PEACE

Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism developed from Clinical Experience

KING'S College LONDON

Demystifying the Human Body: Pilot Outcomes from a Novel Group Intervention

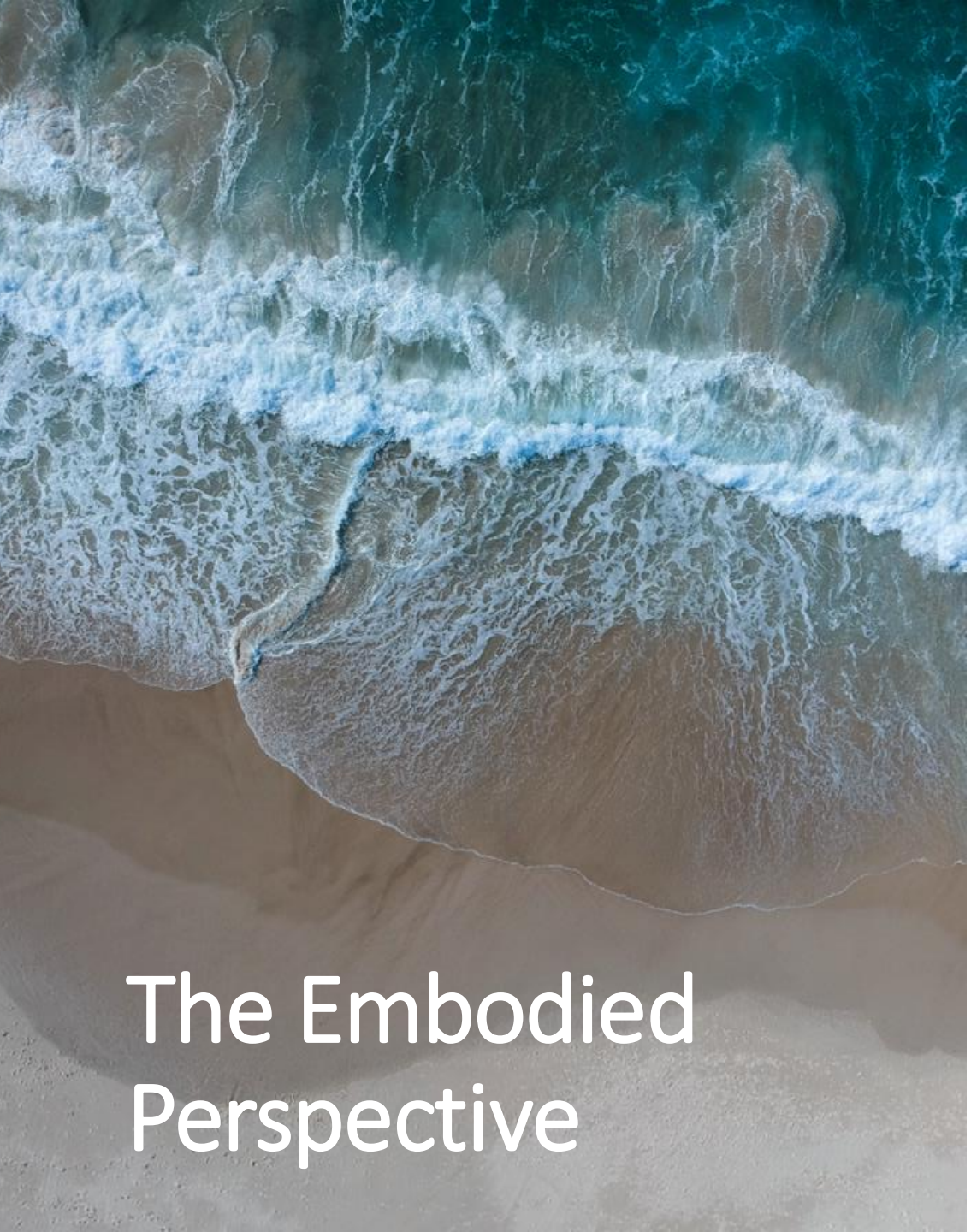
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The Health Foundation

NHS South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Maudsley Charity Backing Better Mental Health.

National Autistic Society Accredited 2021



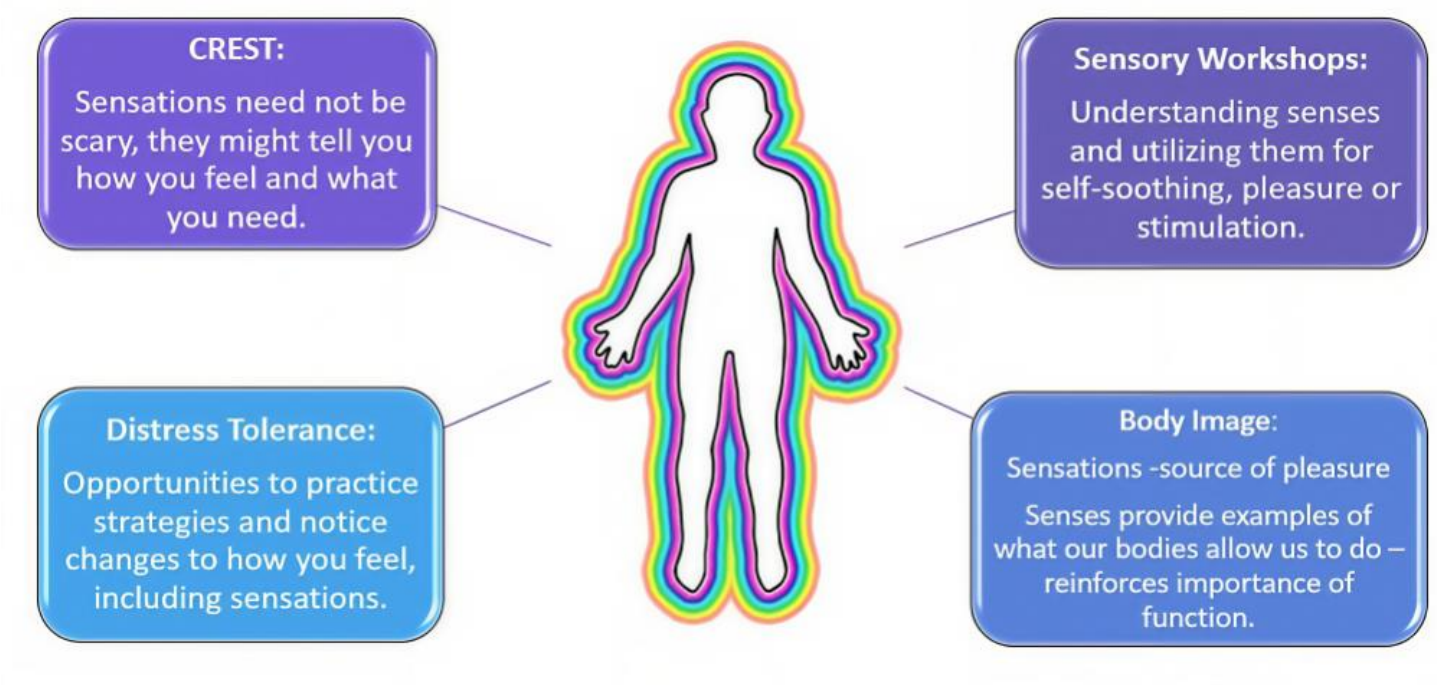
The Embodied Perspective

- Embodiment views experience as undifferentiated until dualist notions are overlaid upon it, via individuals being subject to cultural notions of mind separate from body (Overton, 2008).
- Merleau-Ponty (1962) proposed that embodiment is experienced like a shoreline
- From this perspective the language of “Body Image” reinforces the body as an object to be appraised, rather than embodiment which is a lived experience

So how could we support patients to feel less fearful of embracing their embodiment?

My Body Does What?

- Autism and anorexia often involve a preference to disconnect mind from body, the “rational mind" must dominate the “emotional body" which is confusing, annoying, demanding and unreliable.
- The My Body Does What group intervention aims to integrate aspects of existing treatment which tap into embodied experience
- Developed over last 5 years
- Today we will give an overview of the materials and present our initial outcomes

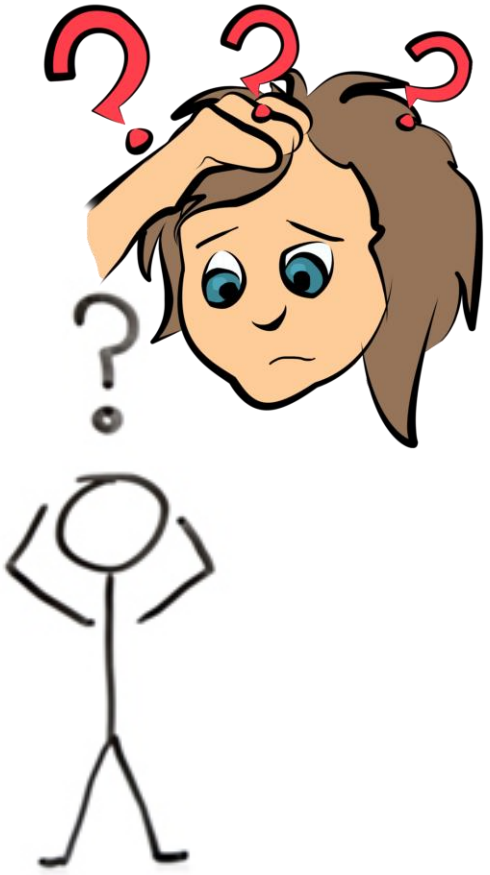


My Body does What?

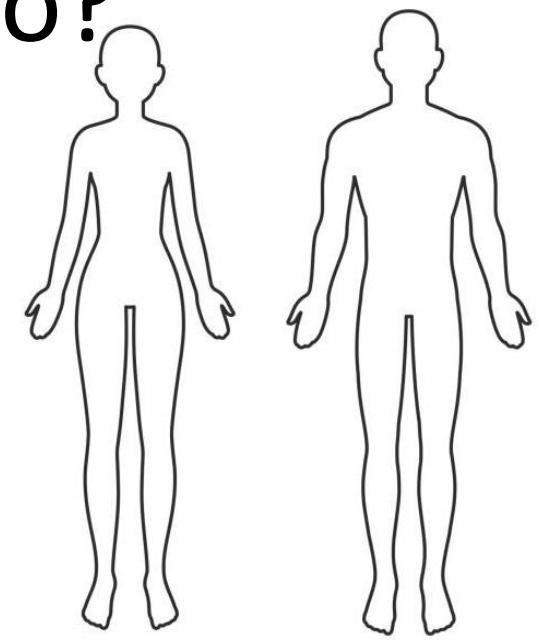
Group Overview:

5 themed workshops aiming

- to improve integration of psychological and physical aspects of lived experience
- to provide a range of information to help understand, reduce anxiety and foster appreciation for the human body



Session 1: What can a human body do?

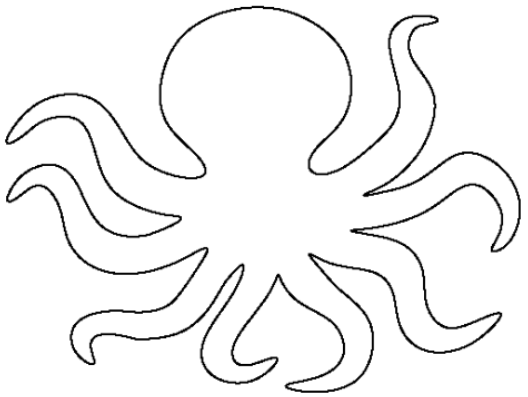


Aim: to encourage bigger picture view of their body as a human body as opposed to a different body

- What does our human body enable us to do?

On a body outline indicate all the different abilities, tasks and functions our bodies enable us to do.

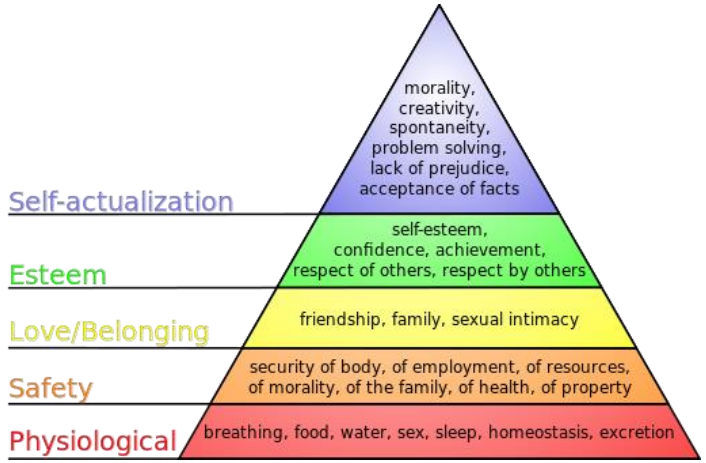
- What would living in a non-human body be like?
  - Ask each person to pick an animal outline and imagine they lived in that body; what this would change about how they experience the world?
  - Prompts: Think about what you would see, hear, feel differently if you were an animal e.g. a whale would not care about rain; a wolf might know where a friend has been by smell alone
  - Invite individuals to share with the group, encourage a playful approach; explore the pros and cons of living in a human body? (e.g. large brain to body ratio; unprotected soft tissue on outside)



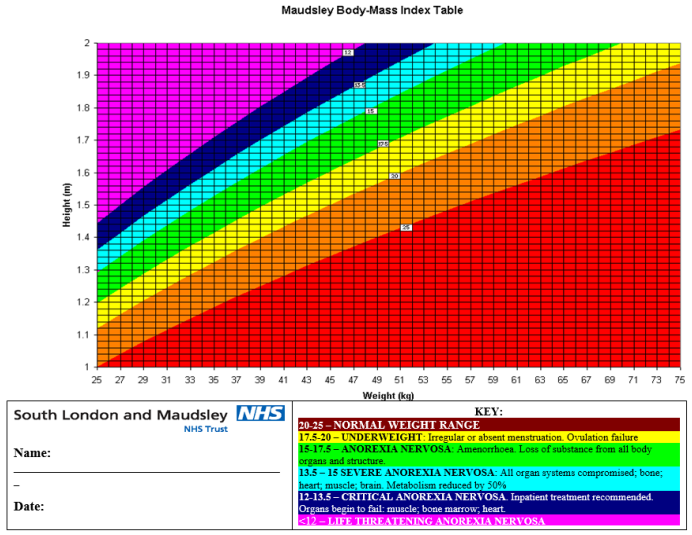
Homework: Appreciate one thing that your human body does for you over the next 7 days – however small or simple, just try to appreciate it. E.g. enjoying hearing music

Session 2: What do our bodies need from us?

Aim: to normalise bodily requirements; provide psychoeducation on risks/consequences of ED behaviours with harm minimization information in a motivational style (meaning without pressure to set goals for change)

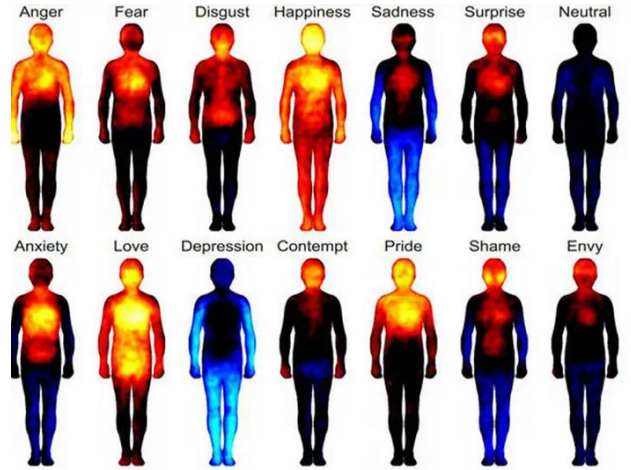


- Share and explore Maslow's hierarchy of needs (with details of physiological layer hidden)- highlighting that physiological requirements are the foundation on which all other needs are built.
- What does a human body need?
  - Group/pairs – try to identify the physiological needs named in hierarchy, share answers with wider group and explore responses
  - Brief psycho-ed on why humans need: Sleep; Physical Rest; Nutrition; Fluids; Vaccinations; Medical care
- Why some ED behaviours can have negative consequences on health (use CCI handouts)
  - Brief psycho-ed on the health impact of common ED behaviours: Sleep deprivation; Compulsive exercise; Poor nutrition; Low BMI – rainbow chart; Dehydration; Purging of consumed calories



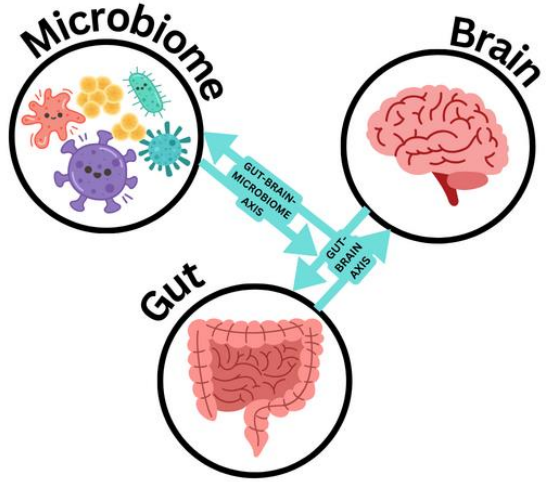
<u>Homework:</u> Is it possible to hold in mind that your body is fragile and needs your help to continue functioning? Try to identify one area within the physiological level which you want to invite yourself to attend to differently over the next week?

Session 3: Emotions and the Body

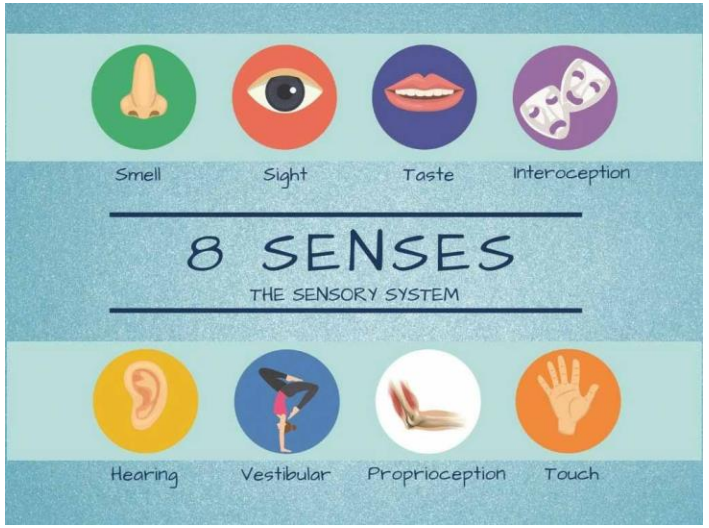


Aims: to raise awareness of both the positive intention of body signals and the impact of thoughts and feelings on the body

- Psycho-education: emotions usually start with body sensations; each emotion feels slightly differently in the body so paying attention can help us identify how we feel
- Quiz – can you guess the emotion from body sensations? e.g. tense muscles + restless/fidgety + cold sweats + needing the toilet = anxious
- Psychoeducation then discussion: Anxiety: Fight and flight response – understanding the link between psychological and physiological components
- Psychoeducation then discussion: The gut-brain axis – understanding psychological component of IBS/gastric discomfort etc. – we can't always blame food!
- Homework: try an experiment, the next time you notice a strong body sensation adopt a curiosity approach – is my body sending a message - what is it trying to tell me? Has anxiety or stress affected my body?

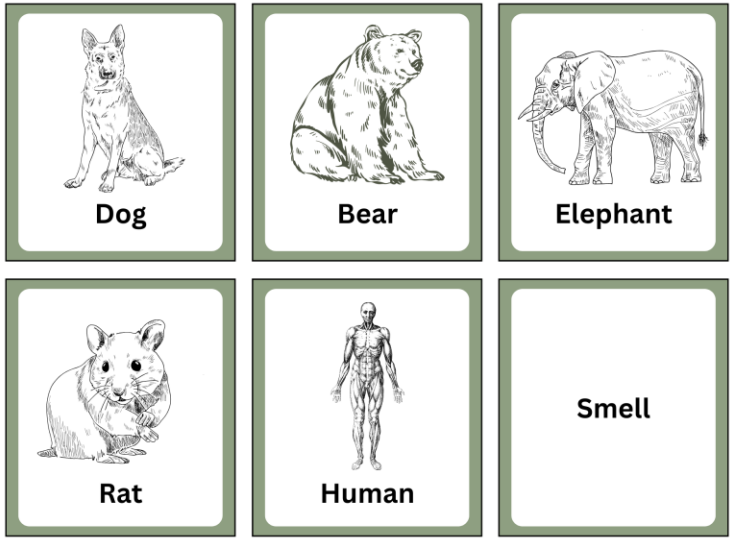


Session 4: The Sensory Body



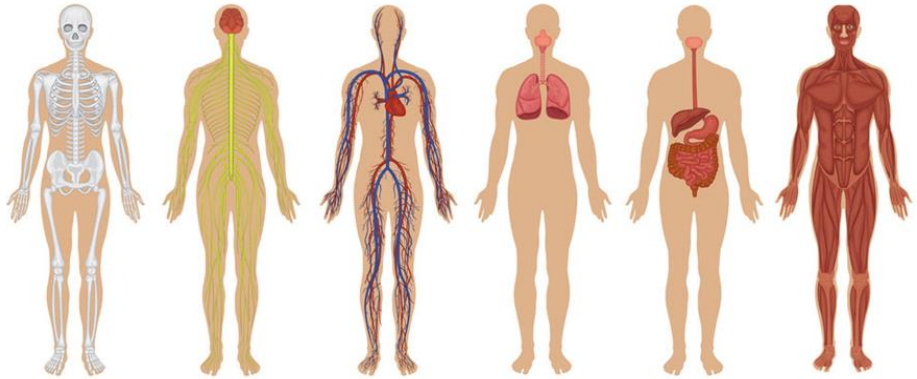
Aim: to explore the body as a source of both pleasure and discomfort

- Provide an overview of the eight senses
- Compare Human Senses to other animals – organise cards in order best to worst
- General discussion
  - Which sense provides the most pleasure/ difficulty? Which sense would you find it hardest to be without? – give recent example of covid changing people's sense of taste and smell
- Permitting the body to be a source of pleasure
  - Mind map: pleasant body sensations and what might provide these e.g. feeling cosy – soft warm clothes
- Explore Sensory Ladder and Sensory Regulation
  - Supply handouts of the sensory ladder and a list of strategies to activate and calm the senses



- Homework: choose one pleasant sensory activity and try to do it over the next week

Session 5: The Wisdom of the Body



Aim: to increase awareness of automatic systems in the body,
to foster increased trust and appreciation for the body's wisdom and capacity to maintain itself (with our help)

- Body map – small group task, on a body outline indicate which functions happen outside of our awareness? What tasks do our bodies do that we don't even notice?
- Brief psycho-education on the automatic systems in the body
- Sum up: We have explored the body from lots of different perspectives including what it does for us, what it needs, how it communicates with us, how it provides information about our experiences and works to keep us alive and well.
- Letter to Body: *Write a message to your body, what would you like it to know? What do you appreciate about it? What would you like to offer it so that it can help you live a full life?* Allow time for letters to be shared (optional) or for any difficulties writing it to be expressed
- Invite each participant to share the main messages they want to hold onto from attending these workshops
- Feedback – invite verbal and written feedback on what has been helpful and unhelpful about the sessions, provide measures and group feedback sheet

Automatic Systems

- ✓ Homeostasis (sweating/shivering)
- ✓ Appetite (hunger; satiety)
- ✓ Menstrual/hormone cycles
- ✓ Pain signaling injury
- ✓ Guarding – involuntarily tensing of muscle to prevent pain
- ✓ Senses - move us away from danger/towards pleasure
- ✓ Immune response
- ✓ Healing/repair

Overview

The ‘My Body Does What?’ group was available for all patients on the inpatient unit to attend

Attendance to the groups for each Pilot run:

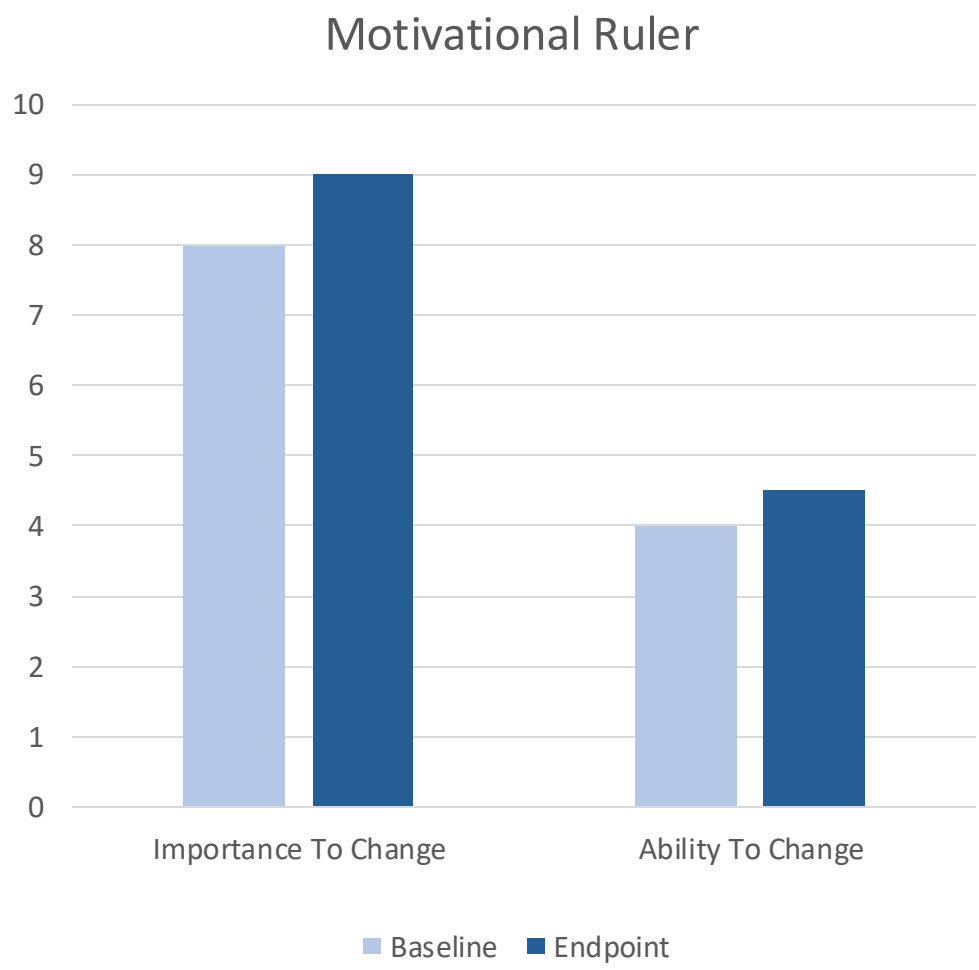
	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	Pilot 3
Group 1	10	4	7
Group 2	7	7	7
Group 3	5	6	3
Group 4	6	6	0
Group 5	6	6	4

Patients needed to complete a minimum of three sessions and have completed baseline and endpoint measures to be included in the data

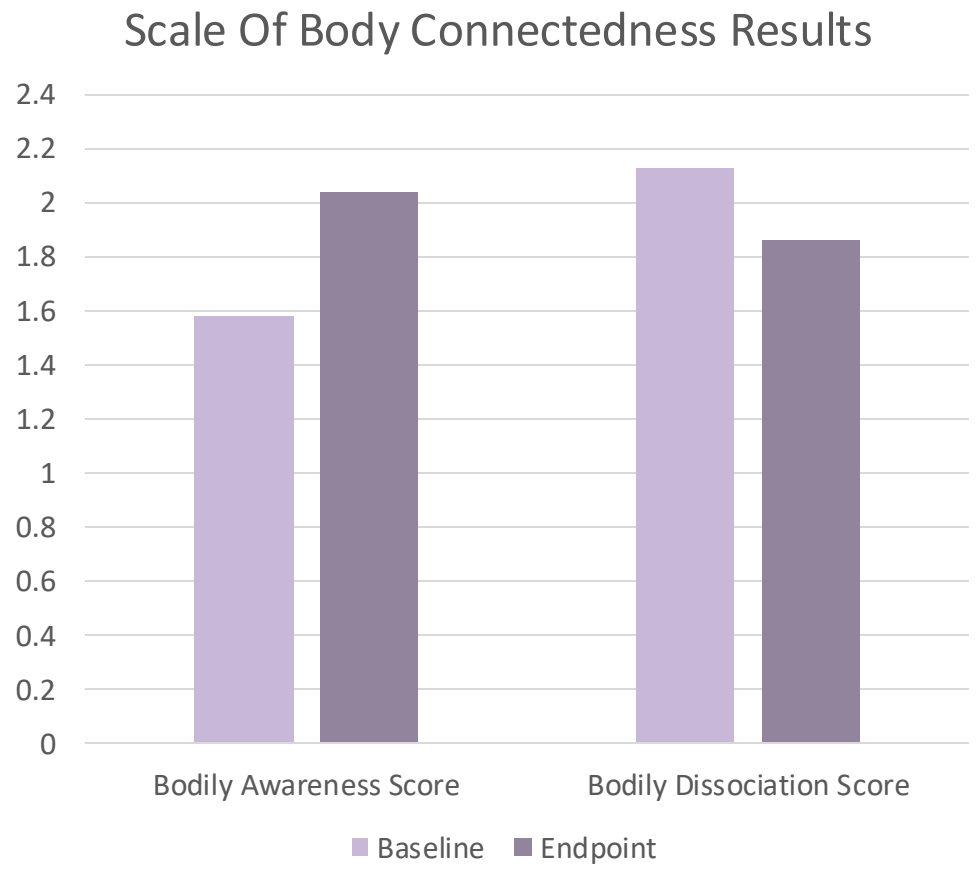
- From pilot 1 there was a total of three patients that we could use for our data
- From pilot 2 there was total of four patients that we could use for our data
- From pilot 3 there was a total of two patients that we could use for our data

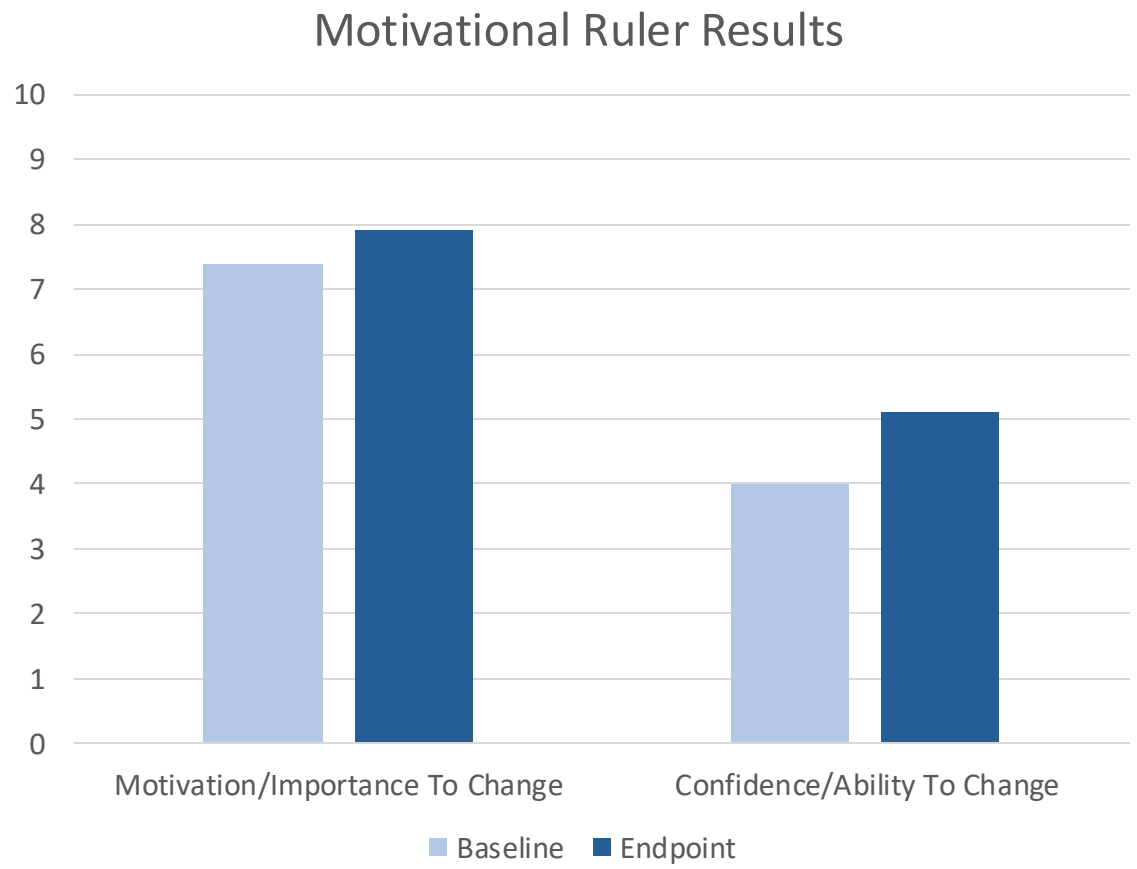
Baseline vs Endpoint Results For Pilot 3





Baseline vs Endpoint Results For All Pilots





Qualitative feedback

Positives:

- Informative and factual
- Included discussions which felt impactful
- Thinking about the body in ways other than food

Improvements:

- Cover information that is more applicable to patients' relationship with their body
- Information on how to improve relationship with body, body neutrality?
- More 'homework'



References and Resources

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Overton, W. F. (2008). Embodiment from a relational perspective. In Overton, W. F., Müller, U. and Newman, J. (Eds.), Developmental Perspectives on Embodiment and Consciousness. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

CCI Disordered Eating Information Sheets available here:
Eating Disorders Self-Help Resources - Information Sheets & Workbooks (health.wa.gov.au)

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Any Questions/Comments?



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With Thanks to …

- Christina Mansour – final year Counselling Psychology student who helped develop the materials and run the first pilot
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