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Student wellbeing: Managing your PhD journey

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Digital Health and Wellness Research Group

Strathclyde iSchool Research Group (SiSRG)

diane.pennington@strath.ac.uk / @infogamerist

SICSA PhD Conference 2018

28 June 2018

Workshop agenda

- Introductory exercise
- Information sharing/lecture
- Reflective exercise
- Discussion and questions

Amber's PhD timeline (15 minutes)

Amber is a first year PhD student studying information engagement at Strathclyde. In an attempt to manage costs, she is living at home in Stirling (30 minutes away) with her parents, her younger brother, and her grandparents. She has EPSRC studentship funding for three years, with an optional fourth year for writing up if necessary. Make a timeline showing how Amber might progress through her PhD. Especially consider important milestones that could be really stressful. What challenges will she face? How is she going to deal with stress? After you draw her timeline, pair up with a partner and share your timeline with each other.

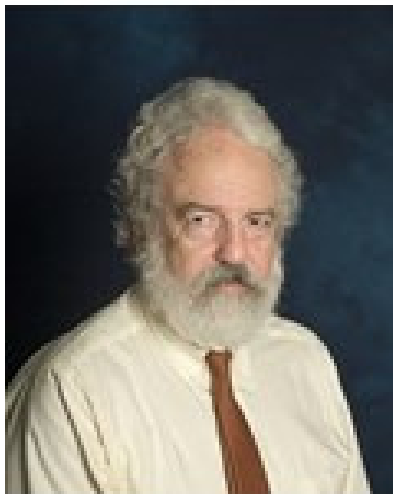
What happens when you do a PhD?

- Submit a proposal
- Get accepted
- Find funding
- Do lots of reading and writing
- Run some original research
- Meet with your supervisor and your examiner on time
- Write it up and submit it
- Pass the viva!
- Make corrections, probably
- Final approval
- You are now a PhD!

Right. But, what *really* happens?

My story:

- I lost my original supervisor
- I worked full-time and paid my own way
- I lost people important to me
- Illness
- I had amazing supervisors in the end 😊



The importance of wellbeing (and, conversely, stress)




- What is stress? How do we know when we're stressed?
 - Worried, annoyed, angry, can't sleep, can't stay awake, can't focus, helpless, panic attacks, heart beating fast, crying, physical illnesses like stomach pain, colds, headaches...
- A certain amount of stress can make us productive
- But too much stress does bad things to our physical and mental selves (and we still don't like to talk about it)
- Increased risk for turning into mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, unhealthy choices, and so on
 - ~ 25% (or more) of people will have a diagnosable mental health condition in their lives
 - 2/3 of them don't seek treatment (World Health Org.)
- YOU are the only person who can take care of yourself

From Scotland's Health and Social Care Delivery Plan

- ‘Empowering people to more actively manage their own health means changing and investing in new technologies and services...’
- ‘People will have access to more and more effective services across the health system to support mental health ... as important as physical health.’
- Mental health is also a priority for UK universities

We're all computing types here, so let's start with online resources

Please note: NOTHING is a replacement for professionally qualified help, such as therapists, counsellors, or psychiatrists, if you need it.



The World Health Organisation defines Mental Health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

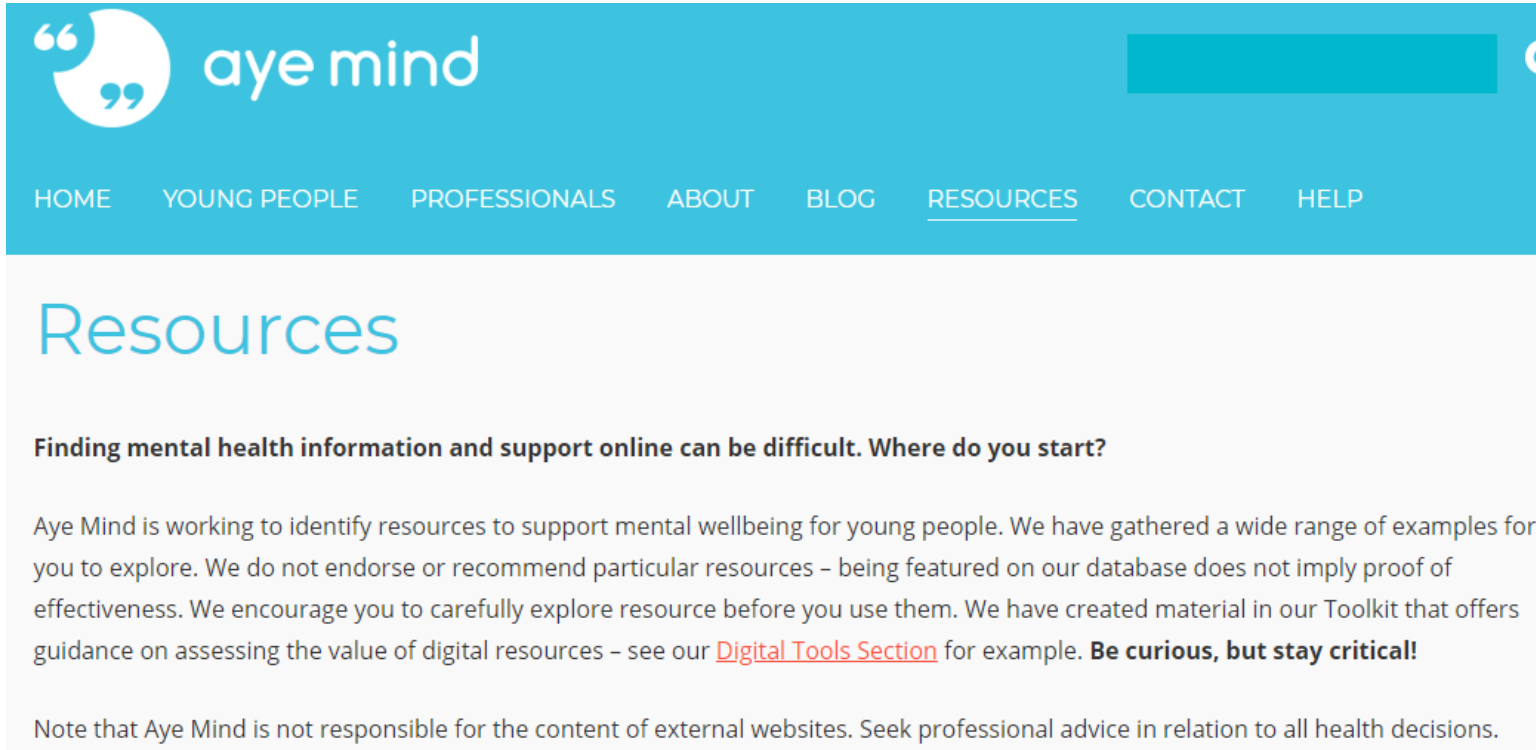
Online help for stress? What's available? What help is out there? How can you find it?



MOODJUICE



Where is “the good stuff”?



The screenshot shows the Aye Mind website. The header is teal with the Aye Mind logo (a speech bubble with a brain) and the text "aye mind". A navigation menu includes links for HOME, YOUNG PEOPLE, PROFESSIONALS, ABOUT, BLOG, RESOURCES (which is underlined), CONTACT, and HELP. The main content area has a large teal heading "Resources". Below this is a bolded sub-heading: "Finding mental health information and support online can be difficult. Where do you start?". The main text explains that Aye Mind works to identify resources for young people, but does not endorse any specific ones. It encourages users to be curious but stay critical, and provides a link to the "Digital Tools Section". A final note states that Aye Mind is not responsible for external website content.

“ aye mind

HOME YOUNG PEOPLE PROFESSIONALS ABOUT BLOG RESOURCES CONTACT HELP

Resources

Finding mental health information and support online can be difficult. Where do you start?

Aye Mind is working to identify resources to support mental wellbeing for young people. We have gathered a wide range of examples for you to explore. We do not endorse or recommend particular resources – being featured on our database does not imply proof of effectiveness. We encourage you to carefully explore resource before you use them. We have created material in our Toolkit that offers guidance on assessing the value of digital resources – see our [Digital Tools Section](#) for example. **Be curious, but stay critical!**

Note that Aye Mind is not responsible for the content of external websites. Seek professional advice in relation to all health decisions.

<http://ayemind.com/resource-map/>

A page of text

What is depression?

Depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time, and affects your everyday life.

In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn't stop you leading your normal life but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make you feel suicidal or simply give up the will to live.

It feels like I'm stuck under a huge grey-black cloud. It's dark and isolating, smothering me at every opportunity.

When does low mood become depression?

We all have times when our mood is low, and we're feeling sad or miserable about life. Usually these feelings pass in due course.

But if the feelings are interfering with your life and don't go away after a couple of weeks, or if they come back over and over again for a few days at a time, it could be a sign that you're experiencing depression.

It starts as sadness then I feel myself shutting down, becoming less capable of coping. Eventually, I just feel numb and empty.

Quizzes to evaluate issues



Personal stories

HOME → EXPRESSION → STORIES → MY STRUGGLE WITH DEPRESSION

my struggle with depression

By James  abuse, depression, mood disorder

I have struggled with depression for longer than I can remember and and it all started when I was younger I was 2 years old and my uncle was "bored" his words not mine but so he touched me and raped me. even now I have night terrors but they don't scare me anymore they make me stronger and that's all thanks to my friends they help me thru so much and im thankful. a message to people struggling.... it gets better there are people that want to help you just have to let them. there is always someone that can help you and wants to.

Submitted by james, age 17.

TAGS IN ALL SECTIONS

wellness (715)
life experience (696)
getting help (620)
coping (543)
self care (405)
relationship (351)
youth (341)
stigma (304)
mood disorder (273)
awareness (252)
depression (251)
behaviour (246)

[More](#)

SHARE



Personal stories (with interactions?)

Home > Real Life Stories > Aidan's Story

Aidan's Story

Story submitted by: Aidan



"There is this external stigma on guys that we don't have feelings – the fact is, we do."

- ⊕ Chapter 1: "I felt lost."
- ⊕ Chapter 2: The Physical and the Mental
- ⊕ Chapter 3: Hitting Rock Bottom
- ⊕ Chapter 4: The Rear View Mirror
- ⊕ Chapter 5: Guys and Stigma
- ⊕ Chapter 6: Friends and Teams



<http://www.brotalk.ca/Real-Life-Stories/Aidans-Story>

Videos featuring others who have “been there”

HOME → INTERVIEWS

Interviews

mindyourmind speaks with advocates, authors, musicians, athletes and other people about their own opinions and life experiences.

ALL AUTHORS MUSICIANS ADVOCATES CELEBRITIES MIXED MEDIA ATHLETES



Tyler Bryden



Frazer Sundown



Okilly Dokilly



Barak Shavit



Elaine Lui



Lee Crutchley - How To Be Happy or at Least

TAGS IN ALL SECTIONS

life experience (655)
wellness (636)
getting help (570)
coping (485)
self care (343)
relationship (328)
youth (326)
stigma (282)
mood disorder (250)
behaviour (236)
awareness (230)
stress relief (223)

More

SHARE

Others who have been there

- <https://thesiswhisperer.com/>
- <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk>
- <https://patthomson.net/>

Interactives/games

HOME → INTERACTIVES → SQUISH 'EM

Squish 'Em

wellness and stress relief.



Annoying stress trogs are on the loose! Squish 'em, and get some stress tips along the way!

PLAY



If you have a QR reader you can scan the code and quickly access the tool on your mobile device.

TAGS IN ALL SECTIONS

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depression (251)
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More

SHARE

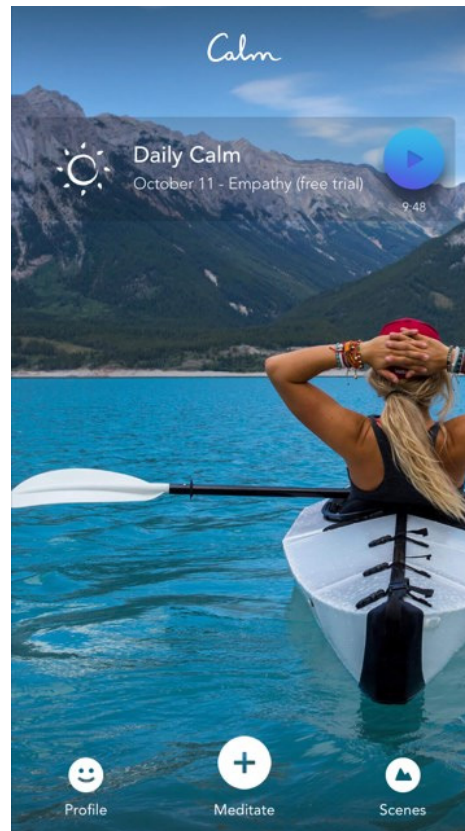
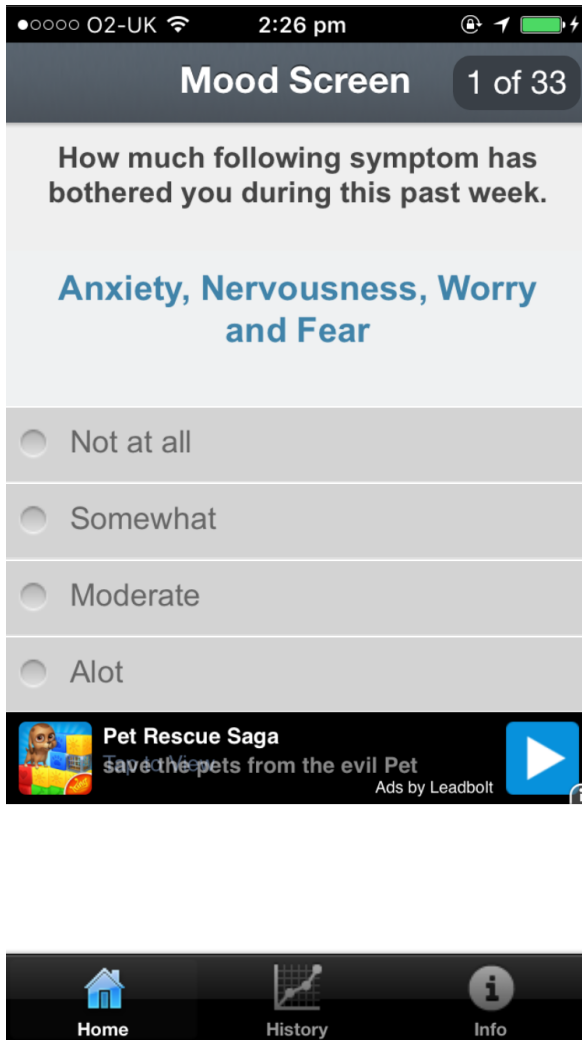


Social media awareness

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile for 'Mental Health on The Mighty'. The profile picture is a red square with the text 'The MIGHTY MENTAL HEALTH'. The cover photo is a collage of three polaroid-style images: a woman's face, a group of people holding a sign that says 'OUR MENTAL HEALTH IS NOT A COSTUME', and a person holding a sign that says '#ThisPsychiatrist helps young people overcome suicidal thoughts'. The page has a navigation menu on the left with options: Home, About, Photos, Likes, Videos, Posts, and a green 'Create a Page' button. The main content area shows a post from 'Mental Health on The Mighty' dated October 6 at 2:00am. The post text reads: "It's silent anxiety attacks, hidden by smiles." Below the text is a video thumbnail showing a close-up of a woman's face with her eyes closed. The text 'High-functioning anxiety looks like...' is overlaid on the video.

<https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthOnTheMighty>

Apps (mood tracking, meditation, inspiration) – Headspace is popular for meditation



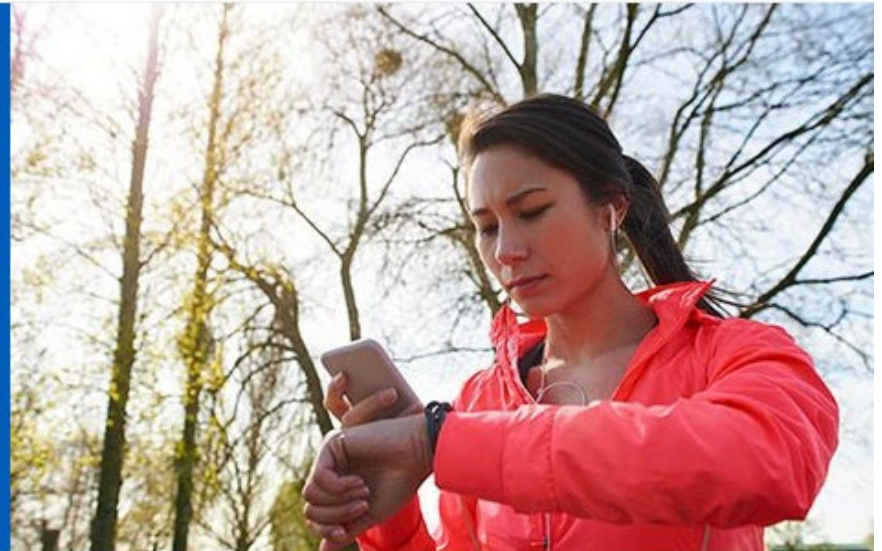
A graphic with a bright yellow sun icon at the top. Below it, the text reads: 'Stress is a designer ailment that many of the so-called afflicted suffer from with pride.' The name 'Janet Street-Porter' is written in a cursive font below the text. At the bottom right, there is a yellow circle with the text 'Ad-Free'. The bottom of the graphic features a navigation bar with a left arrow, a blue circle with 'ALL', a yellow star, a blue circle with 'MORE', and a right arrow. Below this is a banner for the Google app for iPhone with the text 'Get the latest Google app for iPhone*' and an 'INSTALL NOW' button.

Chill Panda!



Find digital tools to help you manage and improve your health

[Find out more](#)



FILTER BY CATEGORY

[All](#)

[Cancer](#)

[COPD](#)

[Dementia](#)

[Dental](#)

[Diabetes](#)



Cove

 Being Tested in the NHS

Create music to capture your mood and express how you feel with the Cove app.

MENTAL HEALTH



Chill Panda

 Being Tested in the NHS

Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with Chill Panda.

MENTAL HEALTH

Online communities and self-help

Big White Wall[®]

[JOIN US](#)

[LOG IN](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

[TESTIMONIALS](#)

[CORPORATE](#)



Big White Wall is an online mental health and wellbeing service offering self-help programmes, creative outlets and a community that cares. When you're dealing with everyday stressors or major life events, we'll help you get through it.

Authoritative resources



NHS inform healthier scotland SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Illnesses and conditions | Symptoms and self help | Tests and treatments | Healthy living | Care, support and rights

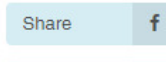
Home / Illnesses and conditions / Mental health

Depression

- 1. **Introduction**
- 2. Symptoms
- 3. Causes
- 4. Diagnosis
- 5. Treatment
- 6. Living with clinical depression
- 7. Psychotic depression

Introduction

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days. We all go through spells of feeling down, but when you're depressed you feel



Also on NHS inform

- Low mood and depression
- Worried someone is depressed?
- Exercise for depression
- Tips for coping with depression
- Depression support groups

Other health sites

- Choice and Medication: Depression
- SIGN: Treating depression without using prescribed medication

Social media; anti-stigma campaigns



Mental Health on
The Mighty ✓
@MentalHealthOnTheMigh
ty

- Home
- Posts

👍 Liked ▾ 📡 Following ▾ ➦ Share ⋮

Status Photo/Video

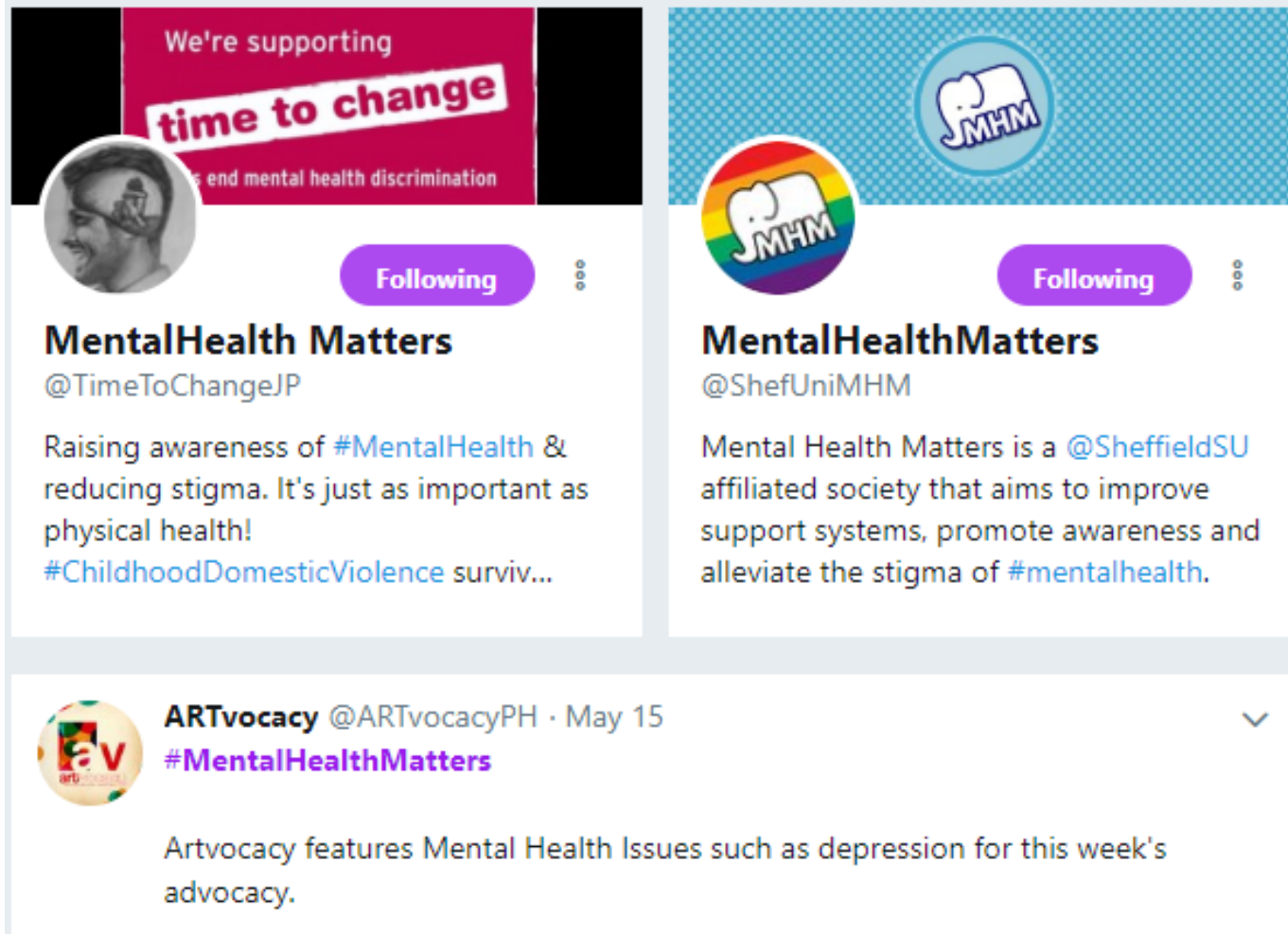
Write something on this Page...

Posts

Mental Health on The Mighty
30 mins · 🌐

Our needs matter. And denying them doesn't make them go away. That's why for #MentalHealthMonth and for May's #MyMightyMonth, we're challenging our community to embrace their needs. Get the conversation started by filling out and sharing these customizable templates.

Social media; anti-stigma campaigns



The image shows a screenshot of social media content. At the top, there are two profile cards for 'MentalHealth Matters'. The left card is for '@TimeToChangeJP' with a pink banner that says 'We're supporting time to change' and 'end mental health discrimination'. The right card is for '@ShefUniMHM' with a blue banner and a rainbow elephant logo. Below these is a tweet from '@ARTvocacyPH' dated May 15, featuring the text 'Artvocacy features Mental Health Issues such as depression for this week's advocacy.' and the hashtag #MentalHealthMatters.

MentalHealth Matters
@TimeToChangeJP
Following

Raising awareness of #MentalHealth & reducing stigma. It's just as important as physical health!
#ChildhoodDomesticViolence surviv...

MentalHealthMatters
@ShefUniMHM
Following

Mental Health Matters is a @SheffieldSU affiliated society that aims to improve support systems, promote awareness and alleviate the stigma of #mentalhealth.

ARTvocacy @ARTvocacyPH · May 15
#MentalHealthMatters

Artvocacy features Mental Health Issues such as depression for this week's advocacy.

Online chat/therapy with a counsellor

Considering Therapy?

Volunteer as a Listener

Need to talk?

Connect with caring people for text chat, online therapy & counseling

Free, anonymous and confidential online text chat with trained listeners,
online therapists & counselors

Get Started

26,485,648
Conversations

The World's Largest Emotional Support System

Online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Living Life

[Home](#) [About CBT](#) [Author](#) [About LLTF](#) [Evidence Base](#) [Contact Us](#) [Login](#) 



**Living Life
To The Full
for older adults**

Overcoming low
mood and stress



Results of research (mine and others) in online mental health



Young people's needs from mental health mobile technologies

1. Safety: confidentiality, cyberbullying, stigma
2. Engagement
3. Functionality
4. Social interaction
5. Promoting awareness
6. Accessibility
7. Gender
8. Young people in control

Kenny, R., Dooley, B., & Fitzgerald, A. (2016). Developing mental health mobile apps: Exploring adolescents' perspectives. *Health Informatics Journal*, 22(2), 265-275.

University students' e-mental health use

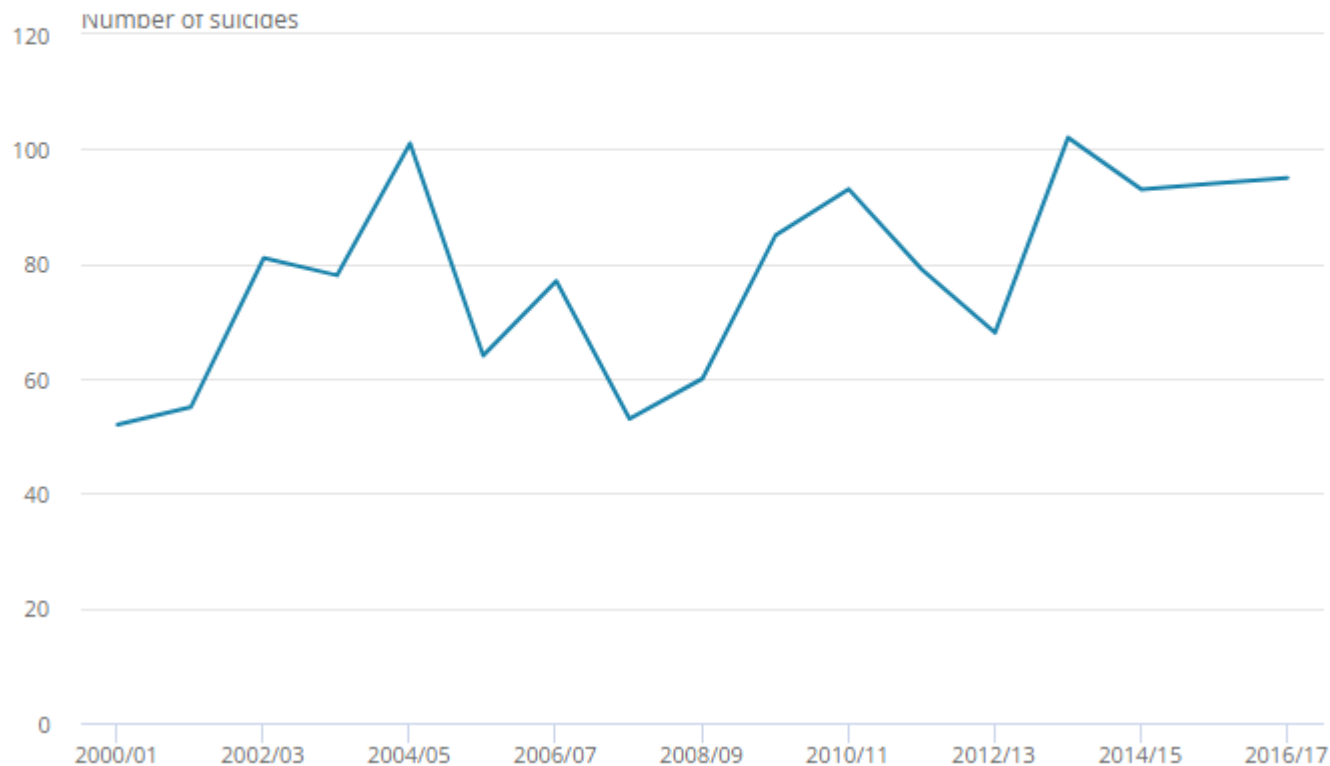


- Women use more than men
- 78% did not trust what they found
- 13% had used e-mental health (forums, chat)
- Advantages:
 - Easy to get
 - Lots of info
 - Private
- Disadvantages:
 - Unreliable info
 - Don't know who wrote info
 - Medical advice more reliable

Topic	Total %
	(0.7% missing)
General information on mental health	64.4 (n = 439)
Depression	19.5 (n = 133)
Anxiety problems	19.4 (n = 132)
Eating disorders	18.9 (n = 129)
Stress (also post-traumatic)	18.9 (n = 129)
Addictions	12.9 (n = 88)
Personality disorders	10.3 (n = 70)
Bipolar disorder	10.1 (n = 69)
Obsessive compulsive disorder	9.7 (n = 66)
Schizophrenia	8.8 (n = 60)
Dementia	7.9 (n = 54)
Suicide and self-harm	7.6 (n = 52)
Panic attacks	7.0 (n = 48)
Post-natal depression	6.6 (n = 45)

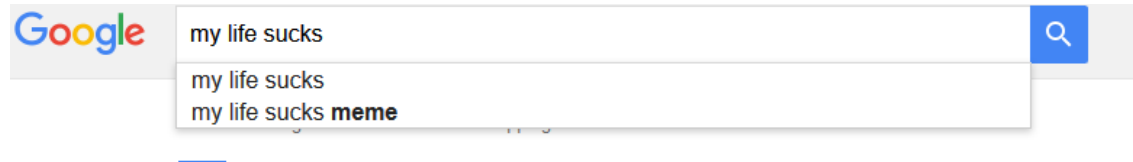
Figure 1: Number of higher education student suicides by year, deaths registered in England and Wales,

between the 12 months ending July 2001 and the 12 months ending July 2017^{1,2,3,4}



<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/estimating-suicide-among-higher-education-students-in-england-and-wales-experimental-statistics/2018-06-25>

Start with Google



About 19,900,000 results (0.54 seconds)

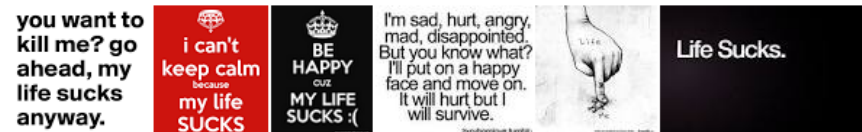
Rate My Life - How Are You Doing? Find Out If You Suck at Life.

www.ratemylife.net/

At Rate My Life, we rate your life using factors derived from what people want to accomplish in life after aggregating data from the entire Internet!

Images for my life sucks

Report images



More images for my life sucks

5 Helpful Things to Do When You Think Life Sucks - Tiny Buddha

tinybuddha.com/blog/5-helpful-things-do-when-think-life-sucks/

1 Oct 2014 - 5 Helpful Things to Do When You Think Life Sucks ... For the better part of my life, I've felt flustered and incapable of handling these moments.

FML: Your everyday life stories

www.fmylife.com/

61 agree, your life sucks415That could've happened to me34 ... He was curious as to how my mom had a better ass than mine when she was twice my age. FML.

Not too much text

About this leaflet

This leaflet is for anyone who is, or has been depressed. We hope it will also be helpful for friends and relatives.

It describes what depression feels like, some of the help that is available, how you can help yourself and how to help someone else who is depressed. It also mentions some of the things we don't know about depression. At the end of the leaflet, there is a list of other places where you can get further information.



Introduction

We all feel fed up, miserable or sad at times. These feelings don't usually last longer than a week or two, and they don't interfere too much with our lives. Sometimes there's a reason, sometimes not. We usually cope - we may talk to a friend but don't otherwise need any help.

However, in depression:

- your feelings don't lift after a few days - they carry on for weeks or months
- are so bad that they interfere with your life.

What does it feel like?

Most people with depression will not have all the symptoms listed below, but most will have at least five or six.

You:

- feel unhappy most of the time (but may feel a little better in the evenings)
- lose interest in life and can't enjoy anything
- find it harder to make decisions
- can't cope with things that you used to
- feel utterly tired
- feel restless and agitated
- lose appetite and weight (some people find they do the reverse and put on weight)
- take 1-2 hours to get off to sleep, and then wake up earlier than usual
- lose interest in sex
- lose your self-confidence
- feel useless, inadequate and hopeless
- avoid other people
- feel irritable
- feel worse at a particular time each day, usually in the morning
- think of suicide.

You may not realise how depressed you are for a while, especially if it has come on gradually. You try to struggle on and may even start to blame yourself for being lazy or lacking willpower. It sometimes takes a friend or a partner to persuade you that there really is a problem which can be helped.

You may start to notice pains, constant headaches or sleeplessness. Physical symptoms like this can be the first sign of depression.

Videos!



I'm sad

Filters ▾

About 14,600,000 results



When I am Sad

Aglaia Mortcheva
7 years ago • 450,130 views

"When I am Sad", Flash, (4 min.22 sec.). short film created by Aglaia Mortcheva 2008.



L CD VOL 01 - I'm Sad - Senmie (Official Lyric Video) / Original song

L PRODUCTION OFFICIAL
1 month ago • 26,179 views

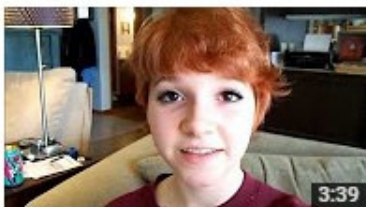
Official Lyric Video I'm Sad - Senmie (Original song) MV Coming soon ...! L Album CD VOL 01 Smart Tune : 415639 SMS TO 855.



I AM A SAD PERSON

JellyandDay2 ✓
1 year ago • 114,063 views

Today I talk about my depression. #VentingWithJelly
----- Want more of us?



What To Do When You're Sad

Musicandartsavelives
3 years ago • 14,478 views

A lot of people ask what I do when I'm sad; so these are some things that I do and you could try too. Let me know if any of these ...

Interactive, not static

- Discussion forums
- Respect confidentiality
- Quizzes, but not if topic is “too serious”
- Chatting/texting with a trusted counsellor
- Chatting/texting is better than phone
- Games must hold their interest

Other results

- People do not know what is available
- Poor health literacy
- Disagreements on judging credibility
- Trust issues are prominent

Finding solutions to advance digital health for addressing unmet needs in relation to self-harming behaviours



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
European Social Fund
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future



**European Social Fund
Social Innovation Fund**

...through socially-oriented, equal inclusion of stakeholders



- Social Innovation Labs/co-production approach to the incubation of creative ideas and solutions
- Young people with “lived experience”, parents, families will all contribute equally
- Hackathons
- Interviews, surveys
- Project Steering Group

I asked some PhD students what helps them deal with stress and take care of themselves...



- Yoga
- Deep breathing: 5/5/5/5
- Meditation
- Tea/coffee/water break, alone/with others
- Take time off – no working 24/7!
- Do things you enjoy!
- Find things to remind you you're not alone
- Set auto reminders: stand, walk, take breaks
- Consider your supervisor relationship

Other things to do

- Nutrition and exercise
 - Watch your coffee, alcohol, sugar...
 - 10,000 steps per day
- Get sunlight (yes, this is Scotland, but...)
- Take medications if prescribed
- Deal with the causes of stress if possible
- Prioritise and learn to say “no”
- Where, when, and how do you work best?
- Make lists and tick things off – feels good!
- Keep a diary for appointments
- Write down your thoughts... “brain dump”
- Maintain perspective on your work, your life...

People are amazing resources

- Friends and family
- Departmental academic PhD advisor or other staff who is not your supervisor
- See your GP
- Find a private counsellor at <https://www.bacp.co.uk/> (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)
- Student disability services
- Student counselling services


Strathclyde's Student Counselling

Student Counselling

- Offers one to one counselling sessions, workshops and self help resources.
- Provides a confidential service for undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Strathclyde, available at any time during your university career.
- Is available for any personal issue affecting general well-being, health, relationships or study.
- Respects your values choices and lifestyle.
- Assists you to talk through your concerns and when appropriate, helps you to make the changes and decisions that are right for you.

If you wish to see a counsellor for the first time this academic session, please contact Reception on 0141 548 3510 or email: student-counselling@strath.ac.uk. We will make arrangements for you to have an initial meeting where you needs can be assessed.

Please contact our [Student Nurse](#) if would like advice and corroboration of [Personal Circumstances](#). She is also available to offer support with health concerns and



The World Health Organisation defines Mental Health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Look after your Mate!

Encouragement and guidance on how to raise concerns if a friend seems to be struggling.

We are a very busy service

Strathclyde's Student Counselling: Self-help resources

Wellbeing collection

Research shows that evidence based self-help materials, particularly in combination with a small input from specialist support services, can be very effective in improving Mental Health and wellbeing.

Student Counselling has worked together with the Library to bring a range of ebooks and books to students and staff of the University. The titles have been chosen to cover a range of topics and also to support the Universities very popular Mindfulness courses.

Student Counselling offers individual counselling and the counsellors will be also be happy to support you with choosing titles or working through the materials. Self-help books can help you understand yourself and others better. With motivation and support they can even help you address major life difficulties.

Counselling online resources

View a selected range of online resources at [Student Counselling Self-Help](#)

Programmes available within the University

Hypnotherapy

For more information on hypnotherapy available in the University
<http://www.strath.ac.uk/studentcounselling/hypnorelax/>

Mindfulness

Mindfulness programme available to students of the University
<http://www.strath.ac.uk/disabilityservice/mindfulnessprogramme/>

Student Counselling

Student Counselling

Phone to book an appointment 0141 548 3510
or email student-counselling@strath.ac.uk

You can also call into Room 4.41, Graham Hills Building, 50 George St.

Useful websites

- [Student Health](#)
The Student Health Service is a confidential service available to all students at the University.
[more...](#)
- [Strathclyde and Caledonian Nightline](#)
Nightline is a confidential listening and information service run by and for students of Glasgow Strathclyde and Caledonian Universities..
[more...](#)
- [The Advice Hub - Students Association](#)
The Advice Hub, your advice and support service, located in Level 5 (access via Level 6) of the Union building.
[more...](#)

<http://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/c.php?g=653766&p=4589963>

The best advice I received during my PhD (from Prof Tefko Saracevic, a very senior academic):

“The best dissertation is a done dissertation. The purpose of writing a dissertation is to graduate, not to save the world.”

Free handouts!

help with **ADJUSTMENT**

- **GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO ADJUST.** The way you are feeling is a natural response to a major life event or change that you have experienced and will not last forever.
- **THINK POSITIVELY.** Remind yourself of your strengths, skills, and abilities. What difficulties have you overcome in the past? How can you apply the coping skills you used then to your current situation?
- **CHALLENGE THE WAY YOU TALK TO YOURSELF.** Question whether the situation you feel negative about is as bad as it seems. Ask: "Is there another way to look at this?" "Am I focusing on the negative details and forgetting the positive details?"
- **KEEP ACTIVE.** Participate in activities you enjoy doing. Exercising can also make you feel good. Try a brisk 30 minute walk each day.
- **GET SUPPORT.** Talk to friends and loved ones about how you are feeling. Understanding and support from others can help you get through this difficult time and speed up the recovery process.

Your PhD timeline

Just how you made Amber's timeline at the beginning of the workshop, make your own PhD timeline. What sources of stress do you think you might face at different points in your process? What if something unexpected happens in your life? What will you do to manage this stress? How will you take care of yourself? What are your goals for your PhD, and how can you help yourself meet them? You and your partner can share your timeline and strategies with each other if you feel comfortable doing so.

Discussion and Q&A

