Where is “me” in this?

Youth, the time in life when you are beginning to individuate from your family, working out what you want your life to look like, taking some chances and trying out different things. What an exciting time of life. Add a mental health disorder. Concerned family gather around, stifling one’s freedom out of genuine love and concern in an attempt to be helpful. Confusion and questioning about what this means; what happens to my life now. Navigating a new and complex system to find the help needed to get life back on track. Where is “me” in all of this.

Young people and their families need mental health services that recognise and promote the exciting experience of youth, even in the midst of illness. Ballarat Health Service – Youth Mental Health Service (BHS-YMHS) along with 36 partner agencies are committed to a model of care that places the young person at the centre.

BHS-YMHS model of treatment is focused on understanding each young person’s goals and using a psychosocial skills based approach, assists them to continue the exciting transition into adult life. The family is actively included in treatment to ensure they too have the tools they need to also live a productive and content life while being able to watch and support their loved one to recover. Where other agencies are involved shared support planning enables a cohesive approach with the young person remaining at the centre.

Results of questionnaires with young people and families at completion of treatment show the following.

Demographics:
- 61% female, 37% male, 2% transgender
- 3% identified as Indigenous and 24% as same-sex attracted
- Families were involved 76% of the time

Accessibility and Treatment Outcomes:

The results indicate that the Youth Mental Health Service is accessible with most finding it easy or somewhat easy to access. Positively, almost eighty percent of young people are engaged in work or study at closure from the mental health service. Family were involved seventy-six percent of the time. Over eighty percent of young people reported some or most of their goals had been met or exceeded during treatment helping them to find “me” again. The majority of young people and families reported they felt more confident in managing their or their family member’s mental health, felt better as a result of treatment and would recommend BHS-YMHS to a friend.

These results demonstrate that a publicly funded area mental health service can embed youth centred practices into everyday treatment with positive outcomes.

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Thank you to members of the Youth Advisory Group for your participation in the photographs.

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