

Supporting social connection through a community-based program for individuals living with mental illness

## Growing Stronger Together

Heather Baker, CTRS

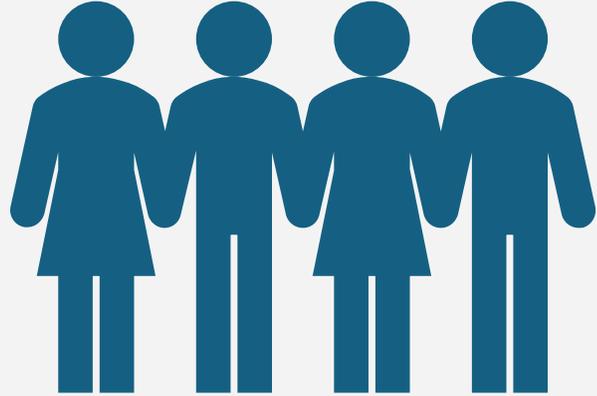
Elizabeth Cleary, RN

Connor Hines, Housing & Employment Coordinator

Alexander Riley, Peer Support

International Knowledge Exchange 2026

# What is Growing Stronger Together?



A social skills training program designed with individuals living with mental illness that expands across the classroom and community.

# Why?



TRENDS



DEVELOPING  
SOCIAL SKILLS



ILLNESS  
SYMPTOMS



DISCUSSIONS



GOALS



IMPORTANCE

# Partnership



# Program Overview

- 10-week program
- PERMA & WHO-QOL
- Facilitated in the community
- Not delivered in lecture style
- Multiple facilitators
  - Peer support takes the lead
  - Clinicians working in mental health & addiction services
  - Community-based organization representative





# Program Summary

- Social skills overview
- Types of communication
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Starting and Ending conversations
- Social Roles
- Social Perception
- Emotions



# Challenges & Modifications

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Environmental  
requirements

Layout of  
content &  
delivery method

Communication  
between  
facilitators

Pre-group  
information

Post-session  
debrief and  
modifications

Planning prior to  
group

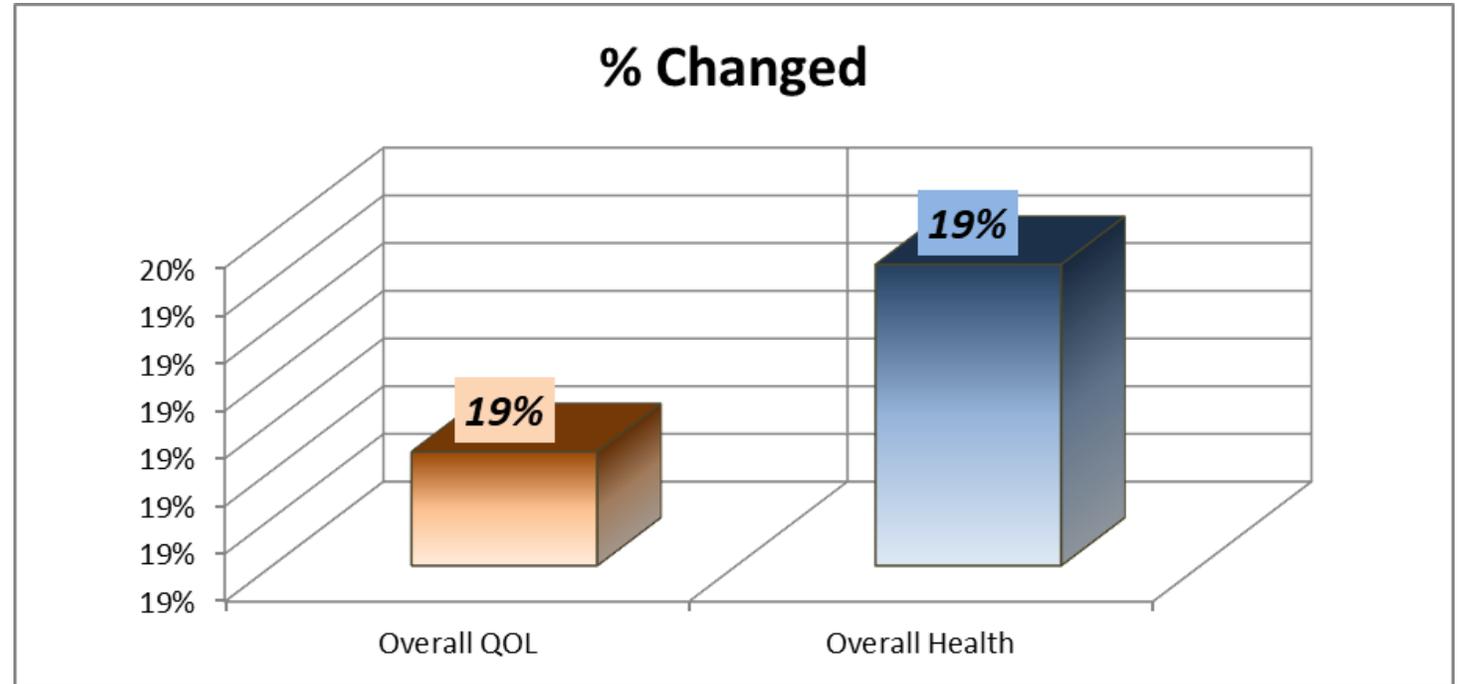
Open to change

Collaboration

# Outcomes

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## WHO-QUAL BREF Results

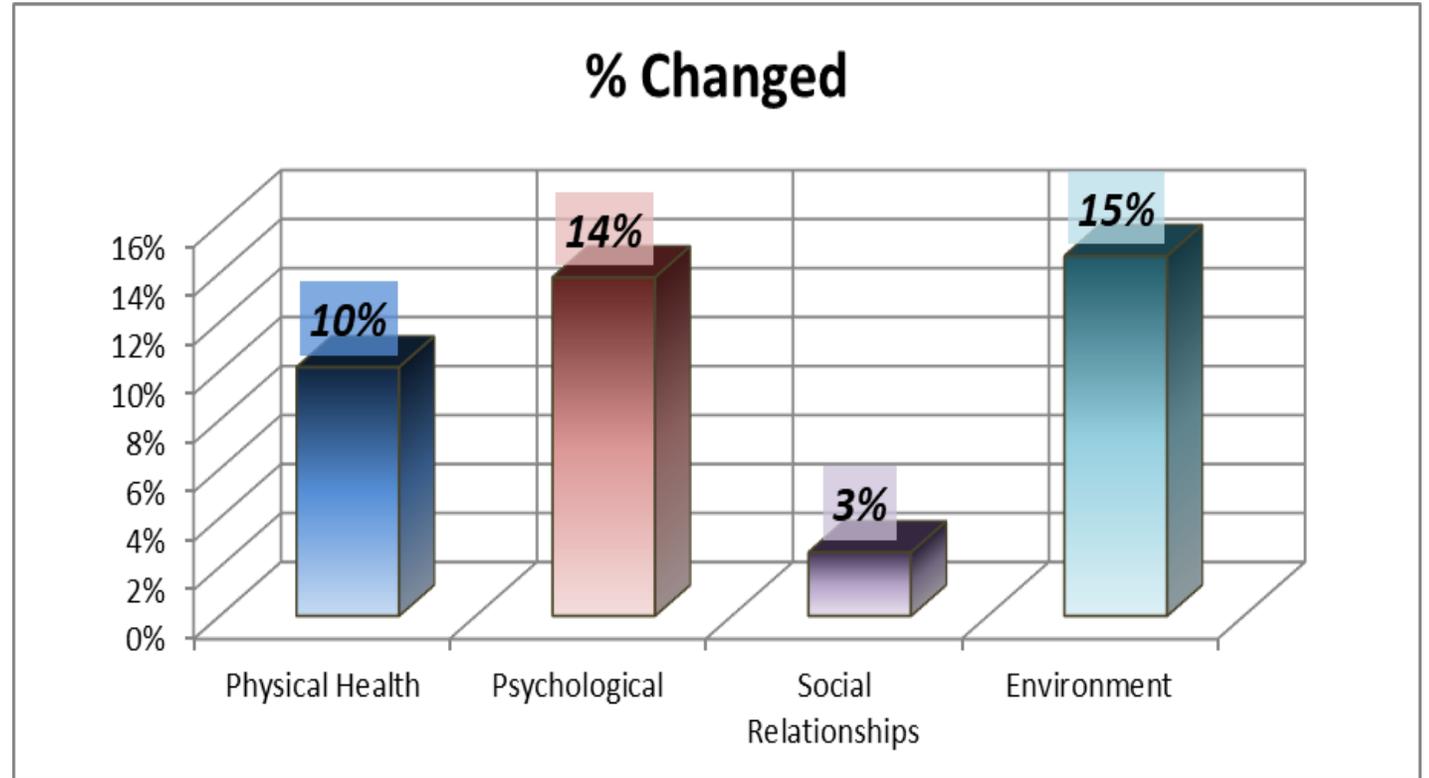


N = 61

# Outcomes

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## WHO-QUAL BREF Results

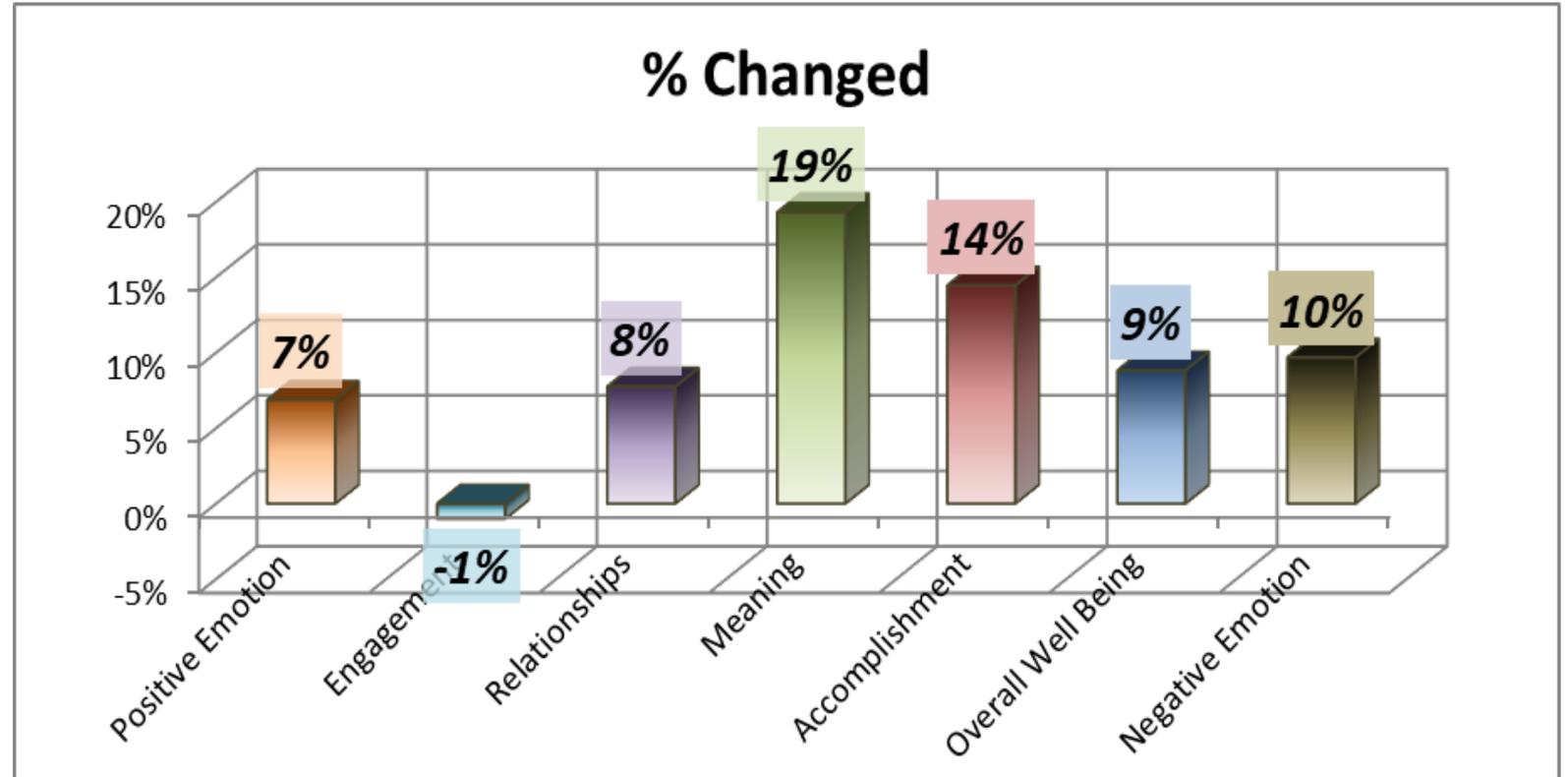


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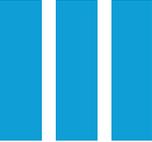
# Outcomes

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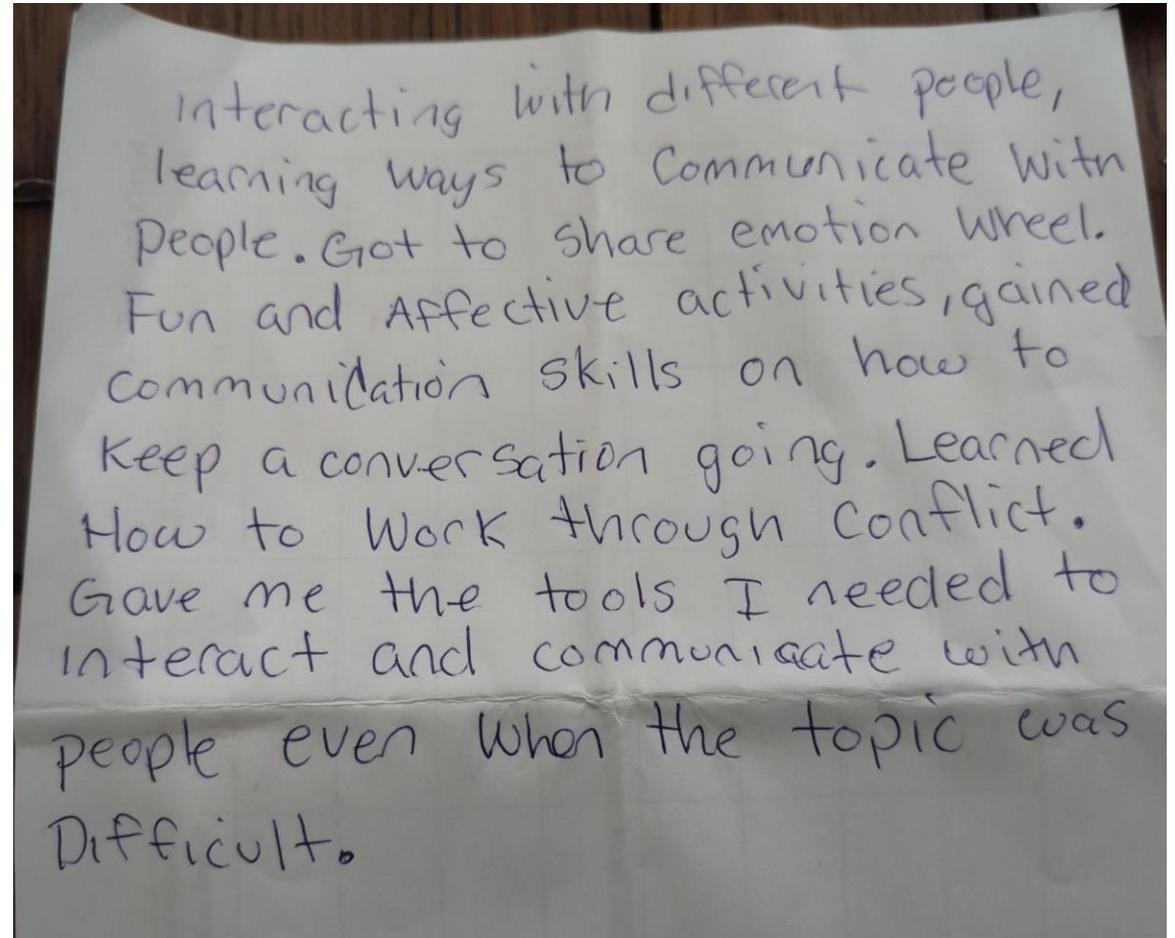
## PERMA Results



N = 61



# Testimonials



interacting with different people,  
learning ways to communicate with  
people. Got to share emotion wheel.  
Fun and affective activities, gained  
communication skills on how to  
keep a conversation going. Learned  
how to work through conflict.  
Gave me the tools I needed to  
interact and communicate with  
people even when the topic was  
difficult.

## Growing Stronger

I have took part of the program 2 times.  
Prior to going to group I was very  
cold and not smiling or mingling. People  
then told me that I started smiling and this was  
not happening prior to group. I would (continue)  
this group to any who has a open mind

ADAM HUNTER

Growing stronger  
The group ~~learned~~ taught me to  
About facial expressions and  
Also respond to people's  
emotions and to be quick  
Not to judge people  
Also help me interact with people  
Better

Diana

# Future Aspirations

- Provide training for additional social skills
- Designing and delivering programs targeting specific types of relationships
- Supporting formation of relationships and skills to navigate them
- Ensuring delivery occurs in a community setting

Questions /  
Comments

