

Happiness Habits Cafés

Burnfoot Community Hub, Hawick



Where: Burnfoot Community Hub, Burnfoot Rd, Hawick, TD9 8EN
When: 17th October 2016 and 14th November 2016, 2-4pm

Background

Happiness Habits Cafés have been developed by Outside the Box. The sessions in Borders are part of the Flourishing Borders project, which aims to increase awareness among older people about how they can look after their mental health and wellbeing.

Andrea Darling, Local Area Co-ordinator for Older Adults in the Hawick area, read about the Happiness Habits Café project in a summer 2016 newsletter published by The Chamber TSI in August. Andrea contacted Lindsey Gray at Outside the Box and they met in late August 2016 to discuss holding a Happiness Habits café in Hawick.

Following their meeting, Andrea pulled together a planning group of local workers from The Community Capacity Building Team (Calum), Community Psychiatric Older Adults Team (Wendy and Gillian), The Burnfoot Hub (Lesley), Local Area Coordinators for adults with learning disabilities (John and Angela) and the local church outreach team (Val). Lizzie from the Healthy Living Network subsequently joined the group. The group met first on 1st September and then again on 10th October.

The planning meeting was a useful way for the local staff to talk about what was available in the locality, and to identify any gaps. Everyone agreed that the meeting had been a useful forum for finding out what each other were doing.

The Café

The group agreed to try out having a café session in the Burnfoot Hub upstairs meeting space, and decided on 2 Mondays in October and November. All partners agreed to publicise the cafes to the people they work with, and all offered to attend. Posters and invitations were circulated and the staff involved worked hard to make the event a success by offering transport support.

Lesley from the Hub organised coffees, teas and scones for the café events, and the tables were laid with white paper tablecloths to be written on.

There was an excellent turnout to the October café, with 16 people attending plus 10 staff members/support workers.

The café followed the approach of having table questions to prompt discussion about wellbeing and mental health. The following questions were used:

- **What are your top tips for coping with life?**
- **We all have times when we feel down – what helps you at those times?**
- **Keeping active is a great way to boost your wellbeing – what do you like to do to keep active? (with picture prompts)**
- **Staying in touch with people is good for our wellbeing – what's on and what's missing in the local area?**

A short introduction to the café was given by the Lindsey, and then people were served tea and coffee. Those sitting at the table were encouraged to fill in the sheet **“How I feel before the café”** (repeated at the end of the café, **“How I feel after the café”** to try and assess the impact of having these conversations on people's mood. You will find out a little later if the café had an impact!

The staff sitting at the tables then facilitated and encouraged discussion around the questions that were on each table. **We all have times when we feel down – what helps at those times?** and **What are your top tips for coping with life?** The conversation flowed easily, and there was a “buzz” and sense of energy and activity in the room. Teas, coffees and scones went down well.

The main themes that help when we feel down are:

Attitude/mood – Get out the house, healthy food, sweets, chocolate, cake, 99 ice cream cone, sunny days, the beach, pet therapy, animals, smile, good patter, sometimes I sit in a dark room, give someone a compliment once a day

Sense of purpose – Tidy up, I work as a volunteer in the soup kitchen, I go to Artbeat twice a week to help with my concentration

Hobbies/activities – Walking, swimming, crochet, knitting, skittles, carpet bowls, flower arranging, playing cards, bingo, day trips, holidays, music, live music, going to cinema, movie days, learn guitar, watching tv, shopping

Connection to others – Talking to people, meeting new people, friends& family, confide in family, socialising, social media, phone apps, tea dances, go to church, comeback to Burnfoot coffee group, I like to talk to someone to give me advice on what to do next

What are your top tips for coping with life – A good night's sleep, work, knitting, reading, puzzles, walking, grandchildren, watching TV/DVDs, eating healthy, swimming, meeting friends, listening to music, ironing/housework.

How people felt before and after, here's a selection of what they said!

Before: Friendly, Fed up, Tired, Ill **After:** Relaxed, Listened to, Friendly, OK, Cheerful

Before: Lonely, Anxious, put down, Sad, Scared, Tired, Ill **After:** Supported, Listened to, Friendly, Encouraged

Before: Anxious, Tired **After:** Happy, Relaxed, Cheerful

Before: Anxious, OK, Dull **After:** Relaxed, OK, Cheerful, Encouraged

The second café on 14th November was attended by 12 people. The format was slightly amended to include a bingo session (suggested at the first café) and the questions had a Christmas theme. We also included a question to encourage discussion about possibilities for the group going ahead in the future.

The questions were:

- **Staying in touch with people is good for our wellbeing – would you like this group to continue in 2017, if so, when and how often?**
- **Make a Christmas card to send to someone. What other activities/crafts would you like to try?**
- **What are your top tips for coping with Christmas?**

What are your top tips for coping with Christmas? Dressing up, take part in the Christmas parade, nice to see family, start your shopping early, spend time with family, lower your expectations, relax and enjoy it, learn guitar, remember it's not about things, it's about people, Christmas starts early – after Guy Fawkes and Halloween, be aware of your expectations – you might get a TV special Christmas, but don't ruin your day with high expectations. Embrace it, it takes more energy to hate the season than to look forward to it, start early with the shopping so you can buy lots of sprouts, eat well, keep healthy, turn off your phone, don't take life too seriously, get your cards written, be happy, go shopping early, block Christmas out, keep independent, get presents done, go for a drink with family, prepare early.

What would you like to see happen to this group in the future? Tony likes this group and would like it to continue weekly doing creative writing, bingo, music and arty things, Keep the group going weekly, I love to do arts and crafts.

How people felt before and after, here's a selection of what they said!

Before: Lonely, Anxious, fed up,
Cheerful

After: Supported, Listened to, Friendly,
Encouraged, Happy

Before: Relaxed, Friendly, Encouraged
OK,

After: Happy, Relaxed, Supported,
Listened to, Cheerful, Encouraged

Before: Happy, Lonely, Relaxed,
Friendly, Confident, Cheerful

After: Relaxed, Friendly, Happy,
Supported, Liked, OK, Confident

December 2016 Follow up meeting

The follow up meeting was attended by Lesley from the Burnfoot Centre, Lizzie (HL), Val (Church Community worker), Andrea (LAC), Christine and Lindsey from Outside the Box.

We talked about positive outcomes for partners and workers which had included some good communication about what is on, and cross referring clients to different groups. The meetings had been a forum for workers from different teams to solve some problems for example a discussion around the lunch club and supporting members to feel more settled. There had been a timing clash between gentle exercise and the reminiscence groups, which had been solved through a discussion at the meeting.

Lesley from the Hub was very happy that a new group of local people had come along to the Hub as they have managed to attract younger people very successfully, but it has been harder to attract older people.

We agreed that the open agenda at the café inviting people to discuss their mental health and self-care and coping strategies had enabled a lot of honest discussion, with people saying how positive they found the experience, as well as really enjoying the café format – socialising with a purpose. There had been some very positive outcomes for clients who had attended the cafes.

Sonny who had not been at all connected to any groups following late retirement from being self-employed. Sonny has commented on how much he enjoyed the cafes, and talking about mental health was a very positive experience for him. He had not known about the community hub until the café and now comes regularly to the café.

A lady called Liz who had been very isolated and withdrawn and was not known to the staff from other groups, is now attending the reminiscence and a local knitting group, and it has been notice that she is talking and joining in much more.

John came along to the cafes and was surprised by how much he enjoyed them. He confided in Lizzie that it was his wife's birthday at Christmas, and although she died many years ago, he finds coping with Christmas very difficult because of memories of her. He had not talked to his family about this as he did not want to burden them. After talking about it, Lizzie suggested John make a Christmas card for his late wife, put it on the mantelpiece, and when he sees it, remember the happy times they had as a couple, and start to process his grief in this way.

Discussion about what next:

Lizzie from the Healthy Living Network had suggested to her manager that the café would be a good thing to continue. Stephanie McKenzie the local lead for Mental Health Improvement was involved in discussions and had expressed interest.

Lizzie would like to keep the format similar – call it a Happiness Habits café, run it on the first Monday of each month and provide an afternoon tea, as this had been so popular.

Burnfoot Community Futures funding has money to allocate to local projects. We propose that Lizzie will write a funding application and submit in time for the first round – 23rd January 2017. This bid will be based upon the experience of the first 2 cafes.

Following this, we will invite those who attended the first 2 cafes back on Monday 6th February, and will make a series of video interviews and talking head interviews using the support of Ciara from Outside the Box, who is used to making film, and this will be used to present the project at the voting event which is attended by local people. This is in April 2017, and the funding allocation is based upon the local vote.

Contacts for Happiness Habits Cafes:

Christine Ryder, Communications & Resource Worker with Outside the Box. christine@otbds.org. Mobile: 07921 265515

Lindsey Gray, Associate Worker with Outside the Box
lindsey@spinningfish.net Mobile: 07865 081369

Outside the Box

Unit F10, 150 Brand Street, Glasgow, G51 1DH

Office: 0141 419 0451

Website: <http://otbds.org>



The Flourishing Borders project is funded by:

