

Mental Health/Safe Space

Mental Health. What is it ?

Mental Health is a topic that is not usually talked about or addressed as freely as it should be. Usually mental health derives from childhood trauma, mental, emotional and physical abuse. The most common mental health issue for Women is Depression and for Men Alcohol Dependency. Low income families have a higher likelihood of developing or having a mental health issue, which is some we aim to tackle, explore and support.

Safe Space

Safe Space will be a replica of "The Red Table Talk". Safe Space will be taking place on Tuesdays from 6pm and will last for a maximum of 45 Minutes with slogan "Come as you are". Lucia, Divine and Julian will be discussing topics that have impacts on Young People's mental health; This will be run on a 5 Week Basis with 5 different topics each week starting off with "Mental Health & Covid". This will be via Instagram Live and the audio shall be recorded simultaneously and then uploaded onto Soundcloud in a form of a Podcast which will be named "Safe Space" and each topic will be named "Episode" for example: "Safe Space - Episode 1: Mental Health & Covid". The aim for this is to engage with Young People via social media which is a tool that they use almost everyday. This engagement aims to reach out to those who are battling with mental health within these areas and initially build a rapport with them to eventually build a mentoring system with the individual who feels like they'll require our attention. Each episode will lead up to the mental health Webinar that will be taking place on the 29th September and then the "Food & Talk" on 6th October. The setting for Safe Space will be cozy and comfortable, this will hopefully give off to the audience a comfortable vibe that will represent transparency, tranquility and confidence.

Mental Health & Covid

This is the First topic that'll be discussed as it is most relevant to the current times. Covid 19 has affected everyone globally, some more worse than others. In the UK the lockdown lasted for 3 months from the end of March to the end of June, consequently schools and other educational institutions had to close early and children had no other option but to be lockdown at home and this has led to development of mental health and well being concerns due to issues young people have faced during lockdown. The main 7 Impacts on young people's mental health are as follows:

1. Increased loneliness and isolation
2. Lack of safe space - including not being able to access their youth club/service and lack of space at home
3. Challenging family relationships
4. Lack of trusted relationships
5. Increased social media pressure
6. Higher gang risk, substance misuses, carrying weapons or other harmful practices.
7. Higher risk of grooming and sexual exploitation

Domestic Abuse/ Violence will be discussed as it takes place usually inside of the home. Domestic violence rate has increased by 20%, with the UN describing it as a “shadow pandemic”. More than 40,000 calls have been made to the National Domestic Abuse helpline since the beginning of Lockdown, so this a topic that needs to be discussed as usually children are witnesses of Domestic Abuse which has a massive impact on their mental health and engage later on in life.

Mental Health & Gang Culture

Gang culture is something that is prevalent in London and over the years the recruitment have become younger and younger with most younger recruits starting at the age of 11. “County Lines” has increasingly become more widespread and prevalent within youths especially the younger ages 11-19, and as a consequence this has had an impact on these young people's mental health. Being in a gang can negatively impact children's mental health in the following ways:

1. Being exposed to violence and other trauma can damage mental health, particularly if they are repeatedly exposed. Sexual violence poses a risk for females especially
2. Through having to suppress feelings of fear and anxiety
3. Taking substances like alcohol and drugs can increase young people's risks of mental health problems, this is particularly the case for cannabis use. This may be being used to increase confidence and numb emotional stress
4. Being involved in a gang during early adolescence can impact on psychological development.

There are also vulnerable children who are being groomed and exploited by gangs, but who would not identify as gang members. This is rare (especially at primary school age) but is being identified as an increasing problem in some local areas in the UK. These children are at significant risk of harm, which may lead to coercion, emotional abuse, sexual violence, school absence, criminal offences and physical assaults. Men (18-34 years old) in gangs have higher levels of mental illness than both men in the general population and violent men not affiliated with gangs. At the point of arrest, 40% of gang-affiliated young people (10-18 years old) had severe behavioural problems before the age of 12 compared with 13% of all those arrested. Young people with early aggressive traits are twice as likely to stay in a gang for a year or longer. Poor mental health can be both a risk factor for and a result of gang involvement. Gangs offer a sense of protection and social support to young people experiencing fear and anxiety or with low self-esteem. Involvement in a gang increases the likelihood of exposure to violence which in turn increases the risk of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mental Health & Social Media, Media & Music

Social Media

1. Social media has dramatically changed the way we communicate. We no longer need to wait for newspaper updates, but rather learn from those on our social media feeds about the issues that are most important or appealing to us. Even more importantly, social media has proven its power in motivating people to action as well as a strong resource to influence social, political and economic policies. Social media is a powerful tool for young people; it provides a platform for our voices to be heard and enables us to become active citizens and to voice our opinions on the matters that affect or interest us. It also has the power to bring together voices of concern about particular issues.

The main issues mental health has on social media are:

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Self-Harm
4. Lonerish
5. Body Dysphoria
6. Suicidal Thoughts
7. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

2. The Media

The Media industry over the years has increasingly become more aware and factual when it comes to mental. Television soaps and films have done very well with the exposure of mental health, many storylines with characters suffering from mental health have seen the encouragement of viewers with mental health issues to come forward and talk/accept their issue. Soaps such as Eastenders and Hollyoaks have done very well with the expression of mental health within young people and explored mental health issues such as bipolar and self harming which consequently has built awareness with the youth demographic.

Unfortunately, not all conditions are treated equally in the media. Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder are starting to be treated with sympathy and understanding on screen. However, when schizophrenia and personality disorders are covered it's usually in connection to violence, even though we know that you're much more likely to be a victim than a perpetrator of violence if you have a mental health problem.

In a public opinion poll we did about mental health storylines on TV, 60 per cent of people said that watching a soap or drama featuring a character with a mental health problem had increased their understanding. However, almost the same percentage said that schizophrenia is more negatively portrayed than other mental health problems.

3. Music

Lately, it's become clear that the number of artists suffering is staggeringly high. In a 2018 study from the Music Industry Research Association, 50 percent of musicians reported battling symptoms of depression, compared with less than 25 percent of the general adult population. Nearly 12 percent reported having suicidal thoughts — nearly four times the general population. According to a 2019 study published by Swedish digital-distribution platform Record Union, the numbers are even starker: It found that 73 percent of independent musicians have battled stress, anxiety, and depression.

In the past few years, these problems have played out in striking and tragic terms. In 2019 alone, Silver Jews' David Berman, guitarist Neal Casal, Yonder Mountain String Band founder Jeff Austin, and Prodigy singer Keith Flint all died by suicide. In the two years prior, rapper Mac Miller suffered an accidental drug overdose, and superstar DJ Avicii, Soundgarden's Chris Cornell and Linkin Park's Chester Bennington all died by suicide.

Mental Health issues within the music industry:

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Self Harming/Self Medication
4. Overdosing on Drugs
5. Suicide

Mental Health & Schools/Employment

Schools (11-20)

Mental health problems among young people in the UK are growing rapidly, with nearly 850,000 children, between 5-16 years, having a mental disorder. This makes mental health one of the most prevalent issues we are facing in the UK, with an overwhelming number of people complaining that more needs to be done to combat mental health problems amongst the young.

One of the main causes of mental health issues amongst young people today is the pressure of exams.

the number of students who raised concerns about exam stress increased by 200%. This demonstrates that while individuals, such as former Education Secretary Michael Gove, believe that putting an emphasis on exams is a positive, many studies actually show that exams are having a detrimental effect on students' mental wellbeing.

In a survey of 8,600 school leaders, teachers and support workers, 83% said they had witnessed an increase in the number of children in their care with poor mental health, rising to 90% among students in colleges.

"We are at a crisis point with mental health," one respondent said. "Much more anxiety, self-harming. Three suicides in three years in my school alone," said another.

“Sats pressure and general expectations are taking their toll on more vulnerable pupils,” said one respondent, adding: “We have nine-year-olds talking about suicide.”

“I am currently working with 15 children who have been bereaved, have anxiety, have PTSD or a parent with a terminal/life threatening illness.”

Mental Health issues that are prevalent in school:

1. Depression - Exam Stress, Trauma, Bullying, Neglect
2. Anxiety - Exam Stress
3. Self Harm - Exam stress, Trauma, Bullying
4. PTSD - Childhood Trauma
5. Suicidal Thoughts/Behaviours - Bullying, Exam Stress

Unemployment (20-25)

The main cause for lack of employment within youths is due to the lack of experience and poor education as not everyone decides to further their education after 18 the compulsory age. In addition, lack of opportunity for experience is out there for youth, not many internships to gain experience and the only available jobs that are willing to take on young people are usually retail jobs, but not all retail jobs provide skills that youths need in other job sectors.

Mental health issues developed from unemployment:

1. Depression
2. Substance Abuse - more time on hands and mechanism of “easing the pain”
3. Suicide

Mental Health & Gender

Within each gender some mental health issues are more prevalent than others. With depression and anxiety standing out for Women and Alcohol Dependence and PTSD standing out for Men.

Mental health issues that affect Men

1. Alcohol Dependence
2. Antisocial Personality
3. PTSD - exposed to violence
4. Suicidal Thoughts/Suicide
5. Psychosis - often derived from substance abuse
6. ADHD - from a younger age

Mental health issues that affect Females

1. Depression
2. PTSD - exposed to violence

3. Anxiety - psychological distress, sexual/domestic violence
4. Substance Abuse
5. Self Harm
6. Eating Disorders