MI Fellowship Framework: Physical health

People with mental illness tend to have poorer physical health than the general community, and often struggle with confidence and motivation. To take charge of their own wellbeing, people need encouragement from others, especially family, friends and peers; while health programs must be designed to instil confidence as well as improve health.

1.1 MI Fellowship’s physical health principles

Where physical health is an issue, we need to ensure that people:

- Feel hopeful and confident about their ability to improve their own health and wellbeing
- Are encouraged by family, friends and workers who understand the barriers the person may face
- Are welcomed by groups and services in the community that can support the person in a healthy lifestyle

1.2 Evidence base for MI Fellowship’s approach to physical health

Research into the physical wellbeing of people with serious mental illness suggests that people may believe they have little control over their health, and that this lack of self-efficacy is a major barrier to engaging in physical health programs (Lysaker et al, 2001). Lack of encouragement from a person’s support network, including workers, also contributes to low motivation (Dean et al, 2001).

People are generally keen to engage in health programs if these are designed in a way that promotes self-efficacy and include effective social support from others (Ussher et al, 2007). Peer-led programs are especially helpful given that the most effective sustainable behaviour changes occur when people set goals and track their achievements over time; and that self-efficacy is increased through peer support (Richardson et al, 2005).

1.3 Features of MI Fellowship’s approach to physical health

MI Fellowship will:

- Offer health and wellbeing programs that can be tailored to individual needs, and that are designed to increase self-efficacy through peer support, goal setting and celebrating small achievements
- Invite family members and friends to get involved in activities that they can enjoy with the person, and offer information about how to effectively encourage and motivate people
- Develop and strengthen support networks – especially people and services in the community that can help include the person in health programs and support the person in continuing a healthy lifestyle
- Ensure that workers are knowledgeable about working with barriers to engagement such as low self-esteem and self-efficacy

1.4 References