

# Developing a Plant Emoticon scale: the Greencare way of measuring how we feel

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## Background

'Greencare'<sup>a</sup> is a group provided by Growing Better Lives for people with a diagnoses of personality disorder or similar. Service users attend weekly for one day of Greencare therapy. This consists of check-in and check-out discussions run on Therapeutic Community principles plus Green activities (horticulture, craft work, other nature based activities, preparing and sharing a meal).

We started to create a new twelve-week evaluation project – our 'Greencare Journal'. The ideas were developed with service users as to what to include. As well as the photo diary and different measures we needed a scale that could be used to assess their experience of that day's Greencare. A Likert scale of 1 to 10 was suggested: and roundly rejected...

"numbers make it too medical"

"every session is 10 out of 10"

Instead the group wanted an image based scale that reflected the horticultural aspects of Greencare, so...

## Stage 1

Photographs of 54 differing plant species (balanced for colour, structure, size) were shown to the Greencare group and each image was discussed as to the emotional response it provoked. There were some strange opinions..



Fierce, scared?  
or  
Warm, safety?



False, stupid, angry?  
or  
Pretty, calm, smooth?

## Anxiety provoking



## Stage 3

Through comparison of images with similar emotions, and discussion of what experiences we wanted on our measure a ten item scale was drawn up with alternate photos to represent the emotions

## Stage 2

Images eliciting disparate responses or no strong responses were removed leaving 25 through to 'Round 2'.

## Protective and safe



## Stage 4 – Final!

Much group discussion – final ten items chosen...

## How was your Greencare day?



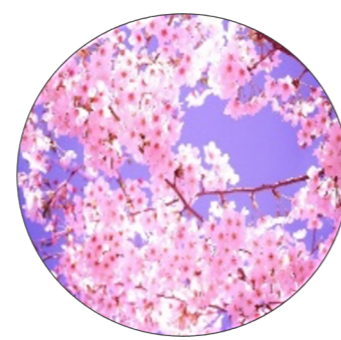
Comfortable and unchallenging



Steady and Trustworthy



Playful and fun



Peaceful and mindful



Anxiety provoking



Difficult but worthwhile



Hopeful, promise of progress & new life



Protective and safe



Natural, wild, plentiful



Sad, painful

"Nicer to use than words";  
"Much less clinical"; More heartfelt" client quotes

## Outcomes of using the scale

"It's a reflection without the intensity of words" client quotes

"The flowers represent the pure essence of the day" staff quote

"Its hard to put a number to what you're feeling but it's much easier to put a picture to it" client quote

"Greater depth of reflection on the day in check-out" staff quote

## A final thought

We know <sup>b</sup> conventionally derived outcome measures in mental health research are problematic. Developing measures through service-user co-creation benefits us all. Planting seeds of knowledge and growing better lives.

## References

- <sup>a</sup> Pearce, S. and Haigh, R. (2017) *The Theory and Practice of Democratic Therapeutic Community Treatment*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley publishers  
<sup>b</sup> Rose, D., Evans, J., Sweeny, A. & Wykes, T. (2011) A model for developing outcome measures from the perspectives of mental health service users. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 23, 41-46.

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