



COWBOY COMMUNITY KITCHEN

STUDY GUIDE



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ABOUT THE VIDEO:

Cowboy Community Kitchen opens people's eyes both to the growing phenomena of community kitchens in senior's residences, homeless shelters etc. and to the impacts of brain injury and the potential for recovery when people are given the right tools. Led by the unique Cowboy Chef, Mark Connelly, a group of brain injury survivors get together in a community kitchen to cook, laugh, share and learn. Mark is completely deaf as a result of meningitis, Robin and Kerry are legally blind. All struggle with various outcomes of their brain injury but, as the film reveals, a community kitchen can provide the perfect space to build renewed trust in each other, in their own abilities and in life itself. Recovery doesn't need big dollars – it can be as simple as getting together to cook and share a meal.



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN IN THIS VIDEO:

The community kitchen in this video is a program run by The Cridge Centre for the Family Brain Injury Services based in Victoria, BC, Canada.

“ We all know what it means to have a good life: a decent place to live, food on our table, good friends and healthy relationships, enjoyable activities and meaningful employment. Well, at least that's the dream we hold for everyone. The reality, however, is that life falls short of this dream for many people and for a variety of reasons. The reason behind an individual experiencing a shortfall in life is usually because they are living with a disadvantage. The disadvantage may come from family stressors, lack of education, mental health issues, addictions, and for our clients, an acquired brain injury. “

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY:

An acquired brain injuryⁱ is caused from a blow to the head, tumour, aneurysm, stroke or concussion. A blow to the head can result from a bike or car crash, a sporting or small wheeled vehicle incident, abuse or a fall. An individual does not have to lose consciousness to sustain a brain injury. The lifelong and often debilitating effects of a brain injury can result in cognitive and behavioral problems and include personality changes, memory loss, and the inability to return to work.

Brain injury has many faces: men, women, boys and girls. Survivors of brain injury often suffer with physical deficits; however, equally as many have no outward appearance that anything is wrong, yet, they struggle daily to battle fatigue, headaches, memory loss, and the inability to handle daily tasks as they once had.



STATISTICS:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (USCDC) estimates that traumatic (Motor Vehicle Crashes, falls, sports-related injuries, assault etc.) brain injuries occurs at an annual rate of 500/100,000 individuals (166,455 in Canada, and 22,000 in BC each year. When other acquired brain injuries (e.g. stroke, aneurysm, anoxic events, tumors, infections, toxins, substance abuse etc.) is added to these numbers, it is estimated that close to 4% of the population lives with the permanent effects of a brain injury (1,400,000 in Canada, 160,000 in British Columbia). These survivors are added to the numbers from the year before and the year before that and so on. The numbers continue to grow; therefore, the unknown total of individuals and families struggling to cope with the effects of brain injury in this province is overwhelming.

Society as a whole pays a significant price for brain injuries. In the Canadian Institute for Health Information's report on The Burden of Neurological Diseases, Disorders and Injuries in Canada, it states that the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) estimates that the total direct cost associated with head injury in 2000 – 2001 was \$150.7 million (99.3%) for hospital care, \$0.3 million (0.2%) for physician care and \$0.7 million (0.5%) for drugs.

COSTS TO SOCIETY:

There are numerous factors to consider when calculating the cost to our society. It is noteworthy to look at the number of individuals being warehoused in our prisons who sustained a brain injury in their lifetime. John Simpson, founder of the Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association and retired case manager, volunteers with people who have sustained a brain injury, states, "on the conservative side, it's estimated that 80% of BC prisoners have sustained at least one brain injury in their lifetime. And 60% plus of those 80%, experienced their first period of unconsciousness as a child." In addition, the human cost in terms of the burden placed on the family, the added stress and often fracturing of marriages, and the emotional struggle for the survivor is immeasurable. Divorce rates are estimated to be as high as 90% following a brain injury - (Simpson).

CRIDGE MISSION AND BRAIN INJURY SERVICES:

The mission of The Cridge Centre for the Family states as one of its key outcomes "rendering aid and service to children, adults and families, to maximize their opportunities to participate and grow in the responsibilities and enjoyment of family life and loving relationships; and to achieve spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and social potential." As an extension of this mission, the Cridge Brain Injury Services continually looks for ways to maximize the strengths of survivors living with a brain injury and to help them to rebuild their life in meaningful and enjoyable ways. This led our team to create The Cridge Community Kitchen Program.

Participants of the Cridge Community Kitchen program are learning to work together to create and operate cooperative community kitchens. These individuals are developing their capacities, skills, abilities, community connections and opportunities. The community kitchen is providing a formal arrangement for these individuals to come together and pool their resources to create meals that meet their financial and nutritional needs. The participants are working together to share resources, plan meals, budget, to shop effectively, prepare food, and to support one another and improve their community. Participants are learning how to support each other in the context of a peer run cooperative. Participants are also building their capacity to identify access and create natural supports in their community. In doing so, participants are reducing their reliance on family and professional supports.

The primary purpose of the program is to reduce the impact of Neurotrauma injuries on individuals, their families and their communities by improving the participants' Quality of Life in the following areas: community participation, productivity, available supports, social inclusion, health, financial condition, self-advocacy, peer support, and rehabilitation.

CRIDGE COMMUNITY KITCHEN PROGRAM:

The Cridge Community Kitchen Program is a 12 week training for people living in the community and recovering from a brain injury. Participants must be able to travel independently in the community and should be ready to contribute, learn, participate and have fun.

Cooking Skills

Nutrition

Organizational Skills

Healthy Lifestyle

Budgeting

Relationships

Teamwork

Leadership

Great Food!

“We may not be able to fix all the problems for all the people all of the time with the Cridge Community Cooking initiative, BUT we can certainly assist individuals to ‘turn over a new leaf’ and create a new life that is rich with promise and hope... essentially living the dream.”



OTHER KINDS OF COMMUNITY KITCHENS:

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY KITCHEN?

A community kitchen is an arrangement where groups of people pool their resources and come together on a regular basis to socialize and cook affordable and nutritious meals. The participants then sit down to share the meal or divide it up for each person to take home. A community kitchen benefits those who have financial, social, or nutritional challenges and participation in a community kitchen offers the opportunity for a wide range of learning and capacity building.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY KITCHEN is continued next page

Community Kitchens ARE NOT

- Cooking classes – Community Kitchens participants learn from each other and through their own hands-on experiences rather than from one ‘expert’ person teaching the group;
- Welfare-style soup kitchens – Community Kitchens participants contribute to the costs of the food and cook the food themselves.
- Communal cooking spaces – Community Kitchens refers to the group of participants who use kitchen facilities to prepare food together, not a kitchen site itself.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY KITCHENS:

Participants of Community Kitchens have reported positive changes in:

- Social skills - communication and interpersonal skills.
- Teamwork and leadership skills - working with others, taking a leadership role.
- Budgeting - writing shopping list, putting money aside, buying in bulk or on sale.
- Cooking - learning new recipes, cooking techniques.
- Shopping – saving money on food costs.
- Greater motivation to cook at home and reduced intake of takeaway/fast food.
- Access to food - increased availability of food, increased variety.
- Literacy and numeracy.
- Confidence and self esteem.

Where do they operate?

Community Kitchens can operate in a variety of settings where there is an existing kitchen that is accessible to community members. Some examples are;

- Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres
- Churches
- Welfare organisations
- Men’s Sheds
- Service clubs
- Schools

Who comes along?

Community Kitchen groups are made up of people with a wide range of personal backgrounds. Many people are currently involved in Community Kitchens including;

- People of all ages from primary school aged children to seniors
- People with disabilities
- Indigenous community members
- People from migrant and refugee backgrounds
- General community members

They are for anyone and everyone.

The Facilitator

The group is assisted by a facilitator who can be a member of the group or a volunteer or a paid worker (who may be from within the organisation that hosts the Community Kitchen). If possible, it is recommended to have more than one facilitator per Community Kitchen. The facilitator's main role is to make sure the group goes along smoothly. They do this by;

- Completing Community Kitchens training on food safety, group facilitation, nutrition and budgeting to support the running of the kitchens;
- Helping the group develop a set of rules/guidelines that everyone agrees to follow;
- Ensuring all new participants are welcomed and provided with adequate information about how the kitchen works;
- Ensuring all participants actively participate in the planning and cooking processes to the best of their ability; and
- Handling all the money and any associated paperwork (or delegating this to appropriate participants).

HOW DOES A COMMUNITY KITCHEN RUN?

There are four basic elements involved with running a Community Kitchen;

- planning
- shopping
- cooking
- eating

The following is a list of general rules for each of these elements but each Community Kitchen manages them differently to suit the different needs of the group.

Planning:

- Group members bring along recipes that they think would be good to cook in their kitchen. These can be from a range of sources such as recipe books, magazines or websites.
- The group discusses the recipes and agrees on which ones they would like to cook. Groups normally choose a few recipes and put them into a timetable so that the planning process does not have to be done every session. They may decide to agree on enough recipes so that they know what they will be cooking for the next 3 or 4 sessions.
- The group may choose to modify the recipes to make them cheaper or healthier. For example, the group may choose to use chicken instead of beef or to use margarine if the recipe calls for butter. Groups should try to choose recipes with ingredients that are on special or in season.
- A shopping list is written up based on the ingredients required, taking into consideration items that are already in food pantry and items that people are willing to bring from home.

Shopping:

- The group decides on who will do the shopping for each session. It may be easier for two members to shop together.
- Money for shopping can be collected before or after the shopping is done and members contribute equally.
- The person doing the shopping sticks to the list and only purchases items for the Kitchen. Any personal shopping should be done separately.
- Receipts should always be kept and stored appropriately at the Kitchen for future reference.

Cooking:

- At the start of the session, it is very important to set aside time to read through each recipe before tasks are delegated to each participant.
- It is usually recommended that participants divide into small groups so they can take part in cooking a complete meal.
- The facilitator should try to arrange it so that the same people are not doing the same tasks every week and that everyone gets a chance to try something different and develop new skills.

Eating:

- The group will either sit down to share a meal together or portion out the food into containers for each person to take home.
- Any extra food is taken home by the participants for themselves or members of their household: it is NOT sold or given to other people.

HOW TO START YOUR OWN COMMUNITY KITCHEN:

There are many different ways to start your own Community Kitchen. Usually, kitchens work best with 4-6 people. It is best to meet first to talk about common interests in food, any potential allergies or strong food aversions, where to hold the community kitchen, as well as how the responsibilities for the kitchen will be divided up, etc.

OPTION A:

If one or several of the members have a kitchen that is big enough for a group to work in, then someone could host, or the members could take turns hosting the kitchens. To first develop a Community Kitchens Working Group.

OPTION B:

If you are an organisation that wants to start a Community Kitchen but do not have any kitchen facilities you will need to:

1. Gather information about Community Kitchens.
2. Partner together with an organisation that has a kitchen site and negotiate with them for its use.
3. Ensure any hazards are identified and resolved before the Community Kitchen commences. Ensure there is a fire extinguisher and first aid kit available.
4. Check that Community Kitchens participants are covered by public liability insurance (either through your organisation or preferably through the host of the kitchen site).

OPTION C:

If you are an organisation such as a Community Health Centre that wants to help others develop Community Kitchens, you may like to

1. Gather information about Community Kitchens.
2. Invite key community groups and organisations to an information session about Community Kitchens.
3. Establish the level of interest at this meeting. Find out who has a kitchen site that may be used by participants, who wants to start a Kitchen, who wants to volunteer and who wants to participate in Kitchens.
4. Form Working Groups for each Kitchen you want to establish.
5. Consult with potential participants regarding their needs and interest in a Community Kitchen.
6. If there are no kitchens available, conduct a mapping exercise of potential kitchen sites. This may need to be done earlier depending on the situation in your area. Ideally these kitchens will be situated within organisations/agencies that can take ownership of the running of the Community Kitchen.

7. Assess the suitability of potential kitchen sites.
8. Invite the Local Government Environmental Health Officer to examine the potential kitchen sites.
9. Check that the Community Kitchen will be covered by public liability insurance (either through your organisation or preferably the host of the kitchen site).
10. Seek partnerships with local organisations to support training for facilitators in basic food safety, group facilitation, nutrition and budgeting.
11. Seek partnerships with local retailers/market gardeners for discounted/donated produce.
12. Continue to promote the concept to local organisations in order to establish new Kitchens and gain referrals into existing Kitchens.

GETTING GOING:

Once you have agreement in principle on the organization of your kitchen it makes sense to form a working group to go over the concept in detail:

Working Groups:

1. Develop a working group of 4-8 people that includes key representatives from organisations and community groups who should be involved in the development of the Kitchen.
2. Consult with the potential community members and participants to determine the level of interest and to further establish the working group.
3. Make sure that management within the organisation where you wish to run the Community Kitchen understands the concept of Community Kitchens, how it will run and the goal of the Kitchen. At times you may need their support so it is best to communicate well with each other. Include them on the working group if possible.
4. Address any liability concerns with management of the host organisation. View their public liability certificate and ensure the Community Kitchen participants will be covered.
5. Develop a written agreement or guidelines between the Kitchen host and user group.
6. Discuss where you will find participants and how you will recruit. Have you ensured participants will be involved in the development of their community kitchen?
7. Identify requirements; participants, food, equipment, fundraising or sponsorship, group facilitator, transport, childcare, equipment and food storage. Are you able to minimise any barriers to participation for your target group?
8. Identify any partnerships that can be created to support the Community Kitchen..
9. Determine how you will evaluate the success of the Kitchen.

Other considerations:

- What are the main goals of your Kitchen (e.g. for participants to develop cooking skills, to build social networks, to increase access to nutritious meals?)
- Which members of the Community would you like to reach? Have you consulted with this group?
- How many participants can work in your kitchen comfortably?
- Is there any cooking equipment? If not how will this be arranged?
- Is there enough storage space? Are Kitchen participants able to bring equipment if there is a lack of storage space?
- How will you advertise?
- Is the facilitator to be from within the group, a member of staff or a volunteer?
- What are the responsibilities of the Kitchen facilitator?
- Will the host organisation or other organisations contribute to any of the food costs?
- How will recipes be selected and who will do the shopping? If the group wants to share responsibility, the shopping list can be divvied up into 1-3 sections (i.e. perishable fruits/vegetables; perishable dairy; non-perishable dry/ bulk goods). Alternatively, one member can do the shopping and this responsibility is rotated amongst the group.
- How much to cook per session? Typical groups cook 3-4 main items (meals that feed 4 adults) and perhaps 1-2 side dishes. The group will also have to decide if everyone is to bring their own take-home containers or if that is part of the kitchen budget and purchased along with the grocery items.
- How long a session? 3-4 hours is a good amount of time for a kitchen, and that will allow for enough time to set up, cook and clean up (and maybe a social break or two!).
- Address food safety issues. At least one person from each Kitchen needs to have done some food safety training. If not, discuss with the project co-ordinator for arrangements to be made.
- The facilitator should also be aware of first aid and fire procedures in the organisation that hosts the Kitchen.
- The facilitator should also be strongly encouraged to have done group facilitation, nutrition and budgeting training.

Try to work some fun into the kitchen as well – community kitchens are a great way to learn more about your friends and neighbors, as well share the responsibility of cooking. It should be fun and enjoyable!



RESOURCES:

<http://cridge.org/>

[www.foodsecuritynews.com/.../Community Kitchen Best Practices Toolkit](http://www.foodsecuritynews.com/.../Community_Kitchen_Best_Practices_Toolkit)

www.cowichancommunitykitchens.org/pdfs/manual/community-kitchen-manual-2.pdf

www.victoriacommunitykitchens.ca/

Distributed by:

info@kineticvideo.com

www.kineticvideo.com

