

Education for mental health case study

Wellbeing in London/Nursing

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Context

The 'Wellbeing in London' module is an opportunity for students to consider wellbeing and opportunities to improve their wellbeing in London from multiple perspectives. The module is explicitly framed around the Five Ways to Wellbeing: keep moving, invest in relationships, never stop learning, give to others, and savour the moment. The rationale for embedding wellbeing in the curriculum is as follows:

- + This level 4 module is based on a whole population approach to improving student wellbeing, rather than targeting students with specific mental health needs.
- + A curriculum-embedded approach suits BSc nursing students because the timetabling of their course offers limited opportunity to take part in university sponsored activities.
- + Nursing students may benefit from bespoke wellbeing input that acknowledges their fledgling expertise in health and wellbeing as healthcare students. 'Wellbeing' content should reflect programme content.

Outcomes of module

The module aims for students to:

- + Describe wellbeing from multiple perspectives.
- + Reflect on their experience of taking part in activities to improve their wellbeing.
- + Develop self-awareness and self-care behaviours to enable them to look after their own wellbeing.
- + Work with others to identify the opportunities and challenges to studying and living in London.
- + Critically engage with the body of research on wellbeing and wellbeing enhancement.

Key module information	
Typical intake	50-60 students
Format*	Lectures and seminars; Face-to-face
Level of study	Undergraduate first years
Status	Optional
Credited	Yes, 15 credits
Assessment	Formative (peer-reviewed 250-word reflective journal) and summative (1000-word essay based on a reflective account of undertaking one of the five ways to wellbeing)
Assessment feedback	Comments and grades
Location*	Classroom
Teaching staff	Lecturer; Guest speakers; Peer-led session
Duration/frequency	Weekly over five weeks; one lecture (2 hours) and one seminar per week (2 hours) The seminars are run as practical workshops covering one of the five ways every week.

*This information refers to usual circumstances (not under Covid-19 restrictions)

Development of module

The module was first run in the 2019-20 first academic year. The development and delivery of the module was led by a mental health nursing lecturer, Dr Jennifer Oates, with expertise in nursing staff wellbeing.

The department received Health Education England funding in 2017 to develop a programme of peer-led curriculum-embedded wellbeing sessions. The peer-led sessions were facilitated by final year student volunteers within BSc Nursing programmes for first and second years. Mode of delivery and content were devised and co-delivered by a wellbeing coach employed by the central university, peer trainers at a Recovery College and by final year students (1).

Learning from this externally funded project informed the development of the Wellbeing in London module.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Lecture: Introduction to the Five ways to Wellbeing (Lecturer)	Lecture: Social aspects of wellbeing (Lecturer)	Lecture: History, culture and mental health in London (Geography Department lecturer – expert in public health; IOPPN Researcher, speaking about joint project on mental health with the National Gallery)	Lecture: Philosophical perspectives on happiness (Philosophy Lecturer) Lecture: Service, community engagement and wellbeing (with Service at King's)	Lecture: Meditation, mindfulness and mental health (Lecturer) Lecture: Critical perspectives on wellbeing and 'self-care'
Seminar 1: Keep moving; Workout with trainer from King's Sport	Seminar 2: Invest in relationships with King's Student's Union Positive Peers team	Seminar 3: Never stop learning – arts workshop facilitated by the King's Culture Institute	Seminar 4: Give to others-- Student led session	Seminar 5: Savour the moment - meditation and yoga workshop

Pedagogic approaches to promote student wellbeing

- + Weekly workshop content was based on the 'five ways to wellbeing' approach.

"My favourite activity in the module is 'keep moving', it's the thing that keeps me sane! But I do enjoy multitasking so my ideal would be an activity that fits all the five ways of wellbeing in one thing, like going for a walk with my friend to help them solve a problem, listening to a podcast on the way where I'm learning new things, where I can appreciate the nice weather!"

Dr Jennifer Oates, Module Leader

- + Reflective practice is central to the assessment, reflecting on experience of engaging in a wellbeing-related activity, referencing relevant research and policy.
- + Engaging critically with the evidence base for student wellbeing.
- + Collaborating with guest presenters from across the university, from academic departments and student services, for example, an Institute of Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience speaker, presenting on a national gallery project around young people's mental health.
- + The module is open to students across the faculty. Small group working within the module enables students to socialise and form connections with new people.
- + Weekly reflective writing using a simple framework (What? So what? Now what?) (2). Reflective writing is an important skill for nursing professional practice (3) and has wellbeing benefits (4).

Challenges

- + Providing appropriate scaffolding for students to complete reflective essays. Students are good at the 'what happened' and less good at the 'so what?' ie, making sense of the information, and the 'now what?' indicating the implications of their experiences.
 - To guide students in this reflective process, they were given a weekly formative homework task to complete a five ways activity eg going for a walk (Keep moving). Students completed a reflective account form asking them to rate their mood and energy levels out of 10 before and after doing an activity; and words they would use to describe the activity. They wrote an account of the activity, using the What? So what? Now what? prompts.
 - If students chose to do this, they would have had five opportunities to get formative feedback on their reflections before completing the summative assessment. Plus, library guides for completing reflective writing were shared with students for guidance.
- + The workshop element of the seminars required participation in movement-based, and creative activities. A small number of students were surprised by this and did not fully engage in active not passive learning modality.
- + During the 2020-21 academic year we adapted the module to online only. All planned speakers and workshops took place via MS Teams. Student feedback was generally positive. They welcomed the interactive approach; however, we are keen to return to on campus for 2021-22. Disruptions to sessions, eg university strikes and Covid.
- + The focus on 'looking after your wellbeing' has meant that the option module attracts some students with mental health histories. Some students disclosed their mental health experiences to the module leader and peers. As an experienced mental health nurse, the module leader feels comfortable handling this, making students feel that they are in a safe space and are not going to be stigmatised.

"Talking to students who disclose their mental health experiences in the classroom can be a challenge but is also something I am up for in trying to destigmatise mental health. So, I am open to those conversations."

Dr Jennifer Oates, Module Leader

- + Important aspect of managing disclosures in the 'classroom' are to set ground rules in the first meeting, to use inclusive language to describe mental ill health and give people 'time out' of the workshop if they want it.

Advice for other academics from module leader:

- + Small groups are essential for activities that involve experiential learning, to promote engagement and positive wellbeing for students. You can create 'small groups' within a larger group. I prefer to allocate students to a fixed small group (6-8 peers) throughout the module.
- + Collaborate with colleagues and students across the institution on module content, particularly on workshop content. For example, researchers are usually really keen to talk about their work to undergrads and students running peer-support initiatives will welcome the chance to promote what they offer.
- + Learn from the ground-breaking work being done in statutory mental health services on co-production and peer support. Look at the work of your local Recovery College for inspiration.

"Developing a collaborative relationship with the local Recovery College really brought on my thinking in terms of peer support."

Dr Jennifer Oates, Module Leader

- + For curriculum-embedded wellbeing content, it's important to get the balance right between having an evidence base for content and building in experiential activity. Encourage students to explore the evidence base for interventions and approaches. Even in a module like this, the approach should be critical and inquisitive.

References

- 1 Oates J, Hassan R, Coster S. "We're giving them the tools." A qualitative study of nursing students working with Recovery College trainers to support student wellbeing. The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice. 2021 Aug 28.
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- 3 Bjerkvik LK, Hilli Y. Reflective writing in undergraduate clinical nursing education: A literature review. Nurse education in practice. 2019 Feb 1; 35: 32-41.
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