



Embedding Mental Wellbeing: Methods and Benefits Collaborative Enhancement Project 2021

Research pilot project – Embedded training for undergraduate children’s nursing students to increase self-leadership, personal autonomy and emotional agility skills

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Introduction

Student nurses face a number of challenges during their undergraduate training, the nature of which is both emotionally and physically demanding. They are required to balance academic work with clinical placements, which can cause stress, anxiety and burnout.

The main barriers to seeking support are fear of experiencing stigma, and being judged and treated differently (Mitchell, 2018). In an attempt to eliminate these barriers, London South Bank University (LSBU) provided a mandatory two-and-a-half-hour session - ‘Self Leadership and Personal Autonomy for Children’s Nurses’ - to 2nd year student children’s nurses. Delivered by the student mental health and wellbeing team (MHWB), this session offered strategies to help cope in times of stress and pressure, and manage the competing demands.

Rationale

This study aimed to investigate if and how:

- students felt they benefitted from the session
- students felt better able to manage and understand their emotions
- students felt more able to succeed in their studies
- future support may be helpful as part of nursing training.

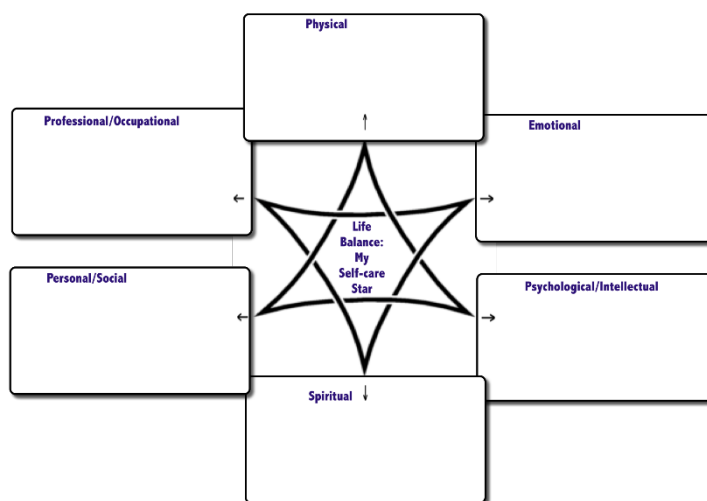
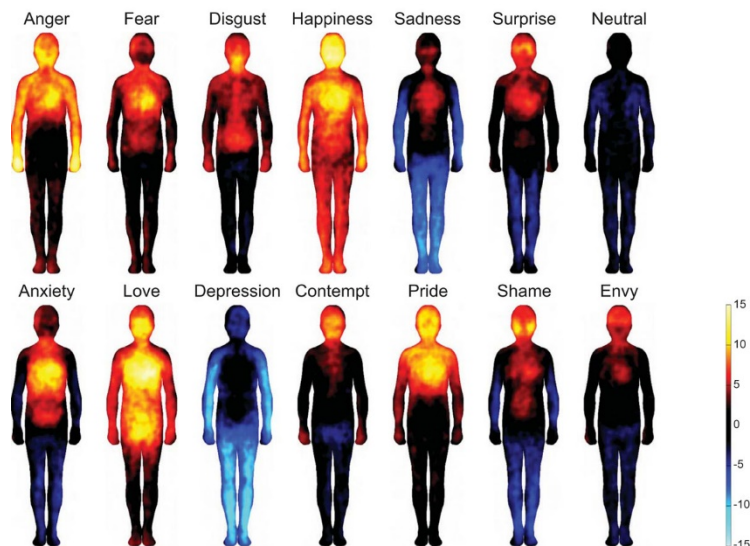
Method

This mixed-methods study used questionnaires to collect feedback from the students who completed the session. Quantitative data were generated from questions answered using a 5-part Likert scale. Free-text questions generated qualitative data.

The content of the session included:

- Mentimeter question – How are you feeling?
- Coping with uncertainty
- Responding to things you can and can't control – Problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies
- Developing resilience – My resilience star activity
- Mentimeter question – Identifying strengths in self and others (nurses)
- The purpose of emotions
- Assertiveness
- Positive ways of responding to stress
- Self-care star activity
- Mindfulness and deep breathing technique
- Support available at LSBU
- SilverCloud and other recommended self-help and wellbeing resources

Examples of teaching resources used during the sessions –



Evaluation / results

All students (n=79) completed all quantitative questions. The qualitative element was less thoroughly completed, with 5 students providing no response, 11 students answering all questions and 63 students some questions. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed together and 3 themes were identified:

1. Understanding and management of emotions

As a result of the session, 78% 'agreed'/'strongly agreed' that they had a better understanding of their emotions and 64% stated they learnt to manage their emotions (Figure 1).

The following are quotes from the students about the sessions:

"I learnt about how different emotions can manifest and how these individual emotions differ from person to person."

"I can communicate my emotions more productively."

"The session challenged students by encouraging discussion of emotions."

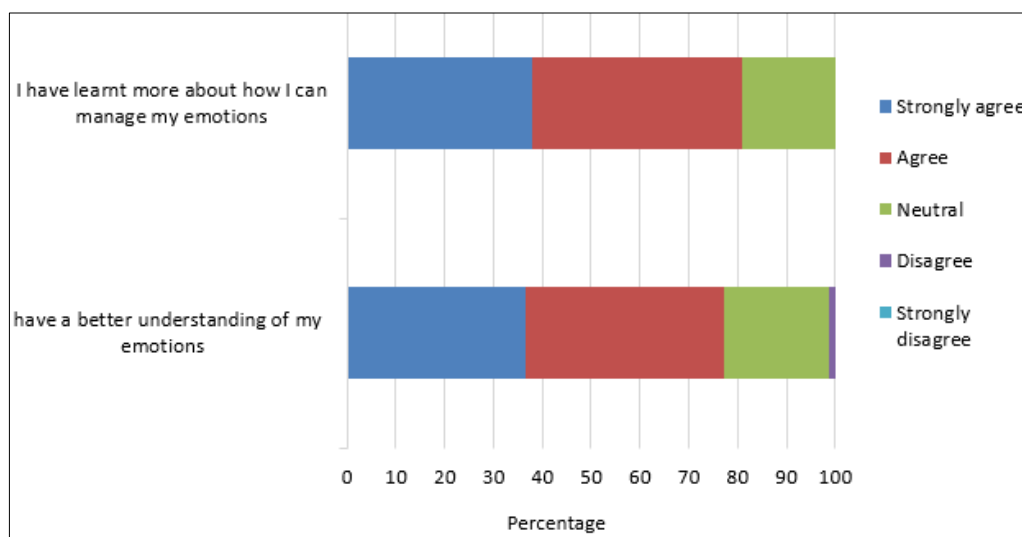


Figure 1: Students responses to questions relating to understanding and management of emotions

2. Strategies to manage competing demands

61% 'agreed'/'strongly agreed' that they felt more confident in their ability to cope with placements and assessments. 68% 'agreed'/'strongly agreed' that they felt more confident in succeeding with their studies (Figure 2).

The following are quotes from the students about the sessions:

"Learnt ways to manage stress and what help is available."

"Reflecting on my life balance and reminding me to do mindfulness."

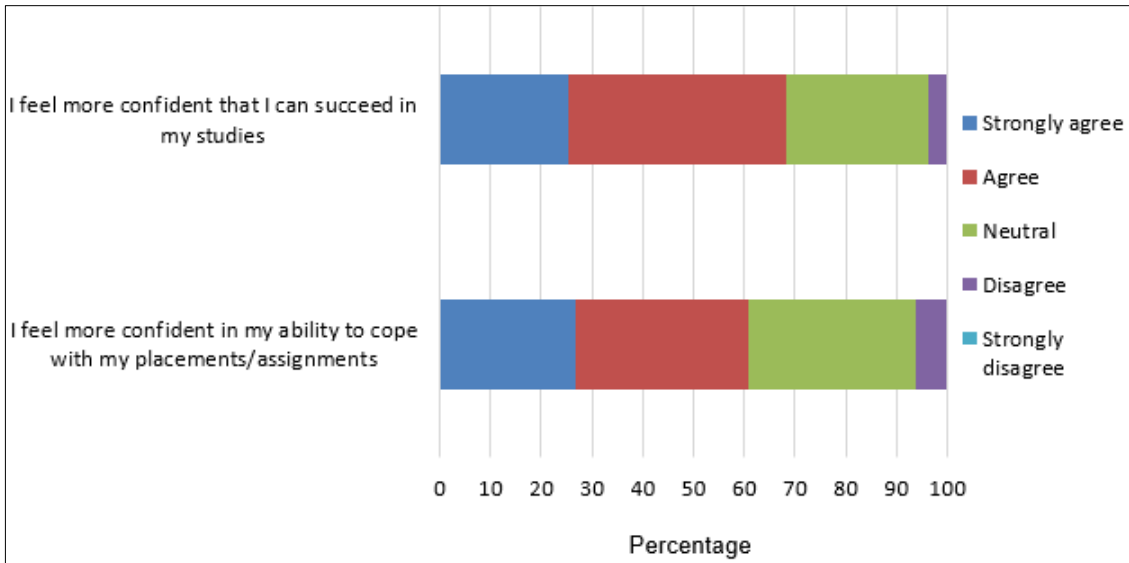


Figure 2: Students responses to questions relating to strategies to manage competing demands

3. Recommendations for future training

Overall, students reported that they benefitted from this session. 94% ‘agreed’/‘strongly agreed’ with recommending the session to others (Figure 3).

The following are quotes from the students about the sessions:

“I wouldn’t change a thing.”

“Not as long but very good.”

Students identified that further training on helping others would be useful.

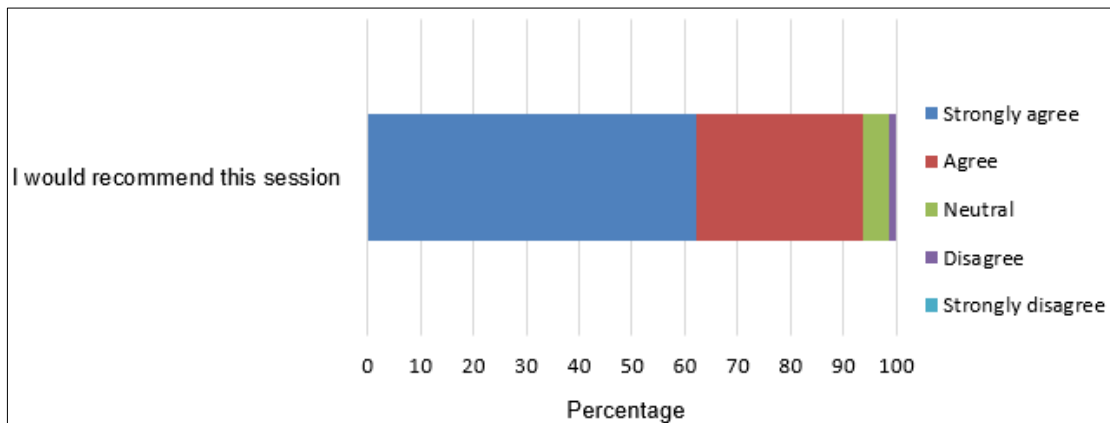


Figure 3: Students responses to the question about whether they would recommend the session to others

The results indicate that embedding similar sessions into the curriculum will empower and prepare undergraduate student nurses to face the challenges they will encounter. As a result of the positive feedback, this session will be repeated for the next cohort. The content has been amended in response to the feedback.

In addition, a further session relating to transition to newly-qualified nurses has been developed and delivered to this cohort of now 3rd year student children's nurses.

Take-away message

Embedding this training into the curriculum develops a sense of responsibility, ownership and self-connection with student nurses' emotional states. Teaching them to prioritise self-care whilst embarking upon a career in a caring profession aims to increase resilience and prevent burnout.

References

Mitchell, A E P (2018). Psychological distress in student nurses undertaking an educational programme with professional registration as a nurse: Their perceived barriers and facilitators in seeking psychological support. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 25 (4), pp. 258-269

This document was produced as part of the [Collaborative Enhancement Project - Embedding Mental Wellbeing](#).