

# MOOD WALKS



Healthy Parks, Healthy People  
University of Waterloo, Ontario  
May 6-7, 2015



# Introduction

**Scott Mitchell**

Director, Knowledge Transfer  
Canadian Mental Health  
Association, Ontario

Director of Mood Walks

Occasional Hiker





***How Mood Walks Promotes  
Healthy Lifestyles and  
Quality of Life for HPHP***

**AGENDA**

**About CMHA**

**Knowledge to Action**

**Mood Walks**

**Evaluation Results**

**Next Steps**

# GET READY TO **GET LOUD** FOR OUR BIGGEST, LOUDEST MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Raise your voice with ours and speak out for the mental health of men and boys

**MAY 4-10, 2015**



[www.mentalhealthweek.ca](http://www.mentalhealthweek.ca)



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*

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Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
*La santé mentale pour tous*

CMHA facilitates access to the resources people require to:

- maintain and improve **mental health**
- build **resilience**
- support **recovery** from mental illness

CMHA provides services and supports:

- across the **country**
- across **settings** (home, school, workplace, justice system)
- across the **lifespan** (children and youth, adults, seniors)



@CMHAOntario #moodwalks #cmha

Map Satellite



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Ontario  
*Mental health for all*

**32 branches in Ontario**



Map data ©2013 Google, INEGI Terms of Use Report a map error

# CMHA Ontario Division

- system planning and **policy research** with a focus on equity and the social determinants of health
- **knowledge translation** and exchange to support evidence-informed decision-making
- **capacity building** for mental health agencies and community partners

# What is mental health?

“A state of complete **physical, mental** and **social** well-being, and not merely the **absence** of disease.”

— World Health Organization

# What is mental health?

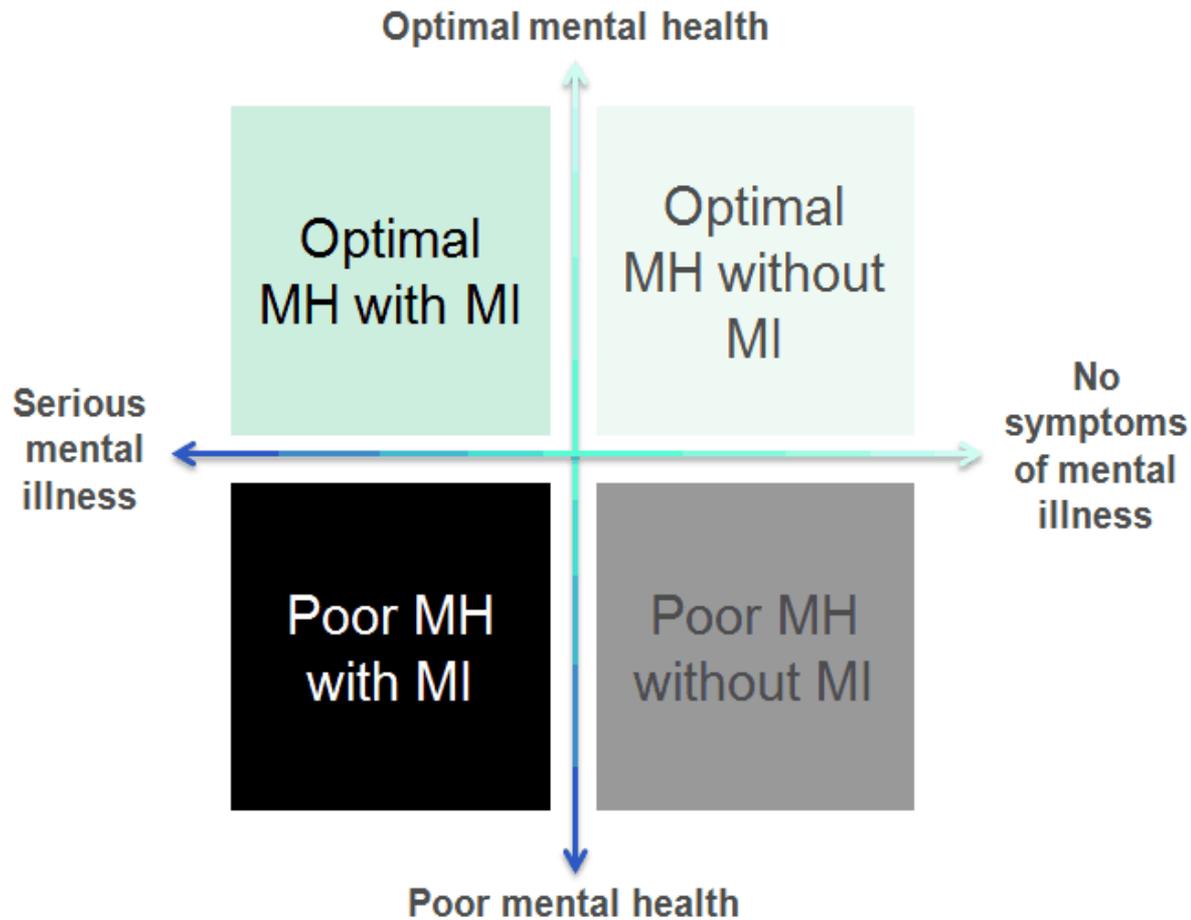
“Mental health is integral to our overall health. It is a state of well-being in which the individual:

- realizes his or her own potential,
- can cope with the normal stresses of life,
- can work productively and fruitfully, and
- is able to make a contribution to her or his own community.”

— World Health Organization, 2007

Adopted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012

# Two-continuum model



Corey Keyes (2002), *The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life*

# Benefits of positive mental health

- **Positive mental health\*** is a protective factor against chronic physical conditions.
- People with positive mental health experience **greater resilience** and stronger bonds with friends and family, miss fewer days at work, use fewer health care services, and experience **lower levels of chronic conditions** (Keyes 2007).

# Recovery from mental illness

Recovery is the **personal process** that people with mental health conditions experience in gaining **control, meaning and purpose** in their lives.

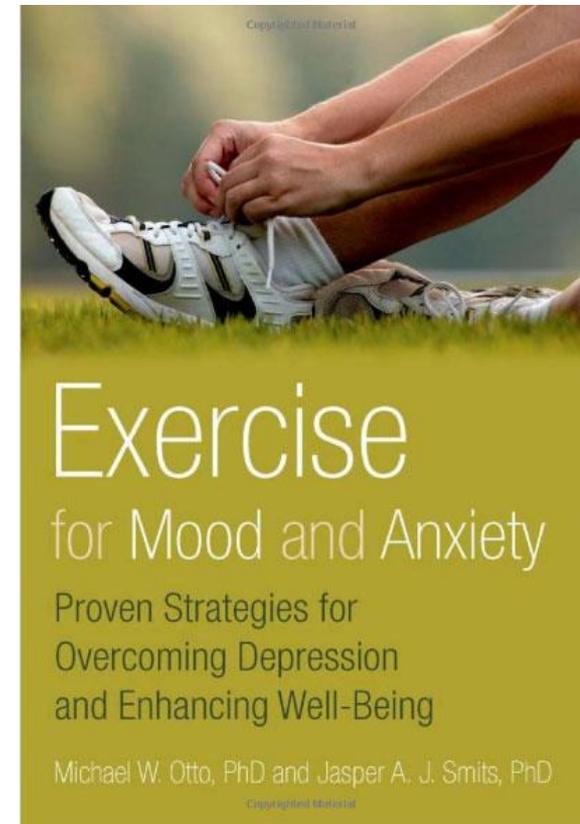
“Recovery means finding **my** reason to get out of bed in the morning.”

- Pat Deegan

# Benefits of physical activity

## Physical activity improves mental health

- Positive effect on emotion, mood, sense of well-being
- Positive effect on self-esteem and self-confidence
- Improved body image
- Improved feelings of mastery and self-efficacy
- Sense of accomplishment and empowerment
- Lower risk of disturbed sleep
- Better cognitive performance



# “Sweat is the best antidepressant”\*

## Physical activity versus “treatment”

- PA associated with **minimal adverse side-effects** – in contrast to pharmacological interventions
- Can be **sustained indefinitely** by the individual, unlike psychotherapeutic treatments which often have a specified end point
- **Normalizing** health-focused experiences, unlike drug treatments and other clinical interventions that are a constant reminder of one’s illness
- Serve as a **bridge** to engaging someone with other programs
- Group programs promote **social inclusion**, which is strongly associated with positive mental health

# The knowledge gap

Research evidence shows that **physical activity can have significant positive effects** in preventing chronic disease, improving chronic disease outcomes and **supporting recovery from mental illness**.

Despite the known benefits, **physical activity interventions are not commonplace** or well integrated with other services delivered by community mental health care providers.

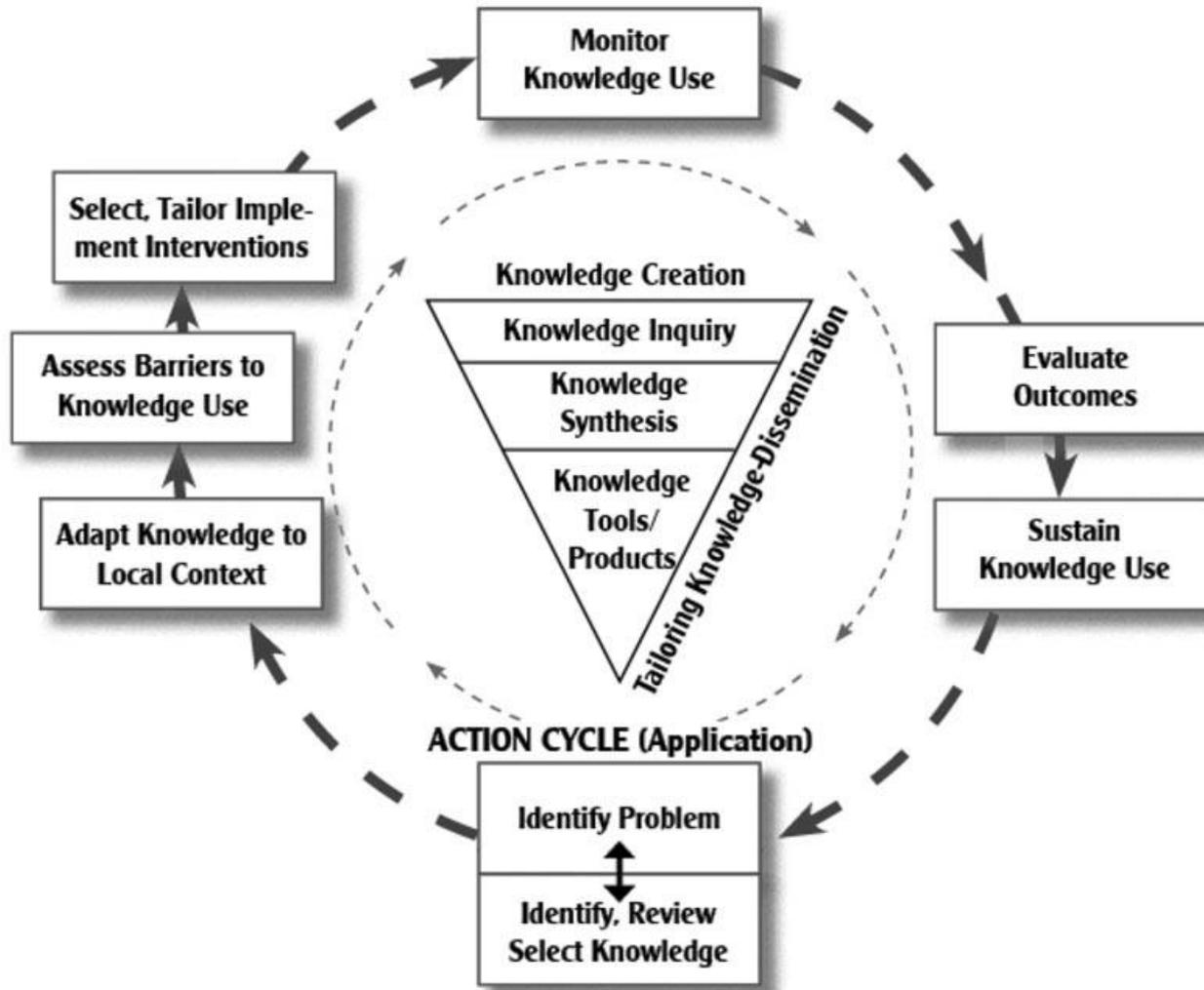
# Defining knowledge translation

## Knowledge translation is...

“a dynamic and iterative process that includes the synthesis, dissemination, exchange and ethically sound application of knowledge to improve the health of Canadians, provide more effective health services and products and strengthen the healthcare system.”

—Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2009

# Knowledge to Action Framework



Ian Graham et al. (2006), "Lost in Knowledge Translation: Time for a Map?" *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*

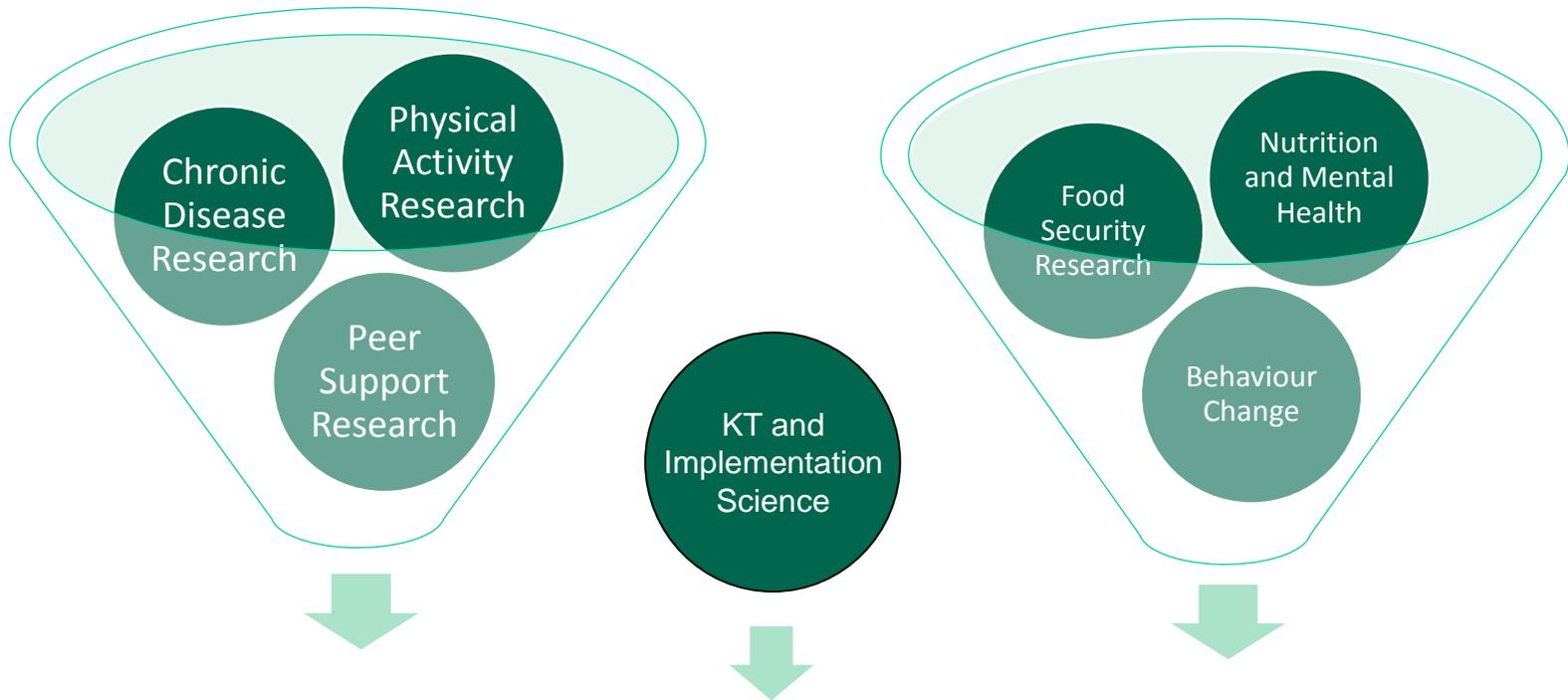


# Defining knowledge translation

Knowledge translation is...

closing the gap  
between what we know (*evidence*)  
and what we do (*action*)

# What evidence?



Making the Case:  
Physical Activity and Healthy Eating for Mental Health



# Minding Our Bodies Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Mental Health

## Why We Do It

People with mental illness face barriers to recovery

Food Insecurity

Chronic Disease

Weight Gain

Stigma

Social Exclusion

## What We Do

We build community capacity to deliver effective programs

Collective Kitchens

Community Gardens

Physical Activity Programs

Nutrition and Life Skills Education

## How We Do It

We provide resources and promote collaboration

Knowledge Exchange

Peer Support

Community Partnerships

Health Professional Education

Funding



Canadian Mental Health Association  
Ontario

[www.mindingourbodies.ca](http://www.mindingourbodies.ca)



Supported by the Healthy Communities Fund

EVA M. SELHUB MD

ALAN C. LOGAN ND

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# Your Brain — on — NATURE

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**The Science of Nature's Influence on  
Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality**

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“By pushing ourselves away from nature, we humans not only have distanced ourselves from crisis-level environmental concerns but we are risking losing contact with one of the most vital mental health tools imaginable — nature.”







The joy of walking

CAN BE DONE  
ALMOST  
ANYWHERE

REQUIRES  
LITTLE  
EQUIPMENT OR  
TRAINING

IS GREAT  
TO DO WITH  
A GROUP

# Project partners



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Ontario  
*Mental health for all*



**MOOD WALKS**

# Project manager



Andrea Town

Occupational Therapist in  
community mental health

Project management and  
evaluation skills

“I love hiking!”

**MOOD WALKS**

# Mood Walks timeline



## Fall 2013

- Conduct environmental scan of resources
- Conduct planning surveys with stakeholders

## Winter 2014

- Recruit advisory committee and hold meetings
- Develop program resources
- Design communication and evaluation plans

## Spring 2014

- Issue Request for Proposals
- Select participating sites

## Summer 2014

- Facilitate Community of Practice webinars
- Create newsletters and media releases

Mental health  
agencies plan  
and implement  
local walking  
groups

## Fall 2014

- Complete evaluation data analysis
- Prepare report of findings

## Winter 2015

- Update program resources
- Disseminate results

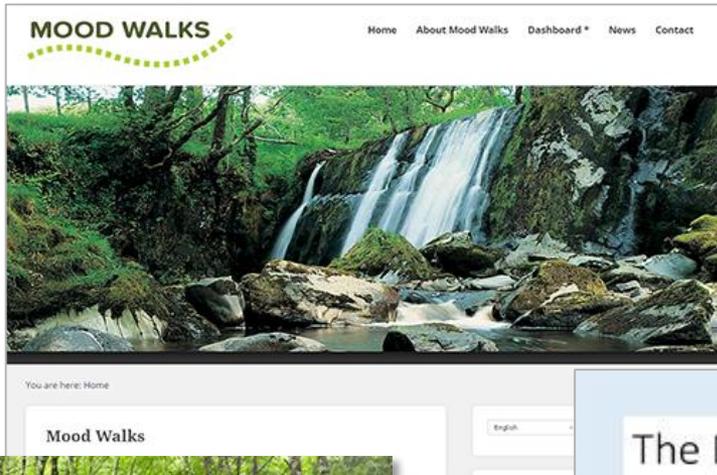
MOOD WALKS

# Stakeholder survey

Would any of the following factors be a challenge for your organization if you ran a Mood Walks group (check all that apply)?



# Mood Walks resources



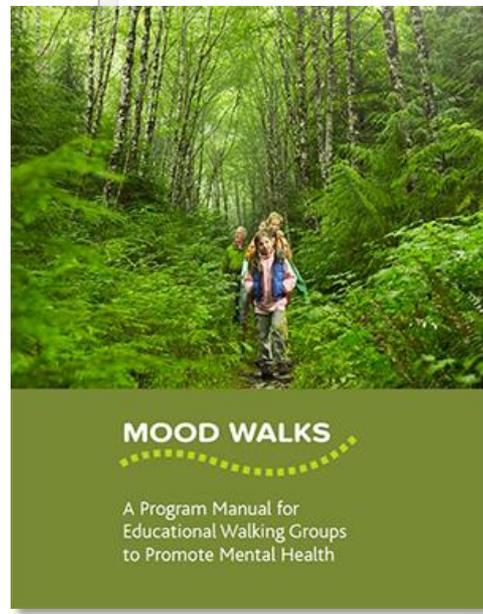
← WEBSITE + NEWSLETTER

INFOGRAPHIC POSTER →



← PRESENTATION

The Mental Health Benefits of Physical Activity and Exposure to the Natural Environment



WEBINARS →

← PROGRAM MANUAL



# Mood Walks evaluation plan

*Looking at both process and outcome measures:*

**Process** – How do Mood Walks groups operate compared with the manner in which the groups were intended to operate?

**Outcome** – How effective is the Mood Walks project in achieving its goals?

*Concerned with outcomes of Mood Walks at 3 levels:*

- **Participants**
- **Participating agencies**
- **Project overall**



# Mood Walks evaluation plan

## RE-AIM framework...

- Reach intended population
- Efficacy or effectiveness
- Adoption by participating groups
- Implementation and adaptations
- Maintenance over time

# Mood Walks evaluation plan

## Outcomes for participating agencies:

- Are agencies satisfied with the initiative, including resources and supports provided?
- Are new, valuable, sustainable partnerships developed?
- Are ties to the greater community strengthened?
- How will participating in Mood Walks affect agencies into the future?
- Did we contribute to an increased understanding of nature's impact on mental health?

# Mood Walks evaluation plan

*Some unique outcomes*

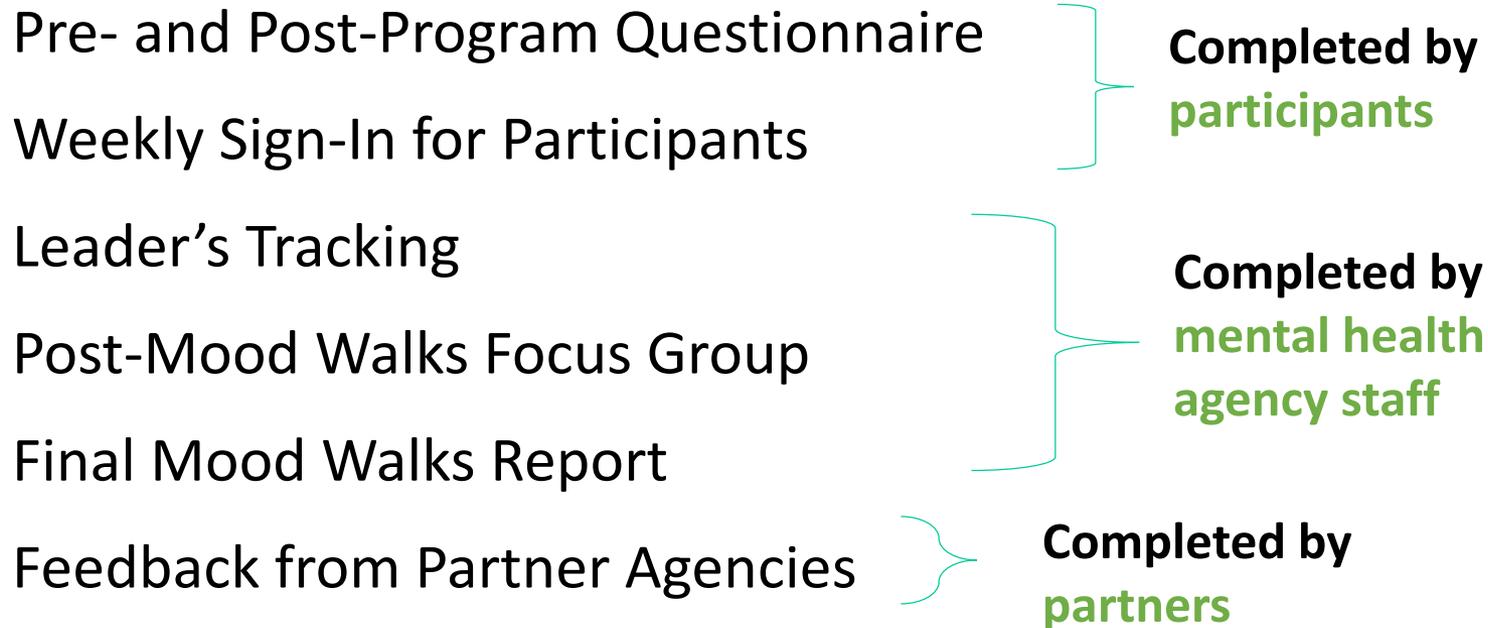
## For Mental Health Agencies

- Is capacity to implement physical activity interventions enhanced?
- Are new formal or informal peer-leader positions created?

## For Partner Organizations

- Is understanding of mental health issues increased?
- Is comfort working with people who experience mental health issues increased?
- Were new user groups or members attracted to these organizations?

# Mood Walks evaluation tools



# Highlights from our pilot year (2014)

**22** new walking  groups across Ontario

**64%** of groups walked for at least **10**  weeks

**70**  minutes = average length of walk

**140** hours  of group walking time

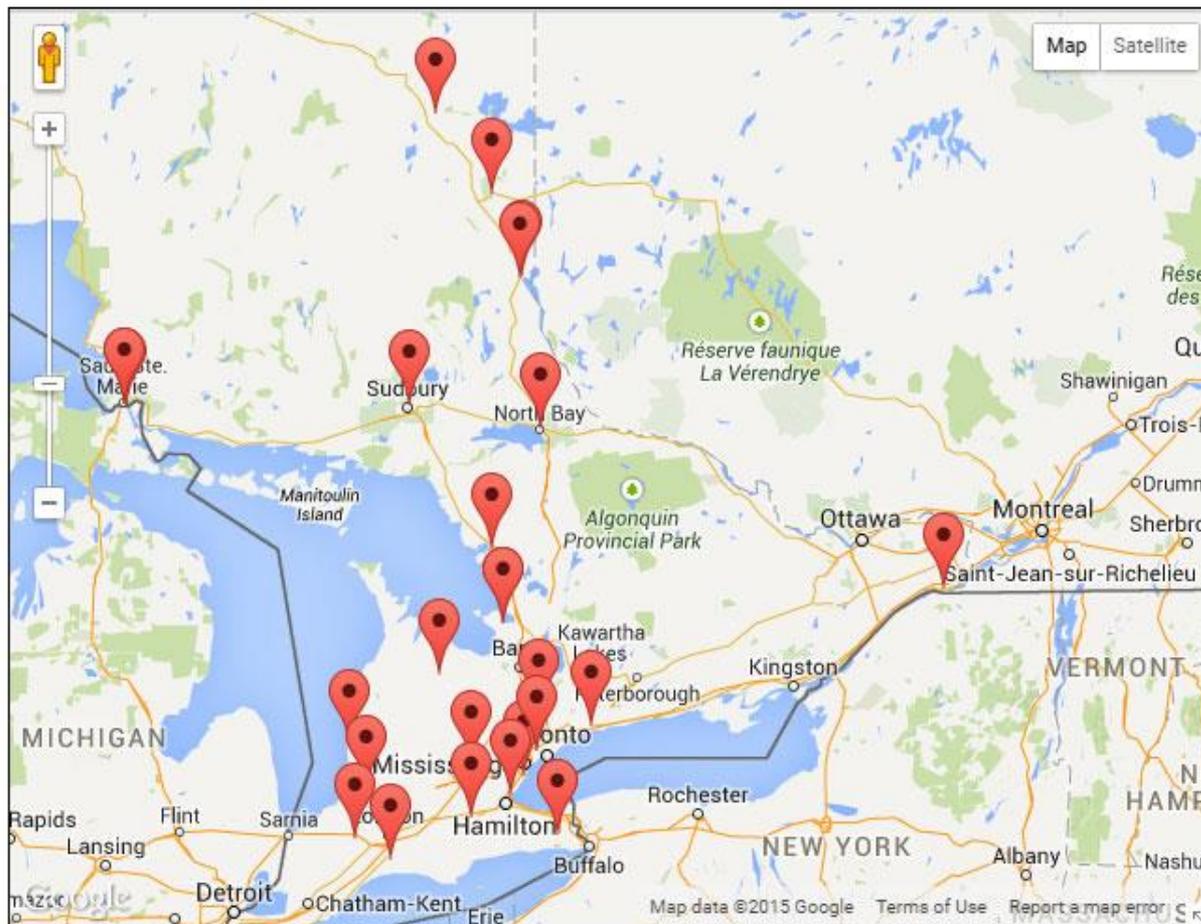
 **896**

hours of walking by participants

Most groups walked once per week, with an average of **6.4** participants per walk

**42%** 

of hikes took place in Conservation Areas



**MOOD WALKS**





**Waypoint Mood Walks group,  
Georgian Bay Snow Riders Trail**



## Training & Support

**220**

people participated in 9 webinars

**257**

people received Safe Hiker training

**21**

new Safe Hiker Instructors

**51**

new Certified Hike Leaders

**2**

new Certified Hike Leader Instructors

**97%**

of mental health agencies and

**20%**

of partners consulted with  
the Project Manager

**90**

people participated in the final  
Mood Walks Summit



# Impact on Mental Health Agencies

## Participating in Mood Walks has...

Average Rating  
(out of 5)

Increased overall client engagement .....	<b>3.9</b>
Enhanced capacity to implement physical activity interventions .....	<b>4.2</b>
Strengthened our agency's ties with the greater community .....	<b>3.8</b>
Enhanced our agency's ability to develop community partnerships .....	<b>3.9</b>
Supported the creation of peer leaders .....	<b>3.5</b>
Strengthened a health-promoting culture within our agency .....	<b>4.0</b>
Improved community awareness of our agency and its services .....	<b>3.5</b>
Improved staff connection to clients .....	<b>4.2</b>

**MOOD WALKS**



# Feedback from MHA Staff

What was effective in generating enthusiasm among group members?

- Special outings
- Partners joining walks
- Mood Walks bulletin board
- Incentives, final prizes, awards
- Reminder phone calls

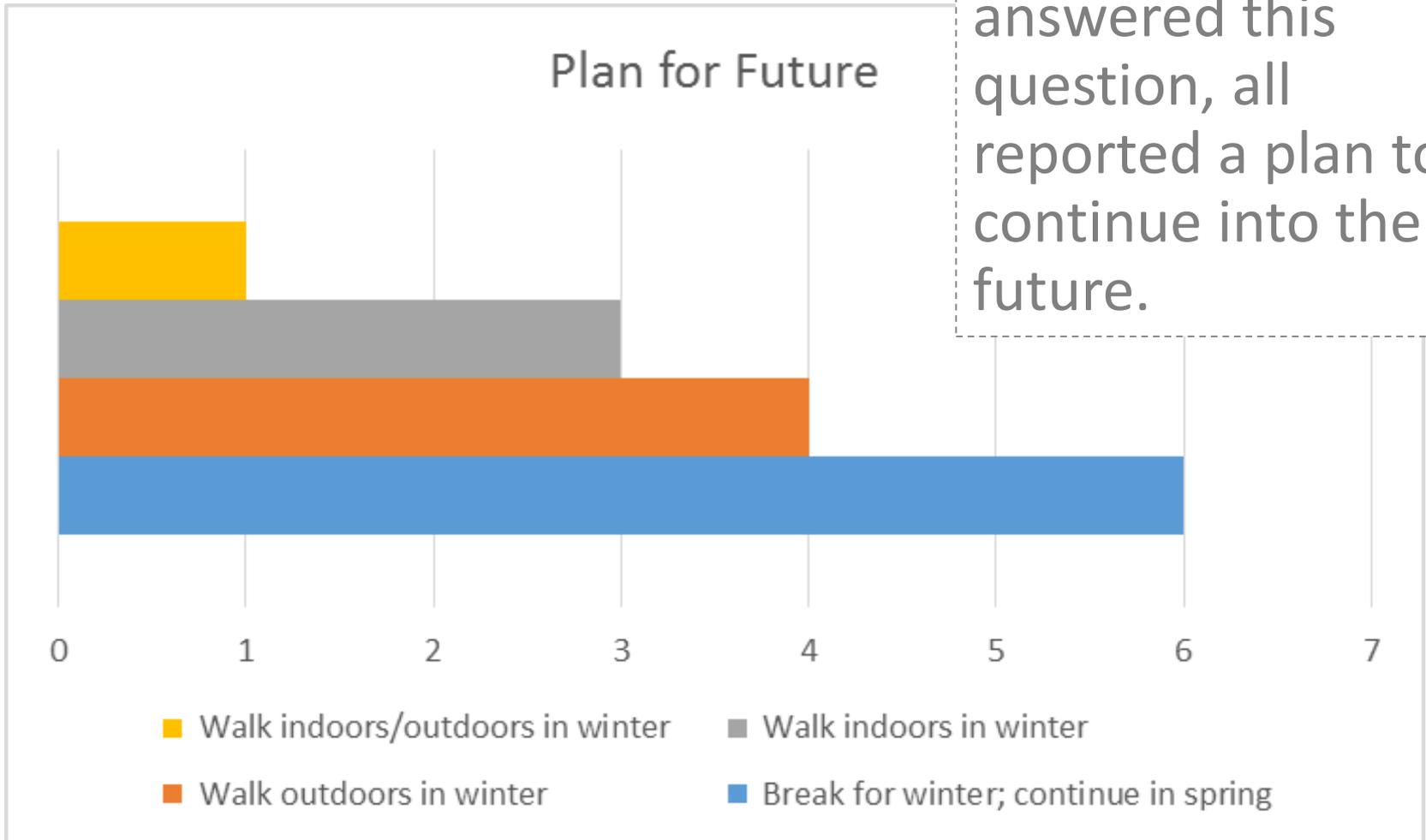
# Feedback from MHA Staff

## Challenges and Barriers for Leaders

- Staff scheduling and time pressures
- Transportation
- Paperwork
- Weather (and mosquitoes!)
- Lack of participant commitment
- Lack of staff buy-in (forgetting phone calls, unaware of health benefits)
- Format didn't fit with drop-in program
- Varying physical abilities of group members
- Prohibitive age limit (target age 50+)

# Feedback from MHA Staff

Of 16 sites that answered this question, all reported a plan to continue into the future.





# How partners can work together

Hike Ontario and Conservation Ontario  
*requested support*  
working with people  
who experience  
mental health issues



Providing guidance about  
engaging with people  
with mental health issues  
*most valuable activity for  
mental health agencies*

Mental health agency staff **assumed leadership of the group**,  
especially regarding interactions with group participants

Partners played **supportive role**, sharing knowledge and expertise

# Partnerships

Mental health agencies partnered with local hiking clubs, Conservation Authorities and student volunteers.

**37**

local partnerships  
(29 new partnerships)

**29**

hours = average  
contribution by partners

**92%**

of partnerships described  
as “successful”

**73%**

of partnerships “definitely”  
expected to continue

**MOOD WALKS**



# Impact on Partners

Participating in Mood Walks has...	Average Rating (out of 5)
Increased my awareness of nature's influence on mental health .....	<b>4.3</b>
Increased my understanding of mental health issues .....	<b>3.5</b>
Increased my comfort working with people who experience mental health issues .....	<b>3.9</b>
Increased interest of others in my organization to learn how to support people who experience mental health issues .....	<b>3.8</b>
Raised the profile of our organization in the community .....	<b>3.3</b>
Strengthened our organization's ties with the greater community .....	<b>3.8</b>
Enhanced our organization's capacity to develop community partnerships ..	<b>3.5</b>
Attracted the interest of new groups or members to our organization .....	<b>3.3</b>

# Participant Results



Homewood Mood Walks group, Fletcher Creek, June 2014, Photo: Barb Cohen

# Participant Results

Pre and Post Questionnaires (3 parts):

**SF-12v2™ Health Survey** [sf-36.org](http://sf-36.org)

Functional health and well-being from the respondent's point of view

**Nature Relatedness Scale** [naturerelatedness.ca](http://naturerelatedness.ca)

Cognitive, affective, and physical connectedness with the natural world

**Additional Questions**

Perceived abilities, beliefs, and behaviours regarding walking and physical activity

Mood Walks goal



# Participant Results

## Mental health component of SF-12

- Increase from 44 to 47 overall
- 50 = general population average

## Knowledge of local hiking trails/parks

- Moved from a 3 “Neither Agree nor Disagree” to a 4 “Agree”
- Many participants (and facilitators!) visited trails and parks they were previously unaware of

## Nature relatedness

- Average scores of 3.9 both pre and post (no change)
- 48% scored 4 or higher



PLACE

PARTNERSHIP

GUELPH TRAIL CLUB!

LEARN FROM OTHERS

OPPORTUNITY TO COMMIT

HEALING ASPECTS OF NATURE

I CAN IDENTIFY THAT!

ECOLOGY

DON'T CONNECT WITH NATURE

AND I DON'T LIKE GROUPS

I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING

CHALLENGES

LACK OF Motivation

TRANSIT DIFFICULTY ACCESSING PARKS

LOWERS ANXIETY AND STRESS

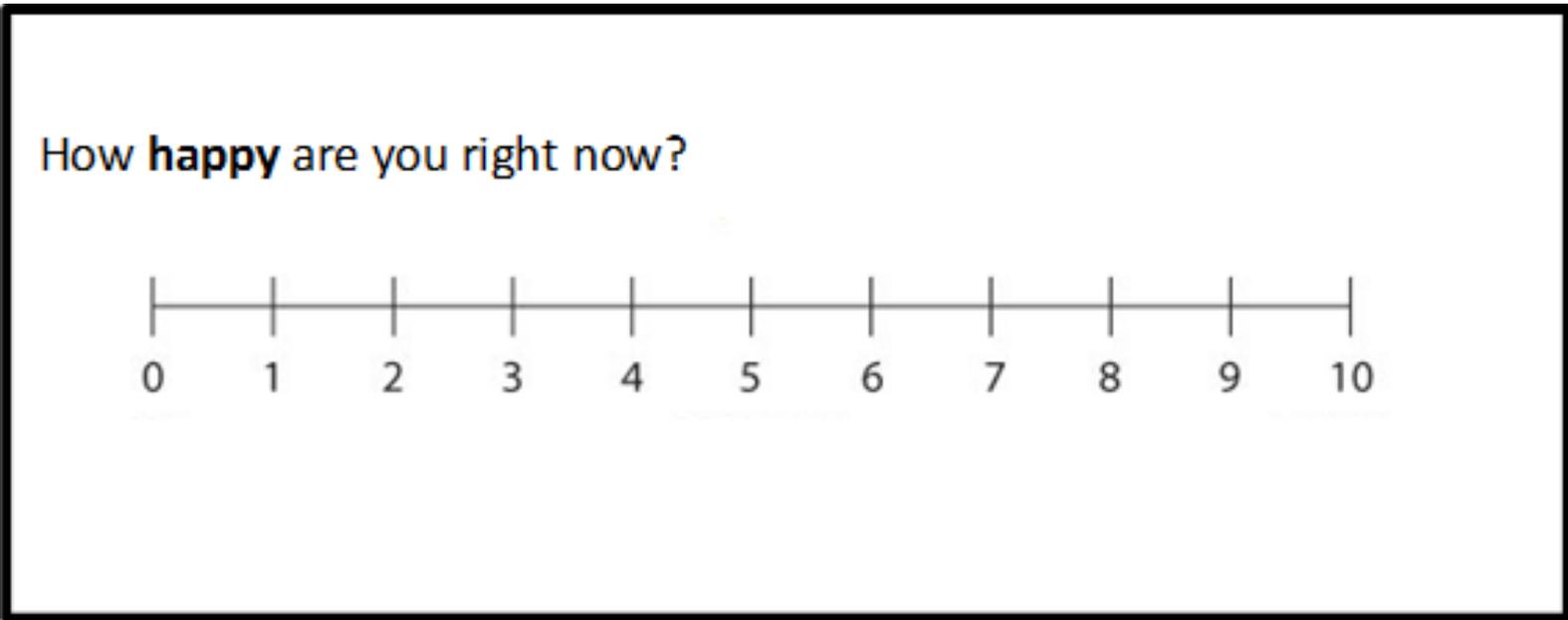
STRONGER HEALTHIER EATING BETTER

CITY STOP



# Participant Results

Participants were asked to rate happiness, anxiety, and energy level **before and after each walk**



# Participant Results

## Impact on Participants

Participants demonstrated a significant positive change (measured on a 10-point scale) in happiness, anxiety, and energy levels from pre- to post-walk.

Pre-Walk Happiness Score	Post-Walk Happiness Score	Significant Change
<b>6.3</b>	<b>7.5</b>	Yes ( $p < 0.01$ )
Pre-Walk Anxiety Score	Post-Walk Anxiety Score	Significant Change
<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	Yes ( $p < 0.01$ )
Pre-Walk Energy Score	Post-Walk Energy Score	Significant Change
<b>5.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	Yes ( $p < 0.01$ )

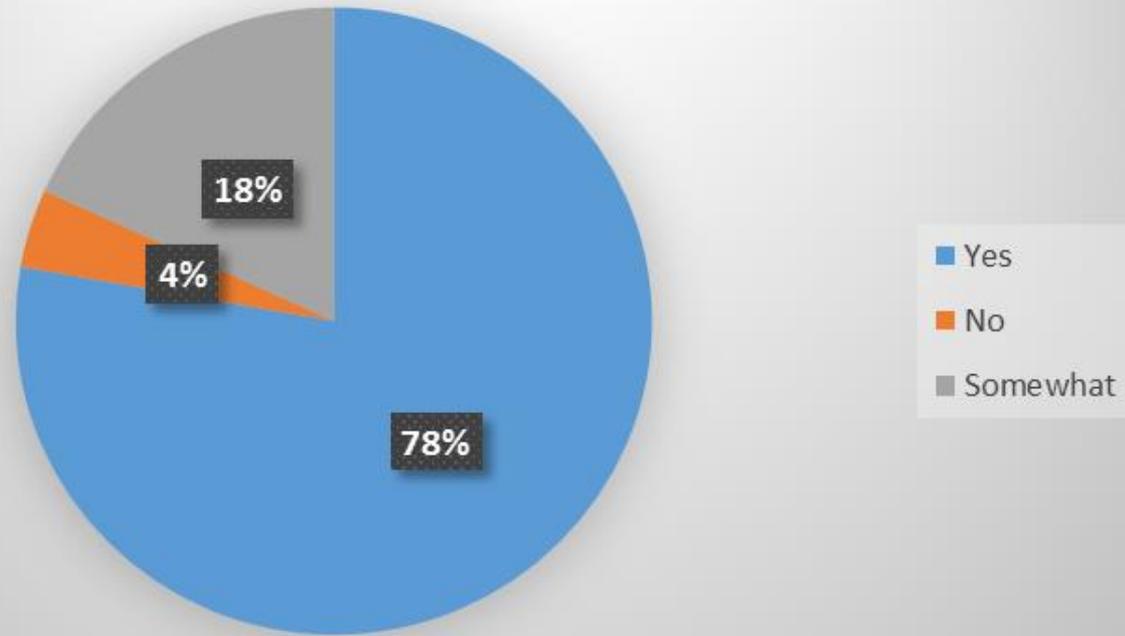
**95%** of participants achieved or somewhat achieved their personal goal.

# Participant Results

Of 99 respondents, 95 achieved or somewhat achieved their goal.

*For those who did not achieve goal, **lack of attendance** was frequently cited as a reason why.*

Goal Attainment



# Participant Goals

1. Increase physical fitness
2. Connect with people
3. Connect with nature
4. Feel good
5. Be more physically active
6. Explore new places
7. Have positive experiences
8. Have something to do
9. Increase knowledge and comfort hiking



# What did participants like about Mood Walks?



1. Connecting with nature
2. Social aspect
3. Learning and gaining skills
4. Feeling of accomplishment
5. Positive experience
6. Exploring new places
7. Engaging with partners
8. *Exercise*

# Participant Comments

## Accomplishment:

“I lost some weight, saw some new places, had fun with friends. I feel better about things. I can do things that I thought I couldn’t.”

## Managing Mental Health:

“It is a useful exercise and do it to not be dependent on antidepressant tablets alone.”

“I notice the difference of being able to breath, calm myself, reduce the number of counselling sessions.”

## Positive Shared Experience:

“I enjoyed every minute, every conversation, every emotion, every sight of the walks.”

# Participant Comments

“Conversation is different: when we meet in a room or a coffee shop we have a tendency to talk about what we did yesterday/tomorrow; when we are in nature we talk about things when you were a kid, how you’d like to have a cottage someday. Your mind just frees right up.”

— *Mood Walks participant*



# How would participants improve Mood Walks?

- Walk more frequently/longer
- More participants
- Split into smaller groups to accommodate varying abilities
- Greater variety of walks
- Give info pre-walk, such as maps

*All participants who responded would participate in Mood Walks again and recommend the group to a friend!*



**CMHA Brant Mood Walks group. Photo: Dan Walsh**

# Next steps...

- Access to Mood Walks manual
- Mood Walks for Youth at Risk
- Research Partnerships
- Sustainability



Questions?



# MOOD WALKS



[www.moodwalks.ca](http://www.moodwalks.ca)

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