

Teen Talk

by Tanya Kennard-Campbell

Many schools have regular 'healthy schools' days where they invite in outside agencies to run workshops for their pupils on elements affecting Health and Well-being. Workshops included relaxation, healthy eating, drum workshops and teen mums' experience of mothering, etc.

I was asked to run a series of five, one hour workshops on emotional Well-being. Ellen Perkins (member of 'Everyday People') co-facilitated the session. Approximately 70 Year Ten (14-15yr old) pupils attended the workshops.

The aims of the workshop were to offer these young people information about the things affecting their emotional health and Well-being, with an emphasis on what they had control over and what they had access to within and around them right now. We also wanted to offer them a list of local and national support agencies, should they need it, and to better understand the resources they are currently using and what helps them day to day to support their Well-being.

The workshops used the 'Principle-Based Approach' to inform the workshop content and focused on the influence of thought and consciousness on our emotional health. The approach was kept simple, aiming for the information offered to be of ongoing help due to its simplicity.

For further information, please see the 'Emotional Health *handout*'.

The sessions turned out to be filled with energy and laughter as the pupils were encouraged to get involved actively in the process. Despite a few high jinx, there was a lot of interest in the



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things they did regularly that put them back in touch with their Well-being.

What this experience highlighted to me was the low level of understanding these pupils had about the things affecting their emotional health and Well-being. They did not seem to see the connection between diet, exercise, hormones and thought on their moods and emotions. It highlighted the interest and desire these pupils have to know more about their emotions and feel more in control of them.

It highlighted the impact of a little bit of information on an individual's sense of control – these young people were like sponges, wanting more information.

This experience also reinforced the importance of investing in our community's knowledge, skills and confidence in dealing with emotional health and Well-being issues. When these young people needed help, they didn't turn to professional services; they turned to their friends and families. But do their family and friends know how to help?

Interestingly, if these young people were discussing the basics of emotional health for the first time, would this be the same for their families?

If we want to support the emotional health and Well-being of our youth and our communities, we need to invest in them, by supporting them to help each other from the inside, not by investing in more and more professionally-based services, but by providing effective programmes that support their own resilience and ability to step up as the experts.



Found below are the feedback statements from the 58 completed feedback forms that were returned from the 14-15 year olds. The numbers at the end of some of the statements reflect the number of participants who submitted that particular statement.

What did you find most useful about today's session?

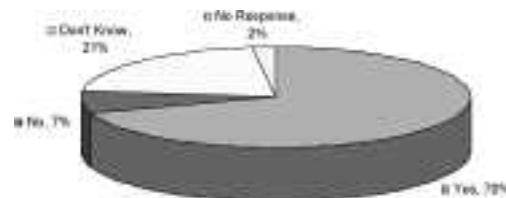
- *That your thoughts make you have a feeling which then leads to the way you behave.*
- *I have found the thoughts and consciousness.*
- *Consciousness. x3*
- *I found the thought, feeling, behaviour most useful.*
- *Being told about how thoughts contribute towards the way you're feeling.*
- *About how emotion levels effect you.*
- *That everyone goes through the same thing.*
- *Discovered that I may go 'ka-boom'!*
- *Interacting with teachers and other students.*
- *Finding out about emotional health. Didn't really know much about it before.*
- *The connection between consciousness and emotional health.*
- *How to deal with your emotions. x3*
- *It made me think about what emotions you can have.*
- *About the moods, like if you're emotional or physical etc. x2*
- *When we were talking about how everyone cures stress and what they do when they're angry. Where you can get help.*
- *Thought cycle. x6*
- *When we were talking about where we can go for help. x2*
- *Know that if you have problems who to turn to.*
- *Everything. x4*
- *How your mind and your thoughts work. x3*
- *Learning about your thoughts.*
- *Mental health/problems. x3*
- *How to stay happy.*
- *When we talk about how we feel.*
- *Feelings – good and bad places.*
- *The thought achievement, focusing on what you want to complete/the part where you should focus on your goal in order to achieve it. x2*
- *It made me think about how important things are.*
- *Nothing. x2*
- *I didn't find it helpful towards me.*
- *Found out about New Zealand. x2*

What would you like to know more about?

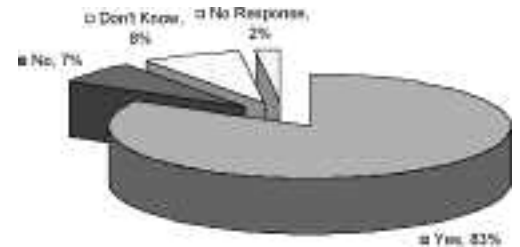
- *Not sure/don't know. x7*
- *Why do some people want to commit suicide?*
- *Depression.*
- *I feel more information could have been provided on the dangers of 'bottling up' emotion.*
- *Physical damage.*
- *How our emotions work.*
- *How to overcome stress and anger/stop getting stress. x3*
- *How to deal with stress.*
- *I feel like everything has been explained really well.*
- *Techniques to calm yourself down.*
- *How to deal with someone who is very emotional.*
- *Ways to talk to people with personal problems (to help them).*
- *Personal help.*
- *Where to get help. x3*
- *How to deal with my thoughts. x2*
- *How to deal with bad thoughts.*
- *More about my thoughts.*
- *Where to find help if no one helped me from the places suggested.*
- *Other people's experiences.*
- *Consciousness.*
- *Nothing, I knew all that already.*
- *What to do if no one helps or you wanted to do it on your own without help.*
- *Nothing. x5*
- *No.*
- *How to cure people with mental health.*
- *New Zealand. x2*
- *Eskimos.*

What would stop you from seeking help?

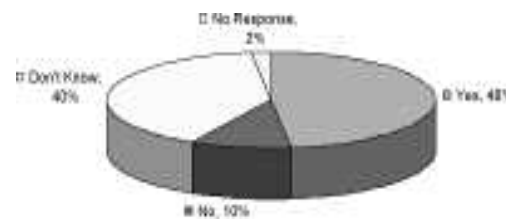
- Being embarrassed about confiding in someone you don't know. Also I wouldn't be sure if they'd keep it a secret or not. x7
- Being embarrassed/embarrassment. x7
- Might feel silly. x2
- My feelings, frightened of what people would think. x2
- Feeling uncomfortable.
- Self-conscious.
- Being scared.
- Being nervous.
- My emotions.
- Promising a family member/friend.
- A friend's trust or oath of something (secret)/friend made me not tell because she didn't want anyone to know. x3
- Being told not to.
- Relationships/people I care about.
- Pressure (them not wanting you to). x4
- If the person you wanted to help did not want help.
- Threats, scared family will find out.
- My Mum. x2
- My friends and family. x2
- Secrecy.
- Faith/religion.
- If you didn't want to go and so you can not get help. x2
- The idea that it wouldn't help.
- If it would get me in trouble. x3
- Personal issues/problems. x2
- Family problems – rather keep it personal.
- My friends, talking to someone who knows nothing about me.
- Confidential issues.
- Trust problems – talking to a stranger.
- Not knowing the person.
- Worried that they would judge me.
- If they told people that I didn't want to know.
- If I did something really bad, like kill someone or something.
- Not talking about it. x2
- Don't know. x4
- Nothing/no one. x3



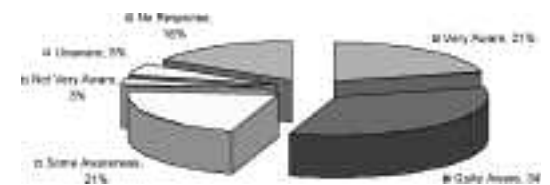
Do you feel you are given enough information about how to understand your and other's emotions and behaviour?



Would you know where you could go to seek help?

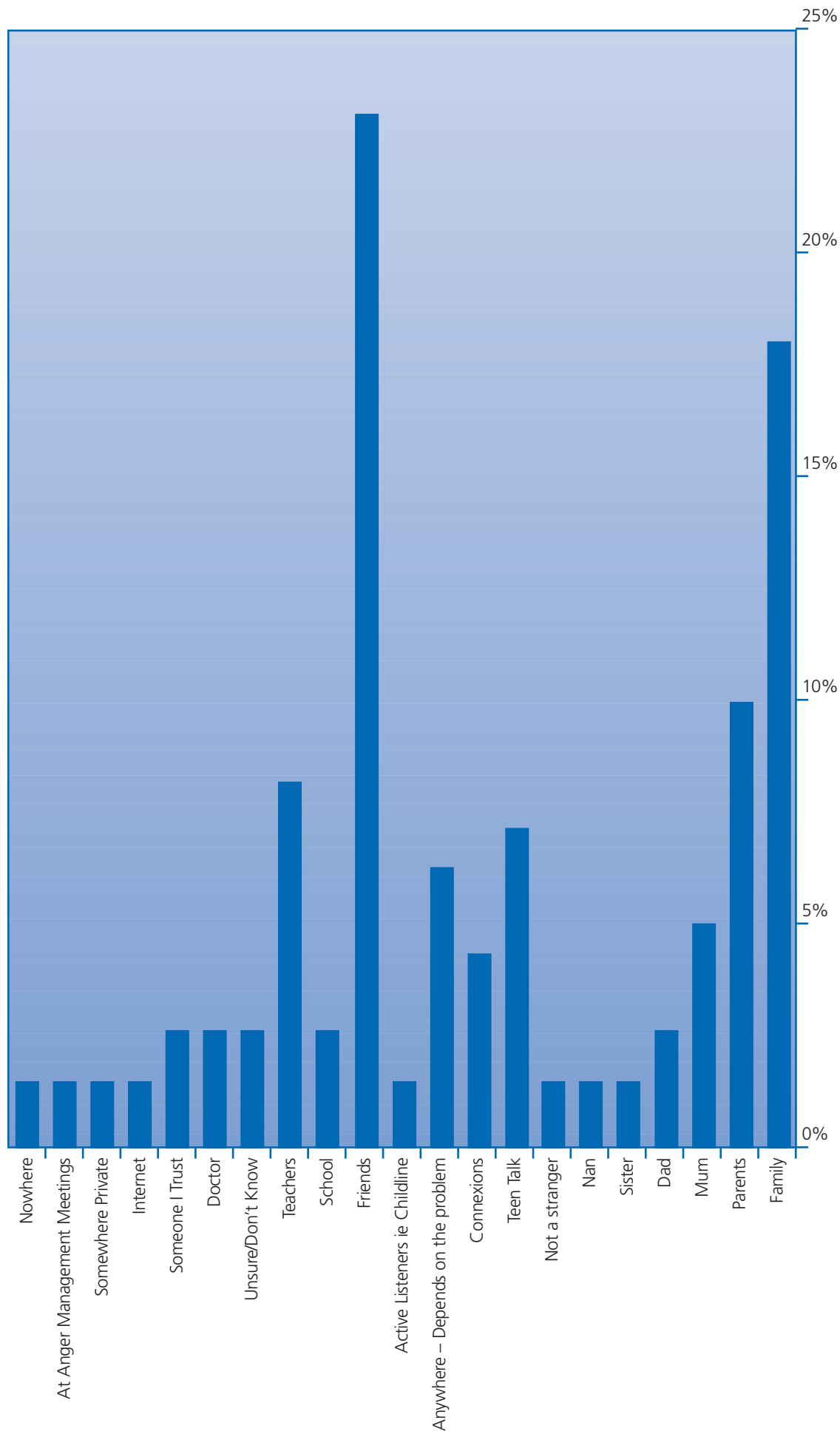


Would you feel able to seek help?



How aware do you feel you are emotionally?

Where would you seek help if you had the choice?



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