

## Session One. 11.15 – 12.50

### **Youth Participation in the mental health care of young people**

*Kirsten Seymour, Headspace Townsville Centre Manager*

This presentation will explore the implementation and processes of youth participation strategy within mental health care of young people in order to create an easily accessible, youth friendly mental health service. It will begin by exploring various models and strategies of youth participation and examine how these have been used across various layers of mental health delivery within a headspace centre. It will draw on the nine years of experience that headspace Townsville has had and explore creative ways of engaging young people in their own mental health care, community awareness and mental health literacy and youth advocacy. The presentation will also share the voices of past and present youth reference group members and youth volunteers of the service to hear first-hand about their experience in being involved in youth mental health care.

### **Preliminary findings from an international study of subjective well-being in tertiary students**

*Associate Professor Helen J Boon, James Cook University*

Experiencing high levels of subjective well-being is a central criterion of positive mental health in all groups of individuals. Well-being is not only the result of favourable life circumstances such as academic success and satisfying relationships, but also a predictor and part cause of these outcomes. More specifically, in relation to university students, well-being is important for influencing not only their academic outcomes, their attitudinal and career outcomes, but also outcomes that benefit communities and society at large. Implicated in well-being is religiosity. For example a 14-year follow-up study found that attending religious services predicted a 22 % reduced risk of developing major depression in adults while another longitudinal study showed that higher self-reported religiosity/spirituality predicted a 90 % decreased risk of major depression in adults.

This study reports the correlates of subjective well-being in an international sample of 1031 tertiary students from Australia, Great Britain, Israel, Germany and Greece using three proxy measures. reported distress symptoms using the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), quality of life evaluation using the Kihmi and Shamai 'Recovery from War' Scale, and individual resilience using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale. Results showed a number of significant differences based on ethnicity, religiosity, religious affiliation, gender and discipline area

of tertiary study. The results are discussed in relation to prior findings and possible interventions that could be instigated in higher education institutions to help increase student well-being.

### **Nurturing Mental Health Resilience in Students in Higher Education Arts Programs**

*Dr Mark Cariston Seton, University of Sydney*

For students who are increasingly conscious of the mental health vulnerabilities they may either already be experiencing or will encounter as they prepare for careers in the performing and media arts, the advice to "toughen up" or "get over it" can no longer be legitimate or, in fact, ethical responses. Over the past four years, based on findings of two nation-wide surveys of professional wellbeing issues in the performing and media arts sectors, I have designed, implemented and refined industry-specific training for students that will empower them to negotiate the variety of stresses, personal and professional, that are known to be prevalent and debilitating in the creative industries.

Feedback from both students and their other teachers, to date, suggests that this new focus of training in identifying and addressing stress factors, personal and relational, is proving valuable because it significantly removes the stigma and silence that have been associated with sharing discomforts that may become mental health concerns. Students in these courses are encouraged to be active participants in evaluating and reflecting on about how both training and anticipated workplace contexts can undermine self-worth and self-care. The programs offer skills in conflict management, interpersonal communication, shame resilience, portfolio career strategies, and sensitivity management through a process known as "resilient vulnerability". In addition, students review various occupational hazards as well as the relational impacts of a lifestyle that has often long working hours, sometimes, much time away from family and friends, and frequent financial and vocational uncertainty. These programs demonstrate the value of equipping the next generation of professional artists with preventative as well as therapeutic practices that will empower them with resilience in both their mental health and holistic wellbeing.

### **Well-being in the Guidance and Counselling and Graduate Certificate of Career Development programs at James Cook University**

*Dr Margaret Carter & Associate Professor Paul Pagliano, James Cook University*

The post-digital fourth industrial revolution

is already impacting heavily on university life. Traditional university classrooms are being replaced by an expanding array of blended learning options that include both face-to-face and rapidly transforming computer-generated possibilities. This is compounded by rising student numbers, wider cultural diversity, and student centred approaches to learning and assessment where simulation often replaces real experience. What it means to be a scholar is being redefined. Within this context students may be more actively engaged, independently and collaboratively, but for many, this is uncharted territory, alien and impersonal, with the potential to generate emotional insecurities and/or escalate pre-existing mental health conditions. In response to these challenges, we advocate promoting the mental health and well-being of students, deeming wellbeing foundational to meaningful student learning experiences, engagement, retention and academic success. Our roles as counsellor and career development educators, practitioners and researchers, commit us to integrating mental health promotion strategies within our programs, not as an optional extra, but as an integral, highly synthesised feature of the courses themselves.

### **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

*Victoria Wilson, University of Southern Queensland*

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) will affect approximately five to ten percent of the population over the course of a lifetime. With 65 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, it is inevitable that English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in Australian universities will see an increase in traumatised students. PTSD has been proven to change the brain, affecting learning, cognition, mood, and the ability to focus. However, to ignore or exclude traumatised learners is neither practical nor ethical, leaving both learners and educators unsupported. While schools in Australia and abroad are instituting trauma-informed pedagogy to transform the learning of younger students, the teaching of traumatised adults has yet to become mainstream practice, particularly within ESL programs.

This presentation aims to raise awareness of PTSD and adult language learning, showing how trauma affects the brain and the implications for the second language classroom. It explains how common teaching materials and interactions can trigger PTSD symptoms, and looks at how the ESL classroom can be both trauma-sensitive and pedagogically sound. Drawing on research from neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology, second language acquisition and critical pedagogies, it proposes ways for educators to create trauma-informed classrooms and points out directions for future research.