

Degrees of sanity: the mental health of students post-COVID

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Who am I?



How To Grow a Grown Up

Prepare Your Teen for the Real World

Dr Dominique Thompson
& Fabienne Vailles

Student MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A practical guide

Edited by
NICOLA BARDEN & RUTH CALEB



What I will cover today... the 'who', 'what', 'how'

- ▶ Think about- what you and your team might need to do in the medium/ longer term to support student mental health
- ▶ What practical steps you might take now to be ready for life and work in a 'post COVID19' world.
- ▶ How will you support your students and staff, and what issues might be top of your 'to do' list?
- ▶ How might mental health challenges have changed?
- ▶ Will some students need more help than others?
- ▶ And what new skills/ services be helpful for life in a changed society?



A word about uncertainty...

- ▶ The issue:
- ▶ Mismatch between expectation and reality
- ▶ Leads to anxiety, and even self-harmful behaviour (Appleby)
- ▶ Bigger disconnect between school and university this year? Imposter phenomenon worse?
- ▶ Disproportionate fear of COVID v actual risk
- ▶ Don't feel in control of future or mental health (UCL)

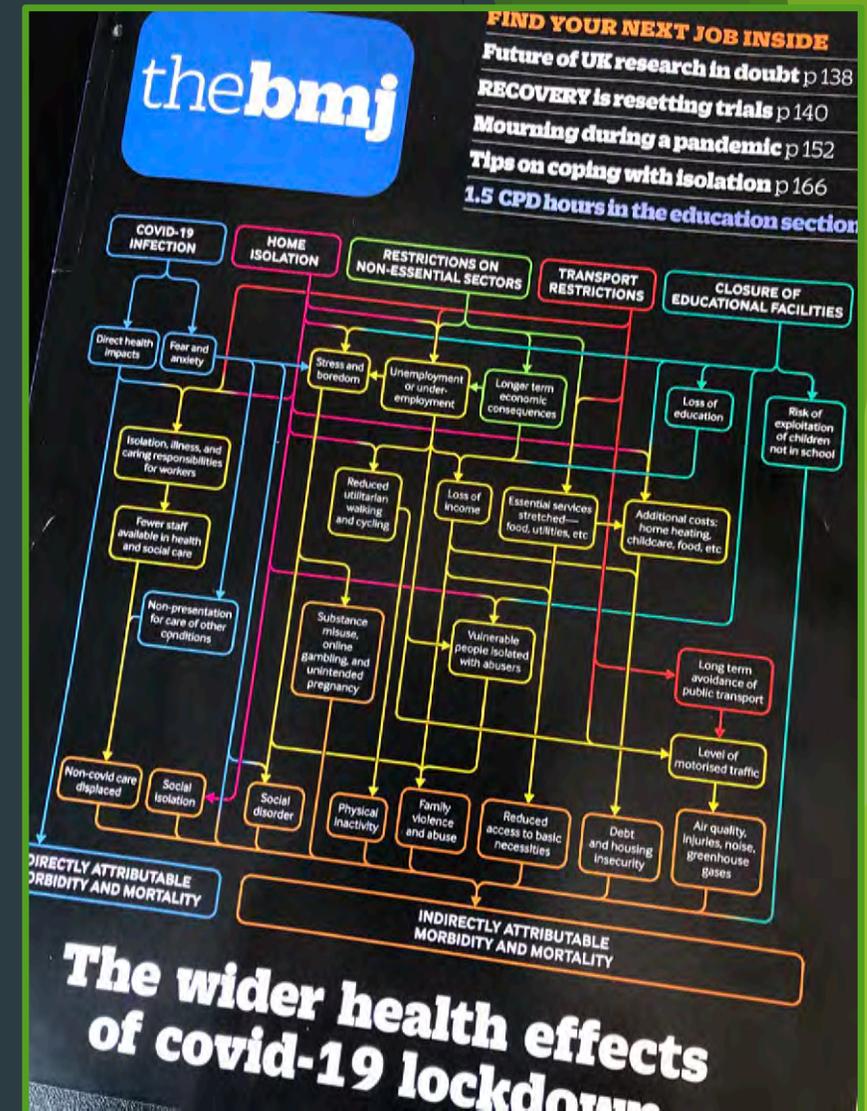
- ▶ The strategy?
- ▶ Help them to 'Take Back Control' ('plan what you can')
- ▶ Teach them- 'When things feel out of control- educate yourself'
- ▶ Need for clear communication/ info *Clarity is Key*
- ▶ Clear expectations of people
- ▶ They like facts- give them factual info!

**Uncertainty
is the only
certainty.**

John Allen Paulos, US Mathematician

At risk groups- adverse MH impact- Direct v indirect

- ▶ Bereaved
- ▶ Recovering from severe COVID19
- ▶ Chronic physical health conditions / disability
- ▶ Disrupted health care
- ▶ Pre-existing mental health conditions/ disability
- ▶ Living in outbreak hotspots
- ▶ Estranged/ care leavers
- ▶ Carers
- ▶ International
- ▶ Isolated / face to face social deprivation (impact in adolescence)
- ▶ Poor access to IT/ online services
- ▶ Healthcare/ frontline workers/ students
- ▶ Low income/ financially vulnerable- graduates facing unemployment
- ▶ Victims of Intimate partner violence
- ▶ Victims of COVID related racism
- ▶ Missed year abroad/ year in industry/ placements



Changing emotions

- ▶ Bereavement/ loss
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Fear of others- threat perceived?
- ▶ Powerless/ helpless



BEREAVEMENT
GUILT
TRAUMA

Changing behaviours

- ▶ Risk aversion
- ▶ Loss of confidence
- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Eating/ food patterns
- ▶ Addictions
- ▶ Alcohol/ substance use
- ▶ Relationships
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Motivation
- ▶ ...long term impact...

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Gen Z is graduating into what could be the worst recession in decades — and it means they might earn less, get sicker, and even die younger

Dominic-Madori Davis May 6, 2020, 4:57 PM

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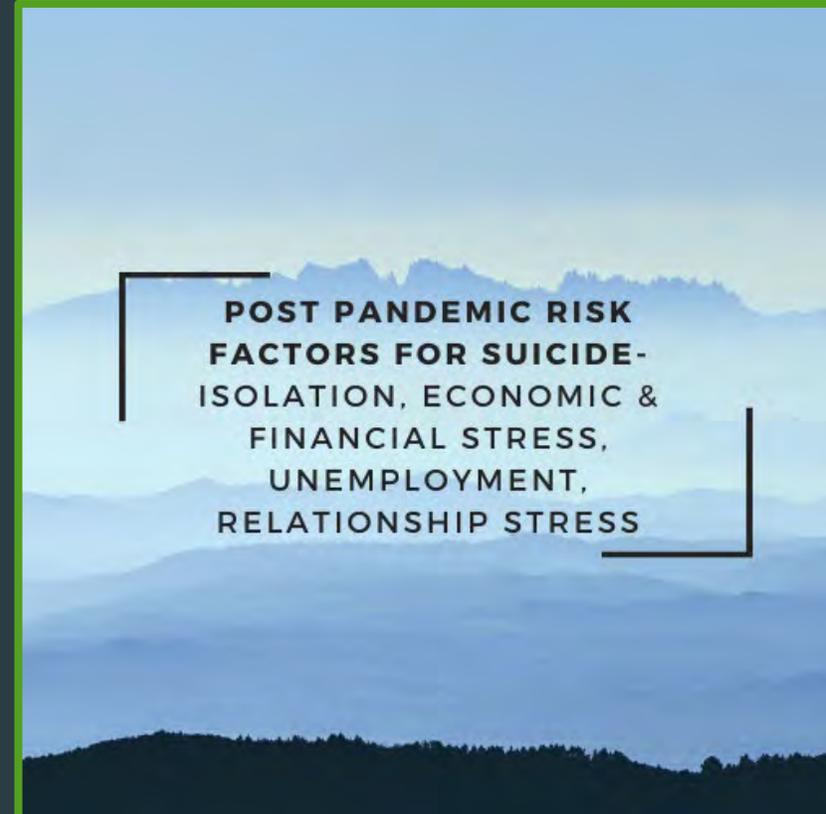


ISOLATION INCREASES RISK OF DEPRESSION IN PREVIOUSLY WELL ADOLESCENTS FOR UP TO 9 YEARS LATER



Impact on specific disorders

- ▶ Anxiety/ OCD
- ▶ Mood- depression/ bipolar
- ▶ Trauma - PTSD (flashbacks)
- ▶ Addiction/ misuse
- ▶ Eating disorders
- ▶ Self-harm/ suicidality (Safety planning?)



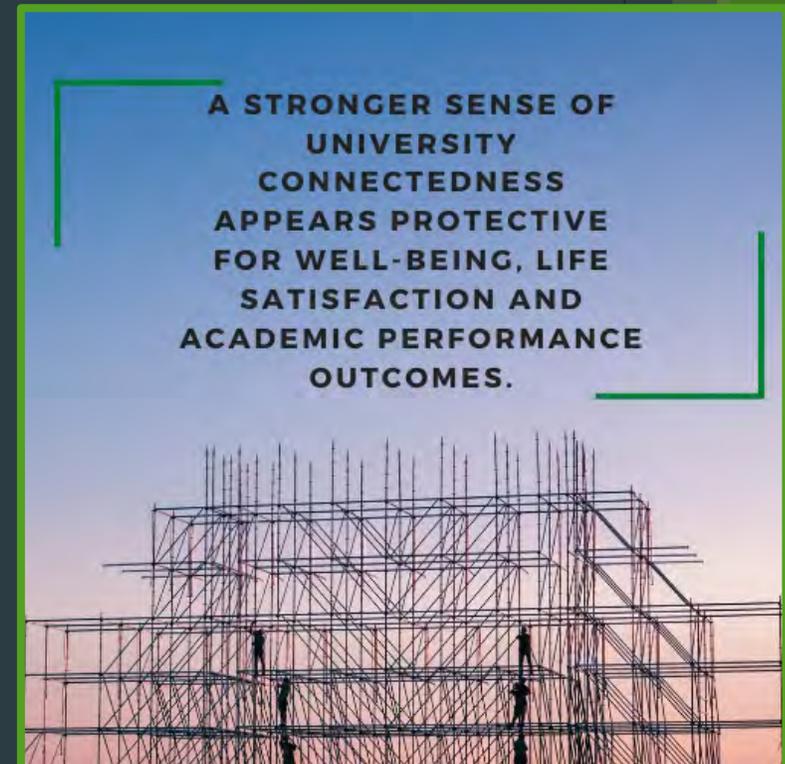
Long term impact... graduating in a recession

- ▶ Recession graduates have a roughly 6% increase in a generation's age-specific mortality rate.
- ▶ Cohorts coming of age during the deep recession of the early 1980s suffer increases in mortality that appear in their late 30s and further strengthen through age 50.
- ▶ Mortality driven by causes such as heart disease, lung cancer, and liver disease, as well as drug overdoses.
- ▶ Recession graduates were less likely to be married, more likely to be divorced, and more likely to be childless.
- ▶ Plan-> social connections/ careers advice/ hardship funds? -> "Recession proof" your graduates



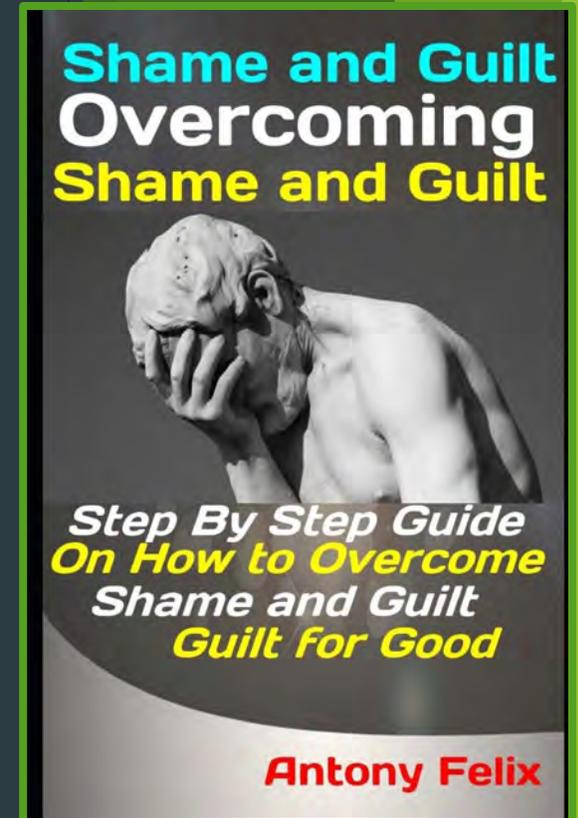
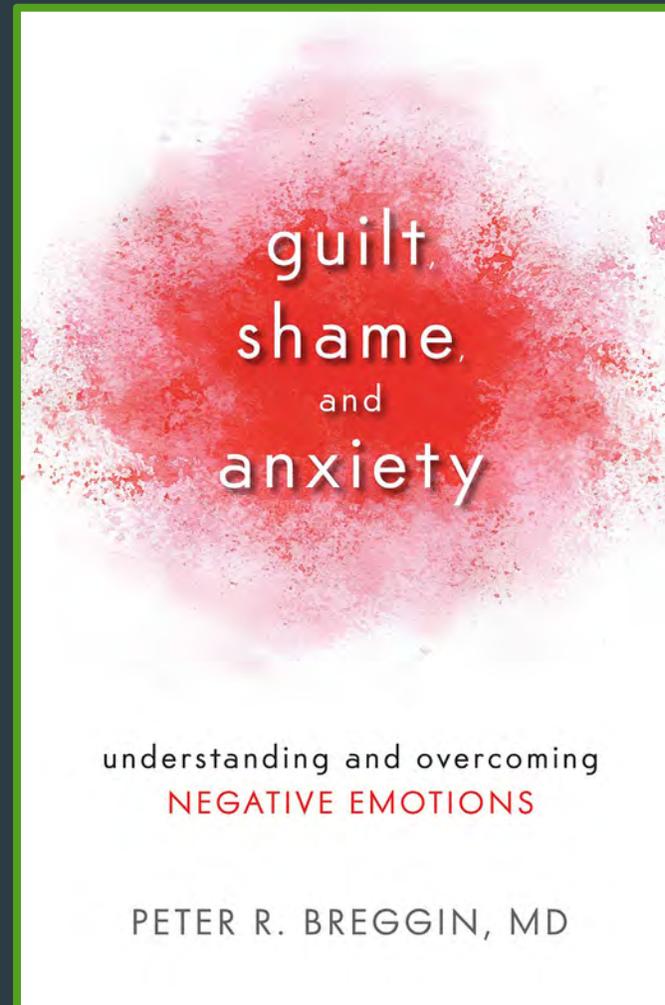
Planning ahead

- ▶ Creating a 'community' post COVID?
- ▶ Use google search terms trends- predict needs? (suicide/ depression)
- ▶ Avoid/ reduce COVID related stigma
- ▶ Identify at risk groups-> additional support
- ▶ Ongoing review of online/ remote support provision (apps/ helplines/ phone/ video) *screen fatigue??*
- ▶ NHS access/ pathways- disruption?
- ▶ New services/ specialist therapies/ targeted group work/programmes eg DBT/ bereavement/ trauma/ sleep/ guilt/ graduating in a recession?
- ▶ Partner with other teams eg SU/ 3rd sector/ peer 2 peer/ housing/ mentors/ academic
- ▶ Training required for different workload?
- ▶ Create a reading list for colleagues?



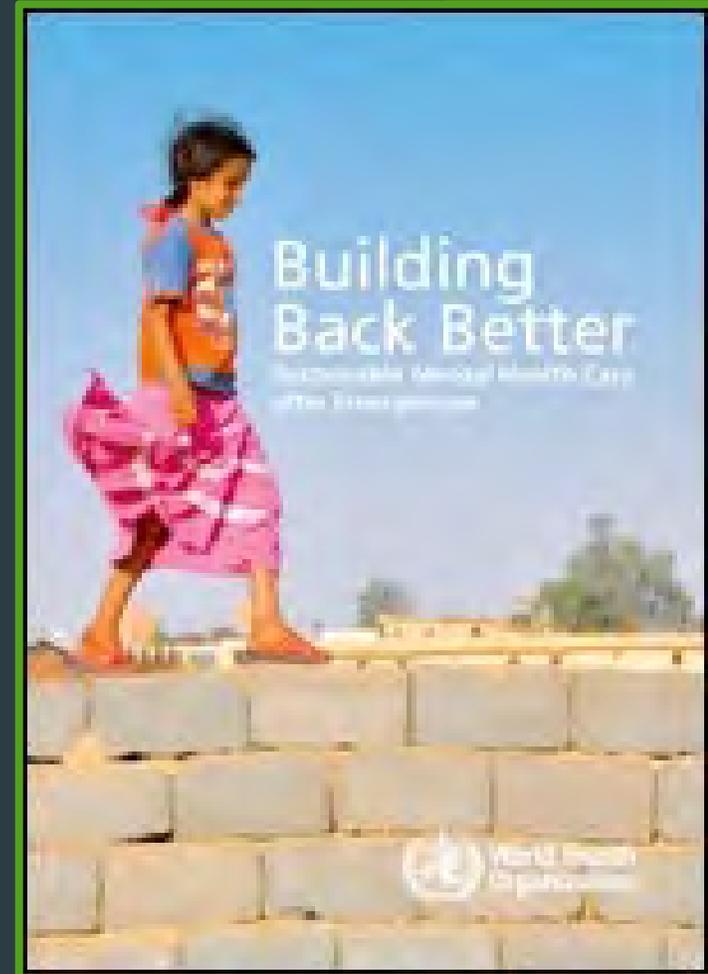
Activity- per 'theme' or topic- for team or you?

- ▶ Update/ reading needs
- ▶ Upskilling needs
- ▶ Training needs
- ▶ Service plan and delivery needs



The last word... BMJ May 5 2020

- ▶ “We need to resist the ever-increasing, opportunistic, commercial influence for miraculous cures in the form of pills, or unevaluated apps, and pursue systems that prioritise good health for all and “*Building Back Better*” in collaboration with national governments, local governments, funders, and global organisations.
- ▶ Historically, claims to “quick fix” solutions in global health have led to unethical excess costs and suffering.
- ▶ It is time to urgently invest, instead, in meeting our fundamental and complex human needs.”



Summary

- ▶ Identify at risk students
- ▶ Be aware of medium *and* long term impact of COVID19/ recession
- ▶ Be aware of risk/ disorders
- ▶ Plan service delivery- focus/ need
- ▶ Plan training needs/ staff
- ▶ Strengthen your communities
- ▶ Don't rely on quick fixes!
- ▶ Take advantage of opportunity to Build Back Better?



Thank you!

Questions?

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