

What is YAM?

Youth Aware of Mental health, also known as YAM, encourages young people between the ages of 13 to 17 to learn about and discuss topics related to everyday mental health. YAM is an evidence-based program that takes place in classrooms around the world. Due to the nature of the program, it is not possible to do YAM online.

In YAM youth role-play different approaches to problem-solve everyday situations and discuss how these situations make them feel. Emphasis is placed on peer support and information is given on how and where to find professional help if needed.

YAM IS DIALOGUE AND PLAY

In YAM, youth are invited to role-play and discuss everyday situations that are important to them. The topics range from relationships with peers and adults, changes in mood, to feeling sad or facing a stressful situation. As a group, the students reflect on how they might feel if faced by such events and discuss how to handle challenging real-life situations.

YAM IS FIVE SESSIONS LONG

In five one-hour classroom sessions over three weeks, the YAM Instructors work to set a safe environment by valuing and treating the youth present as experts on their mental health. Mental health is explored through discussion and role-plays departing from pedagogical materials that include slides, posters, and a booklet for each participant to keep. Youth across the world have addressed concerns such as stress related to schoolwork, navigating community violence, managing interactions with peers on social media, and how to support a friend who isn't feeling well.

By participating in an inclusive and youth-led dialogue about mental health, we have observed that YAM helps grow solidarity among young people. YAM has also been found to prevent the onset of depression and to significantly reduce the number of incident suicide attempts.

YAM IS YOUTH-DRIVEN

In YAM, youth voices take center stage. Young people are listened to and their experiences are valued. The adults present do not instruct them on how to think, feel, and act. Instead, with the support of the Instructor, everyone present works to understand different perspectives and come up with possible solutions to problems.

In YAM, we recognise and appreciate that each participant brings with them their own life experience and we believe that we can learn a lot by inviting difference in opinion. Our focus is not on finding one-size-fits-all solutions to mental health. Instead, we consider how different people feel, the possible reasons for their actions, and what kinds of support they might need in each situation.

YAM IS WORLDWIDE

YAM was created to be adaptable so that it can serve youth worldwide. By relying on each group of participating youth to bring up topics that are important and relevant to them, the program aims to have as much impact on youth in rural India or the USA as to young people in urban parts of Sweden and Australia. Whenever YAM is implemented in a new country or cultural context, we work with local youth and youth professionals to make sure that the program stays appropriate and sensitive to local needs. Please refer to the sections on Translation and Cultural Adaptation to learn more about these procedures.

YAM IS EVIDENCE-BASED

YAM was evaluated in the Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe (SEYLE) research project, an EU-wide Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT). More than 11,000 youth participated in the trial which sought to assess and evaluate three school-based interventions for mental health promotion and suicide prevention. Results published in the Lancet found YAM effective in reducing new cases of suicide attempts and severe suicidal ideation by approximately 50%¹. New cases of depression were reduced by approximately 30% in the youth participating in YAM.

In interviews with youth who participated in YAM, continued effects after the end of the program were observed. Young people pointed to strategies they learned in YAM that they later used in real life situations².

WHO OWNS YAM?

Mental Health in Mind International AB (MHiM) is the exclusive distributor of YAM. MHiM is a research and development company created with support from Karolinska Institutet Innovations AB. The company is co-owned by Karolinska Institutet Holding AB and the researchers who developed YAM. MHiM is the sole administrator of the YAM program. MHiM includes a management team, site managers, Master Trainers, Trainers and researchers.

MHiM collaborates with sites on YAM globally. These partnerships begin with signed agreements with MHiM. Program content and materials cannot be used or distributed and Instructor Courses may not be held without the agreement of MHiM.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DO YAM?

YAM is a time and labour-intensive intervention that requires significant resources and collaboration not only within an organisation but also with schools and the local community. The program cannot be rolled out simply by training a few individuals and then sending them in schools to deliver the program. For the program to work an implementation structure is required. This document gives a short overview of some of the most important factors to consider before deciding to implement YAM. For more detailed explanations, please be in touch with MHiM.

1 Wasserman D, Hoven CW, Wasserman C... Carli V. School-based suicide prevention programs: the SEYLE cluster-randomised, controlled trial. *Lancet*. 2015 Apr 18;385(9977):1536-44.

2 Wasserman C, Postuvan V, Herta D, Iosue M, Varnik P, Carli V. Interactions between youth and mental health professionals: The Youth Aware of Mental health (YAM) program experience. *PLoS One*. 2018 Feb 8;13(2):e0191843

THE YAM TEAM

YAM requires a team of enthusiastic individuals who are passionate about working with youth and open to learning about YAM. As soon as a site decides on implementation, a YAM team should be established. Implementing YAM requires a large amount of work that is impossible for one or two individuals. The YAM team should include YAM coordinator(s) and a number of certified YAM Instructors.

The coordinator will be responsible for leading the implementation and should preferably be someone who plans on working on YAM for a long period. This person does not need to be the same as the leader of the team or organisation. A coordinator should be in charge of recruiting Instructors, planning the Instructor course with MHiM, getting in touch with local schools and healthcare organizations, continued supervision and training of Instructors after the end of the course, and having regular contact with the MHiM team. Recruitment of the best candidates to form a YAM team is crucial for the success of the implementation.

BECOMING A YAM INSTRUCTOR

When identifying YAM Instructors it is important to find candidates who have experience and are comfortable working with diverse groups of youth and absolutely will not discriminate against or diminish the experiences of any youth participating in the program. YAM Instructors should have prior experience working with youth in groups (e.g., youth workers, teachers, social workers, counselors or school psychologists) and be open to challenging discussions. However, YAM Instructors should have no pre-existing relationship with the youth participating (i.e. already work in that school). It is sometimes difficult for young people to discuss sensitive topics when a pre-existing relationship exists with an adult, especially an authority figure such as someone working at their school.

Two trained adults conduct every YAM program. At least one of these is a certified YAM Instructor. These Instructors have completed a five-day in-person YAM Instructor Course. During the course, participants actively reflect on how to listen to and interact with youth. Prospective Instructors are immersed in all aspects of the YAM program such as the theoretical framework, scientific research, and program implementation, and receive hands-on training through workshops, discussions, lectures, and role-play simulations.

During the YAM Instructor Course, participants gain familiarity and comfort with the materials and think about how best to foster reciprocal and impartial relationships with youth. However, after the week-long course, it is necessary that Instructors continue practicing with actual young people before they go into the classrooms.

A locally-trained Helper is required to participate in every YAM session to assist with role-play and logistics. The Instructor and Helper should remain the same throughout the five sessions. Two certified Instructors can run the program where one of them acts as a Helper. Even if this approach could be more expensive it is recommended, especially when the rollout is in its initial phase and the Instructors are less experienced.

YAM IN SCHOOLS

Even if YAM can be delivered to any group of youth, schools are the preferred setting for implementing the program. A strong connection with the school system is critical. It is important to begin to establish relationships with the school system at least a year before a YAM implementation begins. These early conversations can help you determine if there is interest and support for YAM in the local community. Early conversations are also useful in identifying key stakeholders in schools and the broader community.

While YAM takes up a relatively small amount of class time, it requires a lot of support from the school staff and administrators. Without ongoing communication and continued buy-in, this would not be a sustainable relationship. If your site has a previous working relationship with the school system, this will go a long way in implementing YAM. However, sites without existing relationships with schools can be just as successful, but more work will be needed in this area.

When contacting the school, the local YAM team can offer to organise meetings with teachers and parent representatives to discuss the program. It is essential to understand that for the YAM program to be successful, no teachers or school staff will be permitted in a classroom while YAM is running. Yet, support from school staff is crucial to the delivery of YAM. Staff will help provide access to students, assist in logistical support, and help in discussions with parents, students, and school administration before and after the program. No more than 30 youth should make up one YAM group and the participants and the room should remain the same throughout the five sessions. These are some of the particulars you will need the support of the school staff to help ensure.

Schools may be hesitant to implement YAM for a variety of reasons. YAM is often best described to schools as a comprehensive program promoting both mental and physical health and addressing a range of problems common among young people. YAM increases knowledge about mental health, and boosts solidarity, emotional intelligence, and a sense of responsibility among those participating. YAM actively involves students, and it can strengthen the relationships between students, as such improving the class and school climate. YAM prevents depression and suicide and provides students with mental health resources in the community.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A list of health and community resources is to be created and included in the YAM youth materials. The successful outcome of the YAM program is dependent on effective planning with the health care system and other sources of support in the community.

The resource list should include local youth-friendly mental health services and helplines as well as a YAM contact (i.e., email or phone number) that remains in service well after the program ends. In preparing the community resource list, it is important to think outside the box of psychological and psychiatric referrals. Youth participating in YAM may need different kinds of support (e.g., housing, LGBTQI+, sexual health, food and nutrition services). In addition to health care system contacts, youth organisations and activities should be included. These organisations and activities can be youth advocacy groups, youth centres, big brother/big sister organisations, after school programs, or any clubs and activities catering to youth. It is important that site staff make sure that any/clubs/activities you include are operational.

Resources may differ between neighbourhoods in larger cities. Sites are urged to keep the lists as local as possible so that youth can easily access the resources. Some resources will be online, but we recommend keeping a balance between in person and online resources. For online resources, make sure that they are properly moderated and that the YAM coordinator communicates with the organisation in charge of the service. The resource list should be revised annually by local sites to maintain accuracy (i.e., correct contact details, appropriate services to add or remove).

TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION

YAM currently exists in English (UK, US and Australian versions), Gujarati, Swedish, and Norwegian. Translations into other languages should be made by native speakers with experience of translating materials for youth. All translations should be conducted in consultation with MHiM.

MHiM believes that adapting the YAM materials and content so they are sensitive and appropriate to the local context is of utmost importance. The first time YAM is implemented in a country or new cultural context, the program needs to undergo an adaptation process. Cultural adaptation is a lengthy and sensitive process that needs to be carefully planned. The adaptation should be conducted locally with youth, experts in cross-cultural adaptation and trained YAM Instructors, and typically includes a pilot, an advisory group and focus groups with both youth and youth professionals. Sites are urged to address questions of adaptation with MHiM as early as possible so a suitable process for the specific site can be established. It is recommended that the site identifies a YAM adaptation coordinator to organize the process at the local level. MHiM will act as consultants for the adaptation. Translated and adapted materials will be the property of MHiM.

FUNDING

An adequate amount of funding should be available to implement YAM. The amount will, of course, vary depending on the size of the implementation and labour costs. However, it should always be taken into account that the fees delineated below to be paid for training, consultation and royalties to MHiM are not the only costs for implementing YAM. YAM will only work if an appropriate implementation is set up. Labour costs related to all persons that will form the YAM team should be taken into account. These include costs for the coordinator, for YAM Instructors and Helpers and also for the work that may be required to follow the protocols for translation and cultural adaptation. It is strongly advised that a budget is drafted for YAM in the very beginning to verify the financial feasibility of the program. According to experience from previous YAM sites, it is a good to start with a smaller scale feasibility study. After it is established that YAM is feasible in a specific setting, a wider implementation in the community can be planned.

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Instructor Course:

19,500 SEK+VAT (as applicable) per participant plus travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for four Trainers. Courses are organised locally for groups of 14-18 participants.

Program Materials:

50 SEK+VAT (as applicable) per youth participating in YAM + shipping.

MHiM Consultation Fees and Site Visit:

1500 SEK/hour. Approximately 48 hours of consultation is needed per year at a total of 72,000 SEK + VAT/year. This consultation includes support with setting up the local YAM site, implementation advice, recruiting Instructors, troubleshooting, continued training and possible evaluation consultation.

One site visit of at least two days per year is calculated for an ongoing YAM site to ensure fidelity to the program. During these site visits, MHiM will meet with the site coordinator(s) and Instructors and visit a local YAM school. Consultation fee for the site visit: 7,000 SEK per day per Trainer (total 28,000 SEK+VAT). The local site is responsible for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for two Trainers.

Translation and Cultural Adaptation:

Local translator costs, pilot-related costs, and consultation fee.

Suggested Labour Costs for Instructors:

Approximately 12 hours of pay per YAM program group (5 hours of program delivery + 7 hours for preparation, logistics, and debriefings).

For more information or questions on any of the above please write to info@mentalhealthinmind.com