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Using a Social Support Group to Educate and Empower Immigrant Latina Women

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Using a Social Support Group to Educate and Empower Immigrant Latina Women

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Figure 1. The Magnolias Women's Support Group banner



Note. This table demonstrates the new banner design for the group.

Introduction

The purpose of this capstone project was to promote mental health education and access to vulnerable South Florida Latina women. The original intent was to establish a program providing families with mental health education, including information about common mental illnesses, signs and symptoms, community resources, and the impacts on occupations. The focus areas of this capstone were advocacy, policy and program development, and administration. Furthermore, this capstone project intended to promote health literacy for underserved populations, especially immigrant women.

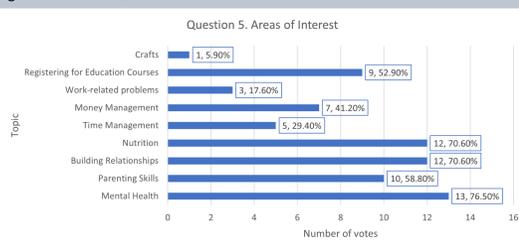
Site Description

- Caridad Center is a non-profit, free clinic located in Palm Beach County, Florida.
- Since the 1990's, Caridad Center has served thousands of uninsured children and adults who live at or are below the 200% federal poverty level.
- They offer comprehensive medical, dental, and vision care along with social services and behavioral health services.
- Caridad Center provides health care services in three languages: English, Spanish, and Creole.
- The Magnolias Women's Support Group is a network for female patients experiencing mental health issues.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- In September 2021, a questionnaire was administered to the Magnolias Women's Support Group in Spanish to 17 participants.
- Mental health, building relationships, and nutrition were identified as the top three areas of interest (see Appendix A, Figure 1A).
- Ten (58.8%) of the participants voted for the group to meet twice per month.
- Scheduling conflicts and technology problems utilizing Zoom were identified as contributing factors to low attendance during monthly sessions.

Figure 2. Areas of Interests



Note. The graph depicts the results from the questionnaire on the participant's areas of interest.

Literature Review Summary

- Immigrant Latina women are at increased risks for violence during their migration journey to the United States, including verbal and physical abuse, exclusion, robbery, extortion, assault, torture, human trafficking and smuggling, kidnapping, rape and mass rape, and homicide (INCIDE Social, 2012; Infance et al. 2012).
- Immigrant and undocumented women may develop mental health issues, such as anxiety, low self-esteem, body image issues, acculturative stress, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance use disorders (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2019; Cook Herron, 2019; National Organization for Women, 2021; Nava et al., 2014).
- Women face several obstacles preventing them from leaving abusive relationships and seeking assistance, including intimate partner violence, lack of financial resources, immigration status, and fear (Gonçalves & Matos, 2016; National Organization for Women, 2021; Vidales, 2010).
- Many women lack access to vital mental health services and, often, rely on services provided by community centers (Vidal de Haymes et al., 2018).

Figure 3. A woman in a dark room



Capstone Project Description

The focus areas for this capstone were advocacy, policy and program development, and administration. Due to unforeseen circumstances, a new program curriculum could not be implemented at this time. However, a new curriculum was designed to meet the current participant's areas of interest based on the needs assessment. Eight sessions will be held between January and April 2022, covering the following topics:

- Mental Health** – Self-care, stress management, triggers, and personal growth
- Building Relationships**- Body positivity, healthy relationship characteristics, toxic relationship information, parenting skills, and communication strategies.
- Nutrition** – The five food groups, portion sizes, eating disorders, and integrating new fruits or vegetables.

Figure 4. Image of a Woman Daydreaming

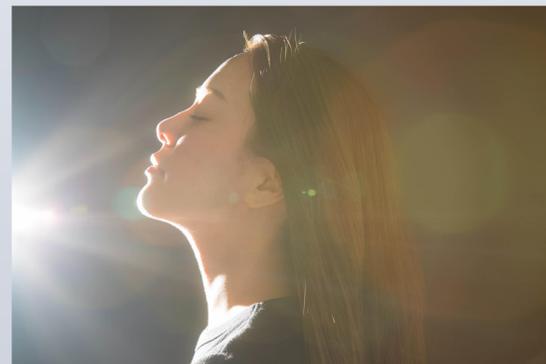


Table 1. The 2022 Magnolias Women's Support Group Curriculum

Unit	Session Topic	Objectives	Discussion/Activity
Unit I: Mental Health	Session 1: New Year, New Me. <i>Nuevo año, nueva persona</i>	Define "mental health" and "mental illness." Explore their awareness of mental health, factors impacting mental health, and develop personal goals for the new year.	Define mental health in your own words. Describe mental health using one word. Create a diagram of all the factors affecting your mental health and discuss similarities and differences. Laugh therapy
	Session 2: Self-Care and Stress Management. <i>Autocuidado y manejo del estrés.</i>	Identify the importance of self-care, factors that increase stress, and stress management strategies.	
	Session 3: Cinema Forum: Self-Help. <i>Cineforo: Autoayuda.</i>	Identify through the film the human side of the disease, both the patients who suffer and their relatives, friends, and society in general.	Watch clips from the movie: Steel Magnolias. Discussion: Circumstances in the particular context as a social and therapeutic phenomenon.
Unit II: Building Healthy Relationships. <i>Construyendo Relaciones Saludables.</i>	Session 4: My relationship with myself. <i>Mi relación conmigo mismo.</i>	Identify fundamental steps to acceptance—role adaptations of being a mother, a daughter, and a grandmother. Identify the influences of social media, diet culture, and Hispanic culture on body image and self-perception.	Discuss how your culture has impacted your body image and self-esteem. Draw a picture of how you want to look and feel during 2022.
	Session 5: Building a relationship with others. <i>Mi relación con otras personas.</i>	Characteristics of a healthy relationship. Sensitive topics include building trust after a traumatic/toxic experience, setting boundaries, and identifying an unhealthy or broken relationship.	Draw a picture of how I view my current relationship. Group Activity: Take turns naming positive traits of potential partners or relationships.
	Session 6: My relationship with my child(ren). <i>Mi relación con mis hijos.</i>	Explore healthy communication strategies with children/adolescents, recognize signs of stress in children, suggestions for creating a safe space.	Draw a picture of a crystal ball and write a letter to your child(ren). What would you say?
Unit III: Nutrition. <i>Nutrición.</i>	Session 7: I am what I eat. <i>Creando un plan de nutrición. Soy lo que como. Plan de nutrición.</i>	Create an understanding of the different food groups, appropriate portion sizes, local food programs in the area, suggestions for healthy recipes. Identify the differences between a nutritionist and a dietitian.	Guest Speaker: Caridad Center's dietitian. Group activity: Food bingo. At-home activity: Incorporate a new fruit or vegetable into your favorite dish.
	Session 8: To the rhythm of the body. <i>A Ritmo de mi Cuerpo.</i>	Understand the importance of daily physical activity, identify examples of physical activity, harmful effects of too much little exercise, and suggestions to try at home.	Assessment of current physical activity and Zumba. Discuss how they felt before and after the Zumba.

Note. This table demonstrates a breakdown of the curriculum developed for the support group.

Figure 5. Sample of Intervention Plan

Magnolias Women's Support Group at Caridad Center Intervention Plans	
Unit 2: Building Healthy Relationships, Session 2	
Date: 3/5/2022	Time: 12:00 am - 12:00 pm
Place/Format of Session: Online group meeting from Caridad Center	
Topic: My relationship with others. <i>Mi relación con otras personas.</i>	
Objective(s): The women in the group will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify characteristics of a healthy relationship Explore how to set boundaries Acknowledge when a relationship is considered toxic or broken Develop strategies for building trust among friends, family, and partners 	
Material(s) Needed: Journal, pencil, pen	
Session Format	
I. Welcome and Introduction	
II. Opening Activity and Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw a picture: How I view my current relationship 	
III. Presentation: Building a Healthy Relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does a healthy relationship look like? What are the characteristics of a healthy relationship? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust, honesty, reliability, kindness, mutual respect, and not centered around one person. Group can provide examples of healthy relationships in their lives The importance of setting boundaries Relationship red flags <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how to identify an unhealthy or broken relationship 	
IV. Closing Activity and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw a picture: How I want my relationship to look like. Then, as a group, take turns naming positive traits of potential partners or relationships. Ask: Do I possess these traits? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although we may look for these traits in others, it's essential to recognize how we are seen as friends. 	
V. Announcements and Kudos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next meeting: March 26, 2022 	

Note. This figure demonstrates an intervention plan that will be used during the unit of building relationships.

Learning Objectives Achieved

- Conducted a needs assessment to investigate the current mental health needs and interests of the Magnolias Women's Support Group participants.
- Established a curriculum that integrated culturally-relevant topics and education, utilizing a trauma-informed approach, with the Magnolias Women's Support Group.
- Increased the number of women who participate in the Magnolias Women's Support Group.
- Increased women's access to health services and community organizations.
- Designed group intervention notes and video tutorials to increase participant technological literacy.

Figure 6. Three People Holding Hands



Implications for OT Practice

- The process of immigrating to a new country can have a life-long impact on an individual's mental health status and affect their ability to engage in meaningful occupations.
- Female-oriented social support or empowerment groups can offer women mental health support, a sense of belonging, and education.
- Occupational therapists (OTs) may identify occupational disruptions and provide essential interventions that allow for a meaningful lifestyle and increased quality of life.
- OTs offer a unique occupation-based perspective concerning mental health services and support groups.
- An increasing need for ongoing advocacy and education regarding the role of OT in non-traditional, community settings exists.
- OTs can collaborate with policymakers and community organizations in the fight for immigration reform.

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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References Available Upon Request