



Time For Me (Yemini Women's Group)

Contact:

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Artists:

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PRIMARY OUTCOME FOR TIME FOR ME GROUP:

Develop confidence
among participants

OTHER OUTCOMES FOR THE PROJECT:

Access communities in
the Black Country

Engage and involve
participants in ongoing
activity

Develop health and arts
sector awareness of the
value of using the arts to
engage with communities

The group meets every Wednesday at the Yemini Community Centre to socialise. A Health Development Officer based at the Centre, Afrah S. Muflihi, supports members of the group. She acted as a link between the group and the team of artists from Multistory. The 'What is Happiness?' workshops with the artists were held at the Centre over four consecutive

Wednesdays: 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th June 2009. The group met for two hours each time. In addition members of the group met on two Sundays to continue working on their homes.

The women's ages ranged from 25 to 60+. On the monitoring information recorded, people in the group classed themselves as 'Yemeni'.

What is Happiness?

Attendance and Initial Response

At the start of the project some of the women had expressed some understandable concerns:

"Originally we didn't want to get involved. We thought, 'what does make us happy?' We got going and started doing a little bit, ideas started to flourish we started to get excited"



The Process

The importance of introducing the theme and explaining the project carefully at the first session was stressed by the artists as a way of ensuring women had confidence in the project and the process they would be involved in:

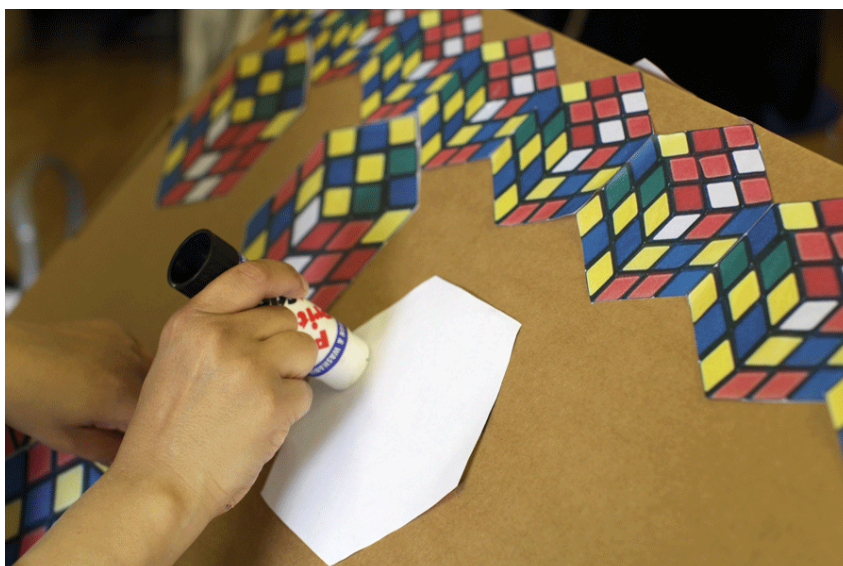
“We took along a suitcase of props to get the group to think about what happiness is to them. The things that the women came up with for this part of the activity were very interesting out of this we came up with four categories; these will be the themes for the houses. They were: childhood, culture, community and hobbies”.

Each of the workshops was very well attended by women from the group and their confidence as well as their ability to create beautiful meaningful houses grew, as the project progressed. The women met on a Sunday to continue decorating their ‘homes’ and the team of artists supported them to do this by arranging to buy extra

materials and dropping them off at the centre.

Members of the group were keen to work together to make a number of houses rather than do one each. The houses they created were diverse; one was based on memories of living in Sandwell in the 80’s. The period was described by one participant as “*everything over the top*”. Another house representing Islamic culture was carefully designed and exquisitely produced. One of the women who made this house described one of the reasons behind their choice of theme as “*some nostalgia, reminding us of our homeland*”.

As the workshops progressed members of the group were very enthusiastic to participate in different aspects of the project. A film crew from BBC Video Nation interviewed two women at The Public as part of the BBC Headroom campaign. The final film was shown as part of the BBC’s coverage of World Mental Health Day on large screens across the East Midlands. Women also brought members of their family to the launch of the Happiness exhibition.



Challenges

During one of the workshops the Health Development Officer had contacted the artists to say that she was unable to make the session and that she had arranged cover. The artist reflected on the session in her diary:

"The other member of staff was not present in the session but this did not matter as the women were competent and happy to continue what they had been working on."

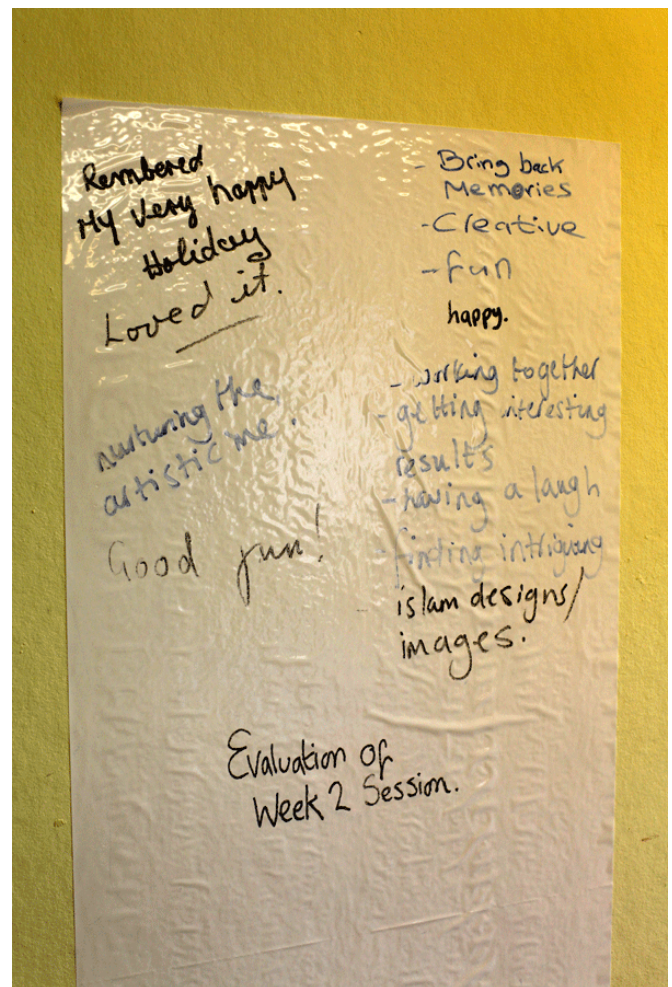
Benefits

A number of the women involved in the project talked about the benefits they experienced from participating in the project particularly the therapeutic aspects of the workshops. The Health Development Officer reported that:

"One of the women commented whilst she was cutting patterns into her box that she 'found it very therapeutic' doing this work. So much so that she took the work with her to continue at home."

The women involved in the project very quickly gained a strong sense of ownership.

The artist wrote in her journal:



"The women decided to use the centre's computer suite to do some research on their chosen areas. As they found interesting images this encouraged them to think about how the ideas could be transferred to the houses. I felt that I could see their confidence in experimenting with different craft materials increase during the session."

Conclusion



The Health Development Officer reflected on the workshop programme:

“It was a wonderful experience being involved in this project, the women worked very enthusiastically and happily! I understand why HAPPINESS is in the title!”

