

Positivity-Pass it On! (PPON)
York University Keele Campus
Mental Health Initiative Proposal
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1.0 Executive Summary

PPON (Positivity-Pass it On!) has a project vision that includes increasing social cohesion on York University's Keele campus and changing perceptions of mental health issues. We attempt to do this by distributing bracelets that encourage compliment exchange to break social isolation for members of this facility. We plan to distribute 2000 "PPON bracelets", once someone has a bracelet on he/she is now responsible for recruiting more people to join the club and they can only do so by complimenting another person, after doing so they pass on the bracelet to said person. Beyond this, our project provides information for individuals dealing with mental health issues and looks to reduce the social stigma associated with them through education. The bracelets will come with succinct information packages and will also have direct users to further electronic resources if they seek it. Our social media outreach will look to gather at least 1000 followers/fans. We also hope to get at least 500 tweets/Facebook statuses with #PPON detailing positive PPON bracelet exchanges. The intervention will take place in two weeks between September and October, but advertising and preparation will occur electronically three months prior to the intervention and on campus two weeks prior. The need for such an intervention is great given that while there is increasing awareness about the social determinants of health for various forms of disease and infirmity, mental health is still very often seen as an "individual" problem and not a social one. Large urban communities are usually made up of strangers who go about their day without interacting with one another. This environment is often conducive to feelings of isolation, and depression is often linked to social isolation. However breaking this social isolation is not difficult and anecdotal evidence shows that an encouraging word or friendly gesture can ease even the worst symptoms of depression, such as suicidal thoughts, without medication or therapy. We plan to break this social isolation by fostering a sense of belonging and community at York University. The project by all estimations will require a little under \$500.00; this cost is going towards just securing materials and resources. The scale and reach of the project can only be made possible by committed and passionate volunteers who will invest their time and effort.

2.1 Description of Group Members

- **Primary Contact:** Pratik Nair
- Humza Syed Mohammad
- Michael Richards
- Ralph Perez
- Joanne Van

2.2 Identification of Community Partners

We wish to partner with Active Minds a mental health organization at York University whose goal is to "provide education and resources about mental health and the prevalence of mental health disorders in order to reduce stigma so that all students know where to seek help as soon as help is needed". This organization's goals and motives share the same values that our group's initiative strives to provide for the York University community. With our community partners, we have a greater amount of tools and resources to achieve our shared goals. This is an already established group with 490 members; they will be useful in providing a volunteer force, alongside with promotional resources and invaluable health promotion experience, as well office space for any meetings or administrative work.

2.3 Opportunity Statement

Our initiative addresses numerous social determinants of health, including social support networks, education, social environments, personal health practices and coping skills, health services, and culture. The importance of social support for our initiative extends to the broader community. Our society is largely determined by dominant cultural values that contribute to the perpetuation of conditions such as marginalization and stigmatization. This initiative provides information for individuals dealing with mental health issues and looks to reduce the social stigma associated with them through education. According to the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment, a 2011 nationwide survey of college students at two and four-year institutions found about 30 percent of college students reported feeling "so depressed that it was difficult to function" at some time in the past year. This initiative helps to address and hopefully solve the lack of awareness regarding mental health by promoting positivity and social cohesion within the school community. The target population is York University students. The location of implementation will be at York University. There have been

other initiatives that promote mental health awareness but none previously implemented the use of spreading positively messaged bracelets and compliments among students within an institutional setting. Similar initiatives include the Act-Belong-Commit campaign (2008). It is a population-based positive mental health promotion campaign combining community development and mass media approach. The impact of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign was substantial in terms of both reach (75% of the population in six communities in Western Australia) and behaviour change. Another campaign includes the "OK2Talk" campaign (2013). It used television and radio ads in English and Spanish, and uses social media to invite teens and young adults to create the conversation about mental health. Our initiative will implement similar approaches and take it one step further by making it more personal, by directly approaching students on a more intimate level to discuss mental health and the importance of spreading positive messages to others.

3.1 Detailed Project Description

Goals and Objectives

Our project is geared to achieve two main objectives:

- 1) Increase social cohesion on campus
- 2) Change the general perception of mental health issues from an individual problem to a social problem

The first objective looks to foster a sense of belonging to the York community for the average York student. This means that it looks to change how York students on the Keele campus view each other, not like strangers as they do now, but as comrades, colleagues, and eventually, friends. Campuses are unfortunately busy, and mental health sufferers go unnoticed and uncared for, therefore gaining attention from others can help change this. This is not that difficult to do given that people are by nature social creatures and long to belong to a community. The second objective is far more challenging as it involves a paradigm shift. This change in perception of mental health is difficult to accomplish because it is so embedded in people's thoughts and social culture. Those suffering from mental health illnesses are usually labelled as weak, infirm, or as invalids. This change cannot come through education alone, but when people make actions towards solving mental health issues through the PPON initiative, they will soon realize that they too can help with solving others' mental health issues. This is significant, as through making

them aware that their actions are solving mental health issues, we've empowered them. This empowerment will display mental health in a new light, as everybody's problem not just somebody's problem.

Our goals are to distribute 2000 bracelets over a two week period, have at least 1000 followers on our official Twitter and Facebook pages (combined), and to have 500 tweets with the hashtag #PPON that details an encounter that was facilitated by our initiative and recount the positivity of the experience. A long term goal of ours is to make our PPON bracelets a part of university culture through having them be part of every first year orientation kit so the trend can continue and be maintained for all incoming York students.

Activities

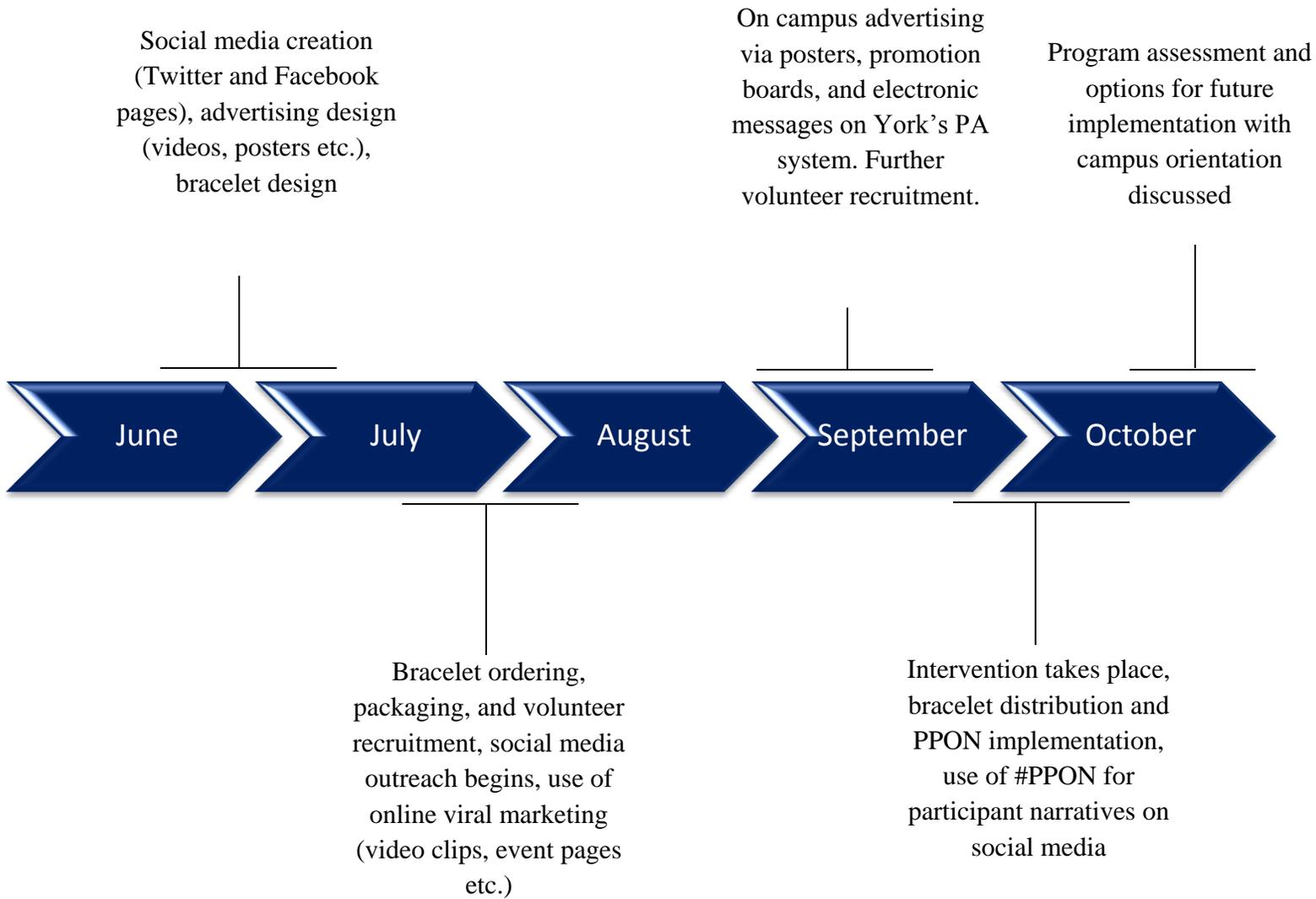
First, the initiative must be widely advertised so the York population not only know what's coming but gain an understanding of how the PPON system works. Advertising is specifically important because we expect the initiative to work only if members of the Keele campus are aware of what their role is in the program, and gain an understanding of what they are helping to achieve. We plan to distribute about 2000 PPON bracelets over a two week period to members of York's Keele campus. That is, 1000 bands in the first week, and 1000 in the second week. Keep in mind that while these numbers may seem small, the bracelets are meant to circulate. That is, when one gets a bracelet he or she is meant to compliment someone else, remove said bracelet and pass it on along with the compliment so as to create a "ripple effect". The bands will be distributed in packages along with information about PPON, how to use the bracelets, and what the initiative's objectives are. Recipients will also be directed to online resources so they can access more information and be part of the PPON virtual community. Following PPON advertising and education, along with the actual distribution of PPON bracelets, the onus falls on the York community to exchange compliments, bracelets, and really get the intervention started. This intervention will last two weeks, with a 1000 bands distributed each week, following which there will be an assessment of the program's success. There will be two ways to measure the program's success. First, subjectively through the amount of bracelet exchange and social cohesion one sees on campus (i.e. general improvements in eye contact, smile exchanges, greetings). Second, objectively, through measures of our followers on twitter, the number of tweets with #PPON, and through a raw count of the number of bracelets we have distributed.

Following this assessment, we will present our measures of success to various social and academic orientation bodies across campus so they implement PPON bracelets into their orientation kits.

Key Personnel

The PPON executive council is made up of five members. Pratik Nair is the main contact and President of the group, the original founder of the PPON idea. He is responsible for developing new innovative ideas, problem solving, and is the primary decision maker and contact. Humza Syed Mohammad is the volunteer supervisor; he is responsible for inter-team communication and volunteer administration. Michael Richards is the treasurer of the group; his roles include fund allocation for various activities, and he oversees the ordering, delivery, and packaging of the bracelets. Ralph Perez is the advertising executive of the group, he works to create advertising, and ensures relevant information about the PPON program reaches the York community both prior to and during the intervention. Joanne Van is the communications officer, she serves as a liaison between community partners and the executive team, she is responsible for our social media outreach, and with Ralph Perez is involved in developing marketing strategies. All executive members will be involved in actual bracelet distribution, but the bulk of this will come from our **volunteers**. The PPON initiative will hinge on the commitment and passion of volunteers. They will assist in the distribution of PPON bracelets and spreading relevant PPON information during the intervention. All executive members will also be involved with advertising and social media outreach (via videos, tweets etc), but Joanne Van and Ralph Perez will be the primary overseers of this facet of the intervention. A York University film major will assist in any video editing, poster creation, or with the other uses of any technology medium. The whole executive team, volunteers, and other associated will be involved with the program assessment Ralph and Joanne will be involved with quantifying all objective measures of success. Pratik will be responsible for summarizing assessment findings and delivering information to campus orientation bodies to discuss future prospects for PPON interventions.

Timeline



3.2 Budget

Task/Activity	Detailed Cost	Personnel	In-Kind Funding	Secure Funding	Agents of Change Funding	Total
Equipments for P.P.O.N	Wrist Bands – 2000 for \$450				\$450.00	\$450.00
	20 hours of volunteer work (band distribution) at \$11.00/hr	Volunteers in general (10 volunteers)	\$2200.00			\$2200.00
	10 hours of video editing at \$15/hr	York U Film Major	\$150.00			\$150.00
	Cost for advertising				\$50.00	\$50.00
	Office space & office resources (75 sq.ft) from community partner				\$129.00/month	\$129.00
Total			\$2350.00	\$129.00	\$500.00	\$2979.00

3.3 Sustainability

When implementing any type of initiative such as PPON, sustainability is of utmost importance. We want our project to have a lasting impact so it will continue to raise mental health awareness and promote positive interaction among students for years to come. In order to do this, our approach is two-fold. First, we will gain a social media following on popular social networks such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. This will provide students with a platform by which they can easily gain information about mental health and PPON far beyond the two week duration of the intervention. PPON is an idea, it simply isn't bracelets and compliments, it is about opening avenues for individuals with mental health issues to gain help, and social media is

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a comfortable, non-discriminatory way for this to occur. Secondly, we eventually hope to incorporate our project into campus orientation activities, thus reaching a large number of York students before they even begin their university careers. Hopefully, PPON will soon become a cultural staple at York University making us one of the most social, welcoming, and successful universities in Canada. With the advent of ideas like PPON the university can double or even triple in size and still feel like home for all its members.