



## Sharpen Services Overview

Sharpen offers a variety of services to improve mental health outcomes and decrease health disparities for both organizations and communities. Each of our services are outlined in detail through the links below:

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## Sharpen Technology System.

The benefits of the Sharpen system includes participant increase in:

1. **mental health awareness** and literacy through our award-winning, evidence based mental health trainings
2. **access** to evidence-based healthy coping toolkits
3. **engagement** in the discussion around mental health
4. **connection** to validated mental health screenings
5. **trauma-informed** school and community best practices
6. **help-seeking** and connection to treatment resources

*What is the Sharpen System?*

The Sharpen system is built through a social-ecological framework that improves the shared protective factors for mental disorders, suicide ideation and trauma. Sharpen provides (i) health promotion programs that build protective factors for resilience (universal/promotion); (ii) screening and targeted services to those who need more support (secondary prevention); and (iii) connection to intensive services to those who need care (tertiary intervention) as outlined in the figure to the left.



The library of Sharpen age-appropriate, psychoeducational content has been created with over 200 researchers in the field of public health, psychology and medicine and has shown to decrease stigma<sup>i</sup>, improve resiliency, mental health literacy<sup>ii</sup>, and increase engagement with mental health treatment<sup>iii</sup>. The Sharpen system has been part of over 50 research collaborations – list is available at [www.SharpenMinds.com/Research](http://www.SharpenMinds.com/Research). The

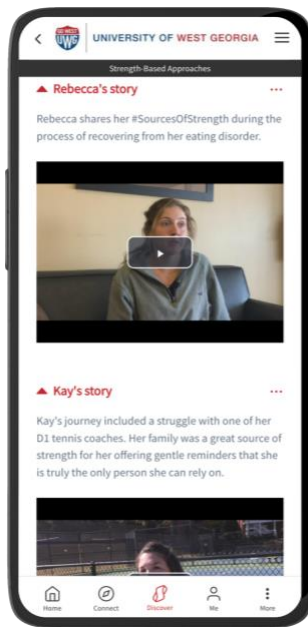
library of culturally-competent and evidence-based psychoeducational modules are grouped into four primary categories that relate directly to the shared protective factors. Our library improves: mental health literacy (MHL), emotional wellbeing (EW), mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and suicide prevention (SP) across diverse audience groups and populations.

Each Sharpen application contains a customized library of modular content that includes peer-focused documentary film footage. In addition, the modules are further customized based on “user story demographics” (parent, educator, high school student, veteran, etc.) specific to the organization deploying the app. For example, a high school student would see other high school student videos in their library of mental health literacy and mindfulness modules to decrease stigma and increase engagement.

In addition to a library of modular content, the Sharpen system connects individuals to mental health screening tools, referral pathways to community resources, and links to community organizations (such as free and reduced substance use and behavioral health treatment

providers) within their zip code as well as 988 and other crisis response support. *The aim is for every individual to receive access to the Sharpen protective content directly from their mobile device or computer, thereby increasing awareness of mental health and healthy coping mechanisms.*

Sharpen enables organizations or communities to deploy a vetted library of psychoeducational content through a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). This provides end-users with immediate, audience-appropriate tools that increase both individual and community resilience. In addition to its robust content creation and delivery capability, Sharpen is a HIPAA compliant communication platform in which moderation and authorizations are controlled by the client organization's administration, and by Sharpen staff.



Sharpen's peer-to-peer, documentary film educational modules consist of a robust library of over 600 courses. The library is built using eight evidence-based protective factors shown through research to improve resilience, while offering a toolkit for creating a healthy social environment that encourages mental health awareness, prevention and recovery support. Most notably, users are immediately directed to a vetted library of resources in their zip code for appropriate treatment and support services. For example, a college student with symptoms of depression is directed to the university counseling center. In addition, the same student is provided connection and contact information for local support groups, along with protective coping tools and strength-based video stories of resilience. Users receive protective content that is pro-actively scheduled at a regular interval (for example, a mindfulness activity once per week on a Sunday evening). These activities normalize the daily conversation around mental health, decrease mental health stigma, and improve protection for the user through Sharpen's mindfulness based stress reduction (SMBSR) interventions.

The Sharpen technology is easy to implement through Single Sign-On (SSO) and/or integration with existing LMS platforms, allowing users to access educational resources for coping, thriving, nourishing, and healing in one, discreet location. Users are not required to access external sites, which often leads to attrition with technological interventions<sup>iv</sup>. Furthermore, the unique design allows providers or clinicians the ability to deploy the Sharpen app in seconds via text message which improves continuity of care. The videos within the app adapt to the available bandwidth at a user's current location, helping address broadband barriers. Sharpen also allows researchers the ability to embed consent, surveys and assessments into the technology and receive results instantly. Sharpen can seamlessly integrate into any Application Programming Interface (API) to allow, for example, Qualtrics surveys to tie into the user experience without having to leave the app. Sharpen's robust CMS offers each organization within the ecosystem a real-time dashboard of de-identified user data and the ability to allow all institutional researchers that are part of the network access to a full range of data collected throughout the entire ecosystem.

### **Data Gathered from Sharpen System:**

The de-identified data that is provided to clients and/or qualified research partners, includes:

- 1) the number of courses, videos, and posts viewed;

- 2) the amount of content consumed (length of time spent on a video or length of time spent on a course);
- 3) Number of local resources viewed/consumed;
- 4) Time on the application;
- 5) Group and social activity on the application (whether user joins a support group, etc.);
- 6) Daily, monthly, weekly, active users on the app;
- 7) Number of times buttons for support or mentoring are accessed;
- 8) Invitations from user to others to join Sharpen,
- 9) Times of day user accesses platform and content,
- 10) The total number of users that engage mental health and suicide awareness,
- 11) Sharpen Resiliency Scale (an individualized scale outlining the protective factors increased on the app,
- 12) quiz and feedback scores from SMHL courses completed,
- 13) quiz and feedback scores from SMBSR courses completed, and
- 14) engagement data regarding the proactive mental health “mini modules” that are deployed via SMS or email.

### **Sharpen’s Evidence-Based Courses.**

The Sharpen system contains award-winning, evidence based courses that can be accessed outside of the full Sharpen service. The library within Sharpen contains over 4,000 films and 600 modules on over 100 topics. We offer the courses through customized integration with other platforms or learning management systems. This enables us to provide all participants with access to protective content regardless of the delivery format.

We have packaged our top courses into 6 hour sessions. These include the Sharpen Mental Health Literacy (SMHL) course, which provides vetted, best-practice asynchronous content (see table below) that has shown to decrease stigma and improve mental health literacy. Other available courses for professional development and continuing education [can be found here](#).

#### *Sharpen Mental Health Literacy (SMHL)™*

**1. Sharpen Mental Health Literacy (101).** The modules within this course draw from the research of Kutcher and colleagues and outlines the four pillars of a mental health literacy framework. The course provides an overview of the protective factors for mental wellness, health literacy training on various DSM topics, mental health stigma, and best practices for assisting someone who is struggling and where to connect them to treatment.

**2. Mindfulness and How to Use it In the Classroom or Home Setting.** This course is rooted in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and advanced yoga practices developed for eating disorder treatment facilities<sup>vi</sup>. Between 2017-2019 the curriculum was deployed to educators in 3-day Resilient Schools trainings on topics including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and primary prevention programs to build community resilience<sup>vii</sup>. This course was implemented as a peer resiliency program for middle school athletes and was found to decrease anxiety<sup>viii</sup>.

**3. ACEs Trauma and Toxic Stress.** This course covers topics that include adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), how trauma impacts the developing mind and nervous system, and strategies for improving resilience. Sharpen's trauma courses were built in collaboration with over 15 child welfare agencies<sup>ix</sup>.

**4. Suicide Prevention.** This course outlines the risk /protective factors and warning signs for suicide, as told through documentary footage featuring national suicidologists. It outlines evidence-based models, such as CONNECT Postvention, Living Works programs and Sources of Strength. It provides connection to national agencies, research institutions and training information<sup>x,xi,xii</sup>.

**5. Disordered Eating Prevention.** The course features over 25 national researchers in eating disorders, individuals with lived experiences, and an overview of six types of eating disorders, research around weight bias, and strategies for improving body esteem. This course has shown to improve the protective factors for disordered eating, awareness of comorbidities for disordered eating among pediatricians, awareness of weight stigma, body esteem, media literacy and awareness of female athlete triad syndrome<sup>xiii</sup>.

**6. Managing School Mental Health Best Practices.** This course prepares the educator, staff member and parent how to respond when a student is struggling and provides technical support and strategies for engaging with students. Most importantly, participants learn boundaries about appropriateness in assisting a student who is currently struggling and are provided with a toolkit to deploy resiliency techniques at the classroom level.

### *Sharpen Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (SMBRS)™*

Sharpen has also developed the mindfulness based stress reduction program appropriate for individuals ages 12 and above which includes video modules covering the below topics:

Activity	Title	Description
1	Introduction to mindfulness	Facts and origins of mindfulness, significance and a quick mindful breathing exercise to reduce stress <sup>xiv</sup>
2	What is stress	Overview of how stress impacts the brain and how mindfulness improves neural connections <sup>xiii</sup>

3	Turning negative thoughts into positive statements	This quick activity teaches participants how to take the negative thoughts happening in their own mind and turn them into positive affirmations <sup>xv,xxvi,xxvii</sup>
4	Pinpointing feelings	Focusing on feeling and emotion regulation <sup>xviii</sup> , this activity outlines how to identify feelings and utilize writing to manage them <sup>xix</sup>
5	Gratitude	Focus on one of the primary core attitudes from the MBSR curriculum through an easy, accessible practice <sup>xiii</sup>
6	Body scan	Focus on one of the primary core attitudes from the MBSR curriculum through an easy, accessible practice <sup>xiii</sup>
7	What went well	Evidence-based exercise taken from positive psychology to focus on three things that have gone well each day <sup>xx</sup>
8	Mindful awareness	Focus on one of the primary core attitudes from the MBSR curriculum through an easy, accessible practice <sup>xiii</sup>
9	Balance	Focus on one of the primary core components from the MBSR curriculum through an easy, accessible practice <sup>xiii</sup>
10	Breathe deep	Taken from the MBSR curriculum, this is a simple, deep breathing exercise <sup>xiii</sup>
11	Mindful movement	Focus on one of the core components from the MBSR curriculum through an easy, accessible gentle movement activity <sup>xiii</sup>
12	Box breathing	Focus on one of the core components from the MBSR curriculum through an easy breathing exercise <sup>xiii</sup>
13	Sources of strength	A mindful activity to focus on strength-based community support <sup>xxi</sup>
14	Mindful eating	Focus on one of the core activities from the MBSR curriculum through an easy mindful eating exercise <sup>xiii,xxii,xxiii, xxiv</sup>

*Prior to and after the mental health literacy training, all participants complete a mental health literacy scale developed by O'Connor and Casey (2015).*

### **Sharpen Customized Content.**

The core competency of the Sharpen co-founders lies within creating engaging, content that normalizes the discussion around mental health. Our team can work with any partner agency or organization to determine the best customized content recommended for the specific audiences being served.

Sharpen customizes content based on each module created. The process typically entails a thorough strategic planning session with the Sharpen team, collaboratively developing a methodology for filming documentary style interviews with key stakeholders, filming and editing the films, assembling the films into Sharpen modular content, evaluating the modules after they are created (typically through IRB pre- post- and/or focus group participation).

[Examples of Sharpen's content are available here.](#)

### **Sharpen Research.**

The original reason for designing the Sharpen platform was to invite inter-disciplinary researchers into the platform in order to reduce the average time it takes for research to translate to various populations. As a result, Sharpen has engaged with over 200 researchers who have been involved in the creation, design, implementation and evaluation of our

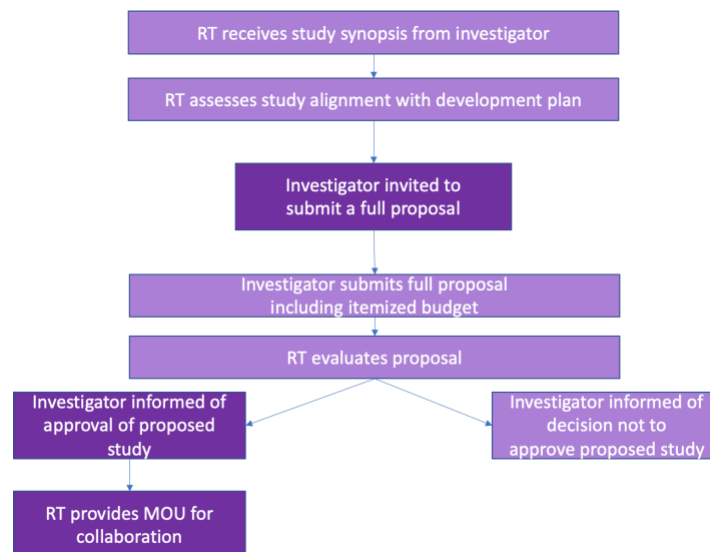
programs. Often our team can collaborate on grant writing efforts that help bring these important research projects to life.

The Sharpen team is currently involved in over 25 research collaborations, including with Stanford Medical School, NYU Langone, Emory University, Kennesaw State, University of Georgia, Medical University of South Carolina, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, University of West Georgia and UC San Diego.

### *Apply for Research Support*

The Resiliency Technologies (“RT”) scientific advisory board (RTSAB) seeks to support research that furthers our mission of deploying evidence-based interventions (EBIs) that support child & adolescent mental health and resiliency. The RTSAB welcomes proposals from all investigators interested in incorporating EBIs into their research program. RT requires an initial study synopsis submission for review. RTSAB / staff will review the study synopsis. Details regarding necessary materials for the initial study synopsis submission are available below.

### *Submission Process Overview*



### *Study Research Collaboration Submission*

To submit a study synopsis, select the “[Apply for RT Research Collaboration Support](#)” link. Principal investigator information and a brief overview of study components are required for submission of the study synopsis form. A confirmation email will be sent upon completion of the form. Our team will review the study synopsis and communicate a decision to proceed or to decline the proposal to the submitting investigator.

Our team may request additional information in the form of a full research proposal following study synopsis review. If so, our team will be in communication regarding the additional information needed.

### **Sharpen Consulting Services.**

Our team has 20 years of expertise in producing, developing and implementing award-winning mental health literacy and prevention programs that have shown to engage audiences into the discussion around emotional and mental wellness. Our programs have been at a

large scale (large public art and multi-media events), theatrical events, and also at a small scale (social campaigns, video and documentary films, courses in learning management, etc.).

Our Founder, Robyn Hussa Farrell, has led large coalitions in suicide prevention, community behavioral health task forces, veteran resiliency projects, foster family resilience programs and college, high school and middle school student mental health and resiliency programs.

We offer our consulting services to communities interested in leading mental health awareness / prevention activities and programs following current best practices.

### **Sharpen Team.**

The Sharpen platform, created by Robyn Hussa-Farrell and Tim Farrell, has been extensively designed based on 20 years of research in mental health prevention in both school and community settings. Hussa-Farrell spent 20 years as a health educator in public and private schools, delivering prevention and resiliency programs in collaboration with interdisciplinary research teams. She has deployed and scaled multi-tiered mental health literacy and suicide prevention programs in 15 states and throughout Resilient Schools initiatives.

Hussa was invited to direct the suicide prevention task force in the Upstate of South Carolina for five years, in collaboration with Dr. Alex Karydi at the Education Development Center and Zero Suicide Initiative.

Throughout her journey, Hussa-Farrell partnered with her long-time collaborator, Tim Farrell (an award-winning, New York City journalist and documentary film producer) to create a robust and engaging psychoeducational library of over 4,000 videos featuring national researchers, practitioners and individuals with lived experience sharing stories of strength. In the course of their work, they have collaborated with national organizations such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, PurposeBuilt Communities, and Esther Dyson's HICcup / Way to Wellville initiative.

In 2014 they created the Sharpen platform to deploy their award-winning programs and scale evidence-based mental health prevention programs to dozens of state agencies, local nonprofits, and behavioral health coalitions.



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