

# SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER: CONVERSATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY



## Comments from the Editor

First, we begin the issue with the **Psychology News**, where we celebrate the team's professional achievements, transitioning into new roles, and update you with all the latest developments within the School for you to get involved with (including the exciting Annual Student Conference 2021 taking place later this year!).

The next feature highlights an important theme of the School Newsletter: **Stress Awareness Month**. Throughout the issue, we present pieces written by the team and students focused on themes of stress, well-being, resilience, and mental health providing strategies to help with stress management.

Gail and Sophie from the Psychology Team have written a piece to normalise conversations around mental health and well-being that includes some essential tips to protect your mental health and well-being. Sara Yadegari gives her insight into the key characteristics that helps us as individuals to cultivate resilience. Also, continuing with the theme of stress management, we offer six ways to maintain resilience during times of stress.

In the staff profile feature, you learn more about myself and read about my comical academic experience in our **getting to know the Psychology Team**. Lilly Sabir shares her learning experience of training and the application of Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) to neurological conditions. Followed by the **career spotlight** feature where we examine the role of a Forensic Psychologist under the microscope.

Before the issue closes on the **dates for your diary**, detailing event details you don't want to miss! Including the opportunity for the brain enthusiasts to help contribute to **Brain Awareness Week**, a School event happening in March 2022.



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If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact the editor, Emily Blakemore ([ebgakemore@arden.ac.uk](mailto:ebgakemore@arden.ac.uk)). We welcome any feedback and content suggestions also.

**Emily Blakemore, Editor.**

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## SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

## WELCOMES

A massive congratulations to existing staff transitioning into new roles:

- **Dr Sophie Ward** (Deputy Head of School of Psychology)
- **Dr Kimberley Marsh** (Deputy Head of School for Social Sciences)
- **Penny Hyams** (Contractor to PAYE)

## CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to **Leanne** who has been awarded the North of Wales award for her contribution to Science!

To mark one year living in the lockdown, **Konstantinos** has published the article '*Psychology – A Year in Lockdown*' **Read the full article here:** [Psychology: A Year in Lockdown | Arden University](#)



Congratulations to **Mvekeli, Adriana and Lucy**, for their Higher Education Academy (HEA) accomplishment.

**James** presented a talk for the Riot Science Club on reproducible workflows: "*Learning the Hard Way: Reproducible Workflows*": **View his talk here:**

[https://youtu.be/P5F\\_aVz3J70](https://youtu.be/P5F_aVz3J70)

**Mvekeli's** abstract: Domestic Violence in the UK Zimbabwean diaspora is due to be delivered to the online IPVI 2021 Conference.

He also made a guest appearance at Aston University's ReproducibiliTea journal club talking about sample size justification: the slides and recording can be found here: <https://osf.io/94b5h/>

Congratulations to both **Lucy** and **James** for being seconded into Senior lecturers role!



Sophie has recently completed her first few shifts as a Volunteer Vaccinator for St John Ambulance during this pandemic #stjohnpeople  
 You can check available volunteering roles here: [Volunteer Opportunities - First Aid Charity | St John Ambulance \(sja.org.uk\)](#).



“ Working as a St John Ambulance Volunteer Vaccinator during the current pandemic has so far been an incredible and rewarding experience. It has enriched my life to meet so many people from all walks of life, to hear their stories, share a smile with them, ease their anxieties, and offer them hope.

If you are thinking about volunteering for any organisation or cause, I would say go for it!

“*Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.*” – Leo Buscaglia.

## ANNUAL STUDENT CONFERENCE 2021

The **Psychology School of Social Sciences** is planning a virtual conference event for later this year and we are looking to recruit **student representatives** for a student's voice and to help us organise the event. This experience provides a great development opportunity and looks great on your CV, making you an attractive candidate for future employers.

We're looking for representatives from all courses and any level within the School including single, joint degrees and postgraduate. After the end recruitment date, the student panel will be decided via a selection process.

If you are interested in participating or would like to hear more information about the event, please contact: [studentconference@arden.ac.uk](mailto:studentconference@arden.ac.uk).

Recruitment end date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

## FIRST ANNUAL STUDENT CONFERENCE

School of  
Social Sciences

PSYCHOLOGY, JOINTS AND GRAPHIC DESIGN



April:  
#StressAwarenessMonth

We understand that juggling student life combined with other factors can often be stressful, and with the added pressure of the current pandemic, it can be normal to feel stressed when we face uncertainty. However, it is important to recognise when we are experiencing prolonged chronic stress which can be debilitating and cause long-term damage to our health, physically and mentally.

For 'Stress Awareness Month' Psychology Lecturer, Hayley Lewis has designed the following sketch notes to provide strategies to help you better manage stress.

10 WAYS TO DEAL WITH STRESS

@Haypsych



☐ Show yourself some self-compassion



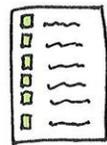
☐ Remember the bigger picture and your 'why'



☐ Reduce cognitive overload by having some routines



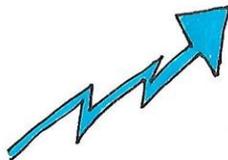
☐ Do something different and interesting



☐ Keep your daily to-do list to six items



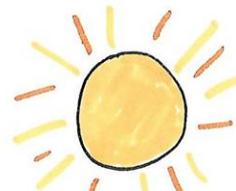
☐ Use the 'if-then' approach to planning



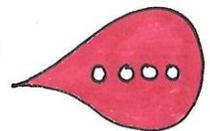
☐ Remember, it's about progress not perfection



☐ Note what you've achieved at the end of each day (no matter how small)



☐ Get outside for some fresh air during the day



☐ Talk to someone - a problem shared is a problem halved



Arden's Chosen Charity of the Year 2021 – 100 miles in May for Mind

Run, walk or cycle 100 miles to raise funds for Mind charity this May.

Sign up for the challenge by joining the Facebook Group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/6596478613/posts/10158919077108614/?d=n>

(Once you've signed up you can register for a free t-shirt too!)

Show your support by getting out and getting moving for better mental health!

# Championing Mental Health

*Sophie Ward, Deputy Head of School for Psychology*

Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder (a common misconception), instead it is a state of well-being in which an individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Interestingly, while poor mental health and wellbeing (Inc. anxiety, depression and self-harm) has worsened during the pandemic (Public Health Matter 2020), following the onset of the pandemic (between April and September 2020) the incidence of primary care for mental health conditions in the UK decreased sharply compared with expected rates (Carr et al., 2021). This suggests that individuals suffering from poor mental health are not seeking and/or being offered the necessary support to aid their recovery, likely due to the increased pressure on the National Health Service and the current restrictions on face-to-face patient care.

Over recent months Dr Gail Steptoe-Warren (Head of School for Psychology and Social Sciences) and Dr Sophie Ward (Deputy Head of School for Psychology and PG Programme Lead) have been working hard to raise awareness and normalise the conversation around mental health, leading on and contributing to a series of events including:

- ❑ **Mental Health** - A webinar held by Arden University, providing insight into current mental health trends, support services, and advice to students on how to look after their well-being and mental health, while staying motivated and productive.
- ❑ **Student Well-Being and Mental Health** - An on-demand webinar/guide to student wellbeing and mental health. Including tips to support student mental health prior to and whilst at university. In collaboration with UniTasterDays.
- ❑ **Mental Health and Remote Working** – An event facilitated by RELX, an external corporation, to help their employees navigate the challenges of remote working and mental health during the global pandemic.

During each of these online events Gail and Sophie have encouraged help-seeking for mental health and shared a range of tips to help students and the public protect their own well-being and mental health. These tips include:





Find a period each day that you can **exercise**, even if it's just for 10 to 15 minutes.

Exercise is great for our physical and mental health, and once you get started you will usually notice a difference in your mood quite quickly.



**Eat healthily and drink plenty of water.** The food we eat can not only affect our bodies, but also our mood. For example, eating a variety of vegetables, fruits, and oily fish has been found to reduce mood swings, depression, and anxiety, whereas the opposite has been found for foods high in refined sugar and fat, foods that are comforting and often our first choice when we are feeling low and anxious. One way you could look to combat this is by setting a meal plan early on and/or making a shopping list that includes mainly nutritious foods, and then ensuring you stick to it. This will help you form a routine and reduce temptation.



**Write a list of the activities that make you feel happy and energised**, as well as those that help to relax you. Once we fall into a cycle of negative thinking, it can often be difficult to remember the things that may help us.



**Plan some activities in advance**, such as, scheduling reading or movie time, or booking an online class to learn something new. Doing this gives you something to look forward to and helps you to maintain your routine.



**Do something that you've been meaning to do** for a while. Not only will it help to boost your mood, but it will also give you a sense of accomplishment.



**Connect with others.** Although this is difficult now due to the current lockdown restrictions, it is still important to speak with others, whether that be over the phone, zoom, online support forums, or a messaging service.



**Limit your time on social media and news exposure.** Social media can have a negative effect on our mood, as we scroll through the posts made by our friends, which are typically made during positive times giving a false impression. There is also a lot of news published by somewhat unreliable sources. Try to watch or read news from only reliable sources such as, the NHS and World Health Organisation, or subscribe to a newspaper such as @HappyNewspaper\_, a platform to share positive news and wonderful people.



Lastly, and by no means least, **ask for help!** If you are finding things difficult, you have questions, or you are concerned, please speak to someone, no matter how small or trivial it may seem. If it's affecting you, hindering your mood and/or making you feel anxious, then it is important. Always remember that your feelings are valid, and if you don't feel comfortable talking to a friend or family member, then you can contact your healthcare professional and/or one of the many voluntary organisations that are there to listen.

## How can you protect the well-being and mental health of others?

As well as protecting our own wellbeing and mental health, Gail and Sophie have also emphasised the importance of helping to protect the well-being and mental health of others, especially during the current pandemic. They suggest that one way to do this is by being a friend. Friendship is a crucial element in protecting our well-being and mental health. We need to talk to our friends, and we want to listen when our friends want to talk to us. You can help to protect the well-being and mental health of others by being a friend to them. Friends form one of the foundations of our ability to cope with the problems that life throws at us.

Another simple approach they suggest is being kind. In some cases just saying thank you, smiling, or doing something nice for someone, such as, sending them a card or some flowers can really help to boost their mood and remind them that they are loved and not alone.

They also highlight the importance of being supportive, non-judgemental, and inclusive. If you notice someone on their own, approach them and ask if they would like to join you and friends. For example, you might ask someone you know who is living on their own in the pandemic to join you on zoom for a family quiz night.



## What can you do if you or someone you know is already dealing with a mental health problem?

While some of the above methods would still be helpful in this situation, Gail and Sophie have provided some additional pointers below, appreciating that trying to cope with and treat a mental health problem, is much harder than trying to prevent it.

### **‘I think someone I know is suffering with their mental health...’**

One of the first things to do if you are concerned about someone is to ask how they are. Don't be afraid to ask direct questions, especially surrounding difficult topics such as self-harm and suicide. Very often people avoid asking these questions as they are worried how the other person might react and whether it could put ideas in their head that weren't there before; however, research has shown that is not the case, and that we are better off asking than not. Asking them, and asking twice, could just save their life.

Secondly, it is important that you listen to what they have to say. There is no point asking how they are if you are then going to interrupt them. Make sure you listen carefully and show them that you're listening. You can do this by repeating what they have said to you in brief, for example, 'I am really sorry to hear that you are feeling low at the moment, it sounds like a lot has been happening with your best friend moving away and your final exams coming up, is there anything I can do to help?'

It is also important that you do not judge the person. They may tell you something that you don't agree with, perhaps you think their view on something is wrong, or that they are worried about something meaningless. It is important that you try to see things from their point of view and that you help them to see that their feelings are valid. Telling someone that they shouldn't be feeling the way they do, or to 'chill out' because things aren't that bad, can make the person feel guilty, and in some cases may cause them further anxiety or upset. It may also mean they are less likely to open-up in the future. It is important that we respect the person, their viewpoint and how they feel.

In some situations, you may be able to support the person yourself and/or with friend or family member, especially if they are experiencing short-term difficulties. It may be however that the person is experiencing a range of complex problems, including those that are long-term. If this is the case you may need to support the person in finding more appropriate help, usually a health care professional. Again, it is key that you respect the person in this situation and their wishes. It may be that they aren't ready to seek the help they need, and you may need to wait until they are ready. Of course, if you become extremely concerned about them, then it would be advisable to tell someone who is in a position to help, although you should first inform them of your concerns and that you are going to have to talk to someone.

### **I am struggling with my own mental health and it is impacting on my daily life...'**

If it is yourself who is struggling, then it is important that you speak to someone. Someone you trust and feel comfortable with. Talking to yourself can be a form of medicine. As they say, 'a problem shared is a problem halved.' You may find just talking about your concerns helps you to feel more positive or less anxious, but if it doesn't, it is important that you continue to talk and find additional support.



Activities you might find helpful include, challenging negative thoughts, managing your sleep, noticing what is happening around you, and keeping a journal or compassionate toolbox. can be found on websites such as the NHS, MIND, and [getselfhelp.co.uk](http://getselfhelp.co.uk).(free pdf download [here](#).)

Recommended mental health and well-being applications for both Apple and Android:  
**Calm, Aura, What's Up?, Headspace, Smiling Mind, Insight Timer, Buddify, Sanvello and Brain.fm.**

## Useful Mental Health Helplines

If you or someone you know needs urgent support, please call [111](tel:111) or 999 (UK), 112 (EU), 000 (Australia) or 911 (US), depending on location.

If you or someone you know needs additional support, please refer to the following UK resources and/or your health service.

**MIND.** Visit [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) to access a range of helpful resources.

**Shout.** If you are struggling to cope text SHOUT to 85258 to the [Shout](https://www.shouttextline.com/) Crisis Text Line or if under 19 text YM.

**Samaritans.** To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call [116 123](tel:116123) (free), email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [visit some branches in person](#) (dependent on lockdown restrictions). You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on [0808 164 0123](tel:08081640123) (7pm–11pm every day).

**SANeline.** If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can call [SANeline](https://www.saneline.org/) on [0300 304 7000](tel:03003047000) (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).

**Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).** If you identify as male, you can call the [CALM](https://www.calm.org.uk/) on [0800 58 58 58](tel:0800585858) (5pm–midnight every day) or use their [webchat service](#).

**Switchboard.** If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can call [Switchboard](https://www.switchboard.org.uk/) on [0300 330 0630](tel:03003300630) (10am–10pm every day), email [chris@switchboard.lgbt](mailto:chris@switchboard.lgbt) or use their webchat service. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+.

Mental health services offered by Arden University:

- **Togetherall** - [www.togetherall.com/joinnow/ardenuniversity](http://www.togetherall.com/joinnow/ardenuniversity)
- **Unitu**

Both services are available via the iLearn A-Z.



**Register today for FREE**

Mental health support.  
24/7. Confidential.  
Online Community.

For more details, please refer to our T&Cs during registration.

## Unpacking resiliency

Sara Yadegari, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student

During the year of 2020, the flow of life was interrupted for many around the world. The global pandemic brought rounds of lockdowns, and quarantines, increasing levels of anxiety and depression among the general public (Wang et al., 2020). Thankfully, the news of COVID-19 vaccinations broke before the year ended and made us hopeful that life would soon go back to normal. However, it is not possible to provide vaccinations to everyone at once, and the governments must prioritize those that are more vulnerable in vaccination programs. For some of us, this might feel even harder to bear than the beginning of the pandemic, because the end is so real yet so far. It is more important than ever to cope positively despite ambiguity and cultivate resiliency in ourselves so that we can maintain our physical and mental wellbeing.

Several studies have shown that genetics and early childhood experiences may play key roles in shaping resiliency in individuals (Feder et al., 2009; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). However, to increase resiliency in adults, research has also highlighted the importance of personality traits that can be acquired and taught. There is a broad set of personality traits that contribute to an individual's ability to endure and recover from difficulties.



### Positivity

A trait that is frequently highlighted in the study of resiliency is positivity; the ability to maintain an optimistic prospect of the future despite ongoing difficulties. This may be intuitive but is still a good reminder, that individuals who are hopeful about the future maintain a more stable emotional response to the ongoing difficulties because they hold the belief that things will unfold in positive ways for them (Fredrickson et al., 2003). The positive view of the future self-regulates negative emotions such as fear or anxiety and protects the individual from being consumed by internal turmoil. Thereby, optimistic individuals can maintain a stable internal state during hardship and focus on solving external problems (Carver & Scheier, 1981).



A study on the lives of American prisoners of war in Vietnam concluded that during the 37 years after they were released, dispositional optimism was the strongest predictor of positive coping and recovery (Segovia et al., 2012). The positive benefit of optimism goes well beyond mental and emotional resiliency. Medical research has also shown the impact of dispositional optimism on the ability of individuals to better adjust to chronic pain and maintain their life satisfaction despite diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or asthma (Agrawal & Pandey, 1998; Goodin & Bulls, 2013).

## Self-efficacy



Research in both clinical and organizational psychology has identified self-efficacy as a strong predictor of resiliency (Schwarzer & Warner, 2013). Bandura (1977) first introduced the concept as an individual's belief that their actions will be effective in creating certain outcomes. In this regard, individuals with high self-efficacy show lower levels of anxiety when dealing with difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1983). As a result, individuals with higher self-efficacy can better endure difficult circumstances and more easily recover from trauma (Hamill, 2003). There is also a strong correlation between self-efficacy and optimism, suggesting that individuals with more self-efficacy also show optimism towards the future (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999).

## Virtuous Cycle

Self-efficacy, optimism and resiliency are separate concepts and yet are correlated. Individuals that believe in their ability to effectively manage their circumstances are not consumed by emotional turmoil when challenged by difficult circumstances and as a result, are more resilient. Previous success in mitigating difficult circumstances is a key contributor to future self-efficacy and strengthens one's belief in being in control of one's circumstances (Bandura et al., 1997). Individuals that already have elevated levels of optimism and self-efficacy, are in a virtuous cycle in which they build on their previous success by promoting resiliency in themselves and therefore have a higher chance of recovery from difficult situations.

There are ways to increase optimism and self-efficacy if an individual is not in this virtuous cycle. One of the important inputs to both optimism and self-efficacy is perceived social support; the belief that the individual has the support of a community and will receive assistance, should they need it (Burešová et al., 2020). Actively surrounding oneself with people that share similar views and are supportive of one's actions will create a positive feedback loop through self-efficacy and optimism that promotes resiliency (Chlebowy & Gravin, 2006). Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is another effective tool in adjusting an individual's beliefs towards self-empowerment and promoting autonomy and self-efficacy (Malouff & Schutte, 2017). Specifically, positive CBT improves an individual's resiliency by focusing on the individual's existing skills and strengths. Individuals learn to foster a sense of security and will believe in their abilities to endure difficulties by shifting their attention and focus on the victories they gain in the process of practicing positive CBT (Prasko et al., 2016).

As we go through what is hopefully the last leg of the pandemic, we can use the resiliency research and bootstrap ourselves into a virtuous cycle by reminding ourselves of how far we have come and surrounded ourselves with friends who can offer us the support we need, or if we are fortunate enough to be already in a virtuous cycle, let's remember to look out for those who need some extra help.

# #StressAwarenessMonth

## HOW TO... MAINTAIN YOUR RESILIENCE DURING TIMES OF STRESS

@Haypsych  
www.haypsychology.com



1

### Focus on the foundation of **HEALTH**

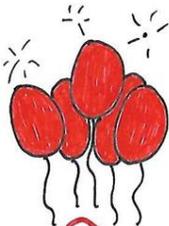
- ◆ Get enough quality sleep
- ◆ Do some regular exercise
- ◆ Eat healthily
- ◆ Keep hydrated
- ◆ Cut down on alcohol
- ◆ Meditate for 10 mins a day



2

### Manage your **TIME**

- ◆ Spend some time to plan the week ahead
- ◆ Prioritise items on your to do list
- ◆ Have max of 5 items on your daily to-do list and then work through sequentially
- ◆ Use your calendar to block out tasks, not just meetings



3

### Have **FUN** and make time for **RECREATION**

- ◆ Block time out in your diary just for you
- ◆ Take up an absorbing hobby e.g. music, art
- ◆ Book a holiday
- ◆ Book a long weekend
- ◆ Watch your favourite show
- ◆ Watch a comedy



4

### Have clear **BOUNDARIES**

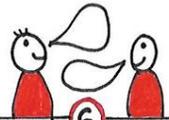
- ◆ Protect your time off, such as weekends
- ◆ Have a time you switch off from responding to emails
- ◆ Switch off from social media an hour before bed
- ◆ Keep your phone in a room separate from your bedroom



5

### Take some **TIME OUT**

- ◆ Plan ahead and block time off in your diary e.g. every six weeks have a long weekend or a week off
- ◆ Go outside for lunch during the day
- ◆ Go for a 5min walk during the day



6

### Talk to someone you **TRUST**

- ◆ Find a friend or colleague to talk about how you're feeling
- ◆ If you have a coach, work with them to identify some practical things you can do
- ◆ If you don't have a coach, think about getting one to help you

# GETTING TO KNOW THE PSYCHOLOGY TEAM: EMILY BLAKEMORE



## Can you summarise who you are and your role at AU?

Hi readers! I'm Emily, the editor of the School Newsletter and the Psychological Experimental Officer at Arden University for the School. Some aspects of my role include managing the induction modules for both BSc and MSc Psychology students, overseeing the Arden Psychology Twitter page (@ArdenUniPsych), offering additional support to lecturers and other various student engagement projects.

My passions include traveling and visiting new places, meditation, socialising and music (I love going to festivals and seeing bands live). In my spare time, I also love sketching, being crafty and I am learning (slowly) how to play the Ukulele.

## Can you tell the readers about your main research interests?

I graduated with a BSc in Psychology with Criminology, but found very quickly that Criminology was not for me and that I am more interested in the health aspect of Psychology which led me to undertake an MSc in Health Psychology. I am a strong advocator for enhancing psychological health and wellbeing through meditative holistic practice and this passion has been translated through my research interests. I have developed interests in mindfulness and the neuroplasticity of long-term meditators, the impact of nature and mindfulness combined with virtual reality technology to improve mental health and well-being.

## If you had to choose just one, what is your favourite academic experience?

My favourite academic experience happened during the end of my MSc whilst carrying out my dissertation experiment. I devised a face-to-face experiment to investigate the impact of mindfulness meditation using virtual reality technology. In one experimental condition, I used VR technology and for the other condition, the participants were required to wear a blindfold for the experiment. During one of the experimental sessions, whilst listening to the meditation recording and wearing a blindfold, one of the participants was that relaxed they fell asleep and started snoring in the middle of the experiment... I guess mindfulness is not for everyone!



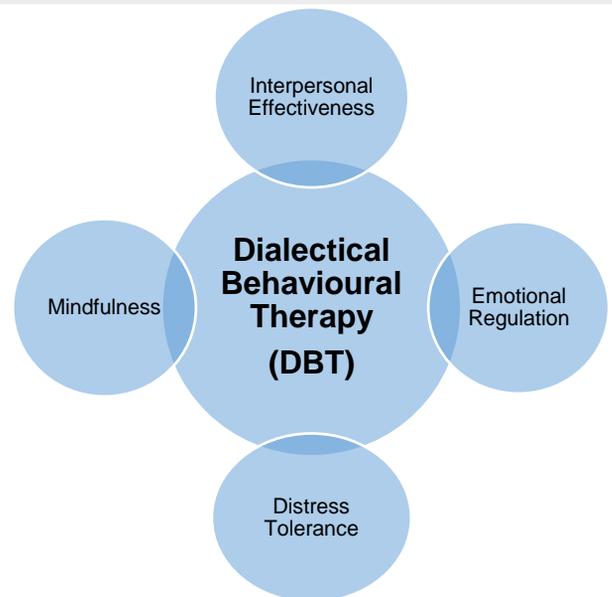
## What is your favourite thing about being part of AU?

It is hard to narrow down because I have a few, but mainly the combination of working alongside such a friendly and supportive team in our School and equally, interacting and supporting students, especially through my editor role. I find it fulfilling knowing that I helped to build the student's confidence and contribute to their growth in particular areas. Also, generally just working for a forward-thinking university, there are always new developments happening that aim to improve experiences for both students and staff, and every day it's evolving, it's exciting to be a part of!

## Remote DBT learning experience

Lilly Sabir, MSc Psychology

Volunteering for the NHS has been one of the most educational experiences I have encountered, whilst undertaking the MSc Psychology degree at Arden. I am a volunteer for the neurological conditions' development department. My main responsibility is running support groups for parents whose children have received a diagnosis for their child, within the umbrella of neurological conditions. Neurological conditions diagnoses can vary from children on the autism spectrum to ADHD. Through my role, I had the opportunity to participate in a Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 2015) course and I would like to share my experience of the applied knowledge and skills that I have learned from the training. There was a diverse range of health professionals who took part in the training, including those who practice in the field of psychology. Therefore, it felt such an honor being part of the clinical team that was offered to participate in the oncoming DBT programs online and I wanted to relay some of that experience.



I had first developed an interest in DBT after shadowing an assistant psychologist and observing how a clinical diagnosis and prognosis is carried out. DBT workshops have a history that goes back over two decades since its creation in 1993 by Marsha Linehan (Chapman, 2006). The program was initially referred to as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and was used for the treatment of borderline illnesses. It consists of various skills and techniques that are applicable in handling people with personality disorders and other psychological conditions (Kells et al., 2020). Dialectical means walking the mindful middle path: finding the synthesis between opposites, for example, what are the agreements between our emotional minds and reasonable minds? How can we find the synthesis between our 'doing mind' with our 'being mind'?

The DBT workshop was administered remotely via the platform 'Microsoft Teams' and this enabled me to converse with occupational therapists, mental health nurses, and pediatricians. Although everything occurred in the virtual environment, all discussions or interactions were live, which enabled the participants to gain knowledge and hear about real-life case studies from the plethora of clinical workers who took part, this made the experience even more enjoyable. Anyone who participates in the workshop are likely to benefit in various ways including developing the skills necessary to see clients on a one-on-one basis. DBT is also useful for teams or individuals that work in the community and inpatient settings. Some of the professionals who could benefit from the workshop include psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, mental health practitioners such as psychiatric nurses, and human resource professionals.

The course ran during the week, with three full days and every session focusing on specific goals that were based on various levels of the training. The training felt as if it had lasted months after the final third day, such as the intensity of the subject matter. This training formed the first step of learning how evidence-based clinical talking therapeutic interventions can help individuals with psychological problems. It focused on essential elements or concepts including distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, contingency management, emotional regulation, and relentless problem solving (Chapman, 2006).

'Validation', 'mindfulness', and 'emotional regulation' were the areas of applied theory that formed a key part of understanding how DBT can be used as an informed behavioral response when working with mental health patients. The handbook supplied for the trainees included a wealth of assessments and resources to be applied in clinical settings. It presented the important aspect of becoming a knowledgeable and evidence-based practitioner and the training enabled one to become proficient in DBT (The Learning Curve Institute, 2021). For this training, one is likely to gain knowledge on how to motivate patients and understand how to respond to their needs effectively. By the end of the training, I had attained recognition in key areas that equipped me with the skills of DBT to volunteer as a therapist.

Throughout the course, we watched a presentation, carried out reflective exercises, and discussed case studies in small groups – all being NHS mental health professions. We were expected to analyse and provide a description of the practice of DBT in the workplace. In relation to working with children, understanding the efficacy of evidence-based DBT for children with neurological condition developments was particularly useful (The Learning Curve Institute, 2021). One example is, learning how to apply sensory language when communicating with ASD children/teenagers. Moreover, I also gained an understanding of how to introduce emotional regulation concepts that can aid their development in the real world. This is important as it provides validation to those children who often have higher rates of suicide risk as they grow older.

I found that the program content related to the skills I had gained in my training regarding the application of DBT in treating patients. I took a keen interest in the specific techniques including phone coaching, one-on-one therapy, and skills training. DBT utilizes these techniques to teach the core skills that are useful in addressing issues of emotional distress. The idea that it can help deal with the intense negative emotions of mentally ill patients was a great revelation.

In conclusion, anyone interested in helping people suffering from personality disorders within mental health should consider taking DBT training, which can be undertaken remotely. The Association for Psychological Therapies (APT) provides accreditation or awards for those who complete the courses successfully. All one needs is an internet connection and a voluntary program run by the NHS to undertake any of the courses, which becomes a fundamental part of our understanding as professionals in mental health.

## CAREER SPOTLIGHT : FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST

### *What is the role of a Forensic Psychologist?*

As a forensic psychologist, by applying psychological theory and methods you will work to assess and treat criminal behaviour to rehabilitate, modify offending behaviour and reduce the risk of offenders reoffending in the future.

In this role, you will not only just work with a range of offenders on a 1-to-1 basis, you will also work with a variety of individuals associated with crime and the justice system. For example, victims of crimes, expert witness testimonies, advisory for parole boards. The work environment of a forensic psychologist varies, and you may be expected to work in one location or across different settings such as courts, prisons, secure hospitals, etc. The role often involves conducting applied research to add to the evidence base of practice in these settings too.



### *What is the relevance of my Arden degree?*

The BPS-accredited degree is directly relevant as it forms the foundation to this career by providing the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC). The knowledge and skills developed from your degree directly align with the role of a Forensic Psychologist. These include:

- Psychological theoretical knowledge to understand criminal behaviour
- Research skills and data handling
- Analysing behavioural skills
- Communication and listening skills to build trust with the offender
- Ability to stay calm in pressured or stressful situations
- Understand individual's reactions



The British  
Psychological Society  
Accredited

### *How do I become a Forensic Psychologist?*

Following the completion of your BPS-accredited degree, the initial steps to one route of becoming a chartered forensic psychologist follows a two-stage process. The first stage involves undertaking a postgraduate BPS-accredited Master's in Forensic Psychology, this can be completed in 1 year (full-time) or over 2 years (part-time). Forensic courses can be competitive, relevant work experience for example, in a prison or mental health service is beneficial to securing a place on a postgraduate course. Once completed, this allows you to progress onto the second stage to the BPS Qualification in Forensic Psychology (QFP), consisting of a minimum of 2 years of supervised practice of the application of psychology in forensic practice. This can also be done whilst working as a trainee forensic psychologist. Some universities may offer the alternative route of a Doctorate in Forensic Psychology combining the master's qualification and QFP (Stage 2). After completing the stage process or doctorate route, you will then be entitled to the chartered status and a BPS Division of Forensic Psychology membership. This makes you eligible to register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) permitting you to use the 'Forensic Psychologist' title.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Virtual Coffee mornings and Social evenings

The School is running a series of virtual coffee mornings and social evenings for students to unwind and keep connected during the pandemic. See below for the dates to join the events:

**Social Evening - Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 18:00-19:00 BST**  
**Coffee Morning – Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May 10:00-11:00 BST**

**Social Evening - Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June 16:00 - 19:00 BST**  
**Coffee Morning – Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June 10:00 - 11:00 BST**

*Keep a look out on your iLearn calendar for zoom invitation links.*



# BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK (BAW)

## MARCH 2022

Dear student,

Are you interested in learning about neuroscience and the brain?  
 Are you interested in collaborating with brain enthusiasts?  
 Do you have a ton of creative ideas to combine neuroscience, the brain  
 and **FUN EVENTS?**

If you answered **YES** to any of the above, please get in touch with  
 Dr. Adriana Soni at [BAW@arden.ac.uk](mailto:BAW@arden.ac.uk)

You will join the **BAW Student Committee** which will be working towards  
 organising Arden University's first participation in the  
[Dana Foundation's Brain Awareness Week](#) initiative during March 2022.



"Orange and Blue Brain Anatomy Hoop Art  
 Hand Embroidered," by Rey Paul Studios is license  
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 of this license, visit  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

Get in touch  
 to find out  
 the benefits  
 of  
 volunteering!



### Contributing to the next edition of the newsletter

We would like to thank all contributors to this issue of the School of Psychology newsletter. If you would like to contribute to a following issue, please contact Emily Blakemore at [elakemore@arden.ac.uk](mailto:elakemore@arden.ac.uk) for more information. Please also contact us if you would like a reference list for any of the articles in this issue. I look forward to hearing from you!

Next issue: August 2021