

Online tool eyes youth mental healthcare experience

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Credit: University of Western Ontario

A new online project aims to improve the experiences of young people entering the mental healthcare system with an eye toward building better relationships between providers and youth.

Launched today, [Shared Humanity](#) is an online module for [youth](#) with the goal of helping them learn about the mental healthcare system and be

better prepared to build a trusting relationship with their [health](#)-care provider. The project is a [joint venture](#) between Western researcher Dr. Javeed Sukhera and mindyourmind.

"Our research found that recognizing one another's humanity is an essential ingredient in reducing stigma and improving the health-care experience for those who are suffering," said Sukhera, a Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry professor.

Using true-to-life scenarios, the module emphasizes the importance of trust and how that trust can be fostered or broken. It also addresses the concept of power and offers youth ways to reconcile the power differential they may feel.

Shared Humanity takes about 30 minutes to complete and has three main sections—shared trust, shared power and shared humanity. Among its features, the module provides an entire section that helps youth to see their health-care provider as a human being with feelings, worries and flaws.

Through mindyourmind, a London-based non-profit mental health organization, the module was co-created with young people who helped write scenarios and design graphics.

"By being a part of the creation, I was able to use my lived experience to ensure that future youth can have a positive experience while accessing [mental health services](#)," Elora Watson said, one of the youth involved in co-creating the module. "Being provided a safe space to share my voice and, in turn, influence change, was a truly empowering and rewarding experience. This tool opened my eyes to the biases we all possess, helping me to find humanity in the professionals that support us."

In order to reach a wide audience and engage with youth, in particular,

the module creators said it was critical to make this a digitally based, online tool.

"If youth are seeing something in a format that is accessible and interesting to them, then it resonates with them in a different way," said Heather Miko-Kelly, Program Manager at mindyourmind. "The way information is presented is just as important as the information itself."

The module was born out of Sukhera's research into understanding bias in the mental healthcare system. Through his research, he realized that a barrier to successful care was that health-care providers have unconscious biases about the patients they treat, and also that the people with lived experiences have those biases about people who work in healthcare.

The next part of this project includes a Shared Humanity [module](#) aimed at health-care providers. It is expected to launch in the next year.

"We hope this is just the beginning of something, and that this can act as an igniter to begin the conversation about how we can use digital technology to make the kind of change we need in the system," he said

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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