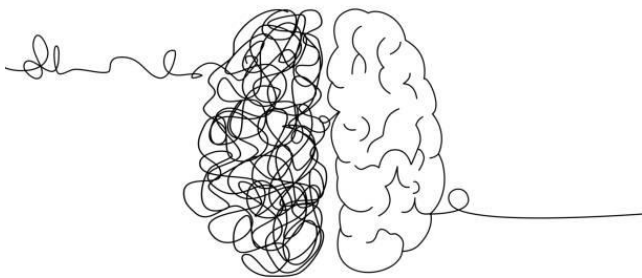




Hammersmith,
Fulham, Ealing
and Hounslow

Understanding Youth Mental Health

Date: 17/01/2023



Workshop Agenda



Understanding the
adolescent brain



Trauma and
personality
development



Identifying
vulnerabilities



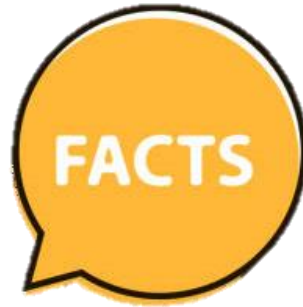
Resources and
signposting



How can we support each other in this workshop?

- Respect for one another
- Disagreements: respectfully disagreeing with the idea and not the person
- Self-care: if you need to take time out, feel free to do so
- Time boundaries: the workshop will last for 1 hour





Mental Health: Myths vs. Reality

Mental health illnesses are something only adults suffer from

Myth


Mental illness can occur in anyone, regardless of their age. Children and teenagers can also develop mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, or panic disorders.

Mental illnesses make people violent, aggressive, and dangerous

Myth

Often, people living with mental health issues are not dangerous or violent

In reality, those with mental health complications are more likely to be victims of complex stressors

A large, pink, hand-drawn scribble of a circle is located in the top right corner of the slide.

**One in six children aged 5 to 16
were identified as having a mental
health problem in July 2021, a huge
increase from one in nine in 2017.**

Reality

**Children and young people reported
that the coronavirus pandemic did
not impact their mental health**

Myth

83% of young people agreed that their mental health was worsened by coronavirus pandemic

**Suicide was the leading
cause of death for males
and females aged between
5 to 34 in 2019**

Reality

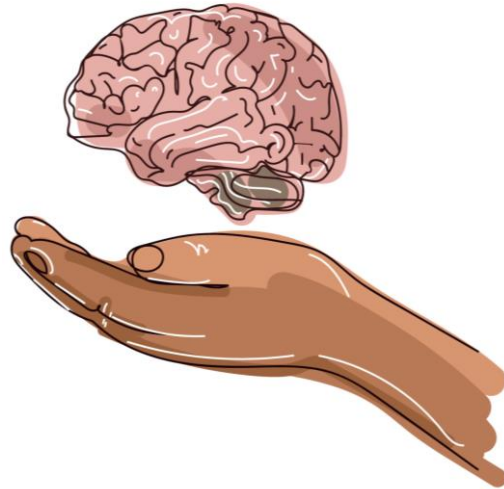
What is mental health?

- How we feel about ourselves, our bodies and our lives
- Knowing that it is okay to struggle when things are tough.
- Understanding how to be a good friend to ourselves and to others (most of the time).
- Being able to enjoy our lives, having good times and positive relationships. (This does not mean that you have to enjoy every moment).
- Knowing when we need to get some extra help and support, and being able to ask for it.

... something we can and should look after – the way we look after our physical health and wellbeing.



Adolescent Brain Development



Emotions and the Brain – The Limbic System

- Brain structures continuously develop between adolescence and adulthood – different regions of the brain mature at different rates
- The limbic system drives emotional processing, and determining of rewards and punishments
- **Dopamine** = neurotransmitter associated with pleasure which can lead to adolescents solely focusing on the reward and less on the potential risks
- **Serotonin** = neurotransmitter involved in mood and behavior regulation (eases tension and stress). However, if serotonin levels are low teens are more susceptible to expressing low mood or feeling overwhelmed
- Further, an increase of dopamine and a decrease in serotonin levels make adolescents more emotional and responsive to rewards and stress
- **Remember, the emotion center of the brain dominates at this stage!**

Emotions and the Brain – The Prefrontal Cortex

- The pre-frontal cortex is involved in thinking, judgement, rational decision making, and impulse control (it's considered the CEO of the brain)
- The pre-frontal cortex does not fully develop until the age of 25 which is the last to reach maturation
- Due to the difference in developmental timing teens are typically seen as overly emotional, impulsive and more prone to risky behaviors than adults
- **Think of your time as an adolescent – Do you remember feeling overly emotional?**



Adolescent mental health



Stress responses

- Stress, either physiological, biological or psychological, is an organism's response to a stressor or a perceived stressor.
- What we identify as “stressor” is a very personal experience.
- Stress is the body's method of reacting to a condition such as a threat, challenge or physical and psychological barrier.
- We might have very good or quite poor coping strategies to deal with stress.
- Long-term stress has an impact on physical and mental health.



Tolerable Stress

- It is tolerable only when it is relieved by supportive relationships that:
 - facilitate coping
 - Restore heart rate and lower cortisol levels (stress hormone)
 - Reduce an adolescent's sense of being overwhelmed



Flight, Fight and Freeze

The fight-flight-freeze response can happen in the face of imminent physical danger. It's the body's way of protecting you from danger such as encountering a growling dog or preparing for a presentation at work or school. When you feel threatened, fight-flight-freeze is automatically triggered to prepare you for physiological changes to either confront or flee from the threat

- FLIGHT: I remove myself from the situation
- FIGHT: I react, I fight back
- FREEZE: I can't move, I stay still as it's safer

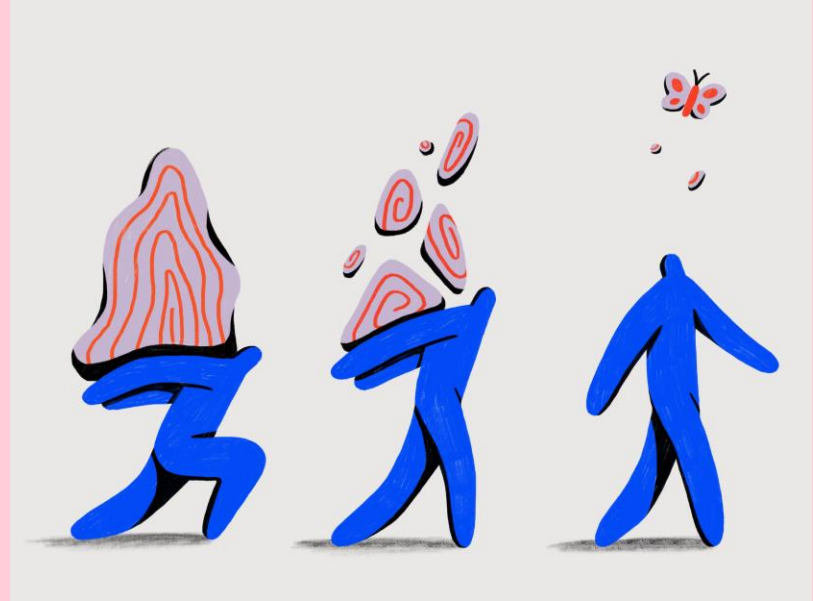


Common symptoms of fight – or- flight response

- Increased heart rate
- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Shallow breathing
- Muscle tension



Trauma – Adverse Childhood Experiences and Protective Factors



Trauma

Traumatic events activate the stress response system (e.g., fight-flight-freeze) and flood the brain with cortisol (stress hormone)

Trauma is defined as a traumatic event with which a person experiences, witnesses, is confronted with a threat of death or serious injury, or threat to physical of others

Adverse childhood experiences

- Recurrent physical abuse
- Recurrent emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional or physical neglect
- Incarcerated household member
- Domestic violence
- Community violence
- Poverty
- Experiences of racism
- Living in an unsafe environment
- Experiencing grief and bereavement



Protective Factors

- A protective factor is countering events that reduce the risk or negative outcome such as:
 - Coping and problem skills
 - Socially and emotionally competent
 - Families who create stable, nurturing, supportive and safe relationships with their children
 - Children who have positive friendships
 - Children who have their basic needs met – food, water, clothing and shelter
 - Children who have caring adults outside the family to serve as mentors
 - Community access to financial help
 - Community access to school programs and educational support
 - Communities with little to no community violence





Identifying Vulnerabilities



What do I look out for: Changes

Physical
appearance

Communication

Relationships

Emotion

Daily
Activities

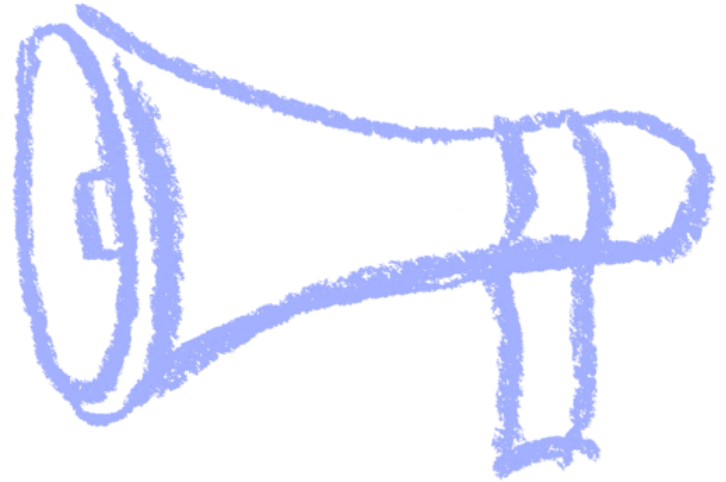
Thinking
and
learning

Behaviour



What is anxiety?

- How is it expressed?
- How do we know if someone is experiencing anxiety?



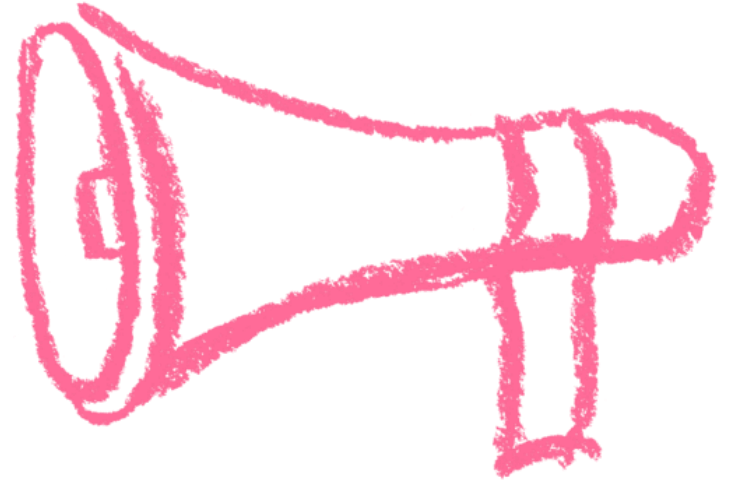
People experiencing anxiety may:

- Worry about the immediate or long-term future
- Have uncontrollable, racing thoughts about something going wrong
- Difficulty concentrating
- Avoid situations that could cause anxiety so that feelings and thoughts don't become consuming
- Recurring nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional numbing related to traumatic experience
- Heart pounding
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Restlessness



Low Mood

- How is it expressed?
- How do we know if someone is experiencing low mood?



People experiencing low mood may:

- Feel hopeless, if nothing positive will happen in the future for themselves, for others, or for the world
- Feel de-motivated and believe it is not worth trying to think or feel differently – because of this sense of hopelessness
- Believe it is not worth trying to think or feel differently, because of this hopelessness
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Unstable sleeping pattern
- Muscle tension
- Appetite or weight changes



Resources & Signposting



Mental health support

- Ealing IAPT NHS · Counselling & Mental Health: <https://www.ealingfamiliesdirectory.org.uk/kb5/ealing/directory/site.page?id=9FLZdtjOcMc>
- Family Lives: askus@familylives.org.uk
- MHST -Young people (Ealing): westlondon.nhs.uk/our-services/child-and-adolescent/camhs/school-support/ealing-mental-health-support-team
- Ealing Safe Space: <https://www.hfehmind.org.uk/get-support/ealing-safe-space/>



Questions?





Hammersmith,
Fulham, Ealing
and Hounslow