

Horticultural Therapy in the Canadian Justice System: Coast-to- Coast Perspectives

Green Mindfulness at HMP

Heather Quinlan & Norman Goodyear

REG-HT

January 31, 2018

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- “Green Mindfulness” – coined to describe a program combining horticultural therapy and mindfulness practice
- First developed and implemented at Memorial University as a wellness related activity for students

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Briefly Horticultural therapy (HT) is a treatment modality focused on the use of natural world, more specifically horticulture, to meet goals based on a formally diagnosed issue or problem
- Mindfulness is a practice which involves being fully present in the here and now, and aware of whatever is happening in the moment, free from lens of judgement; it involves developing an awareness of mind and body

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Success of the Green Mindfulness student program led developers to consider the application of the program to other populations, namely a prison population
- Inspired by the work of Jiller on Riker's Island, a jail in the East River in New York City, which offered a horticultural vocational program for inmates once they have been released

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Her Majesty's Penitentiary (HMP), in St. John's, Newfoundland, the primary facility for housing medium/maximum security male prisoners (general term of incarceration of two years less a day), was identified as a target population.



HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- The proposal for programming was welcomed by the manager for institutional programming, Heather Yetman, and social worker, Susan Green, as it was something never offered before.
- As such, a five-week program, based on the student Green Mindfulness experience, was developed.

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Participants:
- Identified by the social worker and included men with addiction and/or other mental health issues
- Age ranged from youth (19) to senior (65+)

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Goals:
- Introduce the inmates to mindfulness, with focus on mindful practice in a noisy environment
- Use of HT activities to ground practice, and to develop:
 - a new vocabulary associated with activity
 - positive interpersonal interactions
 - cognitive development - learning

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Sessions:
- Each session began with a mindfulness check-in
- Mindful breath practice helped establish a positive group dynamic at the start of the session
- Followed by mindful practice through the plant based activity
- And guided meditation (using Tibetan bells (tingsha) and/or singing bowl)

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Five unique sessions:
- Session 1:
 - Introduction to mindful practice & how mindfulness would be used during the plant based activity
 - HT activity – various growing media, plant propagation technique
 - Senses – tactile, olfactory
 - Discussion of memories & reminiscence was encouraged

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Session 2:
- Mindfulness grounding
- HT – propagation: division & rooted cuttings (mint & lemon balm)
- Leaves were used to make teas
- Senses: touch, olfactory, and taste
- Discussion of memories & reminiscence was encouraged

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Session 3:
- Mindfulness grounding
- HT – propagation: seed & rooted cuttings – culinary herbs
- Senses: touch & olfactory
- Discussion of memories & reminiscence was encouraged

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Session 4:
- Mindfulness grounding
- HT – plant related, print making, images were inspired by plant material, e.g. dried leaves/cones, pictures, plants in the area, memory
- Senses: all senses were encouraged through textures, pressure, aroma, colours, etc.
- Discussion of meaning of the images was invited

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Session 5:
- Mindfulness grounding
- HT – activity chosen by the men: involved potting herbs for the facility kitchen
- And creating air plants on fibre pots (to take back to their cells)
- The second part was very social, with sharing on learnings and application of mindfulness in every day life

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Feedback:
- The men highlighted their engagement in meditative practice & application of learned mindfulness practice
- Strong desire to have all their plants in their cells, as the plants evoked strong memories
- Caring for the plants & watching them grow gave the men a sense of hope
- Later the men were given permission to have their plants, they continued propagation and also shared with other men on their range.
- In a place that is stark and barren, the presence of a small plant has such a powerful effect.

HT & Justice: Green Mindfulness

- Questions?

