



Workshop 3: Social Pressure



U OK? is a series of workshops, co-produced with students. They aim to support student mental health through the transition out of further education, into higher education, the world of work and training.

Each workshop is led by two student facilitators, Mental Health Ambassadors.



SOCIAL PRESSURE WORKSHOP

The purpose of this workshop is to raise awareness of the potential social pressures and challenges that students may face when they leave further education and begin their next steps, and how to deal with them.

You're not expected to have all the answers, but to help start the conversation that will get them thinking about how to navigate different situations and relationships, and manage their mental health, and to signpost them to where they can go for support should they need it.

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USING THE SESSION PLAN

Timings

We give you an indicative timing for each activity. You might find this needs adjusting slightly as you prepare. We suggest an optional task that you can run if you have time. If you don't have time, skip the optional task and move on to Reflection & Close.

How to do it

The instructions for each activity are split into steps, which you should either: DO (handing things out, putting up slides), SAY (the key messages and instructions for the activity) or ASK (prompt questions to extend the discussion or gauge understanding).



Discussion based
activity



Activity



Break

Notes and troubleshooting

We provide extra information that may be helpful when you're running the activity, such as adaptations you could make, considerations about managing the class, or key preparations for the lesson.

Read the lesson plan in advance

As part of your preparation, you should read the lesson plan in full.

You'll need to decide with your co-Mental Health Ambassador who will deliver each section of the lesson.

It's not a script:

The session plan provides sentence examples, but it's not a word-for-word script that you can simply read out. It may be helpful to make key notes about what you're going to say but avoid writing full sentences.

Try and practice beforehand so you feel more confident and less likely to read from the page.

Workshop aims

- ✓ To destigmatise social pressures faced by students.
- ✓ To explore experiences such as social anxiety.
- ✓ To discuss and share tips on maintaining social balance.
- ✓ To discuss and recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- ✓ Signpost to services that can support.

Resources you will need

In Person:

- ✓ Bingo sheet
- ✓ Flipchart paper
- ✓ Pens and paper
- ✓ Signposting resource

Online:

- ✓ Jamboard
- ✓ Signposting resources

Preparation Checklist

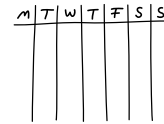
- ✓ Meet with co-facilitator(s) and decide who will run each section
- ✓ Check you can access all resource materials
- ✓ Make sure you have the Zoom link for the call (if delivering online)
- ✓ Read the session in full



TIMETABLE



Workshop Duration: 2 hours



Introduction

- Icebreaker
- Welcome
- Ground rules
- Context of workshop theme

20 mins

Belonging

- Identity Activity
- Video and discussion

OPTIONAL

40 mins

Break

10 mins

Social Connections and Pressures

- Healthy Relationships activity
- Social Anxiety

40 mins

Reflection and Close

10 mins



INTRODUCTION

Welcome

2 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

Thank the group for attending, explain that yourself and your other MHAs will be facilitating this workshop

If comfortable sharing, tell the group why you are passionate about mental health.

Explain:

- Mental health is something we all have, and we all have pressures that impact it in different ways. Some of these pressures increase or change when we transition from further education to higher education, employment or training.



INTRODUCTION

Ice-breaker

10 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

RESOURCE: Human Bingo sheet

DO:

- Hand out human bingo sheets
- Give everyone 10 minutes to move around the room finding people they have things in common with
- The aim is to tick off as many items of their bingo sheet as possible and talk to as many people as possible

MHAs should get involved too

ONLINE:

Go around the group, asking everyone to introduce themselves and an interesting fact about themselves

VARIATIONS:

Feel free to swap the icebreaker out for one of your own or use one of the alternatives on page 18



INTRODUCTION

Ground rules
5 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

"To make sure we get the most out of this session, together we will create a list of ground rules"

ASK:

Ask everyone to share rules that would help them feel safe, supported and get the most out of the session. Examples include;

- Treating each other with respect
- Not interrupting
- No phones

DO:

Add "be aware of triggers" if not mentioned by participants and explain:

- That talking about mental health can be very personal and sensitive
- That you want everyone to feel free and open to share, but they should consider how it might make others in the group feel.
- If it could be triggering but it is something they would like or feel like they need support with, they should message one of the MHAs who will be able to signpost them to the appropriate person or organisation.

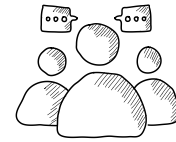
VARIATIONS:

You can create this list by asking people to call out, or anonymously using post-it notes or online using the jamboard



INTRODUCTION

Context of the workshop theme
3 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

- What we mean by 'social' is the way in which we interact with others, the connections we make, and how we feel when making them.
- Our social life and relationships with others can have a positive impact on mental health, but they can also be a source of stress or anxiety.
- Two of the biggest challenges students say they're facing are the fear of being judged, and loneliness. It can be difficult to make friends, but also difficult to navigate those relationships when you do have them.
- Positive relationships can improve confidence and wellbeing. Learning how to cultivate positive relationships and to deal with social pressures can help you to look after your mental health, as well as to create the social life you want.
- Taking your next steps can be a big adjustment. This looks different for everyone but could be living away from home and having to be independent - we may learn a lot about ourselves in the process.



BELONGING

Identity Activity
20 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

DO:

- Hand out a sheet of paper to each person
- Ask them to write down 5 words that represent them. Either descriptive words, or words that represent different roles we play,
 - e.g. Sister, friend, footballer, funny, caring
- Without sharing their words, ask them how it felt to pick them. Was it easy/hard? Was five too few/too many?
- Put everyone in pairs
- In their pairs ask them to read out their five words to each other without explaining why they chose them

ASK:

- The pairs to swap lists and each cut two words from the other's list without consultation – keeping the three words they feel are the most important
- Give lists back to the author

DO:

Bring the whole group back together – each person should have a list of three words down from five

Lead a discussion on how they feel about the remaining words.

Below are some prompt questions. These are not exhaustive and you do not need to cover them all. Feel free to add your own relevant questions and talk about your own relevant experiences.

Prompt questions

- How did it feel to have someone else cross words off?
- Do the three remaining words represent you fully?
- If someone only saw these three things in you, would they have a full picture of you?
- Do you think the three remaining words would be different if your best friend selected them?
- Do you think your different friendship groups would all pick the same words?

ASK:

How does how we are perceived impact our relationships with others? Sometimes we find ourselves pigeonholed or stereotyped to be a certain way, seen as the 'sensible one', the 'funny one', the 'gay one', the 'lad'. When in fact there are multiple facets to our personality and who we are.

SAY:

Identity isn't fixed. There will be aspects of your identity that are constant and some that change as you have new experiences. It is really common to feel a disconnect between our 'home identity' and our 'college identity'. It is common to feel distance from old friends as you change.

This can be challenging. It impacts our sense of belonging. It can also be empowering. At college it may feel like you are creating your own identity as an independent person, often for the first time.

Our identity is part of how we relate to other people and how other people relate to us

If you feel comfortable to, share your own experiences of this from a time when you've 7.

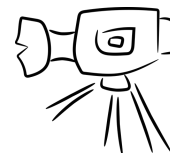
VARIATION:

If delivering online, use a jamboard for this activity.



BELONGING
Video and discussion
20 minutes

OPTIONAL



HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

We are going to watch a video of a young man in his first year at university talking about identity, sense of belonging and connections with others.

DO:

Play the video from [BBC's Normal People](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-56888888) and lead a discussion. LINK: <https://youtu.be/QNBa3HHjnGA>



'You Don't Need To Apologise': Connell's Therapy Session ...

YouTube · BBC Three
27 Jun 2020

Prompts for discussion

- How did that make you feel?
- Were there parts of that that resonated with you?
- Can you see how his sense of belonging and identity is impacting how he feels?
- Why do you think these things impact our mental health?



BREAK
10 minutes



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND PRESSURES
Healthy Relationship Activity
20 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

Connections with people around us are really important in looking after our mental health. Healthy relationships and connections can bring us joy, offer us support and give us a sense of community. Unhealthy relationships may negatively impact our mental health, cause us stress and increase feelings of isolation and anxiety.

DO:

- Assign one side of the room 'healthy' and the other 'unhealthy'
- Read out statements (on the next page) and ask participants to stand in a place in the room to represent whether it is healthy or unhealthy.

DO NOT read out all the statements, there will not be time, but pick a few out that will encourage discussion.

ASK:

A few people to share their reasoning and facilitate a discussion by questioning their choices and using these prompt questions:

- Are there any grey areas?
- Who disagrees?
- Do you think any of these themes are common?
- How difficult is it to push back against social pressure?

SAY:

Close the activity by reading out or saying in your own words:

Healthy relationships are built on balance, mutual respect, understanding, empathy. It can be difficult to, but is ok to let go of relationships in your life that do not have these things or no longer serve you.

ONLINE VARIATION:

Use a jamboard as the 'room', get participants to move a sticky note with their name to either side of the board.

STATEMENTS !

1. If I go to parties without my boyfriend it makes him feel excluded, so now I either don't go or bring him with me. It's easier than having an argument.
2. Sometimes my friends plan things without inviting me. I don't mind.
3. My boyfriend and I know each other's pass codes and can go through each other's phones whenever we want – we've got nothing to hide.
4. I never ask my girlfriend for permission before I agree to doing something with my friends.
5. My friend wants more time just the two of us. At parties she'll pull me away from everyone else for private chats.
6. I lied and told my mates I'm not a virgin, because none of them are and I felt embarrassed.
7. My girlfriend and I fight a lot and she cries a lot. It can't all be that bad though otherwise she'd just leave me.
8. I want to break up with my girlfriend but she owes me some money and I'm worried she wouldn't give it back to me.
9. My friends don't like my hobbies so I don't really do them anymore.
10. I have been missing prayer lately, I don't want to miss out on doing stuff with my friends and they never seem to factor prayer into plans – I don't want to make them feel awkward so I don't mention it.
11. I feel like I have to play down how close I am to my college friends when speaking to my school friends.
12. My friends always make sure places we go have wheelchair access so I don't miss out on anything.
13. I don't actually like drinking or clubbing that much but my flatmates are really into it so we go a few times a week.
14. I'm not good at replying to messages and I hate phone calls, so sometimes I don't get back to my friends for over a week.
15. My mates and I are always getting on it. I can barely remember what we got up to the next day, but we always have such a laugh.
16. My flatmates don't invite me to events with alcohol because I am hindu, they think I won't like it. I can still have a good time without drinking



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND PRESSURES

Social Anxiety
20 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

RESOURCE: Flipchart paper and pens (in person)/Jamboard (online)

SAY:

There are a number of factors that can impact how we build relationships. It is common to have feelings of anxiety around social interactions, especially when in a new setting like college, university or new jobs.

ASK:

If anyone knows what social anxiety is?

SAY:

Social anxiety is characterised by overwhelming anxiety or self-consciousness in ordinary social situations. Some people will experience the symptoms of social anxiety in specific situations, such as public speaking. Where there is a clinical diagnosis of social anxiety any form of social interaction can trigger it.

It is likely that most of us have felt social anxiety at one stage or another, and we will all have our own way of dealing with it.

Global events, such as the Coronavirus pandemic, can mean that we're out of practice when it comes to socialising. This could lead to more anxious feelings around socialising because the way we do it has changed so much. Even if someone considers themselves a sociable person, that doesn't mean it's always easy for them to socialise.

DO:

- Call out the questions for the participants to answer. Some answers have been provided following each question, for you to use to help get the conversation going if needed.
- Ask someone to act as a scribe - writing up the suggestions on flipchart paper (this can be a participant or another MHA)

VARIATIONS:

- Split the group in half and run in two smaller discussion groups

OR

- Write the questions on flipchart paper and stick them around the room, ask participants to go around the room adding answers to each and discuss afterwards. Spend most of the time discussing answers to questions 6 and 7

QUESTIONS



1. Which situations can lead to social anxiety?

- Giving a speech
- Spending 1 on 1 time with a friend
- Going on a date
- Being the centre of attention
- Being asked a question
- Talking on the phone
- Meeting someone new
- Bumping into someone
- Making eye contact
- Going to a party
- Attending a seminar
- Zoom workshops

2. What are the physical reactions to this anxiety?

- Avoiding eye contact
- Sweating
- Blushing
- Shaking
- Not engaging
- Stammering

3. What is the cause of the worry?

- Embarrassing yourself
- Being disliked
- Being rejected
- Being noticed
- Not being knowledgeable
- Not being funny

(Remind them of the stat from the beginning of the workshop about students' greatest challenges - "fear of being judged")

4. What are some 'unhelpful strategies' we might use to cope with social anxiety?

(things we might do to protect ourselves from whatever is worrying us, but aren't necessarily helpful)

- Speaking very little
- Drinking to build confidence
- Avoid asking questions
- Talk excessively to avoid silence
- Rehearse or prepare before socialising
- Exaggerate or lie to feel more impressive
- Using your phone as a distraction – in order to appear busy

5. What are some negative consequences of using these strategies?

- Difficult to make friends
- People do not see the real you
- Only makes you feel better in the short term

6. How would you manage this?

(this is a good learning opportunity where the group can learn from each other and you)

- Questioning the thoughts that contribute to the anxiety can help us to dispel it in our minds
 - What are you afraid will happen?
 - Is the thought based on fact?
 - How would your friend see this situation?
 - What is most likely to happen?
 - How likely is it this fear comes true?
 - If your fear comes true will it still matter in a week/month/year?
- Positive affirmations (saying nice things to ourselves) can improve our self-esteem and therefore reduce anxious feelings
- Accept who you are
- Don't compare yourself with others
- Try breathing exercises (focusing on slower breathing is one of the most fastest and most effective ways to lower stress levels)

7. How would you support others?

(Acknowledge that they might not have experience of social anxiety, and even if they do, it can be hard to recognise when someone else is experiencing it.)

- Be patient
- Accept and adapt to differences – Not everyone likes to socialise in the same way. If you think outside of yourself and your own preferences it can help you to give people space and be supportive of their needs. If you have a friend that doesn't always text you back or is reluctant to come along to social events, it could be because they don't enjoy socializing in the same ways that you do, and that's ok.
- Use activities as a tool for socialising – it can be less daunting to play a video game or do a quiz than it is to just have a conversation.



REFLECTION & CLOSE

Reflection

8 minutes



HOW TO DO IT

DO:

Get everyone to sit in a circle with a piece of paper and pen each.

ASK:

Everyone to write down their biggest concern or worry when it comes to social pressure. Perhaps it is tackling feelings of social anxiety, or making friends, pressure to party, losing touch with friends.

Once written, get everyone to pass their paper to the left and write a tip, piece of advice or a suggestion for that person. Continue until everyone has their paper back.

MHAs should get involved too.



REFLECTION & CLOSE

Close

2 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

DO:

Share the link to the Tips and Signposting Handout and explain that it covers some of the topics we have looked at in the session, and signposts for more information and resources.

DO:

Share the link to the feedback sheet and ask everyone to complete it. The more feedback we have the more we are able to evidence the use and impact of workshops like these, and encourage more institutions to run them.

The link to the feedback survey and a QR code to access it are on the following page.

**Feedback is vital to the success and expansion
of this project.**

<https://linktr.ee/mhfuok?>



ALTERNATIVE ICEBREAKERS



There are suggested icebreakers for each workshop, feel free to swap these out with one of your own, or one of the ideas on this page.

You can add icebreakers into the session to boost energy, after the break can be a good time for this.

High to low

Ask the group organise themselves in order, start off with quick easy ones like height or birthday and then move onto some that involve more conversation, you could even theme them for the workshop you are running.

E.g. for the Academic Pressure Workshop, ask if they thrive under pressure, or prefer more time and preparation to complete an assignment. Ask them to place themselves in order from Less Pressure to Most Pressure.

Desert island

Ask the group what three items you would bring on a deserted island. Then ask them which three items they would bring on an Island paradise. Are they similar or drastically different?

Word Association

Ask everyone in the group to say the first thing that comes to mind when asked the word "health" and again with "wellbeing". Can start off with a less obvious word to encourage creativity e.g. "Tasty"

Visualisation

- If your day/ week was a film/ book/ song, which would it be and why?
- If you or your day/week/life were an animal/ character/ condiment/ meal etc, what would you be and why?

Lucky dip

Everyone in the group has to write out a random word, they then muddle the words up and pick one out at random. They then have to speak about this topic for 30 seconds to one minute. Can be used to represent how social situations might make it difficult for someone to communicate.



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Mental Health Foundation
London. Cardiff. Glasgow.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk
+44(0)20 7803 1100

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