

TISUK proudly presents:

# What every teenager needs to know about emotions, relationships and mental health

A film performed by teenagers for teenagers

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# TISUK's film: *What Every Teenager Needs to Know about Emotions, Relationships and Mental Health*, heralds a much needed, radical re-think in how mental health is taught in secondary schools.

This is in order to alleviate the distress of young people, and markedly reduce both CAMHS waiting lists and public health costs.

Standard manualised mental health lessons bought in by schools, can support teenagers who need better strategies to help them manage stress, emotionally regulate, reframe negative thinking patterns or understand the perils of negative modes of self-help e.g. turning to drink to manage grief. But such lessons were never intended to address the distress of teenagers suffering from ongoing panic attacks, phobias, compulsive rituals, intrusive thoughts, depression, social anxiety, not wanting to live anymore, self-harm or complex post-traumatic stress. And yet there are millions of teenagers living difficult lives who are suffering in these ways.

And referring all the teenagers in distress to CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) isn't the answer either, because of the shocking statistics:

- Last year, 1.2 million referrals were made to CAMHS.
- Nearly 40,000 children experienced a wait of over 2 years. Almost 40% had their referral closed before accessing support (referral closed before second contact)<sup>1</sup>
- A quarter of young people try to take their own lives whilst waiting for NHS treatment.<sup>2</sup>
- In the UK, suicide is the main cause of death in young people under the age of 35. Five teenagers take their own life every day (Papyrus 2024).

So, we believe that there is a missing middle step between the current PSHE mental health resources and referral to CAMHS.



Along with support from school counsellors and emotionally available adults (for teenagers lucky enough to have one) this film provides part of that vital middle step to support teenagers with mild to moderate mental health symptoms. Here's how:

- The film tackles the causes of mental health problems head on. It highlights the intense emotional pain that many teenagers experience.
- The film offers very moving and relatable true stories of pain to recovery – filling a critical gap in how mental health is addressed in many schools.
- The film's honest portrayal of mental health struggles goes way beyond surface-level, cognitively based discussions, to explore how untold stories of distress can result in mental health problems.
- The film provides valuable insights that teenagers find incredibly useful on the most common mental health problems and how to heal (cutting-edge neuroscience and psychological research).

- The film needs to be facilitated by a therapeutically qualified practitioner (e.g. school counsellor) who knows how to respond to teenagers who ask for help. This can also be a TISUK graduate (we are in over 6000 schools nationwide).
- The practitioner can also run therapeutic groups for those who need it.
- The Government Green Paper 2017 states, "There is evidence that appropriately trained and supported staff such as teachers... teaching assistants can achieve results comparable to those achieved by trained therapists in delivering a number of interventions addressing mild to moderate mental health problems (e.g. anxiety, conduct disorder, substance use disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder)"<sup>3</sup>

Refs: 1. Children's mental health services 2022-23 (2023). March 2024. London, The Children's Commissioner Report. 2. Young Minds. End the Wait Campaign (2022) 3. Government Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision (December 2017)

**“There is evidence that appropriately-trained and supported staff such as teachers, school nurses, counsellors, and teaching assistants can achieve results comparable to those achieved by trained therapists in delivering a number of interventions addressing mild to moderate mental health problems (such as anxiety, conduct disorder, substance use disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder).”**

Government Green Paper, ‘Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision’ (December 2017)

**Massive Resource**

**Emotionally available community workers and school staff with training in core therapeutic skills**

**For many cyp suffering from mild to moderate mental health problems, schools can provide the missing step on the ladder, whilst still referring those with severe problems on to CAMHS.**




**Refs:** 1. Children’s mental health services 2022-23, March 2024. London, The Children’s Commissioner Report. Young Minds. End the Wait Campaign 2022.  
2, Duncan, C, Rayment B, Kenrick J, Cooper M (2018) Counselling for young people and young adults in the voluntary and community sector: An overview of the demographic profile of clients and outcomes Psychology and Psychotherapy Theory Research and Practice the British Psychological society

- It **can’t** solely be the teachers: over-stretched and many aren’t qualified to work therapeutically and don’t want this work.
- It **can’t** solely be the school counsellors. With a million referrals to CAMHS, they can only see a few children a week.
- It **can** be a film on mental health such as TISUK’s film, written by top psychotherapists performed by teenagers that gives in depth knowledge about the causes of mental health problems, what’s happening in brain/mind when you suffer from phobias, panic attacks, depression, social anxiety, self-loathing etc., and then not just managing the symptoms but how to heal. This, coupled with moving real-life stories of pain to recovery (all debriefed by qualified therapeutic practitioners; TISUK have trained thousands).
- It **can** be therapeutic groups for teenagers in school/community who, after watching the film, want to talk in confidence. Evidence shows such groups can be truly healing.<sup>2</sup>
- It **should** be training for all school/community staff in active listening and empathic responding and as many emotionally available adults as possible.

# A selection of key messages for teenagers on being human

Painful life experiences you've not processed, don't just sit nicely and quietly in the corner of your mind.

On a daily basis, they can get into your thoughts, emotions, behaviour, ability to learn, in ways that can make your life really difficult.



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**Teenagers with broken hearts**

Sitting in classrooms...  
...surviving not learning.



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**'Don't ask why the addiction, ask why the pain. To understand people's pain, you have to understand their lives. In other words, addiction is a normal response to trauma.'**

Gabor Maté and Daniel Maté



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Ref: Maté and Maté (2024) The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture, Vermilion.

**Trying not to feel emotional pain causes emotional pain**



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**Difficult and painful things happen to everyone but only turn into mental health problems when "you've experienced your mind as being alone."**

(adapted Peter Fonagy BBC Radio 4 The Life Scientific 29 January 2020)



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**"Every thoughtful person knows that self-understanding isn't something you get from the drive-thru"**

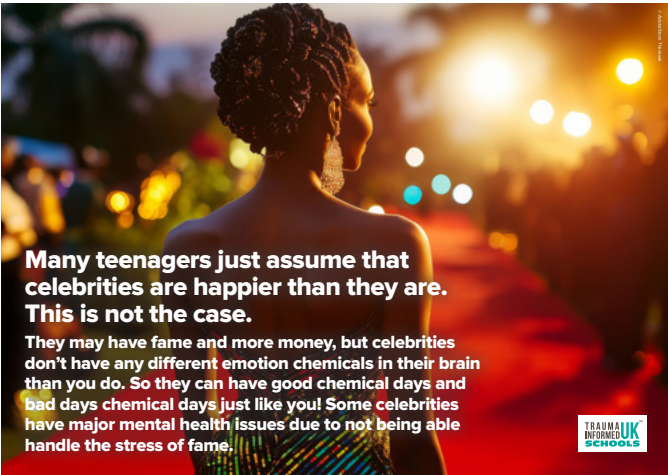
Jonathan Shedler

Cited by Oliver Burkeman Therapy wars: the revenge of Freud The Guardian Jan 7 2016



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CCMH THE CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH



**Many teenagers just assume that celebrities are happier than they are. This is not the case.**

They may have fame and more money, but celebrities don't have any different emotion chemicals in their brain than you do. So they can have good chemical days and bad days chemical days just like you! Some celebrities have major mental health issues due to not being able to handle the stress of fame.

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**For teenagers, intensely painful emotions are huge hormonal forces**

Don't let them smash you against the rocks. Find a trusted adult to talk to...  
...and ride those storms.

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**'You've got to feel it to heal it.'**

Professor Leslie Greenberg,  
Founder of Emotion Focused Therapy

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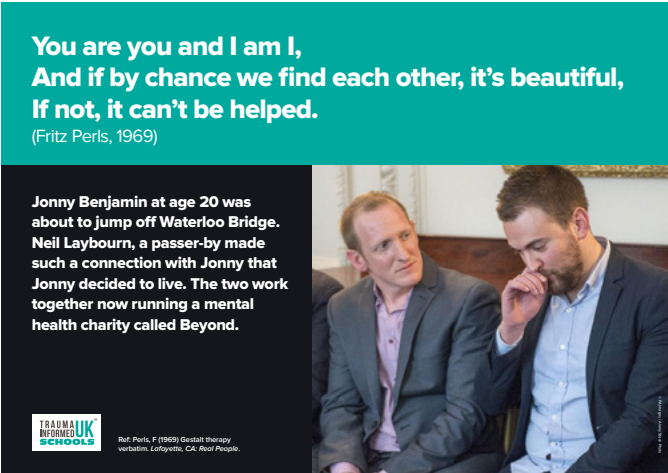


**Supporters of the psychiatric diagnosis approach are quick to say, 'But we don't have any valid alternatives'. This is simply not true.**

**The alternative is to hear people's stories.**

Lucy Johnstone (2014)  
*A Straight Talking Introduction to Psychiatric Diagnosis*

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**You are you and I am I,  
And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful,  
If not, it can't be helped.**

(Fritz Perls, 1969)

Jonny Benjamin at age 20 was about to jump off Waterloo Bridge. Neil Laybourn, a passer-by made such a connection with Jonny that Jonny decided to live. The two work together now running a mental health charity called Beyond.

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Ref: Perls, F (1969) Gestalt therapy  
verbatim. Lofayette, CA: Roof People.



**OXYTOCIN: "We have this wonderful healing substance inside us and need only to learn the many ways we can draw upon it."**

Kerstin Ulnas-Moberg Neuroscientist: major research in oxytocin

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**Research shows that co-operative venture gives your brain as big a hit of dopamine as taking cocaine**

Ref: The neural substrates of reward processing in humans: the modern role of fMRI. McClure SM, York MK, Montague PR. Neuroscientist. 2004 Jun;10(3):260-8.

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Trauma Recovery UK  
Specialist Support for Schools

**“Our positive arousal chemicals (opioids and oxytocin) lie like Sleeping Beauty waiting for [an emotionally available other] to wake them up.” (Panksepp 2015)**

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# What to do with the agony of ongoing emotional pain?

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**It can kill you**

- Self-harm
- Drink
- Drugs
- Controlled eating

**Self-help**  
to change neurochemical state

**It will heal you**

- Collaborative sense making
- Your story met with empathy and compassion
- Help to name your pain
- Help to grieve what's happened

**Seeking help**  
(from therapeutic relationship)  
to change neurochemical state

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## Key credentials

- TISUK is a registered community interest company (social work) working in association with the Centre for Child Mental Health: President Sir Richard Bowlby.
- Over 5000 schools, colleges, early years settings and community settings, have received training from TISUK including: Whole school training, Senior Leads Training, Diploma (Trauma Informed Practitioner training), e-learning e.g. Supporting the Return to School, Working with Trauma in Early Years Settings, Whole School Cultural Shift to a Trauma Informed Culture, Working with Vulnerable Teenagers in Schools.
- TISUK has delivered return to school training in the Covid 19 crisis to over 20,000 staff in school and community organisations across the UK and Ireland, including members of the National Education Union
- TISUK has delivered training at whole school and Diploma level in all of the 22 local authorities across Wales. (bilingual materials and training Welsh language trainers).
- TISUK practitioners work in a variety of settings and organisations including mainstream schools, special schools, alternative provision, secure children's homes, youth offending institutions, community organisations, youth centres, local authorities, support services and many more.

## Recognition by government bodies and academic institutions

- TISUK is an approved provider for DfE funded Senior Mental Health Lead Training. TISUK's training is highlighted in the DfE Advice to Schools: Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools DfE-00327-2018 as supporting and promoting positive mental health.
- TISUK is currently undertaking randomised controlled trial co-funded by the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund researching trauma informed practice and its impact on youth violence. 100 schools across England are taking part in the project running from October 2023 – March 2025. The evaluation will consider the impact of Trauma Informed Practice on young people's behaviour and wellbeing. YEF will then use this knowledge to scale up

effective programmes, spread good practice and guide decision makers on which services or approaches are most likely to keep children and young people safe.

- TISUK has a University of East London validated course entitled Certificate in Trauma and Mental Health Informed Schools and Communities (Level 5) and Diploma course entitled Trauma and Mental Health in Schools and Communities (Practitioner status).
- Sheffield Hallam & Hull University includes a compulsory module of TISUK's training in every level and age phase of their initial teaching education. (Over 1000 trainee teachers have received the training). Professor Mark Boylan (Sheffield Hallam University) is presently working in partnership with TISUK to standardise and publish their key assessment tools.

## National work: schools, families, health communities, youth justice

- TISUK offer trainings for community based workers and foster carers in trauma informed practice and therapeutic skills
- TISUK offer advanced training in those who work with vulnerable parents and families
- TISUK has delivered webinar-based training to schools, early years providers, health and community settings across the UK, including county/borough wide subscriptions in Cornwall, Lambeth, South Yorkshire and across Wales
- TISUK has delivered webinar training on Trauma in the Early years: Prevention and Intervention, to over 1500 Early years settings across South Yorkshire and 100 in Lambeth
- TISUK have worked with education teams in two Youth Offending Institutions to embed a trauma informed approach within each department, with the aim to also train the wider prison staff.
- TISUK offer support for schools and settings in times of crisis. For example, offering support to students, staff and parents after the tragedy of suicide.
- TISUK deliver training to CAMHS based practitioners in North Wales and beyond

## Key credentials *continued*

### Evidence base and results

- TISUK trainings are informed by and adapted from the key components of whole school cultural change as set out by the Evidence-Based Practice Unit, Manchester University/ Anna Freud Centre, (Demkowicz and Humphreys 2019). These components comprise of mental health approaches to teaching and learning; pupil/ student voice; staff and senior lead development; health and wellbeing; online assessment tool to ascertain mental health needs and provide a measurable evidence-base of impact; training key members of staff to support vulnerable children through therapeutic conversations; working with parents to support mentally healthy cultures at home.
- As a result of our trainings, which were created in response to the major cutbacks in CAMHS, we have been thrilled to see so many schools willingly pick up the mental health baton, resulting in fewer exclusions, a reduction in staff stress-related illness and an increase in pupil attendance, attainment and in staff retention. We therefore fully endorse the 2017 Government Green Paper on Children's Mental Health Provision in stating that, 'There is evidence that appropriately trained and supported staff... teachers... teaching assistants can achieve results comparable to those achieved by trained therapists in delivering a number of interventions addressing mild to moderate mental health problems.' That said, our trained staff recognise limits of competence and know when to refer on and to whom.
- TISUK's trainings are run by experts in both child psychology and in education. All the practical evidence-based interventions are informed by over 1000 peer reviewed research studies from medicine, psychology, neuroscience, education and forensic psychiatry.
- TISUK has an extensive group of eminent consultants and advisors. Several of these have lived experience, and provide expert advice on how schools and communities can work to prevent gang membership, violence, homelessness, prostitution, drug and alcohol addiction.
- TISUK has an awards scheme for those schools who wish to be formally assessed for mentally healthy and trauma informed school status.
- For the equivalent of just one Pupil Premium Plus grant, TISUK can provide a menu of training options (e.g. Whole school/Senior Leads training/Practitioner Diploma) to support a whole school understanding of mental health informed practices, all designed to benefit everyone in your school (staff and pupils), and directly attributable to the PP+ allocation/spend. Interventions are all practically based, time preserving and cost effective.

### International work

- TISUK has delivered introductory Trauma Informed Schools training across West Africa, to school counsellors based in international schools.
- TISUK has supported and delivered trauma informed training to Domus Solis & Gravitas Schola who evacuated a whole school community of 300 children, teachers and families from Kharkiv, Ukraine to Vilnius, Lithuania. The school has since been joined by a further 150 children from across Ukraine.
- TISUK has worked in association with the Trauma Release and Wellness Centre, to deliver whole staff and senior lead training to schools in Pakistan.
- Delivered Diploma training for members of the Classic Health Initiatives Uganda team and will continue to provide fully funded places for further team members.