Adolescents with long-lasting health challenges
Experiences from a group-based training programme


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Abstract
Introduction: Chronic illness is a challenge that interferes with everyday life both to the person affected and to their families. Adolescence is a period of major changes physically, mentally and socially. With long-lasting health problems there may be further challenges in taking care of their own resources, education, family, friends and leisure. In an educational training programme to adolescents with long-lasting health problems the aim was to highlight and promote their health by supporting their ability to live with their problems.

Purpose/methods: The aim of this study was to develop knowledge about how participation in a group-based training programme is experienced to promote health among young people with long-lasting health problems during their transition to adulthood. We used the qualitative inductive method of modified Grounded Theory. It was conducted two focus group interviews, one individual interview and four telephone interviews with a total of eight informants, between 15 and 18 years old.

Results: The participants underlined the value of meeting others in the same situation. Together they felt motivated to work with the themes and activities in the programme, to find the words to describe their situation. They also became more aware of themselves to realize their situation. Four categories were identified; Sense of belonging, Sense of being understood, Sense of self-confidence and Sense of optimism in the future. From these categories we further developed a core category; Sense of enhanced self-esteem.

Conclusion: The group-based educational training programme seemed to promote health among young people with long-lasting health problems in their transition processes to adulthood. After the programme the participants experienced to have more influence on their own health and wellbeing, and they had acquired strategies to cope with their health challenge through an enhanced self-esteem experienced from the sense of belonging, sense of being understood, sense of self-confident and sense of optimism in the future.