

WBS

Spotlight on Wellbeing: Settling Into a New University

Sarah Ashworth

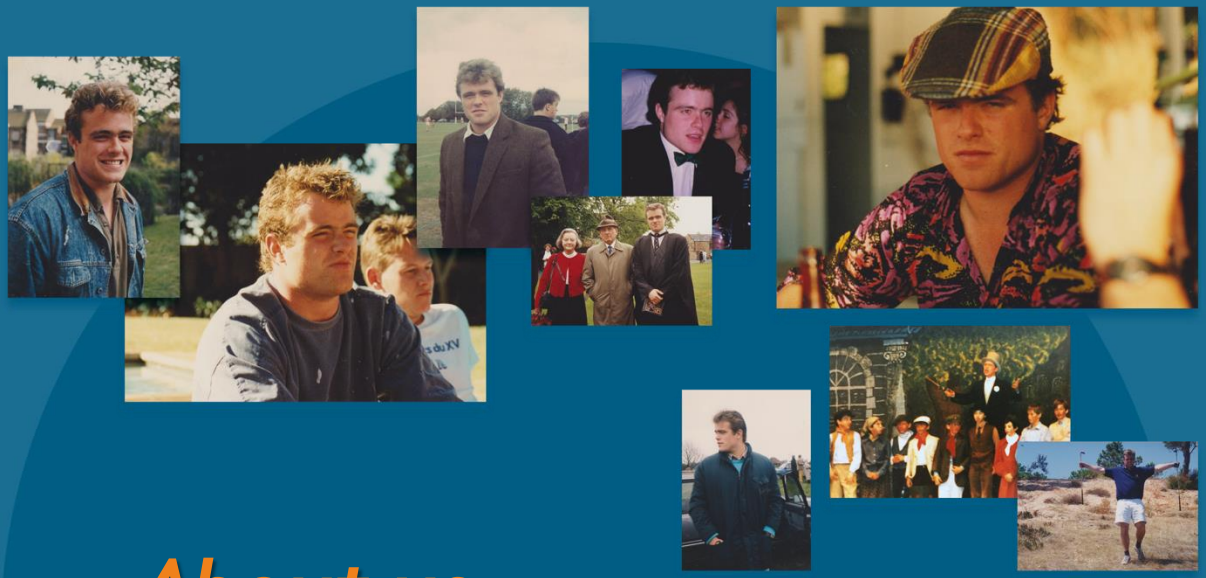
sarah.ashworth@charliewaller.org

www.charliewaller.org

Safety first

- Sensitive issues, including suicide, may be discussed
- Monitor your own wellbeing
- Know where to access support





About us

Charlie Waller was a strong, funny, popular, good-looking and kind young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie took his own life. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded The Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around depression, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.

We're talking mental health

Our vision

A world where people understand and talk openly about mental health, where young people and those who support them are equipped to maintain and enhance their mental health and wellbeing, and have the confidence to seek help when they need it.

Evidence based training



Positive

We take a positive approach to mental health. We focus on prevention and early intervention, and recognise the importance of offering hope.



Proven

Our consultancy, training and resources are all based on sound clinical evidence.



Practical

We give people practical strategies and tools to care for their mental health, and to support others in doing so.

About me

Charlie Waller Trust

Since 2019

University of Warwick

University of Oxford

Objectives for the session

Define

Mental health

Challenges

Discuss

Settling In!

Sensitivity

Spotting the signs

Do

Practical strategies

Support at Warwick

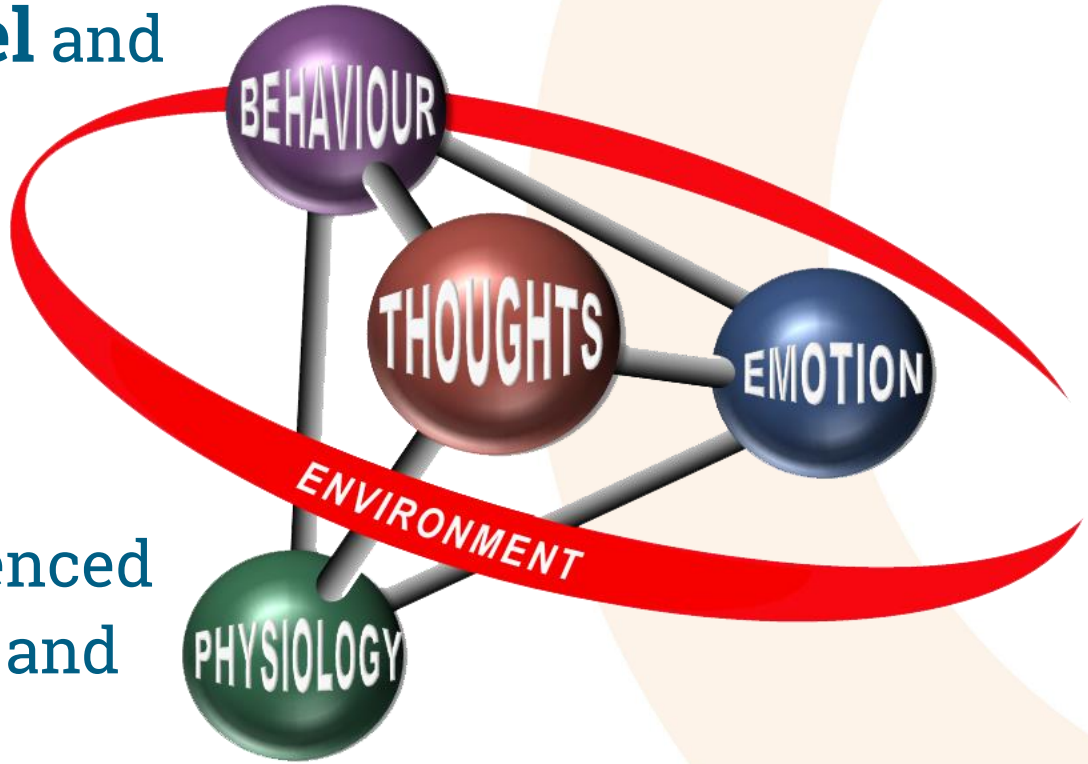
What is…



…'mental health'?

What is 'Mental Health'?

Mental health encompasses all types of health relating to the way we **think**, **feel** and **behave**.



Mental health is influenced by our **environment** and **physiology**.

What is 'Mental Health'?

*'A state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the **normal** stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'*

(World Health Organisation, 2020)



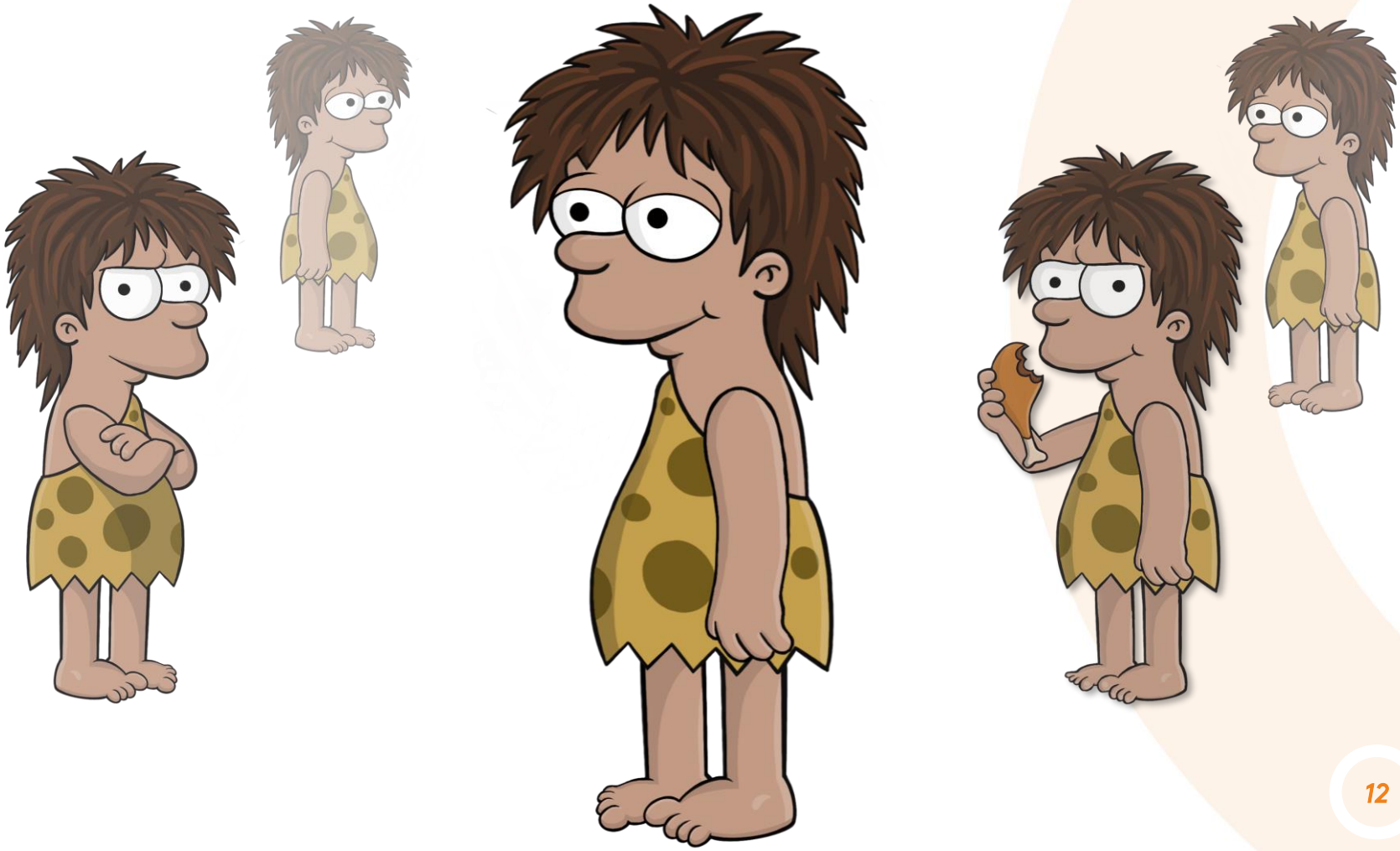
'Stress' 10,000 years ago...

Basic needs – basic threats...



10,000 years ago

Basic needs...



10,000 years ago

Basic needs...



10,000 years ago...

Basic threats...





10,000 years ago...

Basic threats...





‘Normal’ In 2025…

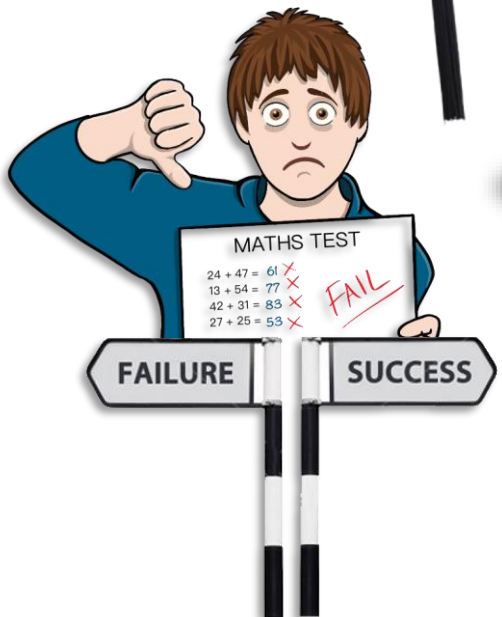
Complex ‘needs’













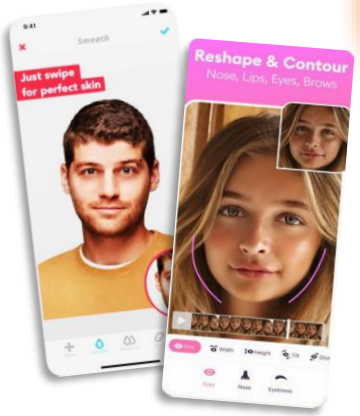


‘Normal’ In 2025…

Complex ‘threats’





















The Evolution of Stress

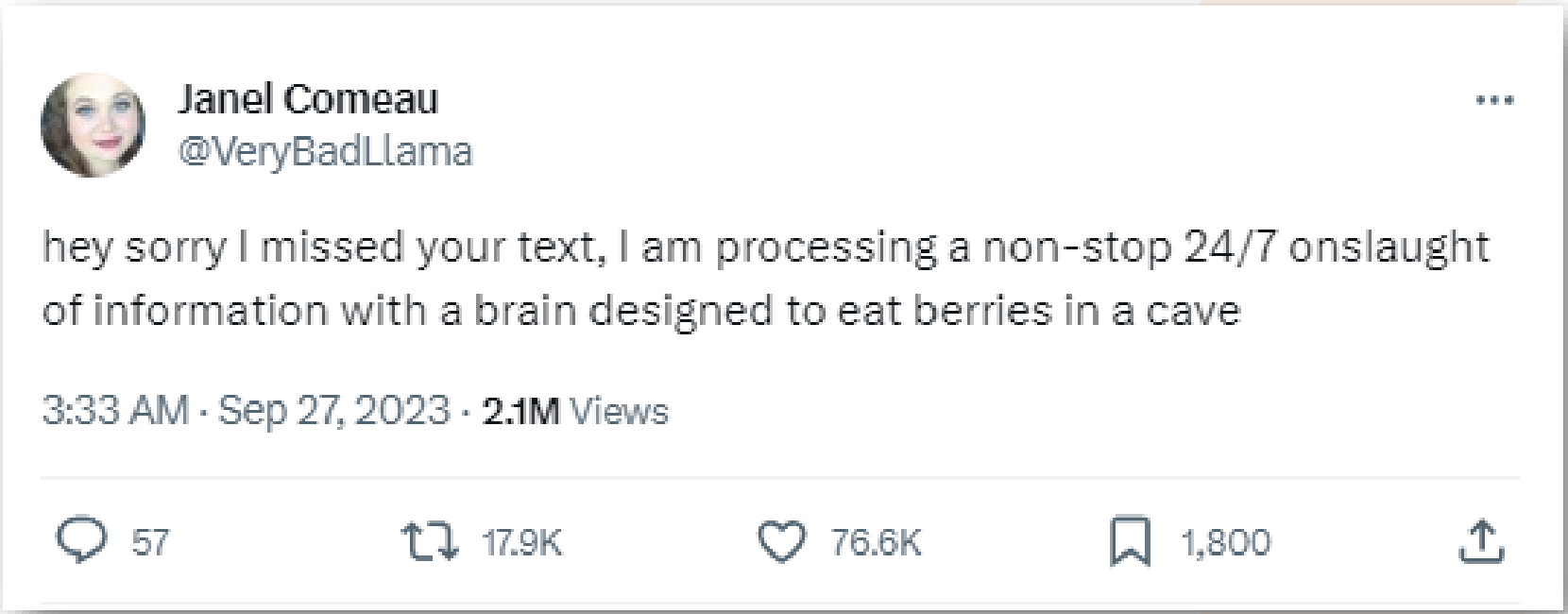






No escape!

Modern technology



Settling In

- Leaving home
- Building new relationships
- Academic adjustment
- Managing independence
- Finding your identity
- Managing expectations
- Coping with uncertainty and change
- Comparing yourself with others
- Looking after your wellbeing
- Knowing when and how to seek help
- Finding your feet



Sensory Processing Sensitivity

‘Highly Sensitive Person’
(Aron, 1999)

- Genetically determined
- Not a ‘disorder’!

D O E S

Depth of processing

Overstimulation

Emotional reactivity & **E**mpathy

Sensing the subtle



Aron, E. (1996) The Highly Sensitive Person. Harper Collins.

Dandelions, Tulips and Orchids

(Lionetti et al., 2018)







29% 40% 31%

Low sensory processing sensitivity

High sensory processing sensitivity

Adolescence

The adolescent brain undergoes significant changes until ~25 years:

- Synaptic pruning
- Prefrontal cortex development
- Reward sensitivity
- Emotional intensity
- Peer influence
- Identity formation
- Blain plasticity

(Blakemore, 2018)



Blakemore, S. (2018) Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain. Penguin.

Signs of Distress

- **S**tudy
- **T**emperament
- **R**eactions
- **E**nergy/Eating
- **S**leep
- **S**elf-Harm/Suicidality

(Ashworth, 2023)



Self...



...care

CLANGERS (Hammond, 2018)

Connect

Learn

Active

Notice

Give

Eat Well

Relax

Sleep

CLANGERS

Connect



CLANGERS

CLANGERS

Learn







CLANGERS

CLANGERS

Active

What's the best form of activity?

1. Something you **can** do
2. Something you **will** do
3. Something you **enjoy**



CLANGERS

Notice





CLANGERS

Give



CLANGERS

Eat well

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Omega 3 fatty acids
- Whole grains
- Lean proteins
- Limit highly processed and sugary foods
- Reduce caffeine intake
- Consume probiotic foods
- Practice mindful eating
- Consult a qualified healthcare professional to discuss individual needs



CLANGERS

Relax







CLANGERS

CLANGERS

Sleep

- Keep to a regular sleep schedule
- Sufficient exposure to daylight
- Avoid coffee later in the day
- Keeping the bedroom cool and decluttered
- Have a wind down routine…
  - Take a warm bath before bed
  - Relax before bed
  - Avoid electronic devices for 90 minutes before bed



Managing...



...overwhelm!

Motivation

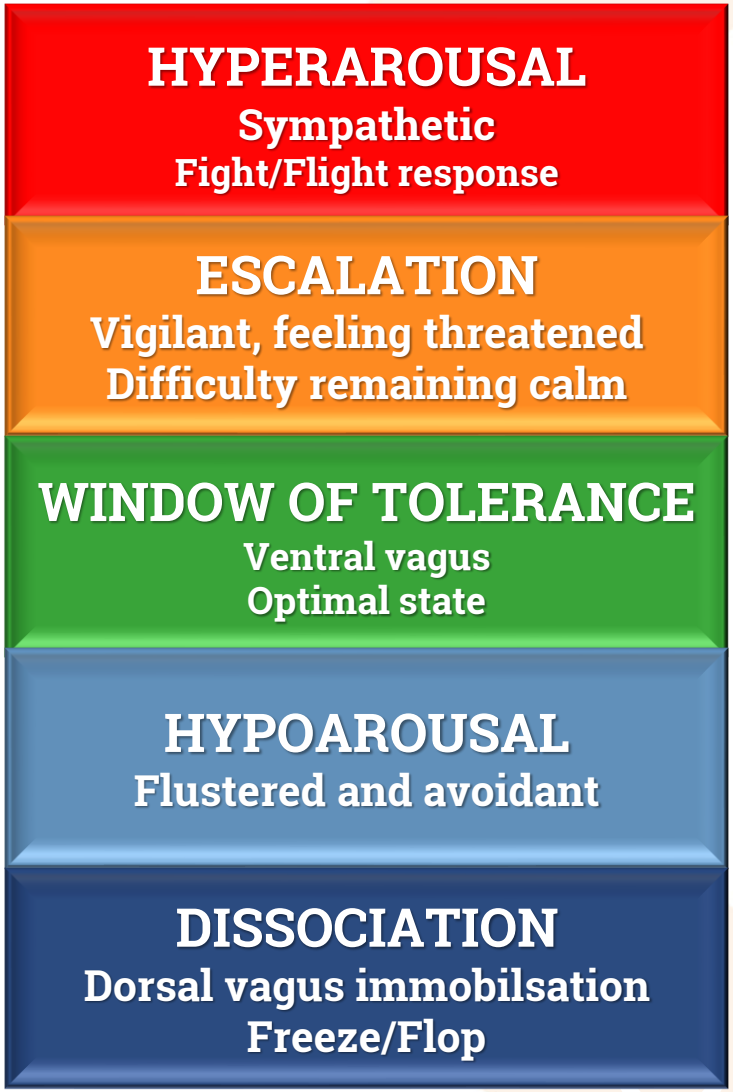
ACTIVITY	PLEASURE 0-10	MASTERY 0-10	SOCIAL 0-10	EXERCISE 0-10
Spending three hours on social media	2	0	3	0
Tidying my workspace	1	8	0	0
Going to the gym	5	6	2	8
Bingewatching something on Netflix	8	1	0	0
Spending an hour in an online support group	7	6	8	0
Scrolling through the news	1	1	0	0

Window of Tolerance
(Dan Siegel)

Window of tolerance:
- Emotions can be tolerated
- Calm, engaged, ready to learn
- Information processed and integrated

Hyperarousal:
- Increased sensations
- Emotional reactivity – anxious, angry
- Intrusive imagery
- Flashbacks
- Disorganised cognitive processing

Hypoarousal:
- Relative absence of sensation
- Emotional numbing
- Reduced physical movement
- Lethargy
- Disabled cognitive processing



Siegel, D. (1999). The Developing Mind. New York: Guilford Press.

Grounding

- Grounding can help you connect to the present moment and your surroundings, allowing you to feel more centred, and calm.
- This can be particularly helpful during times of stress, anxiety, or overwhelm.
- Grounding exercises include:
  - Sensory awareness
  - Breathing exercises
  - Exercises to stimulate the vagus nerve
  - Therapeutic writing
  - Forest bathing



Sensory awareness

Wherever you are, spend a few minutes focussing your attention on the following:

5 things you see...

4 things you can touch...

3 things you hear...

2 things you can smell...

1 thing you can taste...



Cyclic sighing

- A randomised controlled study of three different daily 5-minute breath work exercises was compared with an equivalent period of mindfulness meditation over 1 month.
- Cyclic sighing was found to produce greater improvement in mood and reduction in respiratory rate compared with mindfulness meditation.
- Daily 5-min cyclic sighing has promise as an effective stress management exercise. **(Balban et al., 2023)**



Bee breathing

- Practising Bhramari Pranayama (Bhr.P, also known as Bee Breath) for 15 minutes for 20 days was associated with a significant improvement in mental health scores in a sample of 50 students.
(Srivastava et al., 2017)
- A review of the evidence suggests that Bhr.P may promote parasympathetic dominance.
(Kuppusamy et al., 2018)
- 20 minutes of Bhr.P had a positive impact on psychological health as well as quality of sleep in a sample of 42 covid-19 patients during home isolation.
(Jagadeesan et al., 2022)
- Results need to be confirmed by randomised controlled trials.



Stimulate your vagus nerve

- Cold exposure (ice diving)
- Singing/chanting
- Yoga/Meditation/ Tai-chi
- Positive thoughts
- Social connection
- Deep and slow breathing
- Laughter
- Probiotics
- Exercise
- Massage

(**Cohen, 2021**)



Butterfly Hug

- The **Butterfly Hug (BH)** originated in response to the survivors of Hurricane Pauline in Acapulco, Mexico in 1998 and is practiced by clinicians working with survivors of man-made and natural disasters.
- BH is a self-administered Bilateral Stimulation method which may support desensitization and self-soothing.
  (Artigas and Jarero, 2014)



Butterfly Hug

1. Place the right hand on the left upper arm and the left hand in the right upper arm OR place the hands on your chest, as shown
2. Alternate the movement of each hand, tapping on one arm or side of the chest, then the other
3. Breathe slowly and deeply and be aware of thoughts and feelings



Get writing...

- Writing down the things that are contributing to feelings of overwhelm can be an important first step in managing them.
- Expressive writing confers small but significant improvements in mild-to-moderate psychological distress. **(Wilhelm & Crawford, 2020)**



Wilhelm, K., & Crawford, J. (2020). Expressive writing and stress-related disorders. In K. L. Harkness & E. P. Hayden (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Stress and Mental Health (pp. 705–724). Oxford University Press.

If you go down to the woods...

Research suggests that forest bathing, or Shinrin-yoku in Japanese, can have a beneficial impact:

- Forest bathing has a beneficial impact on human immune function due to the inhalation of volatile substances called phytoncides released by trees. **(Li, 2010)**
- Forest bathing may significantly improve physical and psychological health and overall quality of life. **(Wen et al., 2019; Antonelli et al., 2021)**
- Forest bathing can significantly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. **(Siah et al., 2023)**



What do you say when...



...you talk to yourself?

Self-compassion

"Self-compassion refers to how we relate to ourselves in instances of perceived failure, inadequacy, or personal suffering."

Self-compassion involves providing oneself with encouragement and comfort while going through difficult or painful experiences, and includes the following:

- Increased self-kindness
- Common humanity
- Mindfulness
- Reduced self-judgement
- Reduced isolation
- Reduced overidentification

(Neff, 2023)



Self compassion

Self-compassion break:

- Acknowledge your suffering
- Recognise that suffering is a common human experience
- Offer yourself kindness and understanding

CHAPTER 4

Self-Compassion and ACT

Kristin Neff
University of Texas at Austin

Dennis Tirch
Weill-Cornell Medical College,
American Institute for Cognitive Therapy

Functional Beliefs	√
Mindfulness and Awareness	√
Perspective Taking	√
Values	
Experiential Acceptance	√
Behavioral Control	
Cognitive Skill	

One of the central goals of therapy is to relieve suffering—to help clients escape the dark hole of self-loathing, anxiety, and depression they often find themselves in. But what's the best way to achieve this goal? Approaches such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999) argue

Developing self-compassion

- Practice mindfulness
- Notice patterns of self-castigation
- Treat yourself with the same understanding and kindness that you would a dear friend
- Set realistic expectations: it takes time and effort!
- Practice self-forgiveness
- Use positive affirmations
- See failure as an opportunity for growth



Challenging negative self-talk: STOPP!

- **S**top
- **T**ake a breath
- **O**bserve
  - What am I thinking?
  - What am I reacting to?
  - What am I feeling in my body?
- **P**ull Back
  - Perspective, is this fact or opinion?
  - How might someone else see this?
- **P**ractice what works
  - What's the best thing for me/others in this situation?



Support at WBS

wbs

About Study Life at WBS Research Executive Education Collaborate News Blogs Events Alumni

LIFE AT WBS | STUDENT EXPERIENCES | LOCATION | INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS | ACCOMMODATION | CAMPUS LIFE | WHAT'S NEARBY | STUDENT SUPPORT



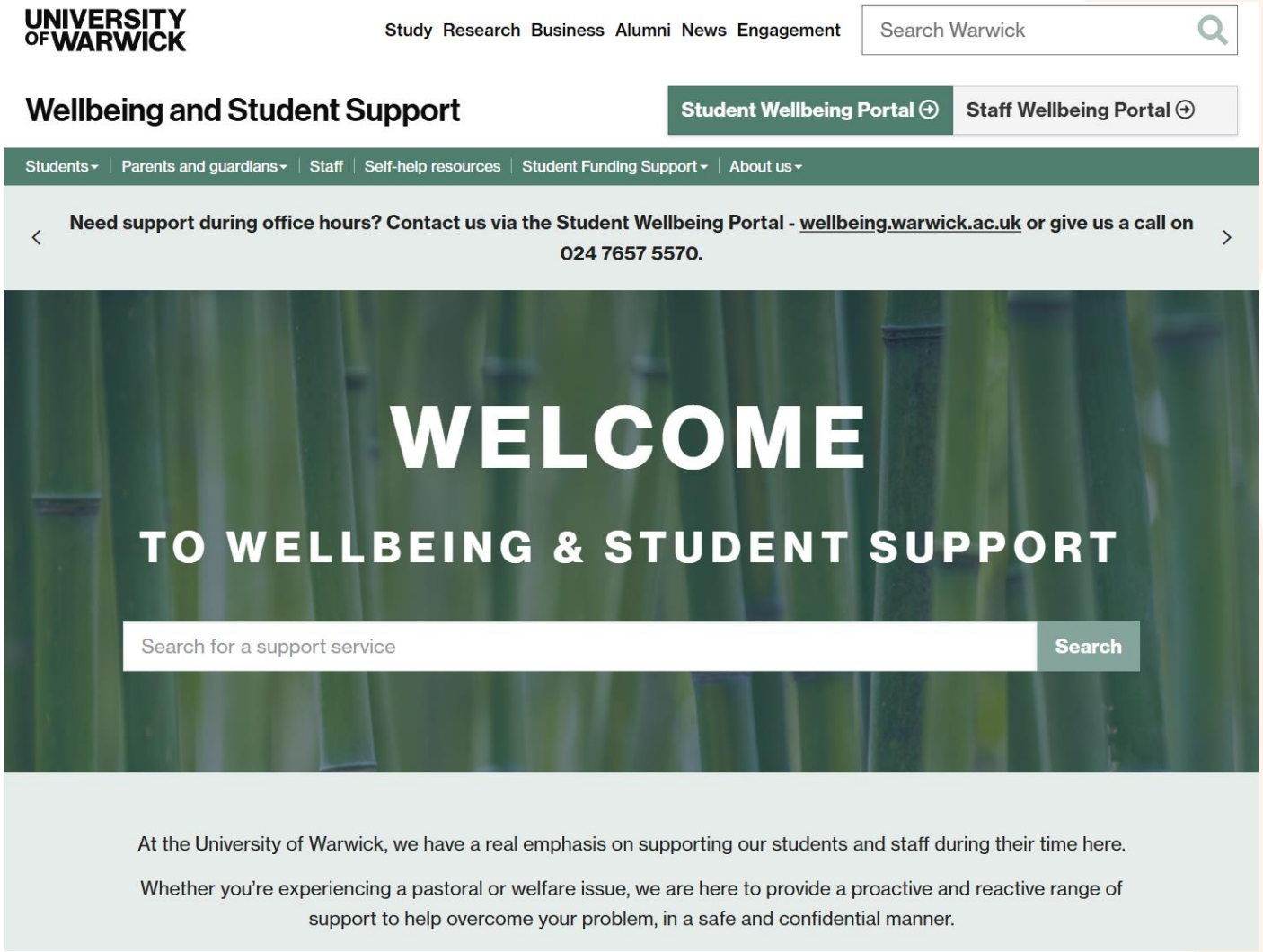
Student support

At the forefront of everything we do are our students. We are here to support and motivate you to achieve your ambitions. The University's Wellbeing Support Services team are on hand to guide you in all aspects of your wellbeing.

LEARN MORE →

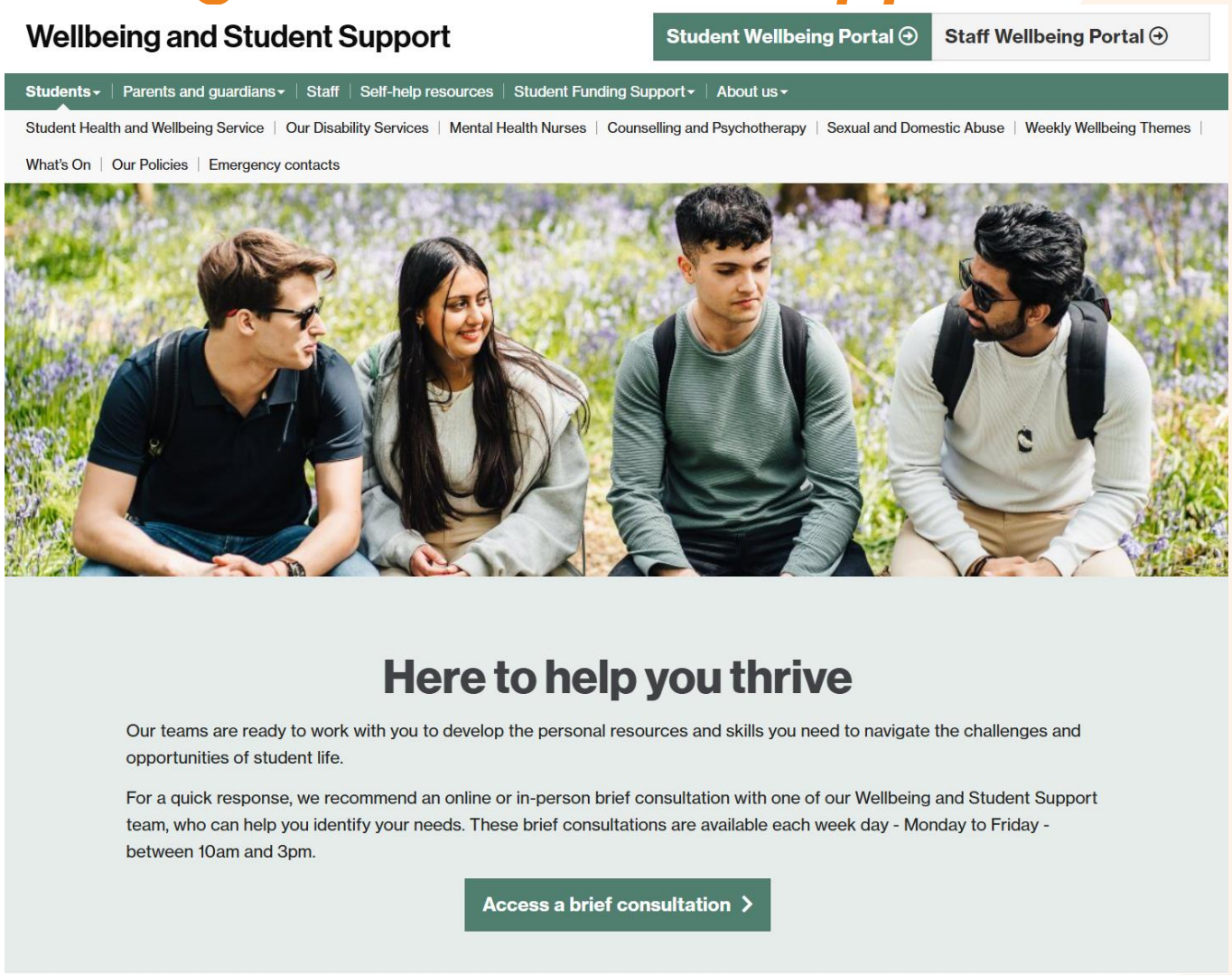
https://www.wbs.ac.uk/life-at-wbs/#student-support

Wellbeing and Student Support



https://warwick.ac.uk/services/wss

Wellbeing and Student Support



https://warwick.ac.uk/services/wss/students


What one action
will you take?

Thank you for listening

The Charlie Waller Trust

First Floor • 23 Kingfisher Court
Newbury • Berkshire RG14 5SJ

01635 869754 • hello@charliewaller.org

www.charliewaller.org

Registered charity number 1109984

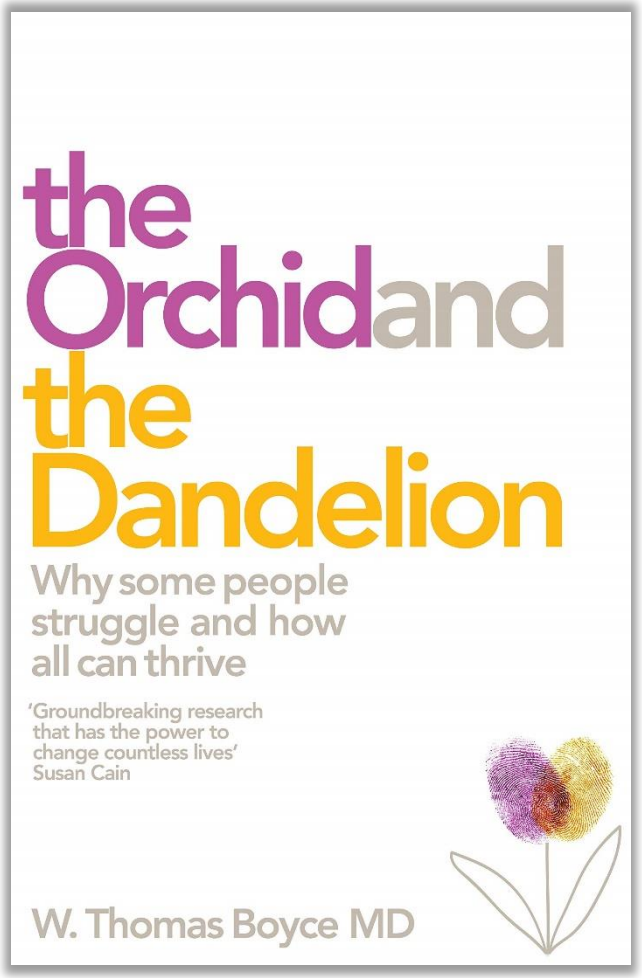
Training feedback

Feedback from participants on our training is a key component in evaluating the effectiveness of and in making improvements to our training and resources.

We would be very grateful if you would complete this short survey based on the training you have received today.

www.charliewaller.org/what-we-offer/training-feedback

Resources

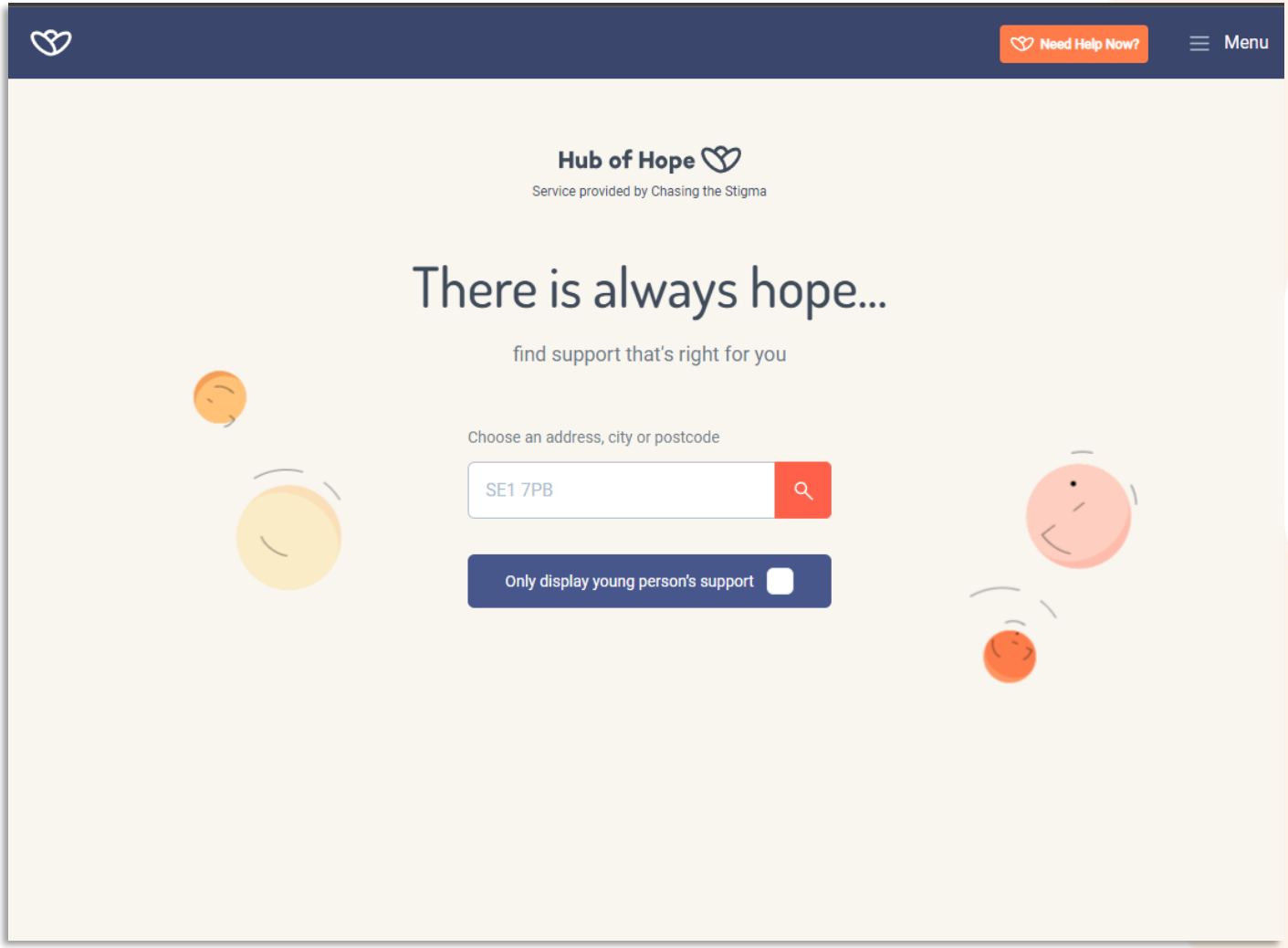




[The Orchid and the Dandelion | Thomas Boyce | TEDxPaloAlto - YouTube]

Boyce, W.T. (2018) The Orchid and the Dandelion: why some people struggle and how all can thrive. Basingstoke: Pan Macmillan.

Resources



www.hubofhope.co.uk

Please consider donating to help us continue our support

Charlie Waller



To donate £10 text

CWT
to **70085**



To donate online visit

charliewaller.org
/donate

Registered charity number 1109984



Follow us

Charlie Waller Trust
@charliewalleruk



Fundraise for us

Fundraising for us not only brings in money to help us continue our work – it also raises mental health awareness and what people can do to take care of their wellbeing.

Find out more
www.charliewaller.org/get-involved



Students Against Depression

Our Students Against Depression website is full of clinically based self-help information and activities for students experiencing depression, anxiety and other common mental health problems.

Find out more
www.studentsagainstdepression.org