

Are People Living with HIV/AIDS

who have higher scores on the (Ryff and Keyes') Environmental Mastery Scale more capable of **using their skills and training to become effective and empowered leaders in their communities:**
Lessons learned from the AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario's Peer Facilitator Training

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OBJECTIVES:

In collaboration with community members, the AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario (ABPO) staff and researchers identified the need to develop an effective training for peer facilitators to provide bereavement and multiple loss support in communities across Ontario.

One of three objectives for this community-based research project and Peer Facilitation training initiative was to identify and assess Peer Facilitator trainee capacities and core Peer Facilitator skills development, including: self awareness, self-perception, self-care, community relationships, survivorship and leadership.

METHODS:

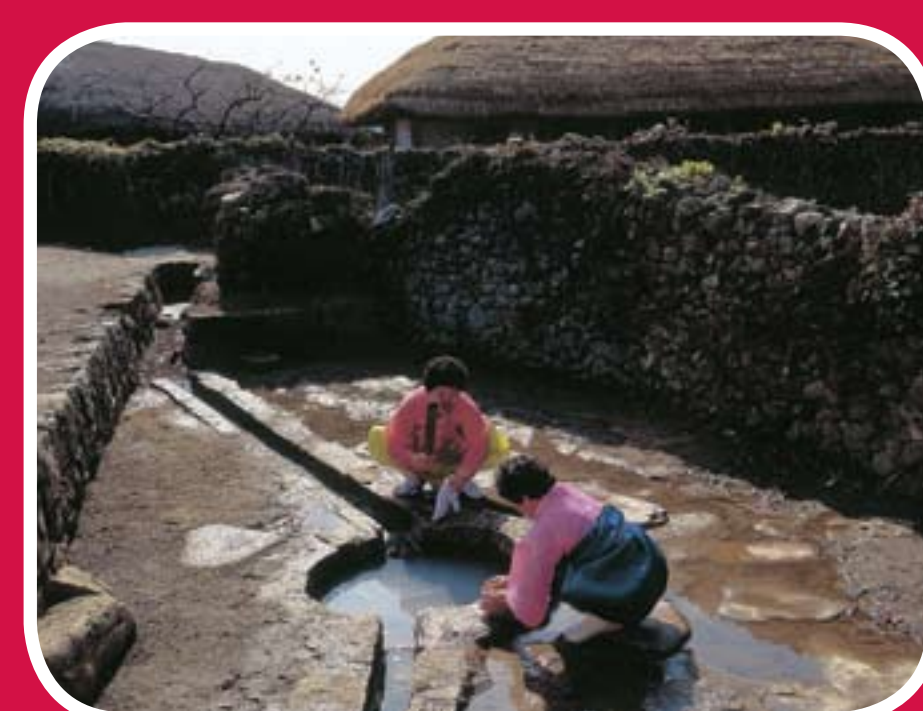
Trainee capacities and core Peer Facilitator skills were assessed using Ryff and Keyes' Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth and Purpose in Life scales.

Training retreats were held in two sessions. A total of 16 Trainees attended Session 1 and 18 Trainees attended Session 2. Training participants had an average age of 45, and 90% reported living HIV-positive, with an average of 15 years since diagnoses. Two training participants identified as HIV-negative Long-term Survivors. Peer Facilitator Trainees represented a variety of geographic, social, cultural and sexual communities of belonging.

A substantial increase in the overall mean Environmental Mastery Score was reported by Trainees who completed both of ABPO's Peer Facilitator training retreats—60.9% vs. 42.2%.

RESULTS:

This research has shown that three of the most important personal skills for facilitators conducting peer support in their local communities are:



- one's sense of mastery and competence in managing their environment;



- their ability to control a complex array of external activities and events;



- their ability to make effective use of opportunities to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.

CONCLUSIONS:

Our recommendations include an ongoing Peer Facilitation Training Program which supports Peer Facilitators in their personal growth and expands their empowerment and leadership core skills.



AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario

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