YOUNGMINDS

Student Participation in Mental Health

Hannah Russell and Kim Markham-Jones

YoungMinds

We want to see a world where no young person feels alone with their mental health, and gets the support they need, when they need it, no matter what.

Participation Framework

Sphere of influence

Systemic Influencing change at a regional or national level.				
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Operational The design, development, delivery and evaluation of an organisation's activities.				
Individual Decisions and actions that impact the young person directly				
	Inform Young people receive clear, accessible, and accurate information. *"I know about the things that impact me"*	**Contribute** Young people have opportunities to share their views, and this is considered *"I can tell you what I think"*	**Collaborate** Young people and staff work together as equal partners *"We work together"*	**Lead** Young people have direct control over resources and decisions, with support from staff. *"I am in control"*

Power held by young people

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Sutton Trust – The project

- The Sutton Trust supports young people from less advantaged backgrounds to access leading universities and careers.
- They gathered data that showed that:
  - an increased number of students were reporting mental health needs;
  - those who declared mental health as a need reported lower levels of agreement to questions such as 'I feel confident about applying to university' and 'I will fit in at university'.

Sutton Trust – The project

- Sutton Trust asked YoungMinds help students participating in their programmes understand how to look after their mental health when preparing to go to university and through the first term.
- Our objective was to create a series of **four resources** and **four webinars** to support young people on their journey to university…
- **…with young people** who had previously been through Sutton Trust programmes.

Sutton Trust – The resources

Preparing for university with mental health in mind

Preparing to go to university can be exciting but it can also be challenging. There is a lot to look forward to but it can be a time of uncertainty with lots of change. We have created this interactive help sheet to provide guidance about how you can prepare for some common worries about university whilst keeping your mental health in mind.

1 Coping with exam stress

The run up to exams can be a very stressful time for all. Especially as it feels like your university place, and your future, may depend on the results of your exams. It's important to remember that some stress is normal and can even be motivating, but if it becomes overwhelming then it's important to address this.

Here are 5 tips on coping with exam stress:

Don't compare your revision to others

Everyone revises differently. Just because someone has made stacks of notes or can create pretty mind maps doesn't mean that your revision is worse or better than theirs. Everyone works at a different pace and uses different techniques, so i you are doing things differently to othe long as you understand what works

Create a schedule with regular breaks

Be specific! Telling yourself you need to maths' sounds a lot more scary then 'do 5 questions.' Be realistic and break it dow manageable chunks. This will give you a start when reviewing your progress eac

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3 Coping with Freshers' week and meeting new people

Even the most outgoing person might feel a bit overwhelmed going to a new place where they don't know anyone at all. Here are some hints and tips about how to prepare for Freshers' week and meeting new people.

Explore the societies and clubs at your chosen university

Make the most of the Freshers' Fair. You could even look into these online before getting to university and send an email to the people that run the societies or clubs you are interested in.

Remember that most people will feel the same way as you do

Nerves and awkwardness are normal when meeting new people and being in new situations. If you are feeling this way then others are as well!

Expectations of un

You often hear the messa time of your life and for s experience is different an expectation of what those

You're going to experienc and university is no differ doing things that support that you've had bad days just around the corner. Al media you will only see th someone's experiences. Y may struggle.

Recognise the you already have something in common with those on your course and your flatmates

You have all picked the course and university for a reason. It's a good starting point for conversation and to find common ground. If you and the people you live with are all new to the area then you can all explore together.

Make use of what helped you to cope when you have felt awkward or uncomfortable before

Being in a new situation doesn't mean you have to leave behind your usual ways of managing difficult feelings. Use the Mental Health Action Plan at the end of this resource to remind yourself of what helps you when things are challenging.

Have a look at this useful page on the YoungMinds website about how to cope with Freshers' week:

How to cope with freshers' nerves

Check out these blogs on the YoungMinds website about students' experiences as Freshers and their top tips:

University: A freshers' Survival Guide | How to deal with stress in Freshers' Week (and beyond)

Leeds University – The project

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- Leeds university asked YoungMinds to create a resource for the Access to Leeds programme aimed at understanding and supporting students' mental health and to deliver webinars supporting prospective students.
- The resource focused on **imposter syndrome, coping mechanisms, loneliness, balancing work and social life.**

** The Access to Leeds programme "supports students whose studies have been affected by personal circumstances such as financial, social and health difficulties."*

Leeds University – The project

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YoungMinds worked with Leeds university alumni to shape the content and design of the resource.

How did we do this?

- **Survey** sent to students asking about their mental health experiences at university.
- **1 workshop** with students to shape the design and focus of the resource.
- **1 webinar** co-facilitated with alumni panel for a mental health Q&A.
- **1 webinar** focusing on a 'resource walk through' and support whilst at Leeds university.

Leeds University – The resource

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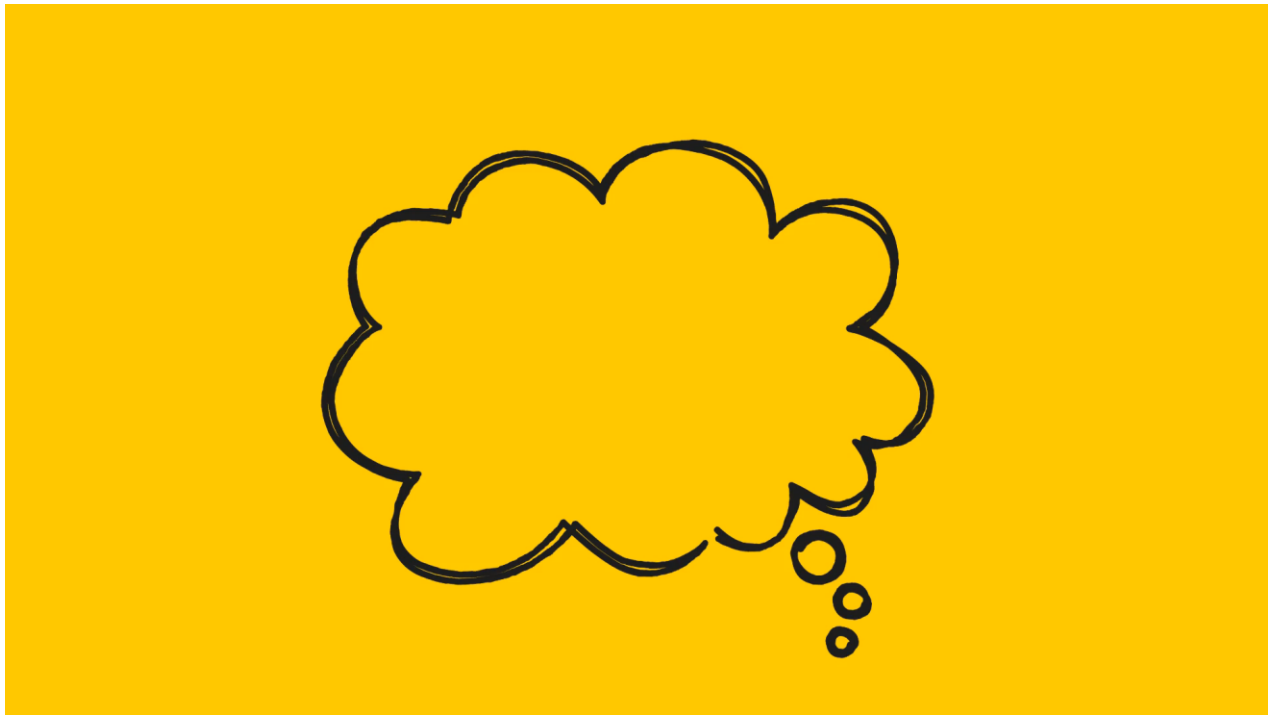

Before we explore the topics within this resource, we wanted to share some YoungMinds definitions for words you may have heard before:

Mental health

Mental Health is something we all have, like physical health. It's the potential of our minds to grow and develop, to be able to overcome difficulties and challenges and to make the most of our abilities and opportunities.

Mental illness

Just like we can all have difficult days with our physical health e.g. headaches, we can all have difficulties with our mental health e.g. low mood days, but mental illness is more prolonged and affects our day-to-day functioning.

Resilience

The ability to adapt to ups and downs in life and navigate situations by using our strengths and accessing support from the people around us. Our resilience changes depending on the situation and varies day to day.

Alumni quotes

"Take time to digest everything, take time to recharge, try and decide beforehand the things you feel comfortable doing and then stick to them. "

"Get involved with everything, even if you don't feel comfortable doing so at first. The benefits of making friends in the first weeks of University are really important."

2 Practical steps:

When presented with hard times, coping mechanisms can be really useful. We are not talking about having a cup of tea or taking a bath and all your problems being fixed. But finding ways and tactics to cope with emotions or situations. Finding something that works for you will not come automatically, but trying different things over time. For example working with somebody to find out what works for you.

Georgie from the YoungMinds blog recommends

Find something to look forward to

Georgie suggests: "doing something that you enjoy is a good way of taking your mind off of things. I get anxiety over things that may not even happen, and so having things in my life that I enjoy doing reduces the amount I worry.

You need to find a reasonably stress-free activity that requires all your attention and will stop you from thinking about other things. Sitting doing nothing allows my mind to wonder and eventually leads to a panic!"

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Coping mechanism

About:

Coping is defined as thoughts and behaviour's that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are viewed as stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

How you might see this manifest.

"When I struggle I cope by biting my nails."

"My coping mechanisms are taking a cold shower when I am stressed."

"I cope by talking about the way I feel."

When we experience something that is 'difficult' we usually cope in two different ways; approach the difficulty, or avoid it. Sometime it's not easy to cope, and that's when you might notice coping mechanisms you have used before, such as wanting to leave a situation, or talk to someone. You may also have coping mechanisms that you use on your own or that involve other people. It takes time to develop your own coping mechanisms, and what works for some people will not work for others. What is important to remember is that not all coping mechanisms you might have used before are helpful to your situation.

Findings from the survey

When asking students "What do you wish you had been taught about when starting University regarding your mental health?"

62% (80)

students who took part in the survey chose coping mechanisms.

Coping mechanism

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Benefits of participation

"…youth participation enhances **feelings of control, meaning, and connectedness**, it can contribute to building resilience and competencies in young people, as well as **supporting several developmental processes**…"

(Dworken, Larsen & Hansen, 2003)

"…it can also assist in **building resilience**, improving connectedness, **developing employment skills**, increasing confidence, and developing **social skills**…"

(Oliver, Collin, Burns, & Nicholas, 2006)

Gives me hope.

Increases my self-worth and confidence in using my voice.

Personal progression, so many levels.

Any
questions?

More from YoungMinds...

Training

Find a course

https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/mental-health-training/

Resources

How to be a good listener

Topic: Practical tools for support, Participation, Coping with life, Mental health in schools
For: Schools, Community support, Youth workers

Supporting a young person to get help

Topic: Practical tools for support, Accessing support services
For: Community support, Youth workers

https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/

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