Mental Wellbeing in International Students during COVID-19

Topics discussed:

- Effects of COVID-19 on Mental Health and Wellbeing in International Students
  - Shifting towards online learning;
  - changes in behaviour of youth during pandemic;
  - Professional stress and challenges during covid-19
- Mental Health Information, Support and Advocacy
- Ways to enhance mental wellbeing

Presented by:
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Media Officer and African Youth Support Group Facilitator
Mental Health Foundation Australia

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INTRODUCTION ON PRESENTER

• Media Officer & African Youth Group Facilitator
• International Student at the Australian Catholic University
• South African moved to Australia in 2018
• My story

Philasande Dladla

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IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Online Learning: Transformation to teaching and learning

Common Questions:

What has changed in your (or your colleagues’) teaching practices as a result of the COVID-19 crisis? Did your institution’s (or your own) priorities or guiding principles for learners change? What is different for your learners?

How do you expect your ability to support learners through technology to be enhanced or degraded? Will the relationship between content and process change? With the “college at home” environment being the norm, how will you reimagine equitable access for students?

Emotional pressure and how will it be dealt with?

Which changes are “forever” -- permanent changes in the teaching and learning landscape?

What possibilities are there for rebuilding or evolving your own institution on the far side of the COVID-19 crisis? Is this opportunity for growth through the crisis different for your other alliances

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Practising Mindfulness through online learning

- Sharing how mindfulness increases self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and better decision-making
- Encouraging them to identify situations when they feel mindfulness would be helpful
- Involving families and helping them understand what mindfulness is and how it supports their children’s learning means that the whole learning community can benefit from the practice.
- Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes closed and notice the places where your body is touching the floor, cushion, or chair;
- Draw in a few deep breaths, completely filling up your lungs and quickly exhaling
- Think back to a time that you recently experienced anger/anxiety/stress/uncertainty. Allow yourself to experience the emotional turmoil or other feeling you felt in that moment;
- Disregard any other feelings that come up with this memory, like guilt or sadness;

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Practising Mindfulness through online learning: Techniques

- Turn your attention to how you are experiencing confusion in your body. Notice whether any parts of your body are manifesting your anger with sensations like warmth or cold, the intensity of these reactions and whether they change as you observe them or move through your body;
- Bring compassion to the your stress and anxiety. This can be a difficult step, but remind yourself that anger is a natural human emotion that affects us all at one point or another.
- Say goodbye and say hello to a good mental health. Gradually bring your attention back to your breath and rest here for a while until your emotions have subsided or settled down.
- Reflect on the experience. Notice the sensations that this exercise brought up in your body. Notice if they changed through the process. Take note of whether you applied compassion to your anger, and if so, how you did it. Think about what happened to the anger when you showed it compassion.
IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Behavioural changes on young people during the pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic may be harder for some children or young people to handle than others, such as those already experiencing anxiety. Below are some strategies to help you as an educator look after your students’, and your own, mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic.

Maintain routines where possible
Maintain as many aspects of your routine as possible. Break tasks down into manageable chunks and give as much notice as possible about transitions and changes to routines and environments. Have realistic expectations of children and young people during this time, especially if they are transitioning in and out of school.

Talk about what’s happening in the news
Talk about the importance of getting information from trusted sources like government websites. Draw their attention to the facts around the outbreak and the reassuring aspects of this information.

Focus energy in a positive direction
Encourage student led discussions and talk about what they can do to minimise the spread of coronavirus to help them feel more in control, for example practising good hygiene as explained by the World Health Organization.

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Behavourial changes on young people during the pandemic

Help regulate emotions

• Words of Affirmation.
• Support children and young people to express their emotions so they feel listened to and validated. Explain that it’s normal to feel a range of emotions during this time.
Professionals: Stress & Challenges during the pandemic

RECLAIM YOUR ROUTINE
Start by making a list of everything you have to do at specific time slots (like live teaching online), then schedule things you need to do with more flexible timing (like office hours or grading) and keep them consistent and time-boxed every week.

TEAM UP WITH PARENTS
Remote learning has shifted the relationship and intensified communications with parents - make a side note for parents in cases where it needs more their attention instead of yours.

TAP INTO YOUR HAPPY SPACE
To maintain a level head in the midst of enormous uncertainty, experts advise you to remain focused on what matters most: remembering yourself is still a skilled teacher, even if teaching looks different than it used to be.

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MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

Mental Health Brochure:

School Program:
https://www.mhfa.org.au/CMS/schools-program

Mental Health First Aid

Community Education Seminars

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MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Benefits of Joining a Support Group

1. Realizing you are not alone
2. Expressing your feelings
3. Learning helpful information
4. Improved social skills
5. Gaining hope
6. Reducing distress
7. Increased self-understanding

Aimed at the youth: Support Groups

1. Youth Anxiety Support Group
2. African Youth Support Group
3. Indian Pakistani Youth Support Group

Contact us: supportgroup@mhfa.org.au
https://www.mhfa.org.au/CMS/support-groups

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Youth Ambassadors Program

Applications for the Youth-Ambassadors Program 2020 are open to all members of the community aged between 16 and 25 years who are passionate about youth mental health to join the program. The MHFA is seeking individuals who have experience in either the mental health sector, students’ unions and societies, politics, business or in community services to join the program.

In your role as Youth Ambassador, you will have the opportunity to identify and discuss key issues affecting young people and contribute ideas for youth programs. YAP members may also get to work alongside MHFA staff to plan key events, speak at or attend MHFA functions, seminars and undertake Support Group meetings. Being part of the YAP is a great opportunity for professional development and expanding your networks, while having some fun along the way!


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WAYS TO ENHANCE MENTAL WELL-BEING

1. Develop resilience and coping skills
2. Track and manage your mood and thoughts
3. Improve your learning and communication skills
4. Track physical health, including sleep, movement and nutrition.
5. Connect with like minded peers and communities - IMPORTANT
6. Seek and access professional and peer support
7. Have a way to say what they're thinking and have their voice be heard
8. Organise and plan online communication - through Skype, zoom, instagram video

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NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE

National Mental Health Helpline
1300 HELPLINE (643 287)

Email Us:
admin@mhfa.org.au

Instagram:
@mhfaustralia

Twitter:
@MHFAus

Facebook:
Mental Health Foundation Australia

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Q & A

Type up your questions in the Q & A menu located at the bottom of your screen.

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NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE
1300 643 287

If you have any questions, we are here to help you!

JOIN AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURAL AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

Learn more: https://form.jotform.com/Projco/australian-multicultural-ambassador
Email: projectofficer@mhfa.org.au

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