

# BRIDGES TO HEALTHY MINDS

2023 EVALUATION REPORT



Prepared by The Family Center/La Familia  
In partnership with Valley Research & Evaluation  
September 2023

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE & KEY FINDINGS	01
SOURCES OF STRENGTH & BARRIERS TO WELL-BEING	02
MENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	03
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER EXPERIENCES	04
MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING SERIES EVALUATION FINDINGS	05
A PROMOTORA PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH / YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY WELL-BEING	09
RECOMMENDATIONS	10
EVALUATION APPROACH	11

## PURPOSE

In 2023, The Family Center/La Familia (TFC/LF) partnered with Valley Research & Evaluation to:

- Identify challenges and opportunities in community mental health and well-being to inform future Bridges to Healthy Minds programming.
- Seek feedback from the Bridges to Healthy Minds External Advisory Board, comprised of Latinx community members, who shared their experiences, expertise, and insights to support the development of curricula for future mental health training courses.
- Evaluate the training series delivered as part of its Bridges to Healthy Minds program;
  - Understand mental health training participants' experiences in the courses and what they gained from the courses.

The evaluation included a document review, interviews, and surveys of community members who participated in training and Advisory Board members (see page 11 for more details about the evaluation approach).

## KEY FINDINGS

Bridges to Healthy Minds training participants increased their knowledge and skills and felt empowered to continue to use skills related to Mental Health First Aid; strengthening mental and emotional health in the family; yoga and exercise; strengths and opportunities to grow; and family communication. These findings of the Bridges to Healthy Minds training were consistent with the 2021 and 2022 evaluation findings.

Participants overwhelmingly recommend the continuation and expansion of culturally attuned educational materials and programs provided in Spanish that promote well-being among the Latinx community in general as well as with a particular focus on youth.

The Bridges to Healthy Minds Advisory Board, composed of 10 Latinx community members, worked with TFC/LF team members and partners at Colorado State University (CSU) to adapt and pilot-test culturally attuned curricula for Latinx community members to add to the existing courses offered by TFC/LF that promote mental health and well-being. The new curricula will be offered in early 2024.

## SOURCES OF STRENGTH & BARRIERS TO WELL-BEING

Consistent with the last two years' evaluation findings, evaluation participants this year described the power of social connectedness and resources and services in Spanish to promote well-being among Latinx community members. Stigma around mental health and continued systemic inequities remain barriers to community well-being.

### Sources of Strength & Well-Being

When asked about the community's strengths that support mental health and well-being among the Latinx community, participants cited:

- Community unity and connectedness
- Organizations staffed by compassionate people who provide resources and support
- Communication and having access to information and content in Spanish
- Having a desire to grow and thrive for self, families, and the broader community.

### Barriers & Challenges

Participants described barriers and challenges to improving mental health and well-being among the Latinx community as:

- Lack of time
- The stigma around mental health that can prevent seeking help for mental health issues
- Community inequities and lack of access to resources and information.

*"Understanding, support and solidarity. / La comprensión el apoyo y la solidaridad."*  
-Evaluation participant

*"The fact that there are not enough resources and equal opportunities for the entire community, whether due to lack of income, lack of information, lack of documentation, etc. / El que no hay los suficientes recursos y oportunidades iguales para toda la comunidad ya sea por falta de ingresos, falta de información, falta de documentación etc."*  
-Evaluation participant

*"[The greatest strength in our community that supports the well-being of members of the Spanish-speaking community is] having resources and centers like La Familia that seeks resources for us. / Contar con recursos y centros como La Familia que busca recursos para nosotros."*  
-Evaluation participant

*"[The biggest challenge in our community that impedes your well-being and that of the members of the Spanish-speaking community is] not having time to attend more activities because of having to work. / No tener tiempo para asistir a más actividades por tener que trabajar."*  
-Evaluation participant

## MENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & PILOT TESTING

The Bridges to Healthy Minds Advisory Board, composed of 10 Latinx community members, worked with TFC/LF team members and partners at Colorado State University (CSU) in the Department of Human Development & Family Studies to identify culturally attuned curricula for Latinx community members to add to the existing courses offered by TFC/LF that promote mental health and well-being.

The advisory board decided to review and adapt an existing mindfulness curriculum, developed at CSU called Learning to Breathe focused on the concepts shown below. The team at CSU pilot-tested the program in the summer with teens including three Latinx teens who reported that the course taught valuable skills to reduce stress but that it was challenging to make time to attend.

A culturally-attuned and community-trusted curriculum developer, who has a master's degree in Innovation and Human Development from Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP), revised the curriculum based on board member feedback. TFC/LF recruited four facilitators for the new two curricula, including two board members, a CSU student, and a promotora. In October 2023, the facilitators will complete training to deliver the first course using the new curricula called ¡Enfocate! / Focus! in February 2024. The 4-session course is intended for youth aged 14 to 18 ye old and their parents. In the first three sessions, the youth and parents will meet separately, and then in the final session, they will work together on how they can face stressful life situations filled with anxiety in a less traumatic and defying way, based on self-empowerment, self-esteem, and mutual help.

- B** BODY: LISTEN TO YOUR BODY.
- R** REFLECTIONS: THOUGHTS ARE JUST THOUGHTS.
- E** EMOTIONS: NAVIGATE YOUR EMOTIONS.
- A** ATTENTION: INSIDE & OUTSIDE OF THE MIND.
- T** TRY BEING KIND TO YOURSELF. COMPASSION & KINDNESS.
- H** HABITS: HEALTHY & VIRTUOUS.
- E** EMPOWERED: GAIN THE INNER EDGE.

*"Before, I'd stress too much about things, and I wouldn't take time to clear my brain and just to let loose. But once I started going to the classes, I was able to take time for myself to relax, and not have any worries on me."*

-Teen pilot program participant

*"It affected [my life] positively because I was able to focus more on what was going on like in life than what was going through my brain, than the worries."*

-Teen pilot program participant

## ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER EXPERIENCES

When asked to reflect on and assess their experience, all but one of the Advisory Board members reported that they:

- Felt their input as Advisory Board members was valued
- Had the opportunity to share their experiences in a safe and trusted environment
- Connected with others on the Advisory Board

Advisory Board members valued serving on the board because they worked collaboratively to address important mental health issues in the community in a culturally attuned way.

Overall Advisory Board members were satisfied with their experiences serving on the board. When asked how to improve the experience of Advisory Board members in the future, board members recommended TFC/LF invite more youth to serve on the board.

*"I loved being part of a better future, better life, or better options for young people. / Me Encanto ser parte de un mejor futuro, mejor vida, o mejores opciones para Los jovenes."*

-Advisory Board Member

*"I was very happy to be part of something so important and of great service to our community. What I liked the most was the focus on the cultural aspect."  
"Me dio mucho gusto poder ser parte de algo tan importante y de gran servicio para nuestra comunidad. Lo que más me gustó fue el enfoque en el aspecto cultural."*

-Advisory Board Member






*[My experience serving on the board was] very nice because I felt that I was contributing to something that we hope will be of much positive support for the Community. / Muy bonito porque senti que estaba aportando en algo que esperamos va ser de mucho apoyo positivo para la Comunidad."*

-Advisory Board Member

## MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING ALIGNED WITH PARTICIPANTS' GOALS

Between March and September 2023, TFC/LF offered 10 group mental health courses facilitated by Spanish-speaking professionals. The courses focused on topics previous evaluation participants expressed interest in learning, including Mental Health First Aid; strengthening mental and emotional health in the family; yoga, exercise, and somatic movement; strengths and opportunities to grow; and family communication.

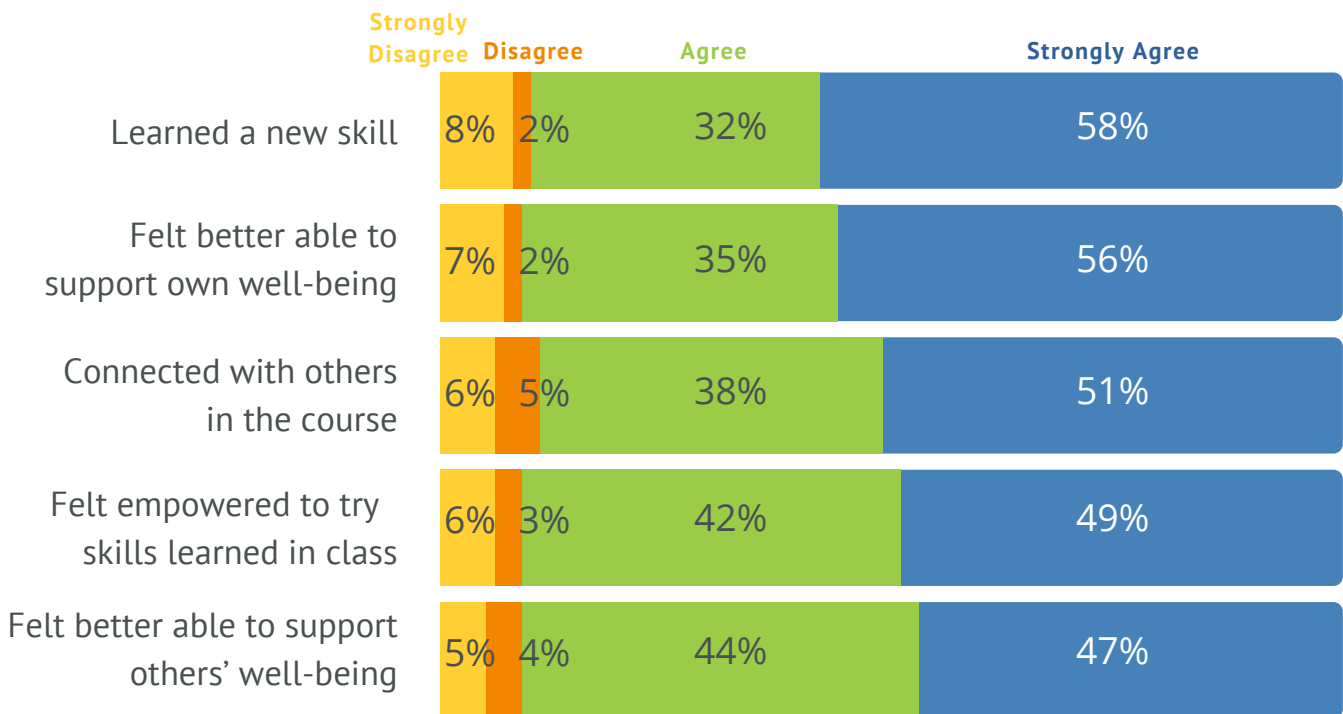
Of the 132 attendees, 73 completed pre- and post-course surveys for a 51% response rate, which is above average for an online survey (which is 30%). In the pre-course survey, participants stated their goals for taking the courses. Their goals aligned with the course focus areas and objectives (shown below).

	COURSE FOCUS	PARTICIPANT GOALS
	<b>STRENGTHS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH</b>	Recognize & value abilities to overcome challenges; gain practical skills for personal growth.
	<b>YOGA &amp; MINDFULNESS / SOMATIC MOVEMENT</b>	Reduce stress, build flexibility, strength, & focus.
	<b>STRENGTHENING FAMILY MENTAL &amp; EMOTIONAL HEALTH</b>	Learn tools to understand & improve mental health & generate a healthy family environment.
	<b>ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY</b>	Improve communication with children and partners when expressing feelings and ideas.
	<b>MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID</b>	Understand signs & symptoms of mental health disorders & learn to use First Aid for Mental Health

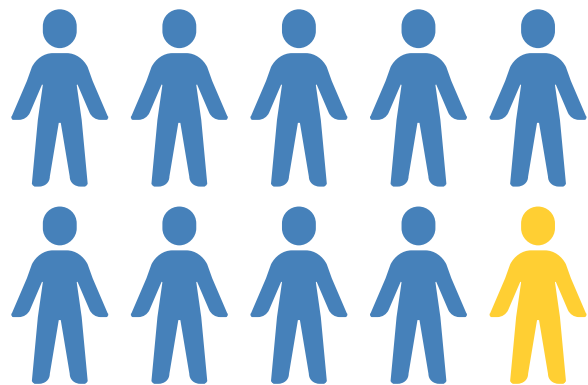
## PARTICIPANTS ACROSS TEN MENTAL HEALTH COURSES GAINED SKILLS AND LEFT EMPOWERED TO IMPROVE THEIR & OTHERS' WELL-BEING

Participants across the training sessions reported gaining insights from the courses that will positively impact their lives. Many participants described how the knowledge and skills they gained will enable them to recognize and address mental health issues and promote well-being personally and within their families and the broader community. These findings are consistent with the 2021 and 2022 Bridges to Healthy Minds evaluation findings.

### Due to the trainings, participants:



*“Exercises like these are what we need in the community, a place where I can come to reflect and connect with my community. / Ejercicios como estos es lo que necesitamos en la comunidad, un lugar donde yo pueda venir a reflexionar y conectarme con mi comunidad.”*  
-Class participant



ACROSS ALL TRAINING SESSIONS, **9 OUT OF 10** PARTICIPANTS REPORTED THAT THEY **CONNECTED WITH OTHERS** IN THE COURSE.



## PARTICIPANTS VALUED THE COURSE IMPACT, CONTENT, & APPROACH

Participants across the training sessions valued the mental health training because it increased their mental health awareness, enabled self-care personal growth, and for the quality of instruction and the sense of community and shared experiences the training provided. These themes reflect the positive impact of the training on the participants' lives and well-being.

### MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

- Participants emphasized that the training increased their knowledge and awareness of mental health.
- They appreciated that the training covered topics applicable to daily life like managing emotions and stress.
- They noted the importance of mental health and well-being and gratitude for the courses bringing a focus on mental health.

### SELF-CARE & PERSONAL GROWTH

Participants valued:

- Taking time for themselves, learning to relax, and listening to their bodies.
- The opportunity to learn something new and recognize their own resilience, strength, and emotional intelligence.
- Learning to manage and express emotions to build and strengthen healthy relationships.

### COMMUNITY & SHARED EXPERIENCES

- Participants appreciated:
  - The opportunity to share their experiences and learn from one another;
  - That the training addressed topics important for daily life and offered opportunities for further learning;
  - The training took place with people from their own community, using relatable examples.

### INSTRUCTORS & COURSE ACCESSIBILITY

- Participants valued the instructors':
  - Knowledge, professionalism, charisma, and passion;
  - Use of relatable and clear, simple explanations;
  - Ability to foster a safe and welcoming environment of respect and empathy.
- Participants appreciated that the training was accessible because it was free in Spanish with childcare.

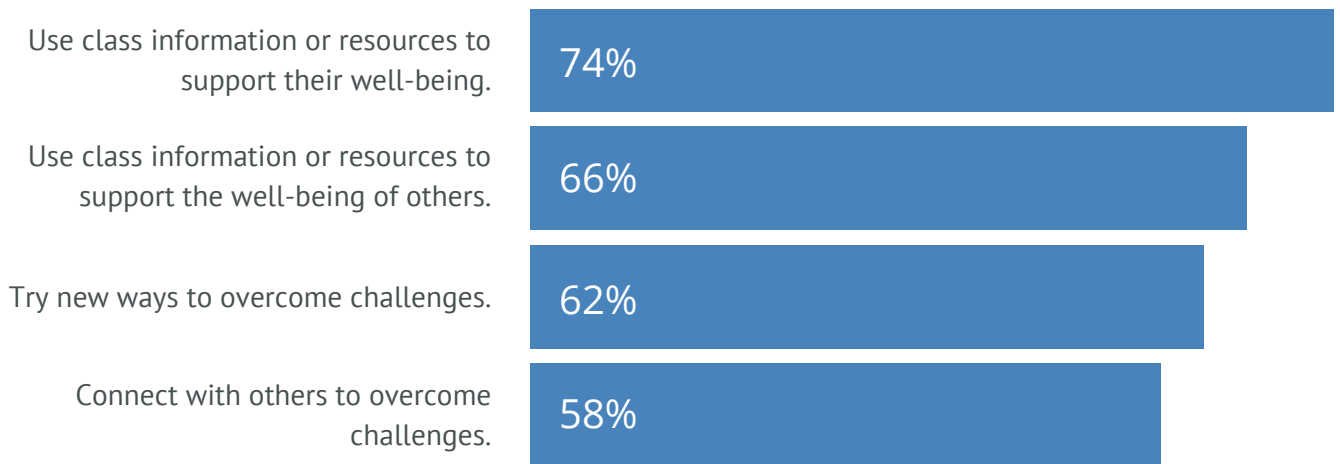
*"[I valued] the participation of the group and the integration of the themes into real life. / La participación de el grupo y la integración de los temas a la vida real."*

-Evaluation participant

## BECAUSE OF THE TRAININGS, PARTICIPANTS WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THEIR & OTHERS' WELL-BEING

Across all training sessions, the majority of participants reported they plan to use the information learned and resources they gained during the course to support their well-being (74%) and try new ways to overcome challenges (66%).

### Due to the training, participants plan to:



*"I learned different strategies to detect when a person needs help regarding their mental health. What struck me the most, that sometimes a small sign could tell you how much need there is in terms of our mental health. / Aprendí diferentes estrategias, para detectar cuando una persona necesita ayuda en cuanto a su salud mental. Lo que más me impactó, que a veces una pequeña señal pude decirte cuanta necesidad hay en cuanto a nuestra Salud mental."*

-Evaluation participant

*"I learned a lot of things but something that stayed very much in my mind was the lesson on how to get rid of repressed feelings and the importance of not staying with those feelings. / Aprendí muchas cosas pero algo que se me quedo muy en mi mente, fue la lección de cómo sacar los sentimientos reprimidos y la impotencia que tiene el no quedarse con esos sentimientos."*

-Evaluation participant

*"I really didn't know how much resilience I had until I started seeing other cases. I loved it, thanks. / La verdad no sabía cuánta resiliencia tenía hasta que empeze a ver otros casos me encanto gracias."*

-Evaluation participant

## PROMOTORAS PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

In 2023, TFC/LF continued to share educational materials and resources through Promotora outreach in mobile home communities and at community-led events. The Promotoras, who are highly trusted community members, have further strengthened their positive relationships with their neighbors and communities.

The resources and materials they provided focused on a variety of topics including mental health and community member rights. They promoted the mental health training series and heard interest and enthusiasm for the courses from community members.

*"With the TFC/LF mental health classes, a lot of people are reaching out to learn when the next classes are and wanting to join the community in that."*

-Promotora

## YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

When asked about their perspectives on mental health and community well-being, Latinx youth said they feel at peace throughout their day and with those they interact with frequently. They described feeling like they're appreciated and cared for at home and in their friends' homes. When they feel big emotions and stress, youth reported using positive coping strategies, such as being physically active, getting more sleep, connecting with nature, listening to music, spending time with friends, family, and pets, and taking time for themselves to have fun and focus on hobbies.

At the same time, youth said they wish there was less drama at school and less division in the country. They reported not having many spaces where they feel like they're welcome, appreciated, and cared for outside of their homes and friends' homes.

Youth participants said they would like access to more fun programming and activities as well as quiet safe spaces to relax and get information and non-judgmental support on topics ranging from math tutoring to "life skills." Additionally, they noted the power of having time in nature for relaxation, connection, and the smell of trees. They described wishing there were more spaces with skate parks, fishing ponds, and if at all possible a beach.

*"I appreciate how my world, my neighborhood, and my connections with people around me are currently. I know everything's not perfect, but I like it."*

-Youth Evaluation Participant

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bridges to Healthy Minds evaluation participants and Advisory Board Members commended TFC/LF's work to promote the mental health and well-being of Latinx community members in Larimer County and expressed gratitude for the Bridges to Healthy Minds program and other services and resources provided.

Specifically, they recommend the continuation and expansion of culturally attuned educational materials and programs provided in Spanish that promote well-being among the Latinx community in general as well as with a particular focus on youth.

Some participants encouraged posting more flyers and sharing more promotional materials through social media to reach community members who haven't heard of or tried the programs and resources TFC/LF offers.

Ideas for potential future classes, learning groups, and resources included:

- How parents can support academic growth among their children
- Mental Health First Aid for teens
- Couple's communication
- Health topics such as nutrition and how to incorporate more vegetables into our diet
- Personal finance
- Time management
- Household maintenance and repairing common household items

Youth participants said they would like access to more fun programming and activities as well as to quiet safe spaces to relax and get information and support on topics ranging from math tutoring to "life skills". Additionally, they noted the power of having time in nature for relaxation and connection.

Participants also called for societal engagement and change to promote equity and unity. Specifically, they want to see community leaders and more community organizations prioritizing and promoting the health and well-being of the Latinx community.

*"[To further support the well-being of Spanish-speaking community members, I'd like] community leaders to think of us and the health of the Hispanic community and for there to be more resources to support programs of this type. / Que los líderes de la comunidad piensen en nosotros y en la salud de la comunidad hispana y aya un recurso para apoyar programas de este tipo."*

-Evaluation participant

## EVALUATION APPROACH

The Bridges to Healthy Minds evaluation consisted of a mixed-methods approach drawing on the strengths of multiple data sources.

The evaluation aimed to:

- Identify challenges and opportunities in community mental health and well-being to inform future Bridges to Healthy Minds programming.
- Seek feedback from the Bridges to Healthy Minds External Advisory Board, comprised of Latinx community members, who shared their experiences, expertise, and insights to support the development of curricula for future mental health training courses.
- Evaluate the training series delivered as part of its Bridges to Healthy Minds program;
- Understand mental health training participants' experiences in the courses and what they gained from the courses.

The evaluation included the methods outlined below and was conducted between March and September 2023.



ONLINE SURVEYS OF MENTAL  
HEALTH COURSE ATTENDEES  
(N=73) AND ADVISORY BOARD  
MEMBERS (N=6)



SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS  
WITH PROMOTORAS (N=2) AND A  
FOCUS GROUP WITH LATINX  
YOUTH (N=4)



DOCUMENT REVIEW OF TFC/LF QUARTERLY  
REPORTS, TFC/LF STAFF REFLECTIONS, & A  
CSU RESEARCH TEAM REPORT THAT  
INCLUDED SURVEY & INTERVIEW FINDINGS

## CONTACT US



### The Family Center / La Familia

309 Hickory Street #5  
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Ph: 970-221-1615  
[info@thefamilycenterfc.org](mailto:info@thefamilycenterfc.org)  
<https://thefamilycenterfc.org/>