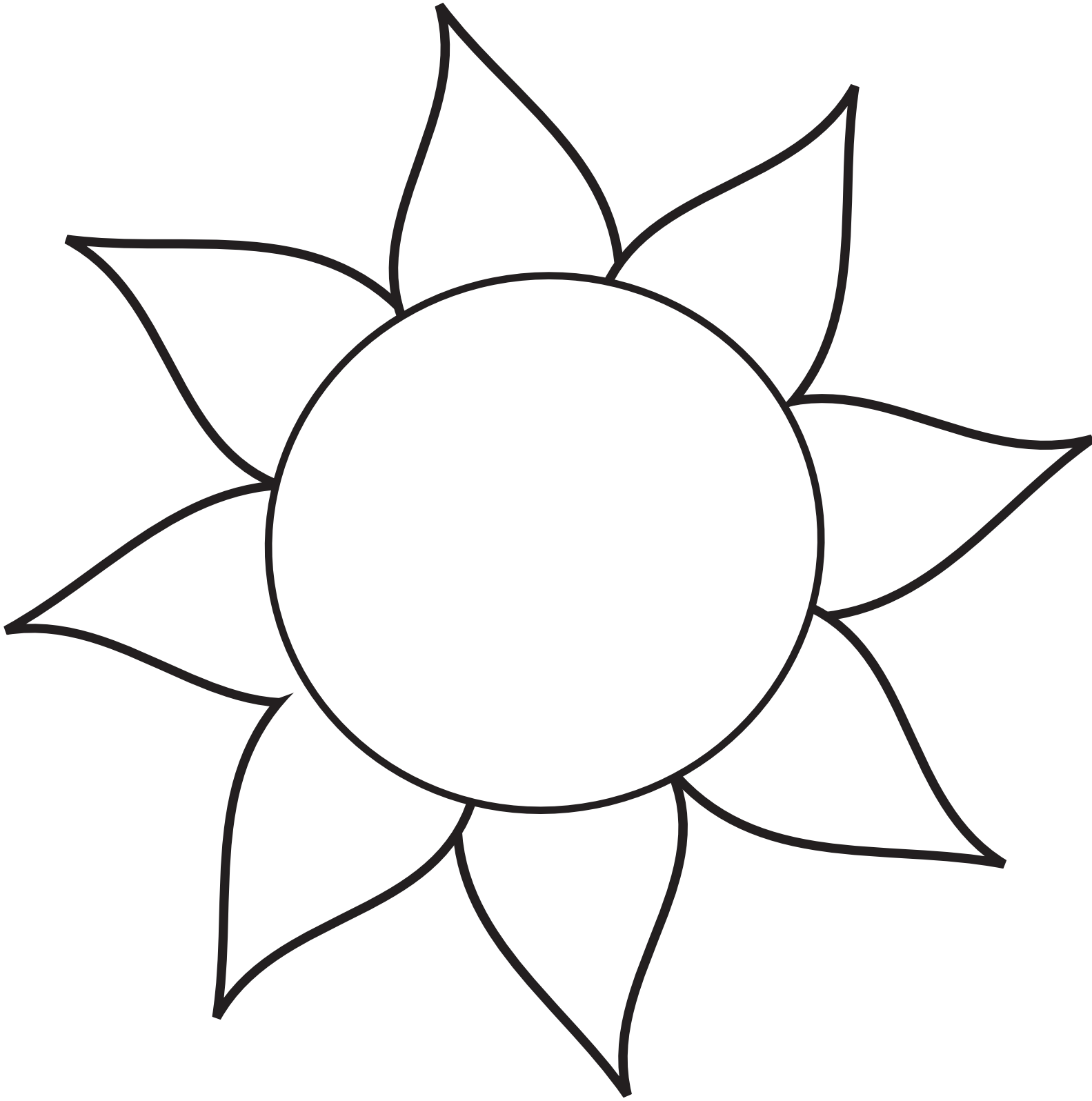
Generally, the concept of liking one's disability or physical difference is introduced gradually and woven through the activities. If this idea is introduced too early or with a group that is not there yet, it can fall flat and you will have lost the opportunity to make the idea resonate among participants. Developing a positive sense of body through one's difference rather than in spite of it could be easily dismissed if the group is not open to hearing it. This is an important reason why facilitation skills and facilitators' insider knowledges of living with a difference and/or disability are so important to the success of the workshop.

The facilitator might ask the question:

"Have you ever thought about difference or disability as attractive or desirable?"

Here the words attractive and desirable do not necessarily mean what is socially accepted as 'attractive' or 'desirable'. For example, when doing this exercise a facilitator who has a facial difference emphasizes that she likes her bottom lip, which is much larger and a different color (burgundy) than her top lip. In this way, new ideas of what is beautiful or desirable can be explored. The goal is not for people achieve this today or to move participants into liking their bodies. It is simply to bring forward for consideration a new idea, a new way for people with differences and disabilities to see our/themselves in the world that we/they can slowly think about.

*Adapted from: Rice, C. and Russell, V. (2002). **Embodying Equity: Body Image as an Equity Issue**, Toronto: Green Dragon Press.*



Activity 4:

Me Inside and Out II

Purpose: • Same as Me Inside and Out I and in addition, to create a visual representation of the discrepancies and congruencies between participants' body and self-perceptions and other people's perceptions of them

Format: Individual Activity

Time: Approximately 1.5 to 2 hours

Materials: Large drawing paper, 1 or 2 pieces for each participant
Variety of art supplies including paint, markers, scissors, feathers, glitter, coloured construction paper, tissue paper, clay, and glue, enough to share in the group

Method:

This exercise can be done in place of or as an extension of Me Inside and Out I. It invites participants to compare and contrast others' perceptions of them with their own views of their bodies and selves.

1. Ask participants to take a large piece of drawing paper and fold it into three parts, creating a double door that opens onto the central or third part of the paper.
2. On the outside of the 'double doors' have them draw a picture, create a word collage or make any symbol that represents how they think others see or perceive them.
3. Next ask them to unfold the 'double doors' and create a representation of how they see or perceive themselves on the center section of the paper.

Review with the group guidelines for "Witnessing and Participating in the Group".

Witnessing and Participating in the Group

In this group you are given the opportunity to talk about your art before witnesses and to view others' creations. The following questions can help to guide your responses:

1. Identify the aspects of their art that interest you

As you view and listen to others' talk about their art, what caught your attention or your imagination?

What struck a chord with you?

2. Describe the significance of what you heard

What did the person's description of his/her art making suggest to you about his/her values, beliefs, intentions, purposes, hopes, dreams, and desires?

3. Speak from your experiences

What is it about your own life that accounts for why this aspect of their art caught your attention?

Do you have a sense of which aspects of your own experience resonate with theirs?

4. Acknowledge your movement

How has viewing their artwork and/or listening to them talk about it moved/changed you?

Where has this taken you?

How have you changed as a result of witnessing their expressions?

It is not your job to give opinions or to make positive or negative judgements about other people's artwork. As a witness, your task is to engage with others about what you have heard and seen, and link and build on each other's expressions. It is important to remember that your responses should not focus on the artwork itself but on group members' understandings, knowledges, insights, values, intentions, and hopes that they identify in talking about their art making. You might also want to reflect on what you have learned and/or how you have shifted as a result of viewing others' artwork and listening to them talk about creative expression.

(Discussion of being a witness adapted from White 2002).

Consideration for Facilitators:

Facilitators should use their judgement when they are explaining this art activity to the group. Overly detailed explanations might shape and direct participants' creative responses and too-brief instructions may leave participants feeling uncertain about their ability to complete the exercise. We recommend that facilitators practice all activities before doing them with a group.

In the large group, ask those participants who are comfortable with sharing to talk about their artwork. It is extremely important that you structure group members' responses to each other's creative expression. When doing artistic activities, it is important to remember that no judgement—positive or negative—should be placed on the art created. For, example, we do not use words like beautiful, good, or nice to describe works. Instead, participants and facilitators should be encouraged to use phrases like "your piece makes me feel..." or "your piece reminds me of..."

Expressing Identity through Appearance

When doing this exercise, some participants may interpret the 'outside' as others' perceptions of them and the 'inside' as their authentic selves. Alternately, participants may interpret the 'outside' as their bodily selves as perceived by others and

the ‘inside’ as their bodily selves as perceived by them. Both interpretations enrich the group’s deepening understanding of the relationship between body image and identity. Through presenting their own and witnessing the group’s artwork, participants recognize that others make assumptions about who people are based on how they look and that people create views of their bodily selves that both conform to and resist others’ stereotypes.

Help presenters to focus on any discrepancies between the outside and the inside of their piece that emerge, and where they think the differences originate. For example, they may secretly aspire to being or see themselves as a risk taker while other people may perceive them as being a ‘good girl.’ Explore why this may be so.

“Where does the idea that they are or should be a ‘good girl’ come from?”

“When are you told you are or should be a ‘good girl’, and what does this do to other self-views, aspirations, or desires that you may hold?”

People with body differences are often constrained in their efforts to express themselves through their appearance. For many participants, there may be a discrepancy between ‘the self’ they experience internally and ‘the self’ others perceive based on our culture’s body stereotypes. If you find participants expressing this constraint, to deepen the discussion you may want to ask:

“If there is one quality, desire, value, or purpose that you wanted people to perceive about you when they first interact with you, what would it be?”

“What do you think would enable you to project that quality, desire, value, or purpose into the world?”

*Adapted from: Rice, C. and Russell, V. (2002).
Embodying Equity: Body Image as an Equity Issue. Toronto: Green Dragon Press.*

Activity 5

Our Bodies, Our Selves

Purpose: • To identify where and how body image is formed. This can help participants recognize the messages they have received about their bodies while growing up and/or in their current daily lives. These messages are social ideas of how others may have perceived them, which participants may have internalized as their own.

Format: Group Discussion

Time: Approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on time constraints

Materials: Flip chart and markers

Method:

A key aspect of the *Building Bridges* workshop experience is the cultivation of a positive identity, not in spite of difference and disability, but partly because of body difference and disability. This exercise begins the discussion of incorporating one's bodily difference into one's positive sense of identity.

Activity Introduction

Discuss the inter-relatedness of how we see ourselves, and how we think others see us, and how this may play itself out. How we see ourselves—our body and self image—affects how we interact with others. Facilitators can begin this exercise by questioning: How do we see ourselves? How do we think others see us? How do the appraisals of others affect my own self-appraisal?

Let's start with a look at body and self-image.

Group Discussion

Ask the group the following questions and record answers on flip chart:

- What is body image?
- Where do we get messages about our bodies?
- What did you learn about your body?
- How has that been reinforced?
- How may these affect us?

Summarize with group from written notes on flip chart:

What is body image?

Body image is defined as the mental picture an individual has of her/his body, and her/his feelings about that picture. It includes your perceptions of your body, what

others have told you about your body, and how you feel about your body. Body image influences self-image—our sense of who we are. Body image is not static. It is developed through interactions with others and changes during our lives.

How is body image developed?

Body image is shaped over time by different factors including:

How others react to your body and appearance.

What messages did you receive about your body and appearance while growing up?

What did people say about your body and appearance?

What kinds of non-verbal messages did you receive?

How do others respond to your appearance now?

How you learn to feel about your body.

What most affected your body image as a child or youth?

Was your body only seen as a problem, something that needed to be fixed?

How do you think things that happened to you impacted on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours?

What happens to your body during your lifetime.

Was your body treated with respect while you were growing up?

Did you have opportunities to make decisions about what happened to your body?

How the culture values or devalues our appearances, physical differences, and disabilities.

What are the connections between body image and self-esteem?

The way you see yourself—your body image—affects how you feel about yourself. The face, in particular, is significant because it is the centre of communication (Cole, 1998), and closely aligned to ideas about who we are. Group discussion of the relationship between perceptions of body and perceptions of self can be guided by the following questions:

What do you see when looking at yourself?

Do you focus on the physical aspects that you think need to be changed?

Do you feel comfortable with what you see? What traits do you like?

Do you consider other things about yourself, in addition to your physical self?

What are your skills and abilities? What are your relationships like?

How much time do you spend thinking about what effect your appearance has on others?

How do you think your appearance affects your interactions with others?

Does appearance affect people who have low vision or are blind? How?

What role does your face or disability play? Are you thinking about it?

How much time do you spend thinking about what effect your appearance has on others? How do you think others see you?

While numerous, the questions outlined above are intended as examples only and are *not* meant to be a facilitator's script. They are given to assist facilitators in helping group members to access what they know about experiences influencing the formation of their body image and the effects of body image on their sense of themselves.

Consideration for Facilitators:

This exercise assists participants to talk about the stereotypes and assumptions that may have been or may be projected onto them in their daily encounters with others and the ways they may have been marginalized by the dominant view of themselves as different. In this activity, participants can begin to question cultural perceptions about appearance and ability and cultivate new views of their difference. Realization may occur within the setting of the workshop and have less than a constant presence in an individual's life afterwards. Alternately, the workshop may begin a process of moving toward seeing disability or difference as something positive and integrating this view of their body into identity.

*Adapted from: Rice, C. and Russell, V. (2002).
Embodying Equity: Body Image as an Equity Issue. Toronto: Green Dragon Press.*

Activity 6

Expressing Agency: Our Intentions and The Actions We Take

Purpose: • To remind participants of their abilities to make choices and take action

Format: Group Discussion

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Journals, flip chart, markers

Method:

Activity Introduction

Ask group members to think about a situation in their everyday lives that they find difficult. Break the group into dyads to discuss or ask group members to journal individually about these experiences and how they have handled them. Participants should be invited to record all responses they have to challenging situations without judging or censoring their list. Ask them to consider finishing the following statements:

- Things I do to deal with hurtful situations are...
- One thing I do to take care of myself when things happen that are hurtful is...
- One thing I do to feel better about my body/self is...

People's responses are often unrecognized strategies they use to handle difficult situations. When participants come back to the large group, ask them to brainstorm the strategies that they have used and evaluate, for themselves, possible negative and positive effects of the strategies. As each person identifies a strategy, record his or her answers on a flip chart.

Some examples have been:

Getting angry, withdrawing from the situation, punishing yourself by misusing drugs or alcohol, not sleeping or eating, bingeing, isolating yourself, or placing yourself self in a risky situation.

Focusing on what you like about yourself and your body.

Examples: Everyday, doing one small thing for yourself; Carrying a special saying; Finding ways to encourage yourself; Saying no just once.

Finding positive images and putting them where you can see them often.

Valuing yourself for who you are—the traits and values you know that you possess.

Taking time to reflect on what having a 'difference' has meant in your life.

Facilitators can lead the following discussion on agency with participants. Introduce the idea of agency in the large group. Ask participants:

- What is a person's agency?
(The capacity to recognize choices; discover your perspectives, values, and intentions; the ability to impact on others; and/or the capacity to act in the world)
- What experiences/contexts/messages diminish a person's sense of personal self-agency?
- What experiences/contexts/messages foster a person's sense of personal self-agency?
- What internal resources can you call upon to increase your sense of agency in the difficult situation you describe?
- What external resources can you call upon to increase your sense of agency in the difficult situation you describe?

Expressing agency is a process. New or unexpected situations will arise which require re-appraisal, thinking through our responses, values, and purposes, and strategizing which actions to take. Agency involves mobilizing resources, both internal (thinking it through, affirming our perspectives and/or actions, modifying our responses) and external (enlisting the help of others, using social supports, and/or gaining institutional/organizational support).

Reinforce that participants have power within their lives, including the power to define themselves as opposed to letting others define them. They might not have power over the ways others may perceive them, but they have the power to choose how to act.

Considerations for Facilitators:

This exercise is about understanding choices we can make within our daily lives to move towards feeling more positively about our bodies and selves. For some participants, this exercise may reinforce the actions they already take and for others, it might assist in developing strategies that they identify as positive for themselves.

Sometimes participants will develop strategies to increase their agency that are physically or psychologically harmful. For example, starving oneself to deal with negative weight commentary is a strategy that increases a person's personal sense of agency but is obviously harmful. Moreover, while retreat or withdrawal from social interactions may be an effective strategy for avoiding negative looks, comments, or unwanted touch, it can also lead to a sense of isolation and depression. Facilitators must strike a delicate balance between affirming the value of people's active responses to others' negative perceptions, and helping them look at the effects of these strategies—positive and negative—in their emotional and relational lives.

Activity 7

Recreating Situations and Skills: The Tools We Use

- Purpose:**
- To acknowledge different perspectives of people within social interactions
 - To discuss and expand choices as an effective way of creating positive social interactions

Format: Discussion in pairs, followed by a large group discussion

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Flip chart, markers

Methods:

Activity Introduction

People we interact with may have expectations and assumptions about people with facial and physical differences and/or disabilities, or may be unsure of how to act. Each of us interprets others' responses during social interactions. These thoughts, combined with our own self-regard, then influence our actions.

The way others treat us is, in some measure, a reflection of our expectations and treatment of them. What we say or do can affect how the other person will respond. Our efforts to create a positive interaction can result in positive feedback. Of course, this is not always the case. We know people's abilities to shape the outcome of social encounters are not entirely within their control. Yet, while their efforts may be met with negative responses from others, they have often acquired significant knowledge and skills to handle challenging situations.

The following are some questions for the group to consider in thinking about how they handle difficult situations:

"What do you say or do in social encounters?"

"How does the other person respond?"

"What is the end result?"

"What result do you want to achieve?"

"How do you think others should be treated? What values do you bring to interactions?"

"What do your efforts say about your values and intentions towards others?"

"How are your efforts in interactions consistent with your view of yourself?"

When discussing these questions, it is important for facilitators to acknowledge that participants' have the power to influence but not determine the outcome of social situations. Facilitators can invite participants to reflect on the values they might bring to difficult interactions and think about how they want to conduct themselves

in these situations. This shifts the facilitator's goal from encouraging participants to take responsibility for other peoples' perceptions and responses to supporting them in reflecting on their own ethics and actions in situations.

Divide the group into pairs.

Small group discussions about social interactions (in pairs):

- What do you think the other person might be thinking or feeling? How does that impact on how that person responds to you? What is happening?
- What are you thinking and feeling?
- What results do you want to achieve?
- How can you make a difference in social interactions? What have you done?
- What's been working? Why do you think it has been working for you?

Reconvene together as a group to report back to share ideas.

Large group discussion (record answers on flip chart):

- Do you see any patterns in people's experiences?
- What are the similarities and differences?
- What insights or surprises can you share?
- What can you learn from these experiences?

These questions are designed to amplify group members' knowledges and skills in social situations. Communication skills such as listening (taking an interest), using humour, putting others at ease, withdrawing, changing the subject, and expressing anger are all examples of their actions and agency in interactions. If group does not address different levels of communication and interpersonal expression, add: body language and non-verbal communication such as facial expression, eye contact, handshake, voice tone, posture, touch, body contact, and spatial movement.

Group Discussion about Problem-solving in Social Interactions

New situations will always arise. Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, values, intentions, and actions.

Problem solving skills we use in social situations often involve these four steps:

1. Assessing the situation:
 - What is happening and why? With whom?
 - How do I feel?
 - What do I want in this situation?
2. Imagining the other person's point of view:
 - What might that other person be thinking?
 - What are they feeling?
 - What are their intentions?

3. Discovering my point of view:
 - What values do I bring to this situation?
 - What are my intentions towards others and myself in this situation?
4. Having a plan and acting on it:
 - What are my options in this situation?
 - What is the best response in this situation?
5. Reflections on the interaction:
 - How am I feeling now?
 - Did that work well for me?
 - What about it worked for me?
 - How did my response support my purposes and values in interpersonal relationships?
 - How can I take this knowledge into my life?

Having knowledge of the skills you may already possess to handle difficult situations can assist you in dealing with negative responses. Recognizing your intentions toward others and the values you bring to interpersonal interactions can also help. Having a plan of what you want to say or do in a challenging situation can make it easier for you negotiate it. This cycle of reflection and learning continues until

- knowledge and skills you already use become more known to you, and
- you have opportunity to try out new strategies in interactions.

Adpted from: Lister, I. (1996). *The Psychology of Facial Disfigurement: A Guide for Health Professionals. Facing the Future*. London, England: Changing Faces.

White, M. (October 18-25, 2002). *Intensive Training in Narrative Therapy*. Brief Therapy Training Centres, Gail Appel Institute. Toronto, Ontario.

Activity 8

What are My Preferred Results?

- Purpose:**
- To identify social situations that participants find challenging
 - To work towards and identify problem-solving skills, unique results, and possible solutions that work within participants' daily lives
 - To identify values, purposes, and intentions participants' hold that may help them maintain a sense of self through difficult encounters

Format: Individual Activity

Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Materials: Preferred results form (following) and pens

Method:

Ask participants to think about and record their answers to these questions

- What are two social situations that I find difficult or challenging?
Facilitators should help participants identify two concrete social situations that they personally have found difficult or challenging, preferably in the recent past, the present, or one that they anticipate in the near future.
- What are the effects of these situations in my life?
These could include the effects of situations on relationships with one's body, self, and others; family, sexuality, and work life; as well as the person's hopes, dreams, choices, and future possibilities.
- What are my preferred results for these situations? How will I know when I have reached my preferred results? What will be different?
These could include each person's hopes, desires, wishes, aspirations, and longings for the situation. Use the preferred results form that is included in this manual. Participants can use this sheet to explain in more detail what forces (internal and external) might impede and/or support them in their attempts to attain their preferred results and describe how they will know if their result has been reached.
- What values do I bring to these situations that support my actions regardless of the outcome?
These include the ethics and values people use to guide them in their interactions with others. This question invites participants to think about maintaining their intentions and sense of self in the situation despite others' responses to them.

Participants are asked to keep this paper as a reminder of what they are working on, and as a way of acknowledging their insights. The preferred results identified will be worked upon throughout the duration of the workshop.

Co-facilitators circulate and review preferred results forms with participants. If there is time, have the group share their preferred results and why they chose them.

Considerations for Facilitators:

The *Building Bridges Project* does not stress people becoming more assertive in their social interactions as the major strategy for reaching their preferred results. This goal does not provide opportunity for group members' voices, desires, and aspirations to be heard, or the stories of oppression and marginalization that often frustrate people's attempts to reach their desired/hoped for outcomes. Dominant stories of problems and solutions do not take into account inequalities in people's lives. It is important for facilitators to recognize and work with, in an explicit way, the real social constraints that undermine people while strengthening and affirming their preferred accounts of themselves.

Adapted from: Lister, I. (1996). *The Psychology of Facial Disfigurement: A Guide for Health Professionals*. Facing the Future. London, England: Changing Faces.

White, M. (October 18-25, 2002). *Intensive Training in Narrative Therapy*. Brief Therapy Training Centres, Gail Appel Institute. Toronto, Ontario.

What is my Preferred Result?

1. _____

EFFECTS

PREFERRED RESULTS

VALUES

What is my Preferred Result?

2. _____

EFFECTS

PREFERRED RESULTS

VALUES

Activity 9

Telling Our Stories through Story Circle

- Purpose:**
- To develop our knowledge and understanding of situations we currently find challenging or difficult
 - To use story telling as a way to problem-solve, that is, discovering and remembering together ways of dealing with these situations
 - To create key lessons from the collection of stories and plan actions based on our discoveries and insights

Format: Individual story writing, story circle and reflection, followed by group dialogue

Time: 1.5 to 2 hours: 5 minutes for exercise intro; 5 minutes to develop story; 10 minutes for each person to share their story in a circle; and 30 minutes to dialogue about our reflections together

Materials: Paper and pens, flip chart, and markers

Methods:

Activity Introduction

Each participant will develop a story, and in the story circle, each person will take turns sharing their story out loud while everyone listens and silently takes time to note their reflections on paper provided. Then the group discusses their reflections on the stories together. Participants may wish to build a story from one situation they identified in the preferred results exercise.

Guidelines for Telling Our Stories

Participants can make notes on paper if this helps.

The story is about what you did in a challenging or stressful social situation and how events unfolded from your point of view. Write or tell the story from *your own experience*, from the point of 'I' or 'we', rather than 'he', 'she' or 'they'.

Stories should include (write on flip chart):

When and where did the event take place?

What was happening?

Who was involved?

What did you do?

What did you think or feel at the start of the interaction?

What was happening inside? (Thoughts, feelings, body reactions, intentions, desires)

What do you think was happening with the other person?

What did they do?
 How did you decide to act as you did?
 What worked well and what was difficult?
 How did you and others relate to one another?
 How did it end?

Guidelines for the Story Circle

One at a time, participants share their stories. They can read their stories or use notes as an aid to expand upon it as they go along. If the group is large and there is more than one facilitator, break up the group into smaller groups for the story circle.

Review guidelines before proceeding:

People speak one at a time.
 We give our full attention to the person speaking.
 There is no response or dialogue between people until everyone in the group has spoken.
 People can pass on speaking.
 Speakers show respect by leaving time available for others to speak.

Reflecting on the Story We Just Heard (individual activity)

Each individual story is followed by a few moments of silent reflection on the following questions (refer to witnessing and participating in a group):

1. Identifying the aspects of their stories that interested you

As you listened to others' stories, which aspects caught your attention or your imagination?
 What struck a chord with you?

2. Describing the significance of what you heard

What did the person's story suggest to you about his/her values, beliefs, purposes, intentions, hopes, dreams, and desires?

3. Speaking from your experiences

What is it about your own life that accounts for why this aspect of the story caught your attention or struck a chord with you?
 Do you have a sense of which aspects of your own experiences resonate with this story?

4. Acknowledging your movement

How has listening to this story moved you?
 Where has this experience taken you?
 How have you changed as a result of hearing this story and responding to it in the way you have?

When you are thinking about what you witnessed, try not to focus your responses on the negative interaction itself but on group members' understandings, skills, strengths, values, intentions, and hopes in relation to the difficult situation. Also, reflect on what you have learned and/or how you have shifted as a result of listening to them.

Group Dialogue

Structured dialogue questions (put on flip chart):

- Did you connect with the story? If so, how?
- What do you see happening here?
- Why do you think it happens?
- How are these stories different from, or similar to, your own experience?
- What did you learn from this story?

Create key lessons from the collection of stories and plan new actions based on insights. Write each key lesson and actions on flip chart:

- What have we learned from our own experiences or the experiences of others?
- How can we acknowledge our skills in future interactions?
- How has your thinking changed through this process?
- What remains confusing, difficult, or challenging?
- What, if anything, would you do differently? What would you need to help you do it differently? What can we do about it?
- So where do we go from here?

Adapted from: LaBonte, R. and Feather, J. (1996). *Handbook on Using Stories in Health Promotion Practice*. Ottawa: Health Promotion and Development Division, Health Canada.

White, M. (October 18-25, 2002). *Intensive Training in Narrative Therapy*. Brief Therapy Training Centres, Gail Appel Institute. Toronto, Ontario.

Activity 10

Telling Our Stories through Drama

- Purpose:**
- To assist participants to identify social interactions they find or have found difficult or challenging
 - To develop self-awareness by providing opportunities to explore thoughts, feelings, values, aspirations, intentions, and actions within social interactions
 - Identify strategies and generate new possibilities to deal with social situations

Format: Act out 'real life' situations in pairs followed by group discussion

Time: 1.5 to 2 hours

Materials: Flip chart and markers

Methods:

Activity Introduction

One of the best ways to learn how to handle a situation is to act it out. Drama is one way of trying out different approaches and actions in difficult situations. You may even try taking on the role of the other person in the interaction. Drama allows us to be honest about situations we find difficult or challenging, to explore strategies for action, and to reflect on possible outcomes. Affirming our skills in navigating interactions and learning new ways of interacting by 'pretending' may feel unnatural at first, but over time, the newly remembered or discovered skills will feel comfortable and authentic.

Drama Guidelines

Each story is acted out in the pairs while the others in the group watch and listen. By not having the group involved while each drama is being played out, the group does not focus on one person's story nor become involved in providing unsolicited advice. Facilitators and other group members can help participants build their roles with questions, suggestions, and prompts. It is important for facilitators to convey their support for the ways participants can and do act out their scenarios—through participants' speech, body and/or facial movement, gestures, or any other form of interpersonal expression and communication.

The drama is designed in four steps. Practice (in pairs) for presentation to the group using the following guidelines.

1. Identify the situation you find challenging and would like to understand better.

In pairs, participants are asked to develop a story based on challenging social interactions they have had. Both participants discuss self-identified situations they want to work on and develop scripts using common elements. (Participants may wish to build a story from one situation they identified in the preferred results exercise.) They clarify what is happening, generate possible solutions, anticipate consequences of each solution, and decide on the best approach for themselves. The story is told from the points of view of the 'storytellers'.

2. Set the scene for the drama.

When and where is it taking place?

What are the details?

Make it as similar to a real situation as possible.

3. Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, reactions, aspirations, purposes, and responses in this situation. Within the drama, both participants verbalize their 'internal' dialogue that she or he is experiencing or may have experienced at the time and the actions taken in the social interaction. Reinforce that people's thoughts, feelings, reactions, responses, and intentions in the situation are all expressions of agency as are any subsequent actions they make.

4. Generate possible scenarios and responses. Anticipate the consequences of each and decide on the best approach for you.

What would you say? What skills would you use?

Imagine yourself as you would like to act.

Group Dialogue

Each drama is followed with group discussion involving reflection on the story just heard. Review the guidelines for responding from "Witnessing and Participating in the Group" (from "What Makes A Successful Group?" and below). Also review links between thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions.

Witnessing and Participating in the Group

When you respond as an audience member to the drama, you do not need to recount the whole of what you heard or saw, but focus on those aspects of the other's stories that interest you most. The following questions can help to guide your responses:

1. Identify the aspects of their drama that interested you

As you listen and watch, which aspects caught your attention or your imagination?

What struck a chord with you?

2. Describe the significance of what you heard

What did the person's drama suggest to you about his/her values, beliefs, hopes, intentions, purposes, dreams, and desires?

3. Speak from your experiences

What is it about your own life that accounts for why this aspect of the drama caught your attention?

Do you have a sense of which aspects of your own experience resonates with this drama?

4. Acknowledge your movement

How has listening to and watching this drama changed you?

Where has this experience taken you?

How have you changed as a result of watching this story and responding to it in the way you have?

It is not your job as an audience member to give opinions about or to make positive or negative judgements about other people's lives. As an audience member, your task is to engage with others in conversations about what you heard and saw, and about your responses to what you witnessed, and to link and build on each other's insights. Try to focus your responses on how group members' dramatized their understandings, skills, values, beliefs, desires, intentions, and hopes in the difficult situation. Also, reflect on what you have learned and/or how you have shifted as a result of witnessing their story.

(Discussion adapted from White, 2002).

Actions and responses should be presented and discussed. End the activity with group dialogue about what emerged from each drama focusing on identifying common themes across the dramas and what participants and facilitators learned.

To elicit more information and to draw stories out, questions may be posed such as:

"Have you been in a situation like this? How did you respond?"

How would you respond in a similar situation? What happened then?"

"When hasn't this been a problem? What was different? What worked then?"

"What continues to work for you now?"

"Do you see any patterns in the experiences of people in this room?"

What are the similarities and differences?"

"What worked? What could be done differently?"

To ensure participants do not feel judged or blamed for their responses, it is extremely important for facilitators to acknowledge that people's responses were borne of their life experiences and appraisal of the situation at the time the story took place, and should be recognized as such.

Considerations for Facilitators:

Drama allows participants to tell their stories to the group, reflect on the interactions, and to share solutions and strategize actions together as a group. They serve as a catalyst for in-depth discussions about the realities that participants face in

their daily lives as well as the creative expressions of agency that people are often unaware that they use. Many people may not have shared their life situations and challenges with others like this before. We have found that this exercise creates a greater bond among participants by giving them a way to share thoughts and feelings with others who listen and understand.

Through examining the drama, participants assist others in the group to question their feelings, thoughts, intentions, and actions and to examine the context in which their actions take place. Participants' creative responses in difficult situations are noted and amplified through drama and discussion, and participants remember and affirm strategies they use to negotiate challenging encounters.

Reflection on interactions in a group context helps individuals to trace the effects of their strategies for managing intrusive looks and comments, and identify their current and alternative options. For example, participants who have said that they felt it was important to educate and smile when strangers asked them personal questions, later remembered and expressed their anger, frustration, and right to ignore the person or to answer in a way that felt more empowering to them.

Adapted from: Lister, I. (1996). *The Psychology of Facial Disfigurement: A Guide for Health Professionals*. Facing the Future. London, England: Changing Faces.

White, M. (October 18-25, 2002). *Intensive Training in Narrative Therapy*. Brief Therapy Training Centres, Gail Appel Institute. Toronto, Ontario.

Activity 11

How Would I Know?

Purpose: • To acknowledge participants' challenges and emphasize the strengths and skills they have generated over the course of their lives that have assisted them in navigating difficult situations

Format: Group discussion followed by an individual written activity

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens, and envelopes and stamps if doing the additional activity, Activity 12, "A Letter to Myself"

Method:

Group Discussion: How Would I Know?

Start with a short discussion that addresses the following questions (written on flip chart):

- When in your life have you felt good about yourself? How do you maintain that feeling? How can you get that feeling back?
- What values, qualities, purposes, commitments, connections, desires, and/or aspirations do you hold that help you maintain a sense of self and/or move toward your preferred results in social situations?
- What actions can you take to move in the direction that you want to go? What are you already doing to make this happen?
- What have you learned? What knowledge and skills do you hold that supports you in your preferred results?
- What remains confusing, challenging, or difficult? How can you handle this?
- How would people in your life know about the skills and knowledges that you possess? How would they acknowledge these?
- What will happen in your life if you are able to maintain awareness of these knowledges and skills?

Follow up to questions for participants:

Place yourself in at least two of the social situations that you want to work on; apply your newly discovered or remembered strategies. Using the journal pages (at the end of the manual), record social interactions, in keeping with your knowledges and skills, during your daily life. Note feelings, thoughts, intentions, and actions.

Questions adapted from: Metcalf, L. (1998). Solution Focused Group Therapy. Simon & Schuster, New York.

Activity 12

Letter to Myself

Purpose: • To acknowledge participants' challenges and emphasize the strengths and skills they have generated over the course of their lives that have assisted them in dealing with difficult situations

Format: Individual activity

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Paper, envelopes, pens, and stamps

Methods:

Activity Introduction

This is a creative expression exercise in which participants write letters to themselves.

Write a short letter to yourself with the insights gained through participation in this workshop. What have you learned about your intentions, values, desires, and aspirations in this workshop? What have you learned about the expertise and skills that you and/or others in the workshop use to deal with difficult situations in your daily lives? How can you carry these knowledges with you as you move into the larger world? Make a promise to yourself to follow through.

Facilitators mail the letters to each participant two weeks later. To ensure confidentiality, ask them to seal the envelope and to write their name and address on the front. Tell participants that, in two weeks, the facilitators will mail these letters.

Considerations for Facilitators:

In the *Building Bridges* workshops, the facilitators also write letters to each participant and enclose them, along with participants' letters, when they are mailed. We write to acknowledge participants' challenges and emphasize how their skills and strengths help them. We keep copies of our letters to participants for evaluations/reports.

For more information on letter writing see: White, M. and Epston, D. (1989). Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Activity 13

Where Do We Go From Here? Group Action Plan

- Purpose:**
- To continue the work that participants have undertaken in the workshop, and develop plans for continued contact at the conclusion of workshop
 - To create a sense of community extending beyond the duration of the workshop

Format: A written activity in pairs followed by group discussion

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

Methods:

Provide participants with a piece of paper divided in half, with each half having two sections or columns.

Ask participants to, in pairs, brainstorm some collective ideas for change. Write down two future possibilities for the group, one in each half of the piece of paper. Participants may need help to focus on group goals (staying in touch through e-mail or telephone, planning a reunion).

Under each goal, write down two steps you can take that will help reach these goals. Write these steps in the first column.

In the second column, beside each of the two steps, write down the resources or support needed to do each step.

Facilitators should ask participants to share their collective goals for the group. If possible, your role could be to provide support and advocacy for participants to carry through their action plan.

Considerations for Facilitators:

We have found that at the conclusion of the workshop, some participants express a desire to continue with the work that they undertook in the workshop, to maintain social contact with other group members, or to develop plans for continued contact at the conclusion of workshop. Yet one of the gaps identified by *Building Bridges* participants is the lack of opportunity to maintain connection following participation in *Building Bridges* workshops without the active participation of project coordinators and/or facilitators.

If the group is interested (but should not be pressured to do so), a conversation about future contact could be initiated by group members and supported by the facilitator. We have found that many participants have chosen to share phone numbers with one another to maintain on-going contact. Some group members have explored ways to contribute to their communities through focused activities.

At the request of participants, we also have conducted a second workshop in various regions, which included previous group members as well as new members. Between the first workshop and follow-up workshop, we have found that many participants do continue to work toward the preferred results they identified in the first workshop or have developed new ones. Some of the areas we have explored relate to what participants have been doing, what has changed, what hasn't changed, what was better for them, and what have they discovered that worked well.

*Adapted from: Rice, C. and Russell, V. (2002).
Embodying Equity: Body Image as an Equity Issue. Toronto: Green Dragon Press.*

Activity 14:

Imagining the Future

Purpose: • An activity to bring closure and a sense of community

Format: Group Activity

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Paper, pens

Methods:

Activity Introduction

Imagine that the group has come together again in one year. This is a way to look into that future and describe how things have changed for us and how we have incorporated the knowledge and skills identified and affirmed in this workshop in our daily lives.

Each person is asked to write their name on the top of a page and pass it to the person on their left.

That person then writes the answer to the first question (see questions below) as it applies to the person whose name is on the paper. Then she or he passes it to the next person, who writes the answer to the second question again about the person whose name is on the paper. This continues around the group until all the questions are answered about each person in the group. You will need one or two more questions than there are participants depending on the number of facilitators answering questions.

1. What qualities, values, intentions, and purposes have helped this person get through hard times in the last year?
2. What do others admire in this person?
3. What is this person doing now?
4. What makes that such a great choice for this person?
5. What is one thing you learned from this person?
6. What knowledge and skills does this person put into practice?
7. What is this person's best memory of this group?
8. What is one thing you wished you had told this person?
9. What is this person's next positive step going to be?

Share what was written with the group.

Adapted from: Fiske, H. (1999). Workshop in Solution-Focused Counselling. Office of Advanced Professional Education Certificate Program in Solution-Focused Counselling, University of Toronto. Toronto, Ontario.

After the Workshop

Facilitator Involvement

After the workshop, it is important for facilitators to de-brief the group process and to review participants' evaluations to gain valuable information about the planning of future workshops. For *Building Bridges* facilitators, de-briefing has involved discussing together their role in supporting, validating, and facilitating participants' positive sense of body and identity. In de-briefing sessions, facilitators have discussed the challenges and rewards involved in assisting participants to uncover and expand their own perspectives on their bodies, selves, and lives that may differ in significant ways from the view given by the larger culture. Facilitators have also shared their thoughts and feelings about the significance of witnessing and participating in participants' discoveries, insights, and accomplishments.

Participant Involvement

A few participants have joined our program throughout the years to become staff members, facilitators, committee members, regional coordinators, and consultants. Many network and partner with other organizations, bringing their knowledge and skills to the programs and forums. The inclusion in our program of people with lived experience of physical differences and/or disabilities, on various levels and in various regions throughout the project, has been an essential component. This enhances our program so that the workshops are more relevant and inclusive within communities.

One of the goals of our project has been to create a sense of community and to reduce the sense of isolation and marginalization that many people experience. We feel that follow-up in the form of check-ins, re-unions, and workshops have enabled participants to re-visit their original hopes, desires, and aspirations, reflect on recent developments in their lives, and acknowledge their accomplishments. Although group members speak about continued struggles, some were also able to reframe their challenges more positively and collectively support each other to celebrate what they did and who they were at that time in their lives.

In a follow-up workshop, one participant shared how she incorporated her aspiration into her life: *"My goal was to see myself as a sexual and beautiful person. Now when people flirt with me, I accept it as a compliment and I don't automatically think that it's impossible for someone to flirt with me."*

Another woman who was involved in our workshops has said: *“It is fascinating how powerful we feel with each others’ support; there’s nothing like knowing we have shared experiences and outlook. I really think that since we have a social problem, having social support is part of the solution—both in the workshop and afterwards.”*

Appendix A: Introductory Interview

Introduction

We're meeting with people interested in the *Building Bridges* workshop. This is a chance for us to get to know you a little better, and for you to get to know more about the workshop and see if it is something that will work for you right now.

How did you hear about the workshop? What made you think it would be a good thing to try?

A bit about the workshop! We will use storytelling, drama, art, and journaling to explore connections between messages we get from society about what is 'normal' and who we are and what we do. The goals of the workshop are to explore some of the following issues with other people:

- what you think about ideals of beauty and the 'perfect' body and how these ideals might have affected you
- how you feel about your body
- what it is like to have a disability, physical difference, or facial difference and how this influences your body image
- what things make you feel positive or negative about your body
- what we can do to about other's negative attitudes or responses towards disability and difference
- how to strengthen and affirm who are you are

In a safe, supportive, non-judgmental atmosphere we will:

- explore issues related to our facial/physical differences or disabilities
- talk about what has worked for us and what hasn't
- find and affirm solutions to challenges we face every day
- have fun and make connections with other women/men

Questions related to Challenging Situations and Goal Setting

All participants are invited to think about what they want to accomplish here. We hope that you will think about what you hope to get from the workshop.

We ask participants to think about challenging social situations related to living with

disability and difference. Is there anything, for you, that has been a challenging situation in terms of disability or difference? For example, at work, where you live, in the community, and/or in relationships. If you feel comfortable, you can identify some situations here. If not, you can share it at the workshop.

Regarding the challenging situation you identified, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is feeling anxious in this social situation you've described, and 10 is feeling entirely comfortable, where would you place yourself? Where would you like to be?

What is one thing you would like to be different or to change for you by the end of this workshop? For example, a person may wear specific kinds of clothing to cover her physical difference and set a goal to be more accepting of her difference by not hiding it. She might feel the workshop is a safe place to try out wearing something that exposes her difference! Or a person may identify a challenging social situation and explore ways to deal with responses from people in public.

In thinking about making the workshop useful to you and how you might accomplish your hopes, desires, and/or aspirations, you may want to consider:

- If you could have any possible result, what would it be?
- What is a small step you could take toward that result?
- What would that look like? How would it feel?
- How would the people who are important in your life know that something was different?
- What are some things that have worked well for you? How did you know that/to do that?

Is there anything else, in particular, you would like to explore in the workshop about body image issues, physical difference or disability, and how society sees difference? (If answered in a previous question, skip this question)

Questions related to Group Process and Accommodation

This workshop works best when group members are comfortable participating in both small groups and the larger group.

What is your experience in working within groups? How do you feel about working within groups?

What do you think makes for a successful group? Have you been in a group that did not work well? What happened?

If a group could be helpful for you, what do you think it would look like?

Have you been in a group with other people with physical disabilities or facial and physical differences?

If you were in a group, and:

One person continued to speak a lot and didn't allow others a chance to share their thoughts, what would you do?

Someone in the workshop refused to take part in group activities, how would you feel? How would you react?

What would you do if you felt like you weren't being heard in the group?

Do you have any issues or concerns about this weekend?

Can you commit to the entire workshop? Attending the whole weekend is important for group process. It will not only affect what you can get out of this program, but it will also affect others in the group.

Is there anything you need for this workshop to be comfortable and accessible for you?

Workshop Information for Participants

Before the first workshop, please:

- Think of two social situations that you find challenging and define your preferred results for each situation.
- Please remember to bring a small object that has some personal significance for you. We have an activity planned where we'll use this object. (Don't worry! It won't be damaged!)
- Please do not wear perfumes or strong scents in consideration of those who have allergies.
- Please wear comfortable clothing. Some of the exercises we will do are written and some involve movement.
- Please let us know if you require an attendant, note taker, interpreter, or communication assistant.
- Coffee, tea, juice, and food will be provided. Please let us know if you have any food allergies or special food-related requests.
- Please try to arrange your transportation so that you arrive at least 15 minutes early if possible so we can have a chance to settle in and get started on time. Also, arrange your pick up time after the advertised closing time.

Questions? Need more info? Feel free to reach us at:

The time, date, and location of the workshop are:

Appendix C: Resources

AboutFace International

AboutFace is an international organization that provides information, support services, and educational programs for individuals with facial differences and their families, service providers, and other community members. AboutFace International welcomes people whose facial differences were present at birth or develop as a result of illness or trauma. Links to additional resources and organizations are available.

AboutFace International
 123 Edward Street, Suite 1003
 Toronto, Ontario M5G 1E2
 Phone: (416) 597-2229
 Toll-free: 1-800-665-FACE (3223)
 Fax: (416) 597-8494
 Email: info@aboutfaceinternational.org
 Website: <http://www.aboutfaceinternational.org>

Canadian Abilities Foundation

The Canadian Abilities Foundation publishes *Abilities*, Canada's Lifestyle Magazine for People with Disabilities, produces EnableLink, a disability resource website, and the Directory of Disability Organizations in Canada, which is compiled yearly and has a comprehensive listing of organizations across Canada, organised by province.

Directory of Disability Organizations in Canada 2002/2003

You may find this directory in libraries and resource centres and it can be accessed online at www.enablelink.org. To order, contact the Canadian Abilities Foundation (There is a cost for this directory).

Canadian Abilities Foundation
 489 College Street, Ste. 501
 Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5
 Phone: (416) 923-1885
 Fax: (416) 923-9829
 Email: able@abilites.ca
 Website: www.enablelink.org

Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC)

The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centre (CAILC) is a national organization consisting of local community-based Independent Living Resource Centres. Each Independent Living Resource Centre functions autonomously and is operated by and for people with disabilities. Centres in each region provide information, support, and services and links to other organizations.

Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC)

170 Laurier Ave. West, Suite 1104

Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V5

Phone: (613) 563-2581

TTY: (613) 563-4215

Fax: (613) 563-3861

Email: cailc@magma.ca

Website: www.cailc.ca

Independent Living Resource Centres In Ontario

Centre For Independent Living Toronto (CILT)

205 Richmond Street West, Suite 605

TORONTO, Ontario M5V 1V3

Phone: (416) 599-2458

Toll-free: (416) 1-800-354-9950

TTY: (416) 599-5077

Fax: (416) 599-3555

Email: cilt@cilt.ca

Website: www.cilt.ca

Breaking Down Barriers

An Independent Living Centre

275 First Street, Unit 9

COLLINGWOOD, Ontario L9Y 4E8

Phone: (705) 445-1543

Toll-free: 1-800-843-6943

TDD: (705) 445-1658

Fax: (705) 445-1656

Email: bdb@georgian.net

Website: www.breakingdownbarriers.org

Kapuskasing Regional Resource Centre for Independent Living

29 Byng Avenue, Suite 5

KAPUSKASING, Ontario P5N 1W6

Phone: (705) 335-8778

Fax: (705) 335-5666

Email: krrcil@nt.net

Website: www.disabilityresourcecentre.netfilms.com

Kingston Independent Living Resource Centre
859 Princess Street
KINGSTON, Ontario K7L 1G7
Phone: (613) 542-8353
TTY: (613) 542-8371
Fax: (613) 542-4783
Toll-free: 1-800-553-4572 (regional)
Email: infor@ilckingston.com
Website: www.ilckingston.com

Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region
3400 King Street East
KITCHENER, Ontario N2A 4B2
Phone: (519) 894-8350
TTY: (519) 894-8377
Fax: (519) 893-2213
Email: info@ilcwr.org
Website: www.ilcwr.org

Independent Living Centre London and Area
433 King Street, Suite 101
LONDON, Ontario N6B 3P3
Phone: (519) 660-4667
Fax: (519) 660-6818
General Email: pquesnel@odyssey.on.ca
Website: www.ilcla.tripod.ca

Ottawa Carleton Independent Living Centre
75 Albert Street, Suite 207
OTTAWA, Ontario K1P 5E7
Phone: (613) 236-2558
Fax: (613) 236-4562
Email: ocilc@magma.ca
Website: www.magma.ca/~ocilc/

R.I.S.E. Research, Information, Support, Empowerment
17D Bay Street
PARRY SOUND, Ontario P2A 1S4
Phone: (705) 1-800-634-6828
Toll-free: 1-800-634-6828
TTY: (705) 746-6996
Fax: (705) 746-1448
Email: rise@vianet.on.ca
Website: www.psmrise.ca

Niagara Centre For Independent Living (NCIL)
211 Church Street
ST. CATHARINES, Ontario L2R 3C9
Phone: (905) 684-7111
TTY: (905) 684-0420
Fax: (905) 684-1199
Email: ncil@cogeco.net
Website: www.ilcniagara.org

Independent Living Resource Centre
425 N. Edward St.
Northwood Plaza
THUNDER BAY, Ontario P7C 4P7
Phone: (807) 577-6166
Toll-free: 1-800-461-3153 (in 807 area code)
Fax: (807) 577-6119
Email: info@ilrctbay.com
Website: www.ilrctbay.com

Independent Living Resource Centre
66 Elm Street, Unit 108
SUDBURY, Ontario P3C 1RC
Phone: (705) 675-2121
TTY: (705) 675-2121
Fax: (705) 675-1283
Email: nshaw@absoluteabilites.on.ca

Canadian Hearing Society (CHS)

The Canadian Hearing Society provides services for hard of hearing, deafened and d/Deaf persons and those working with them. Among many services, this organization provides interpreters through the Ontario Interpreter Services (OIS). Ontario Interpreter Services provides interpreter services on a first come, first serve basis, for a 2-hour minimum. There is a cost, for both profit and non-profit organizations. There are 28 regional organizations throughout Ontario, which can be accessed through the main office.

Canadian Hearing Society Main Office:
271 Spadina Road
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2V3
Voice: (416) 928-2500
TTY: (416) 964-0023
Fax: (416) 928-2506
Email: Info@chs.ca
Website: www.chs.ca

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind provides education and support to people with low vision, people who are blind, and others in communities. The CNIB has Ontario district offices throughout cities and regions in central, southwestern, northern, and eastern Ontario. District offices can be accessed through their National and Ontario office.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
National Office and Ontario Division
1929 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4G 3E8
Phone: (416) 486-2500
TTY: (416) 480-8645
Fax: (416) 480-7677
Website: www.cnib.ca

Canadian Paraplegic Association

The Canadian Paraplegic Association provides a range of services for people with spinal cord and mobility disabilities such as outreach attendant services. In Ontario, the Canadian Paraplegic Association has regional offices in Hamilton, Toronto, London, Ottawa, and Barrie.

Canadian Paraplegic Association, National Office
230-1101 Prince of Wales Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3W7
Phone: (613) 723-1033
Toll-free: (416) 1-800-720-4933
Fax: (613) 723-1060
Email: cpanational@canparaplegic.org
Website: www.canparaplegic.org

Canadian Paraplegic Association, Ontario Head Office
520 Sutherland Drive
Toronto, Ontario M4G 3V9
Phone: (416) 422-5644
Toll-free: 1-877-422-1112
Fax: (416) 422-5943
Email: info@cpaont.org
Website: www.canparaplegic.org/on/

Disabled Women's Network of Ontario (DAWN Ontario)

DAWN Ontario is a province-wide organization for women with all types of disabilities and is operated by women with disabilities. This organization provides a wide range of resource materials on topics that highlight issues for women living with disabilities. In

addition to resource materials, you can download information on physical barriers and accessible designs that go beyond ramps, to assist in increasing your service accessibility. One example of useful information related to accessibility is the Access Checklist.

DAWN Ontario
 162- 975 McKeown Ave. Unit 5A
 North Bay, Ontario P1B 9P2
 Phone: (705) 494-9078
 E-mail: dawn@thot.net
 Website: <http://dawn.thot.net>

Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters (OASLI)

Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters (OASLI) is a professional association of ASL-English language interpreters. This association provides consultation to service providers, and answer questions and address concerns of people using interpreting services. Annually, they publish a directory that lists interpreters in private practice in Ontario. Also included is a list of provincial and national interpreter associations.

Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters
 255 Ontario Street South
 House #4
 Milton, Ontario L9T 2M5
 Phone: (905) 693-9011
 E-mail: mail@ossli.on.ca
 Website: <http://oasli.on.ca>

Ontario March of Dimes

Ontario March of Dimes provides information and community assistance to support independent living for people with disabilities. They have attendant services on a fee for service basis for events and groups. Chapters in regional locations service districts throughout the central, southwest, south, south central, east, west central, north east and north west regions of Ontario.

Ontario March of Dimes, Provincial Office
 10 Overlea Blvd.
 Toronto, Ontario M4H 1A4
 Phone: (416) 425-3463
 Toll-Free: 1-800-263-3463
 Fax: (416) 425-1920
 Email: info@dimes.on.ca
 Website: www.dimes.on.ca

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