

School based mental health promotion: key issues and controversies

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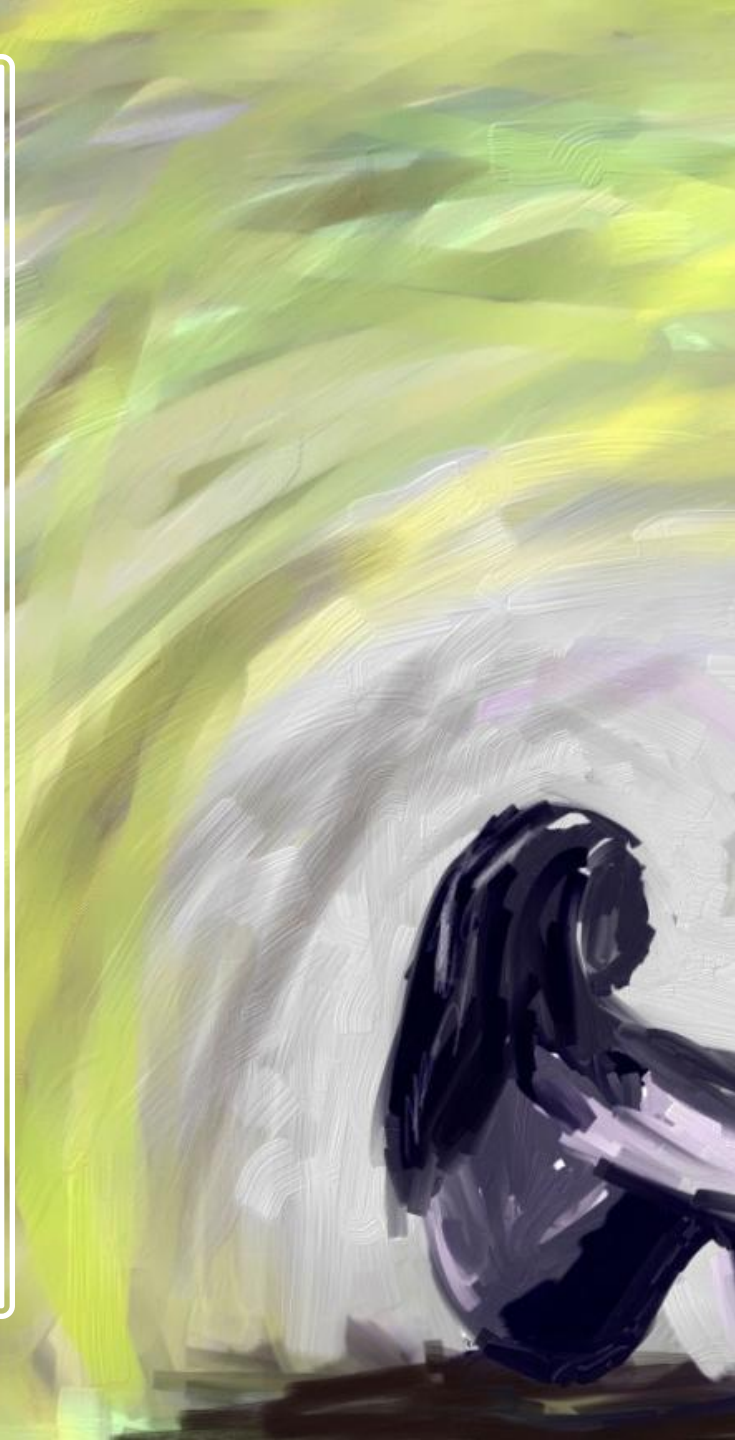


Overview

- Review of state-of-the-art in school-based wellbeing/mental health promotion
 - Characteristics of successful initiatives
 - Barriers and Facilitators
- Debates and controversies:
 - How should we conceptualise mental health?
 - What is the role of schools in responding to the determinants of mental distress?
 - How can we ensure mental health promoting activities are co-created with students?

The mental health of our children

- Globally 10–20% of children and young people meet the criteria for a mental health condition, and this is increasing
(Belfer, 2008; Harden et al, 2001; Kessler, et al., 2005; Kieling et al, 2011)
- Childhood adversity is a key determinant of distress
 - (Boyle, 2020; Felitti & Anda, 1998; Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018; World Health Organization, 2000, 2002, 2013).
- Covid-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and increased the economic, social, and psychological pressures on children
 - (Save the Children, 2020; United Nations, 2020).



The impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of students, teachers & wider community

Themes included:

- Young people rising to the challenge
- Psychological toll on YP especially those in marginalized communities or prior exposure to trauma
- Teachers navigating new professional boundaries
- Sexual harassment & homophobic bullying of teachers by students
- Lack of adequate governance by state authorities



O'Toole, C. and Simovska, V. (2021), "[Same storm, different boats!](#) The impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of school communities" Special Issue of *Health Education: 'Health education's response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Global challenges and future directions'*.

Education for human flourishing

- The International Science and Evidence based Education (ISEE) Assessment contributes to re-envisioning the future of education and feeds into UNESCO's Futures of Education report mgiep.unesco.org/iseea
- Working groups (250 academics from 45 countries) providing synthesis of evidence
- Flourishing in schools
 - Lisa Flook (UCLA), Catriona O’Toole (Maynooth University), Kimberly Shonert-Reichl (University of Illinois, USA), Jason Ritter (Duquesne University, USA)
 - “.schools seeking to promote human flourishing need to place relationships at their centre”
 - Relationships with self
 - Relationships with others
 - Relationship with knowledge (curriculum content / subject matter)



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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npj | Science of Learning www.nature.com/npjclearn

COMMENT OPEN Check for updates

The International Science and Evidence-based Education Assessment

Anantha Duraiappah^{1,193}, Nienke van Atteveldt^{2,193}, Stanley Asah³, Gregoire Borst⁴, Stephanie Bugden⁵, J. Marieke Bull⁶, Oren Ergas⁷, Stephen Fraser⁷, Julien Mercier⁸, Juan Felipe Restrepo Mesa⁹, Alejandra Mizala¹⁰, Yoko Mochizuki¹, Kaori Okano¹¹, Christopher Piech¹², Kenneth Pugh¹³, Rajiv Ramaswamy¹, Nandini Chatterjee Singh¹ and Edward Vickers¹⁴

Education is indispensable for the flourishing of people from all backgrounds and stages of life. However, given the accelerating demographic, environmental, economic, socio-political, and technological changes—and their associated risks and opportunities—there is increasing consensus that our current educational systems are falling short and that we need to repurpose education and rethink the organization of learning to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “Futures of Education” initiative was formally launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2019 to provide such a vision of education for the future. The International Scientific and Evidence-based Education (ISEE) Assessment synthesizes knowledge streams generated by different communities and stakeholders at all levels and scales and will thereby essentially contribute to re-envisioning this future of education. The overall aim of the ISEE Assessment is to pool the expertise from a broad range of knowledge holders and stakeholders to undertake a scientifically robust and evidence-based assessment in an open and inclusive manner of our current educational systems and its necessary reforms. In this commentary, we discuss the aims and goals of the ISEE Assessment. We describe how the ISEE Assessment will address key questions on the purpose of education and what, how, where and when we learn, and evaluate the alignment of today’s education and theory of learning with the current and forthcoming needs and challenges and to inform policymaking for future education.

npj Science of Learning (2021)6:7; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-021-00085-9>

Not many would argue with the claim that education matters, for specific contexts in which education is embedded, and the state- of the world. However, there is increasing consensus on the need to repurpose education and rethink the organization of learning to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “Futures of Education” initiative was formally launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2019 to provide such a vision of education for the future. The International Scientific and Evidence-based Education (ISEE) Assessment synthesizes knowledge streams generated by different communities and stakeholders at all levels and scales and will thereby essentially contribute to re-envisioning this future of education. The overall aim of the ISEE Assessment is to pool the expertise from a broad range of knowledge holders and stakeholders to undertake a scientifically robust and evidence-based assessment in an open and inclusive manner of our current educational systems and its necessary reforms. In this commentary, we discuss the aims and goals of the ISEE Assessment. We describe how the ISEE Assessment will address key questions on the purpose of education and what, how, where and when we learn, and evaluate the alignment of today’s education and theory of learning with the current and forthcoming needs and challenges and to inform policymaking for future education.

Addressing these key questions and challenges is exactly the aim

Review of State-of-the-art in school based mental health promotion

- Rapid Realist Review
- Whole-school approaches
- Impact (short/long term)
- Characteristics of successful approaches
- Barriers & facilitators
- Gaps & Future directions

www.schoolsforhealth.org/resources/materials-and-tools/factsheets



S·H·E
Schools for Health in Europe

Health Promoting Schools (HPS) Framework



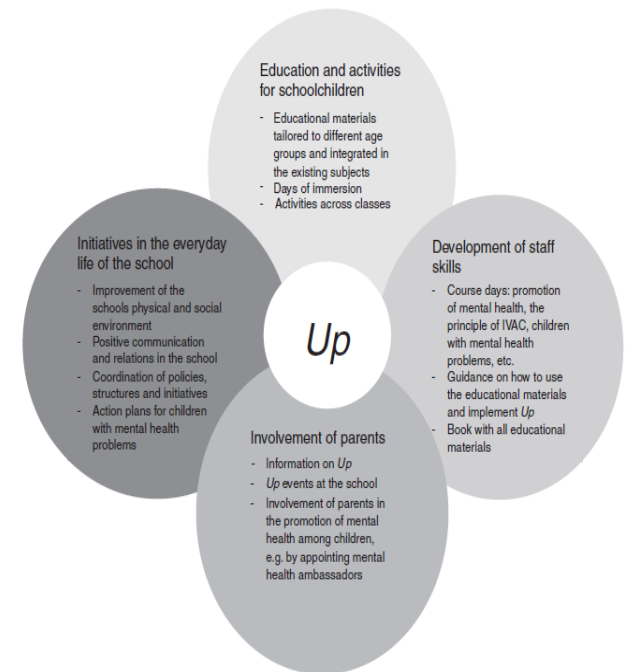
A Health Promoting School is envisaged as a place where all members of the school community work, learn, live and play together to promote the health and wellbeing of learners, staff, parents and the wider community (WHO, 1991).

But, childhood adversity is a significant barrier to realising this vision

Some examples of whole school approaches...

- *Up*
 - Denmark
 - Informed by HPS Framework (Nielsen, et al., 2014)
- *MindMatters*
 - National programme , Australia (Hazell et al., 2002; Lyn, et al., 2000; Mullett et al., 2004)
 - Adapted for Germany (Furze & Paulus, 2009)
- The Gatehouse Project
 - Melbourne, Australia (Bond et al., 2004; Patton, et al., 2006)
 - Adapted for Alberta, Canada (Omstead, 2008)

Figure 1.
The whole school approach intervention *Up* consists of four components: education and activities for schoolchildren, professional staff development, involvement of parents and initiatives in the everyday life of the school



From Nielsen et al., 2014

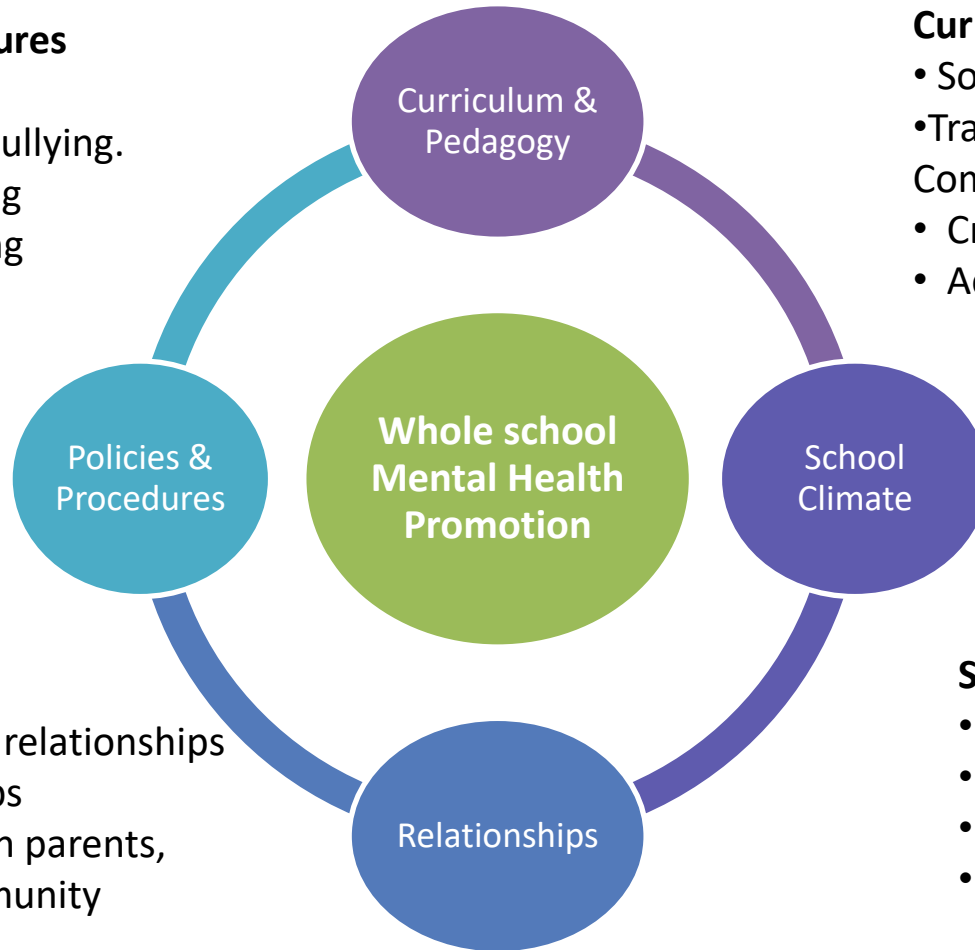
Current state-of-the-art

Policies & Procedures

- School policies – behaviour, anti-bullying.
- School scheduling
- Teacher wellbeing
- Staff CPD

Relationships:

- Student-teacher relationships
- Peer relationships
- Partnerships with parents, families and community



Curriculum & Pedagogy:

- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Transformative SEL; Action Competencies
- Critical mental health literacy
- Active & experiential learning

School Climate

- Positive school climate
- Sense of belonging
- Opportunities for success
- Safe physical environment

Barriers and Facilitators

Teachers:

- Teacher training & professional development
- Teacher wellbeing, morale and reflective supervision

Leadership:

- Proactive and enthusiastic champion
- Joined-up thinking, coherence
- Time management

Resourcing:

- Providing professional development
- Paying for teacher release time
- Developing curriculum resources

Implementation & sustainment:

- Long term commitment
- The high quality implementation

Competing priorities

- The prominence of academic attainment and accountability



Future directions

Co-creation

- Bottom-up collaboration with parents, teachers, local community (Darlington et al., 2017; Darlington & Masson, 2021; Honingh, 2018)
- Peer-led programmes (Hawkins; et al., 2017); children's voice (O'Reilly et al., 2013)

Strengthening EDUCATION

- Educational theory, curriculum and pedagogy (O'Toole & Simovska, in press)

Childhood adversity and trauma

- The need for trauma-informed approaches (Magruder, et al., 2017; O'Toole, in press; 2021; Scott et al, 2011; Stein, et al., 2019)

Beyond biomedical explanations

- Understanding emotional /psychological distress in relation to children's life circumstances (UNHRC, 2017; Patel et al, 2018, Johnstone & Boyle, 2018)

Beyond biomedical explanations

United Nations

A/HRC/35/21



General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 March 2017

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Thirty-fifth session

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

“The crisis in mental health should be managed not as a crisis of individual conditions, but as a crisis of social obstacles which hinders individual rights. Mental health policies should address the “power imbalance” rather than “chemical imbalance”.

The urgent need for a shift in approach should prioritize policy innovation at the population level, targeting social determinants and abandon the predominant medical model that seeks to cure individuals by targeting “disorders”.

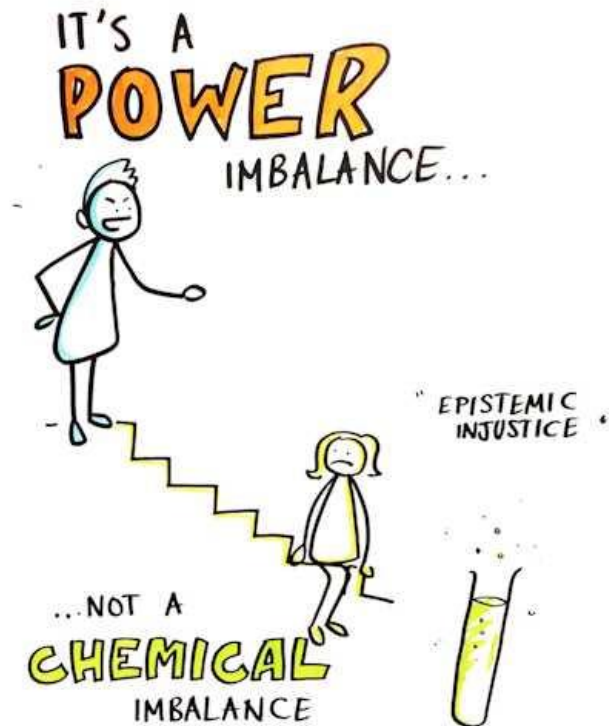


Image: adisorder4everyone.com

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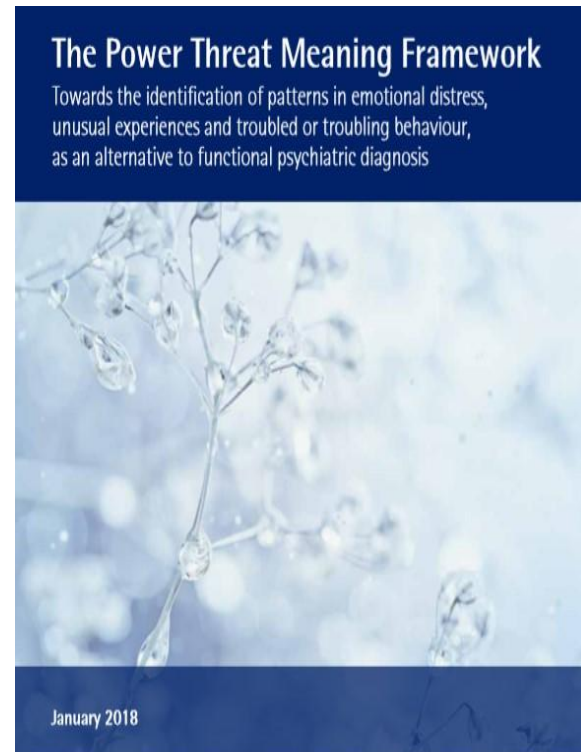
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The biomedical model of mental health “*can at times lead to unhelpful labeling, diminishing the agency of the affected individual, promoting a reductionist perspective, and oversimplifying and under-valuing complexities of personal circumstances*” (pg 15).



WHO, 2021

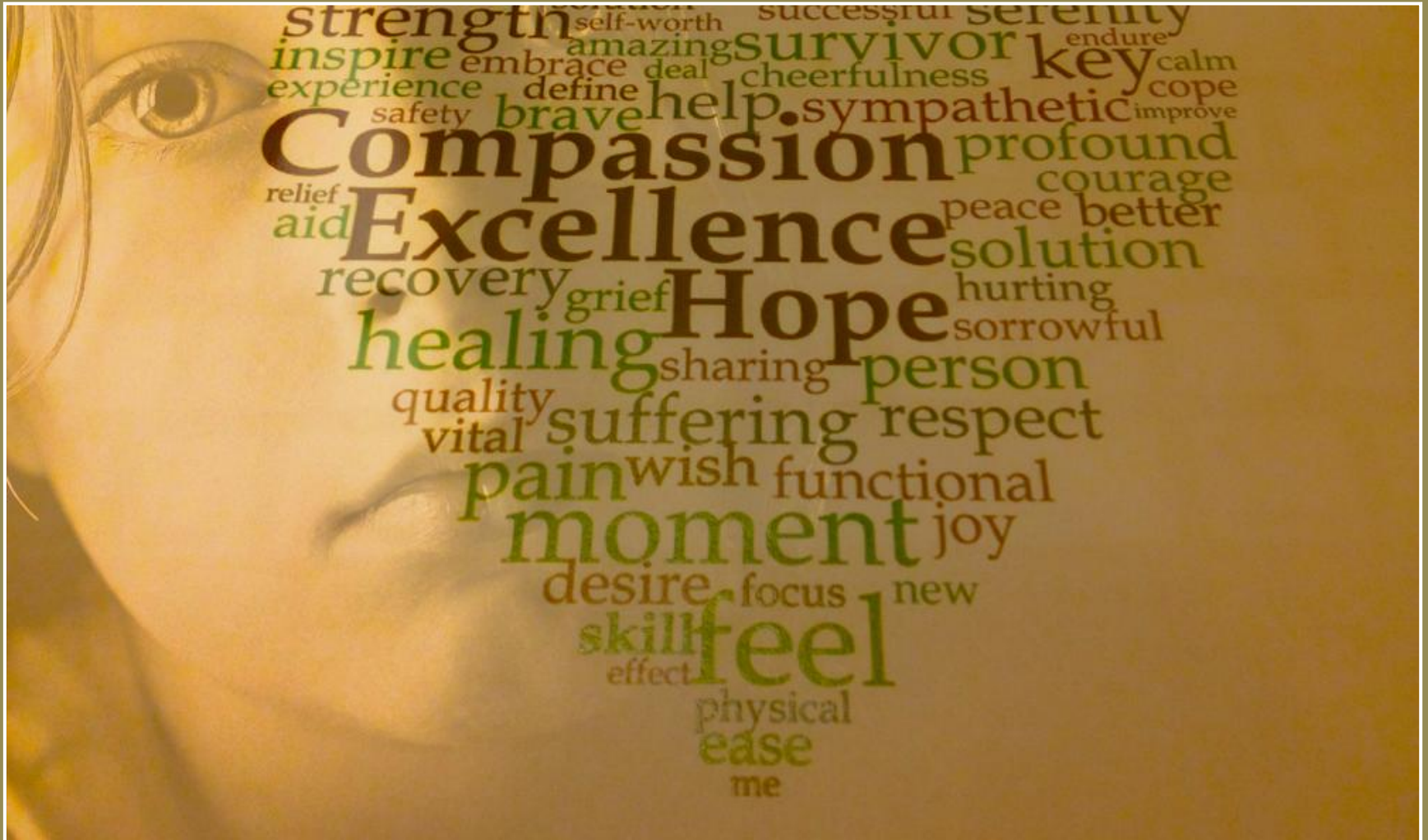


Johnstone & Boyle, 2018



Implications for wellbeing promotion in schools...?

Image: alyseruriani.com @alyseruriani



Childhood Adversity & Trauma-Informed Practice in Education

Childhood adversity: A public health epidemic

- Childhood adversity - whether resulting from social inequalities, poverty, discrimination or trauma like abuse and violence - is common and the effects can be devastating.
- Indeed, childhood adversity is so prevalent and so damaging that it is increasingly recognised as a public health epidemic (Anda, et al, 2010; van der Kolk, 2014).



Childhood Adversity & Trauma

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - 10 “types”
(Felitti, et al. 1998)
- Collective & community trauma
(Ellis, 2017; Faulkenberger, 2018; Matlin 2019; Pinderhughes, 2015)
- Racialised trauma / Cultural and Identity trauma
(Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Menakem, 2017)
- Historic and intergenerational trauma
(Fosion et al., 2003; Yehuda, 2018)





The many faces of trauma in the classroom

- The responses of trauma-affected children may appear bizarre or incomprehensible to those who do not understand how abuse and trauma impacts mind, body and behaviour.
- Children may appear 'spaced-out' and inattentive, angry and disruptive, confused and disengaged.

Trauma-Informed Practice

- Builds knowledge about trauma and its impact on mind, body and behaviour.
- Emphasises self-care for educators & protection against secondary traumatic stress.
- Whole school approach - integrating knowledge of trauma into policies, practices, procedures (Thomas et al., 2019; Maynard et al, 2019)



O'Toole, C. (in press). When trauma comes to school: Towards a trauma-informed praxis in education, Special Issue of *International Journal of Schools Social Work*, 'Applying a Social Justice Lens to Trauma-Informed Approaches in Education'.

O'Toole, C. (in press). Childhood adversity and education: Integrating trauma-informed practice within school wellbeing and health promotion frameworks. In C. Fauchner, R.W. McLellan & V. Simovska, [Eds]. *Wellbeing and Schooling: Cross Cultural and Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*. Taylor & Francis

Trauma-informed practice and HPS

- A trauma-informed lens that supports educators in appreciating the nature and consequences of adversity could support, enhance and/or re-orient school health promoting activities
- In the absence of a trauma lens, it remains all too probable that students will be blamed and shamed for their 'poor choices' and 'risky behaviours'.

O'Toole (forthcoming)

