

UIC Solutions Suite Webinar Series
Transcript for how-to webinar on Whole Health Action Management
Recorded by Judith A. Cook

Slide 1 (announcer)

Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Solutions Suite to obtain free tools that promote health, self-direction, and employment for the behavioral health field.

Slide 2

Hello. My name is Judith Cook. I direct the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Our Center offers an online Solutions Suite, containing free tools for the behavioral health field. These tools promote wellness, self-direction, and employment for people in mental health recovery. You can visit our Solutions Suite on the web site where you found this webinar, at www.center4healthandsdc.org. Today, I'll be discussing how to teach *Whole Health Action Management* or WHAM for short, which is offered in our Solutions Suite.

Slide 3

Our Center and the Solutions Suite are jointly funded by two federal agencies. First is the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. Second is the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The work of the Center does not necessarily represent the policy of any agency or endorsement by the federal government.

Slide 4

There are several learning objectives for this webinar. One is to understand the purpose of WHAM and how it's organized. Another is to learn about the qualifications and training needed in order to teach WHAM. You'll also hear about ways to market WHAM to potential participants and how to keep them interested and engaged in the course. Another objective is to become familiar with WHAM's underlying principles and the content that is covered in WHAM group and individual sessions. Finally, you'll learn how to implement WHAM at your agency or program.

Slide 5

It's important to know that WHAM was developed by people who've experienced mental health problems. It was created by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, Appalachian Consulting Group Incorporated, and the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. They created the WHAM Peer Support Training Participant Guide available for download from the Solutions Suite web site.

Slide 6

WHAM's purpose is to improve the physical health of people in recovery from behavioral health conditions. It's especially useful for people who have chronic medical conditions but it can be

used by anyone. WHAM was designed to be taught by peer specialists who are trained to deliver the intervention.

Slide 7

WHAM teaches people about 10 factors that are key to wellness. By wellness, we mean the state of being healthy in body and mind. Often, wellness includes things a person does to maintain their health and well-being. These include healthy eating, physical activity, restful sleep, and stress management. Other things include being of service to others, having a support network, maintaining optimism, and knowing how to avoid negative thinking. Finally, wellness is enhanced by nurturing spiritual beliefs and practices, and having a sense of meaning and purpose in one's life.

Slide 8

WHAM is designed to help people learn about these 10 factors so that they can become and stay as healthy as possible. In addition, WHAM helps participants set an achievable health goal using a structured process that I'll tell you more about later. Once they've chosen their goal, people develop a weekly action plan to work toward that goal. They keep a daily log to track their progress. They give and receive peer support in WHAM group meetings. They also receive peer support through weekly individual meetings with their WHAM facilitator.

Slide 9

Today I'll be discussing the 12-session format for teaching WHAM. This is detailed in the WHAM Intervention Facilitator Manual that you can download from our Solutions Suite web site.

Slide 10

WHAM includes both group and individual meetings. Let's start with the WHAM support group. The first 3 group sessions last two and one-half hours. At these sessions people learn about what whole health is. They are helped to select an achievable wellness goal and learn how to create action plans. The remaining sessions last for 90 minutes. Sessions 4 through 11 deal with special health and recovery topics. The final session is a graduation celebration. In all 12 sessions people learn and practice the relaxation response. This is a technique for dealing with internal and external stress by relaxing your body and your mind.

Slide 11

WHAM also involves weekly individual meetings with a peer specialist. The first 3 of these last 45 minutes so the participant and facilitator can get to know each other. By building on this relationship, WHAM education and support are personalized for participants so they get the most out of the course. The remaining individual sessions are shorter, typically around 15-20 minutes. These sessions include health check-ins, which are an important part of WHAM.

Slide 12

The weekly health check-in during individual meetings identifies any upcoming medical appointments. If these are scheduled, participants are helped to prepare for them. Also discussed is whether a person might need to see a doctor about a health issue. If that's the case, participants are helped to arrange an appointment. In addition, the health topic for session 5 focuses on how

to relate to health care providers and how to be an informed patient.

Slide 13

Setting and working toward a health goal is a major part of WHAM. Participants learn a structured and proven way to do this using a procedure called IMPACT. Using this framework guides people to choose a goal that makes an improvement in their lives. It also should be something that is measureable so the person can tell when it has been achieved. It needs to be positively stated so that it adds something the person thinks will be beneficial to their life.

Slide 14

Using IMPACT, people also learn how to make a goal that is realistic given their particular situation and abilities. This makes it something that's achievable. A goal also should be action-oriented by focusing on what needs to happen or be worked on. Finally, the goal should be something that can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time. While this all may sound simple, learning the skills required by the IMPACT framework can be challenging. The WHAM manual describes in detail how facilitators should explain this framework and then how to guide participants to develop a goal that meets these criteria.

Slide 15

Here's a look at the health goals of WHAM participants who used the IMPACT framework. Note that these goals meet the criteria I just described. They include things such as jogging for 20 minutes 2 times a week; eating baked or boiled chicken at 3 meals per week; doing specific physical therapy exercises 2 times a week for a specific number of times; and eating 7 servings of fruits and vegetables a week. These are all realistic additions to a person's life that are action-oriented and measureable. They're not dramatic changes but instead things people can do weekly over a 3-month period of WHAM participation. By developing and working towards goals such as these, people gain self-confidence and learn new behaviors.

Slide 16

This is how WHAM teaching conveys an underlying principle of health behavior change, which is that success creates more success.

Slide 17

WHAM also is built around some core values. One of these is that WHAM participation must be voluntary. People can't be forced to stop engaging in unhealthy habits. Instead, they need to choose to live a healthier lifestyle. Also, WHAM participation needs to involve dealing with a health issue. However, it doesn't have to be a medical condition. For example, one person's health issue was that she wasn't able to take her grandchildren to the playground. Another person's issue was that he wanted to be able to fit into the gear he needed to wear for volunteer fire fighting. Letting people state their health issue in their own words is an important part of WHAM.

Slide 18

Another WHAM core value is that people are more likely to create new habits when the focus is on their interests and what they think they can do. In addition, goal planning needs to be person-centered, based on people's strengths and not their weaknesses, and recovery-oriented.

Slide 19

If you are going to be a WHAM facilitator, it's important that you use WHAM on an ongoing basis. One reason is because it helps to maintain your own health and wellness. Another reason is that WHAM facilitators share their own goals and action steps with the people in their group and individual meetings. In addition, it's important that facilitators do regular self-care to help relieve the stress and emotional challenges of teaching WHAM. Self-care might include getting adequate sleep and nutrition, especially in the day before leading a WHAM group. Another self-care strategy is to use the breaks that occur in each WHAM session wisely. It's a good idea to relax and refresh yourself for a few minutes during break, so that you're ready for the second part of each session.

Slide 20

Another tip for facilitators is to develop a Quality Assurance Plan to share with their co-facilitator. This describes how you'd like to handle any times when you're not feeling well enough to teach. It might include things like how and when to notify your co-facilitator that you can't be at the next session. This gives the co-facilitator adequate notice and even time to find a replacement. You should also plan to meet regularly with other WHAM teachers to discuss how things are going, and to give and get support.

Slide 21

Facilitators also face three important challenges whenever they begin a WHAM class. One is recruitment of people into the class. Another is keeping people engaged and involved in WHAM activities. A third is retaining participants in the course and getting them to attend as many sessions as possible. That way, they get the maximum benefit from WHAM.

Slide 22

Let's start with recruitment. We suggest having meetings to introduce people to WHAM in groups. During these meetings you'll want to emphasize that participation is voluntary and people should feel free to decline if they wish. You'll also want to tell people that they won't be asked to change their personal habits but instead to consider adding new ones. You'll want to describe the health goal setting process and its challenges. But you'll also point out that people get lots of assistance with selecting and achieving their goals. You should also mention that people are free to change their goals if they find that what they selected isn't right for them.

Slide 23

Another recruitment strategy is to personalize what people will get from WHAM. You do this by finding out what someone wants to work on and describing how WHAM could help. We like to use testimonials from people who've participated in WHAM and found it helpful. You might want to have WHAM graduates at the group to talk briefly about how WHAM worked for them. Finally, since you'll be using WHAM yourself, you can talk about how it has affected your life. You'll be successful at recruiting if potential WHAM participants come away with an understanding of how WHAM might benefit their own health and well-being.

Slide 24

Once people decide to participate in WHAM, your focus will be on engagement. That's the

process by which people become actively involved in WHAM. We suggest making reminder calls before each group and individual meeting. We also suggest sending notecards by mail each week to everyone who has enrolled. You'll use these cards to thank the people who attended for their participation. You'll also use them to encourage people who didn't attend by reminding them that they're always welcome. Another way to keep people actively engaged is to make up missed group content during the one-on-one sessions. Remember, if people fall too far behind, they may stop coming.

Slide 25

Finally, we have the challenge of retention. Even after people are engaged, the novelty can wear off over a 3 month period. After several weeks, people may start to miss sessions and want to drop out. To combat this, you'll want to make WHAM as much fun as possible. Don't be afraid to laugh and show the humorous side of creating new habits. If the class seems to be in a rut, take it outside and have your group or individual meeting in the fresh air. Just make sure the space is private enough to enable the personal sharing that WHAM involves. You can also encourage people to buddy up with another person in the group so they can give each other extra support during and between group sessions. Another way to enhance retention is to address common transportation problems by asking people if they need help getting to sessions.

Slide 26

Another thing that can enhance retention is a new goal. If people continue to be unsuccessful, this may mean that the goal they chose just isn't right for them. Encourage them to switch to something else without defining this as a failure. Just be sure to help them use the IMPACT framework in setting their new goal. Other times the goal is good but something else is getting in the way. You can discuss this in individual meetings to see what might be going on and how to address it. For example, the person may have a goal of walking for 20 minutes every other day, but they feel uncomfortable doing this in their neighborhood. You might help them find a park nearby or a school with a playground or track they can walk on.

Slide 27

We also suggest that you serve healthy snacks and beverages during the break in your group. People often concentrate better when they're not hungry or thirsty. This also gives you a chance to share healthy snack ideas and recipes for tasty yet nutritious dishes.

Slide 28

I'd like to share with you some real-life examples of how WHAM participants feel after they've graduated. We taught WHAM to over 140 people in one study, and asked them for their reactions. The large majority told us they liked listening to other people's challenges and successes in groups. They also said they liked the chance to form meaningful relationships with WHAM facilitators. An even higher percentage said they appreciated WHAM's focus on setting simple, achievable health goals. Over 60% felt their health had improved as a result of WHAM.

Slide 29

If you're planning to teach WHAM to other people, we suggest that you seek training from the National Council for Behavioral Health. Find out more about this training on their website at www.thenationalcouncil.org/training-courses/whole-health-action-management/.

Slide 30

Thank you for your interest in WHAM. If you have questions, you can request free technical assistance from our Center, which we offer on a time-limited basis. Call us at 312.355.1696 or click the “free technical assistance” button on the WHAM page of our Solutions Suite.

Slide 31 (announcer)

Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional Solutions Suite recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Center’s web site.