

Community-Partnered Development of a Dissemination Campaign to Improve Exposure Therapy Access for Caregivers and Young Adults

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Overview

Project REACH (Raising Exposure Awareness for Caregiver Help-Seeking) sought input from parents, caregivers, mental health professionals, pediatricians, and young adults to identify dissemination strategies to improve awareness of and help-seeking for exposure therapy.

Background

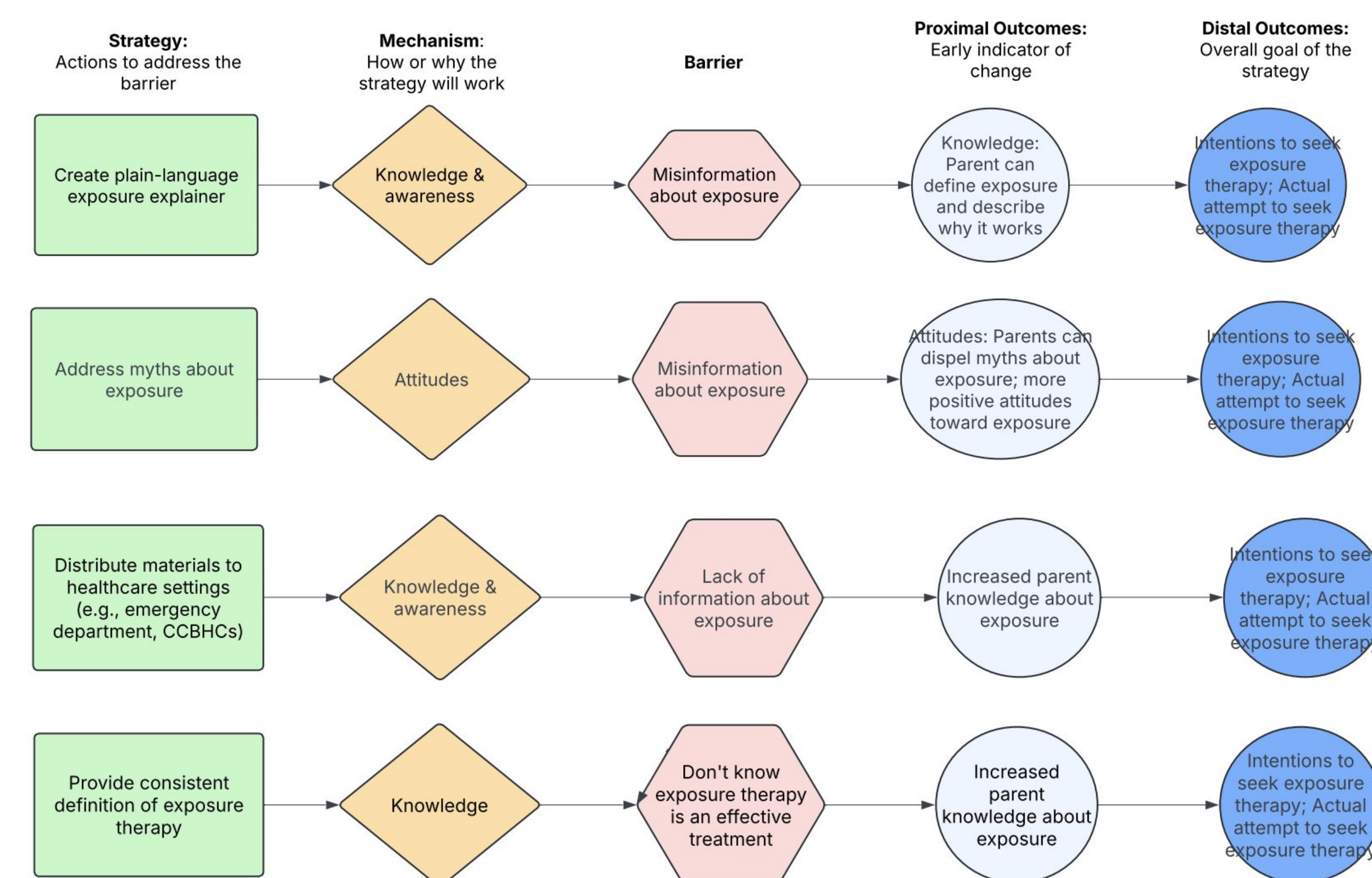
- Anxiety and related disorders are the most common youth mental health problems.
- Exposure therapy is the leading evidence-based intervention for anxiety and related disorders yet is rarely accessed in routine care.
- Parents and caregivers report limited awareness of exposure and misconceptions due to poor branding.
- Dissemination science principles represent a promising approach to improve access to information about exposure and to increase help-seeking.
- Visually appealing materials and a consistent definition of exposure therapy may enhance dissemination.

Methods

- We first convened a 10-member community advisory board (CAB) including parents, school staff, pediatricians, advocates, and clinicians to inform a dissemination campaign.
- Theory of Planned Behavior, posits that for one to engage in mental health care, one first must be motivated to engage in help-seeking behavior.
- Guided by the TPB, we asked CAB members to identify barriers related to attitudes, norms, and self-efficacy. Using established barrier prioritization methods, we identified high impact and feasible barriers and co-developed corresponding dissemination strategies
- We then convened a youth advisory board (YAB) of youth ages 17-25 with anxiety and/or OCD and asked the YAB to identify which strategies resonate most and any differences/additional strategies for specifically reaching young people.
- Material creation strategies were developed in partnership with Rhode Island School of Design students.

Causal Pathway Diagrams

Causal pathway diagrams provide a structure for developing, selecting, and evaluating implementation strategies.

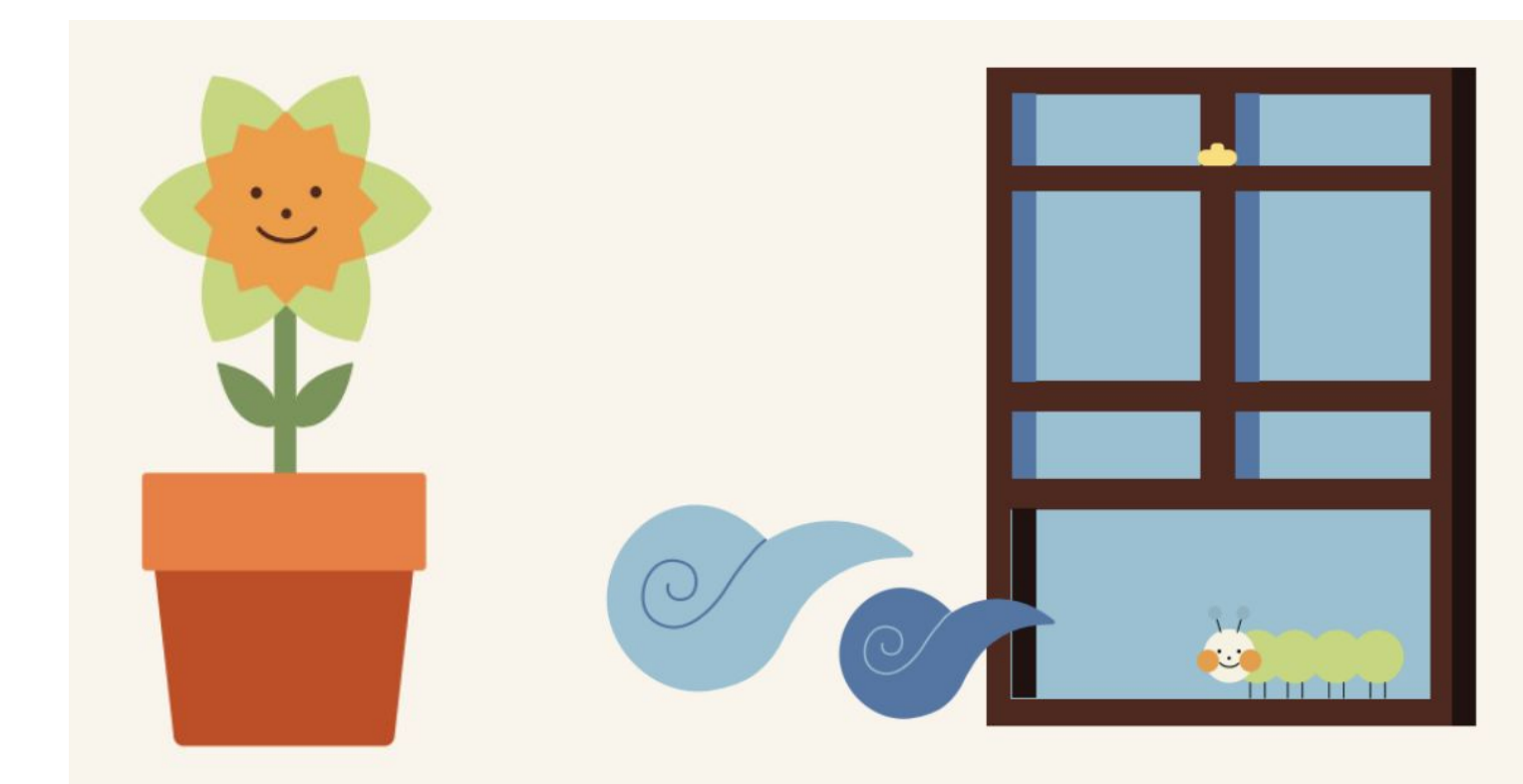


Material Creation - Infographic



Results

- Attitudinal barriers centered around misinformation about exposure.
 - Self-efficacy barriers included difficulty identifying whether a therapist delivers exposure.
 - Normative barriers included stigma.
- Identified strategies are categorized as follows: (1) material creation; (2) place-based dissemination; and (3) branding and voice.
- Material creation strategies include a plain-language exposure explainer video, youth and parent/caregiver testimonial videos, and a practical referral guide that can be used by families.
 - Place-based dissemination strategies include distribution materials via schools, pediatrician and primary care offices, faith-based, professional and community organizations.
 - Branding and voice strategies include providing a consistent definition of exposure therapy and adopting a cohesive brand identity.



Conclusion

- This community-partnered theory-driven approach illustrates how community engagement can inform dissemination strategies to address barriers to accessing evidence-based care.
- We next aim to conduct a randomized pilot evaluation of the campaign's impact on caregiver help-seeking intentions.
- Through discussions with the YAB, we identified needs within the community of emerging adults (ages 18-25) with anxiety and/or OCD.
- Ongoing work will explore emerging adult perceptions of exposure therapy through focus groups.

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