

## **BODY MAPPING: PILOTING AN APPROACH TO EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN DRUG AND ALCOHOL RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT**

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**Introduction:** Commonly employed research approaches do not always provide an in-depth understanding of young people's perspectives and experiences. Arts-based approaches offer an alternate, innovative method. This pilot study examines the utility of body mapping, an arts-based method, as a way to improve understandings of the lives and experiences of adolescents who are admitted to a drug and alcohol residential treatment program.

**Design and Methods:** Two workshops were held at an adolescent residential treatment facility in Australia. Facilitated by an artist, the workshops focused on using body mapping techniques to explore the young people's strengths and support networks. Five male residents and three females participated. Semi-structured follow-up interviews with participants were conducted and triangulated with other data sources, including observational notes and staff interviews, to examine the utility and effectiveness of body mapping as a research tool.

**Key Findings:** The data revealed that body mapping engaged the participants, reduced verbal barriers and facilitated dialogue on their sources of strength and support. Four recurrent themes were identified: 1) engaging through art, 2) removing the mask that hides their emotions, 3) revealing their strengths and 4) promoting a sense of achievement.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Visual methods, such as body mapping, hold promise for optimising research with younger participants as they are an engaging and less confrontational form of data collection compared with interviews alone. In particular, body mapping is a useful tool to prompt discussion on topics which participants find hard to verbalise face-to-face.

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