Over the past 5 years, especially, there has been growing concern about what appears to be a rapid escalation in the mental ill-health of University students across the UK.

The picture became clearer in a recent (2016) survey of students by YouGov.

The survey showed that...

One in four students (27%) suffer from mental health problems.

Nearly one in five (18%) of students have made use of university mental health services.

The number of students leaving University because of mental ill-health increased between 2009-10 and 2014-15 by 300%.

(Higher Education Statistics Agency – HESA – 2016)

More recent – unconfirmed – figures show further substantial increases.
YOUGOV 2016 SURVEY OF STUDENT MH

63% of students say that levels of stress interfere with their day to day lives

“Main sources of stress” (all students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University work</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job after university</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNIVERSITY WELLBEING SERVICES

Many university wellbeing services are now reporting that they are being ‘overwhelmed’ with requests for help and that they have long waiting lists for 1:1 consultation

“CRISIS ON CAMPUS”

Norman Lamb (former UK health minister) writes of “a crisis on campus with respect to students’ mental health”

He said that there is an urgent ...

“... need for increased access to a wide range of mental health and wellbeing options”

“CRISIS ON CAMPUS”

Universities UK Mental Health in Higher Education Working Group

“... national trends in mental ill-health among young people have materialised in student populations, and there are sharp increases in demand for support services

“CRISIS ON CAMPUS”

“The focus has turned to how universities look after their own communities of students and staff, to support them through mental health difficulties and help them to thrive and succeed.”

“CRISIS ON CAMPUS”

... “the main message is self-improvement. Universities should adopt mental health as a strategic priority, implementing a whole university approach, with students and staff involved at all stages of the journey”
Interventions focussed on:
 Increased Wellbeing
 Increased Resilience
 Psychological Distress

TREATING MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

There are two effective approaches to treating psychological distress –

the pharmacological
 and the psychological

PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENT

There has long been concern at the very high (and sharply rising) numbers of prescriptions for antidepressant drugs (across the UK, and especially in Wales)

ANTIDEPRESSANT PRESCRIPTIONS

(England – millions)

SURVEYS HAVE SHOWN CONSISTENTLY THAT

Many patients would prefer psychological help for their emotional problems – and this is widely recognised in Mental Health Strategy policy documents across the UK, including Wales ...

MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT WANTED

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES - 2001

“Psychological treatment techniques are appropriate in many conditions managed in primary care but are often unavailable because of a lack of trained staff”
“... users in the primary care setting have shown a keen interest in the application of effective psychological therapies either as an alternative or a supplement to medication”

Responding to evidence of large increases in antidepressant prescribing in Wales, a WG spokesman said recently that the government expected GPs to use their clinical judgment in deciding treatment ...

... and to use NICE guidelines which recommend that psychosocial interventions should be considered as an alternative to antidepressants

Many people prefer psychological treatment
Increases sense of personal empowerment
Effects are more immediate than AD meds
No rebound effect when treatment ends
Lower relapse rates (teaches ‘skills for life’, EQ)

Psychological interventions can be highly effective, but their actual IMPACT on the population is TINY
This is because the availability of psychological therapy is very limited
Few people who could benefit ever receive any form of psychol. treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact = Effectiveness x Reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Impact = Relief of Suffering)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How effective is the therapy?
How many people does it reach?

MUCH more emphasis has been placed on effectiveness than on reach
LOW INTENSITY INTERVENTIONS

Bibliotherapy  Psychoeducation

Both of these can offer:

High EFFECTIVENESS
(and high COST-effectiveness)

And  Wide REACH

and therefore …  HIGH IMPACT

“Books on Prescription”

2005

PRESGRIPSIIWN LLYFRAU CYMRU
BOOK PRESCRIPTION WALES

BOOKS ON PRESCRIPTION SCHEMES

England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Eire
Jersey, Guernsey, New Zealand, Australia,
Canada, United States, Denmark, Sweden

Reach: England scheme 2014 -17 = 850,000
(see Reading Agency website ...
http://reading-well.org.uk/ )
USER IMPACT - MENTAL HEALTH

- 90% of users said books helped them understand their condition
- 85% more confident managing symptoms
- 55% said that symptoms had improved
- Cost per treatment delivery = £1

THE IMPACT OF BIBLIOTHERAPY

BIBLIOTHERAPY IS AN EFFECTIVE TREATMENT
IT IS HIGHLY COST-EFFECTIVE
IT CAN BE WIDELY DELIVERED –
SO – POTENTIALLY – EXTREME ‘REACH’

GROUP PSYCHOEDUCATION

Psychoeducation effectiveness depends on ...
The Quality of the Therapeutic Approach AND
The Quality of the Specific Course AND
The Context and Quality of the Presentation
ACE - ACCESSIBLE, CLEAR and ENGAGING

Another High Impact Strategy
GROUP-DELIVERED PSYCHOEDUCATION COURSES

ACTivate Your Life
A psychoeducation course
Delivered live to groups by trained presenters (mental health professionals and others)
Transdiagnostic and “non-diagnostic”
(uses material related to mental health and physical health conditions as well as everyday life – e.g. smoking, shopping)
AYL teaches some of the fundamental ideas and uses some of the basic therapeutic strategies of …

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

ACT

ACTivate Your Life

ABMU - 2016 – DEPRESSION – PHQ 8

Effect size

\[ .946 = \text{large} \]

ABMU - 2016 – ANXIETY – GAD 7

Effect size

\[ .851 = \text{large} \]

ACTivate Your Life

Each session includes a number of non-interactive ACTIVITIES

… and each week participants are given a Handout summarising the session and a Home Activity Sheet

ACTivate Your Life

The course is now run regularly in the NHS across Wales (in 5 of the 7 Health Boards)

260 mental health professionals and others have been trained to present the course

Typically groups of around 30 – but up to 140 (by the end of 2017 approx. 6000 had attended)

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- “AYL – After Stroke” (AYL-AS)
- “AYL – Affected by Cancer” (AYL-ABC)
- “AYL – At University” (AYL-AU)
- “AYL – Power and Control” (AYL-PAC)
- An Older Adult version (Cwm Taf)
- Delivery to employees (DVLA)
- A (signed) version for the deaf (online)
INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

In this course you will learn a lot about how your Mind works, and you’ll discover that your Mind often works against you.

It’s the same for everyone – our Mind often plays tricks on us and tries to control us – and, as a result, our own Mind often adds to our suffering.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

But the good news is that we can stop this happening.

Rather than letting your Mind spoil things, increasing your suffering and stopping you doing things that really matter to you, you can learn to take control and to make life better for yourself.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This is a psychology-based course that will help you to become your own therapist.

It is based on scientific research and an exciting approach called “Acceptance and Commitment Therapy” ACT.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

There is very good evidence that ACT can help people to take more control of their actions and can decrease the suffering that comes from health issues and emotional problems.

A Course in 4 ACTS
The course consists of 4 weekly sessions – we call these ACT 1, ACT 2, ACT 3 and ACT 4.

Each session will introduce new ideas and new activities, and your understanding and skills will gradually increase as we go through the course.

This week’s session – Act 1 – is called …

“**You Are Not Your Mind**”

and it’s about “Getting Wise to Your Mind”

We’ll show you how your Mind works – and how it often works against you.

We will also start to show you how to gain more control over your life so that you can stop your Mind spoiling things and adding to your suffering.

Each session has a slogan – and the slogan for ACT 1 is …

“**Get Wise to Your Mind**”

Next week’s session – ACT 2 – is called …

“**Facing Up to Life**”

When there’s something that we are not happy with, we naturally try to change it. Often, we try to avoid it, or to fight it, or to “fix it.”

So if you hate shopping in large stores, you may avoid all supermarkets.

Or if you are in pain, you may try to “fight the pain.”

Or if you are depressed you may try to “pull yourself together.”

But such strategies don’t work.

... in fact they often make things a whole lot worse.

... so, what is the best thing we can do?
In **ACT 2** you will learn how to **ACCEPT** the things that you don’t want in your life but which can’t be changed

The slogan for this session is:

“**Accept What You Cannot Change**”

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**ACTivate Your Life – A COURSE IN 4 ACTS**

**ACT 3** – “**Being Mindful**” is about focussing on what’s happening right here and now, rather than thinking about the past or wondering about what might happen in the future

“**Mindfulness**” is a very important part of **ACT** and we will be showing you how you can develop **Mindfulness** skills

**ACT 3** focusses on **Mindfulness** and the slogan for that session is **“Be Here Now”**

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**ACTivate Your Life – A COURSE IN 4 ACTS**

**ACT 4** focusses on what you value in life

It will help you to answer questions such as:

“**What really matters to me?**”

“**What do I want my life to be about?**”

“**What do I most care about?**”

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**CHANGING LIFE FOR THE BETTER**

Our aims for the course are ambitious – we want to help you to get the best out of life – here at university and then throughout your life

We will help you to do this by teaching you about how your **Mind** works and teaching you skills that allow **YOU** (not your **Mind**) to control your actions

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**A Course for Everyone**
We believe that everyone can benefit from this course – that includes people with emotional problems, mental health issues, physical health conditions, and even people who have “no problems at all” (although that is a very rare condition!)

Everyone has emotional issues
Sometimes these are just a bit of a nuisance – they spoil things and take the edge off life
But emotional issues can also have truly devastating effects on a person’s life

Emotional issues include anxiety, loneliness, depression, stress, worrying, low self-confidence, unwelcome thoughts, panic, lack of motivation, unwanted habits, addictions, etc. etc.
Any of these may seriously interfere with what the person wants to do – they can ruin things!

Many students find that life is particularly challenging during their years at University
This is not surprising given all the things that may be happening during this time …

Aspects that often contribute to the high level of stress that many students experience include …
Being in a completely different environment, away from home, family and friends
Freedom and independence!

Aspects that often contribute to the high level of stress that many students experience include …
Academic pressures – difficult material, heavy workload, frequent deadlines
Expectations about speaking up in seminars, tutorials, etc.
Aspects that often contribute to the high level of stress that many students experience include ...

Difficulties with accommodation, flatmates
Worries about finance – present and future
Issues with drink and drugs

Aspects that often contribute to the high level of stress that many students experience include ...

Social isolation and loneliness
FOMO - “Fear Of Missing Out”
Difficulties with close relationships

Aspects that often contribute to the high level of stress that many students experience include ...

Worries about the long term future ...
“What will I do after Uni?”
“I don’t have any idea what I’ll do”
“Where will I end up?”

We believe that Activate Your Life can help students to understand what is going on in their life. We believe that it can help them to deal with thoughts and feelings that may be troubling them and preventing their University experience being engaging, fulfilling and enjoyable!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

neil.frude@ntlworld.com