

The Session Will Begin Shortly



1. Click on the pink Collaborate button (bottom right) to open the chat window and enter your message. You will also see the settings tab there to check your audio setting.



2. You can close the Collaborate panel at any time so you can see more of the current presentation.

Can You Hear Me?

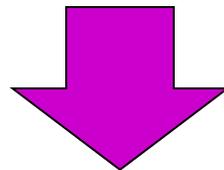


If you can't hear me, check your computer's volume setting (bottom right of the screen in Windows, top right on a Mac)



If you still can't hear me, click on Collaborate icon at the bottom right of the screen then on the gear button to configure your audio settings.

Answer 'Yes' to the poll below if you can hear me.





Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Wellbeing During the Postgraduate Experience

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Student Counsellor
Trinity College Student Counselling Service



ICE BREAKER

1) Type in to the Chat Box about how you are finding the postgraduate experience so far:

- **One thing you are enjoying/looking forward to**
- **One thing you are finding challenging/stressful**

2) Rate current stress level out of 10

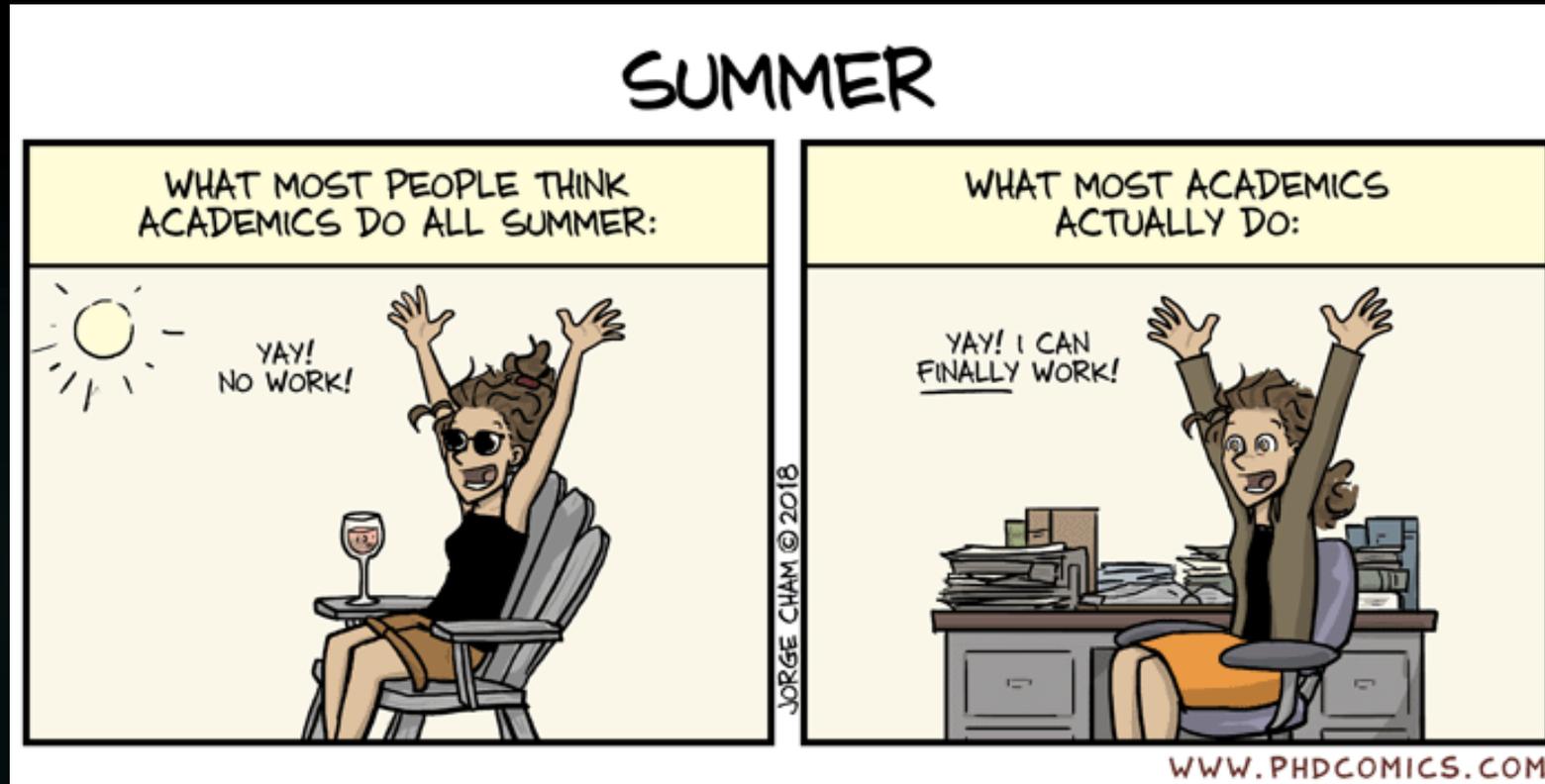
Engage in simple breathing exercise (4,7,8), rate again.

Our plan for today

- ▶ General strategies for minding our mental health as a postgraduate
- ▶ What's your context? What issues are specific to your course/department?
- ▶ Creating a community of support– your secret weapon
- ▶ Get to know ourselves better– your other secret weapon
- ▶ Interaction and participation required!
- ▶ Stretch breaks (please take these as often as you need to)



Postgraduate Etiquette



<http://phdcomics.com/top2018.php>

Mental Health Mythbusting



I can learn techniques to avoid unhappiness



If I experience intense distress, there is something wrong with me



I must get rid of strong painful feelings



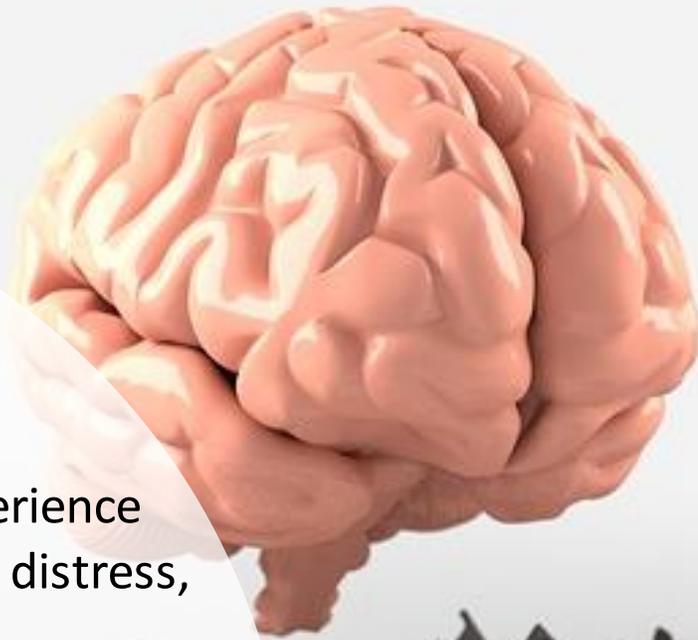
I am abnormal/I am the only one



It's my fault



I can't do anything that causes upset, I can't work if I'm upset



What is mental health?



- ▶ It encompasses our capacity to work, to love and to play:
- ▶ **Work:** A sense of agency and the capacity to be generative/feel that what you do has meaning
- ▶ **Love:** The capacity to have an authentic, intimate relationship with at least one other person,
- ▶ **Play:** The capacity to enjoy life, sing, dance, play. To be involved rather than just observe.
- ▶ **Our capacity to tolerate distress, not just work towards contentment.**

Difficulties arise when...

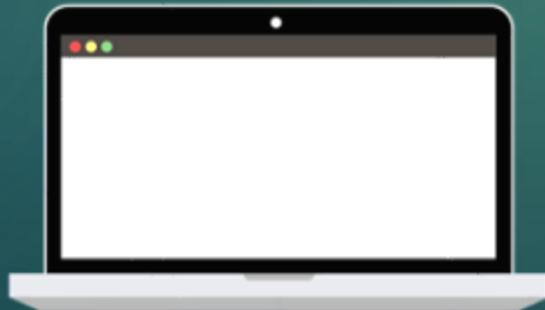
- Our emotional needs (safety, acceptance, love) are not being met.

- The demands in our environment outweigh our available resources.
- We feel powerless, under threat and overwhelmed by this to the point where we can no longer make sense of it.
- We feel defined by our problems.
- We feel alone.



The Postgraduate Experience

- ▶ **Postgraduate students are often:**
- ▶ More isolated from support networks
- ▶ Experience intercultural differences & language barriers
- ▶ Can become dependent on their supervisory relationship
- ▶ Experience unrealistic expectations for themselves!
- ▶ Feel like imposters much of the time
- ▶ All of which can lead to feelings of terror, shame and loneliness on a pretty regular basis



▶ **Taught Programmes**

- ▶ Often come at a huge financial expense
- ▶ Will have a different level of expectations for students
- ▶ These are rarely explicit and need to be independently navigated

▶ **Research Programmes**

- ▶ Vary in the amount of available peer/pastoral support
- ▶ Straddle the role of being a student and a staff member
- ▶ Are designed to be individually challenging
- ▶ Often become personally challenging



Resilience

- The ability to face and overcome adversity, to **"bounce back"**
- It is not just a quality of an individual, but also of a community, requiring supportive relationships and systems.
- You are likely ***much more resilient than you realise***, having recovered from multiple failures, disappointments, crises, struggles and losses in your life.
- College is hard, and you will face roadblocks and really hard phases. But ***most people come out of it just fine***, with increased ability to recover from future hurts.



What's the secret to happiness?

- We all want to be happy.
- Sooner or later we need to accept that rather than things being the way we feel they should be, they are usually the way they shouldn't be.
- Life is full of unexpected events, suffering and trauma.
- The biggest trap we must avoid is trying to constantly escape pain and distress.
- The biggest lesson we need to learn is how to turn towards our pain rather than running away from it.



So if we can't control our happiness, and the postgraduate environment is going to challenge us what can we do?

Six Strategies that can help



Avoid avoidance



Recognise we are not alone



Proactively do things that help



Accept our difficult feelings



Catch our self-critic



Build supportive communities

5 ways to Wellbeing

BE ACTIVE
DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD

KEEP LEARNING
EMBRACE NEW EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF

Give
Your time,
your words,
your presence

TAKE NOTICE
REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY

CONNECT
TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED

Proactive approach





Managing Expectations and Cultural Diversity

- - PG study can be an exciting opportunity *and* a huge pressure
 - What are my family's expectations? What am I sacrificing? What are my own expectations?
- - Trinity expects students to take a **proactive approach**
 - E.g. Seeking help and support
- - This includes becoming familiar with the academic culture
 - E.g. Rote learning no longer an option & failure is likely

⊘ Avoid Avoidance ⊘

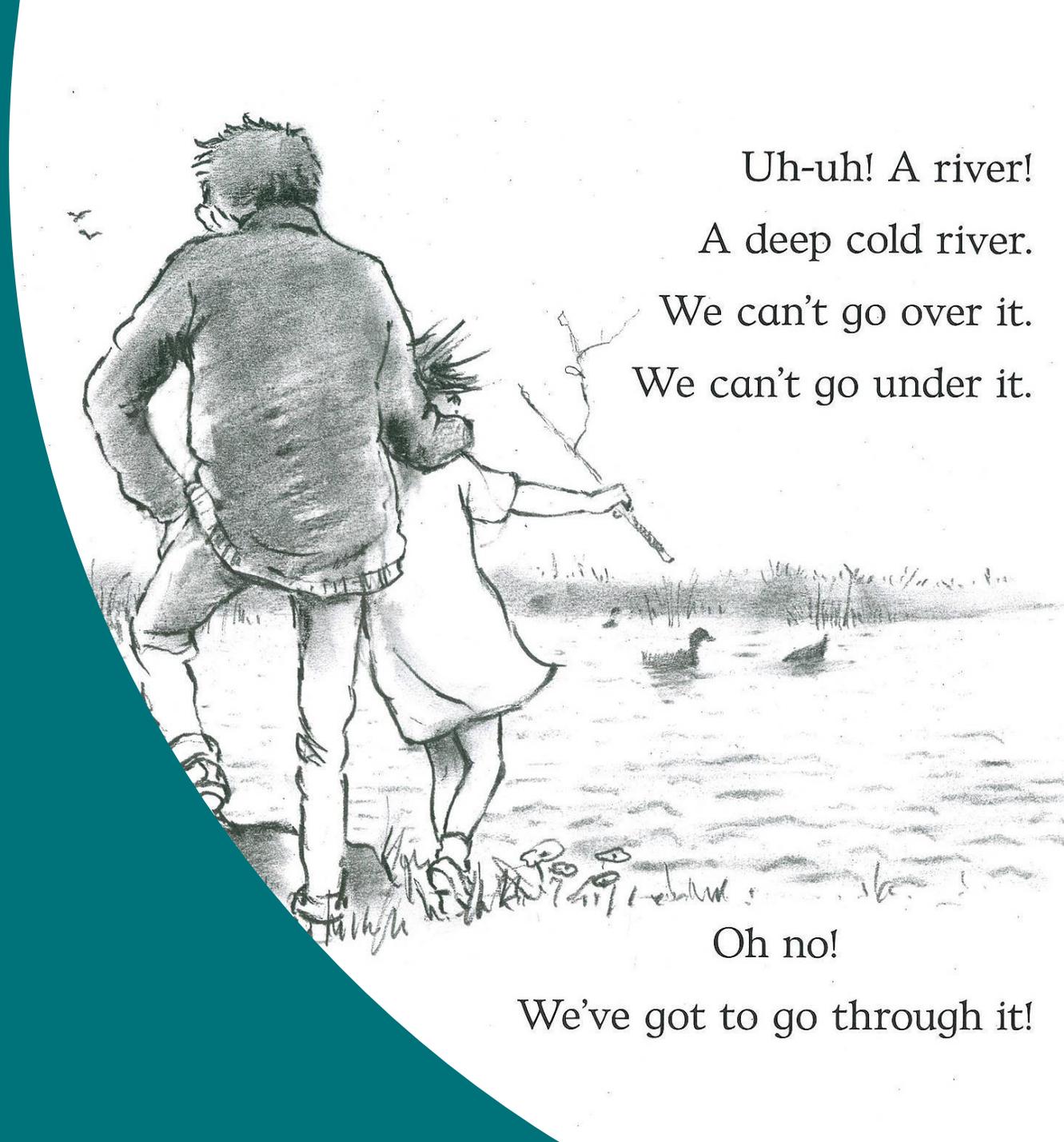
- It's natural to want to avoid pain, and we usually do it through behavioural avoidance (avoiding people or situations likely to cause distress), or emotional avoidance (avoiding our painful feelings).
- Avoidance can be **very effective**, particularly with anxiety, but only in the **short-term**
- When we are constantly running away from difficult feelings and experiences, we become out of touch with ourselves and others. We make decisions based on fear, rather than based on our own needs, goals and values.



Beware the comfort zone

Avoidance easily becomes a habit, and can quickly become part of our identity – we believe ourselves unable to tolerate fear or solve problems.

Learning to tolerate distress and face into our problems takes a lot of courage.



Uh-uh! A river!
A deep cold river.
We can't go over it.
We can't go under it.

Oh no!
We've got to go through it!

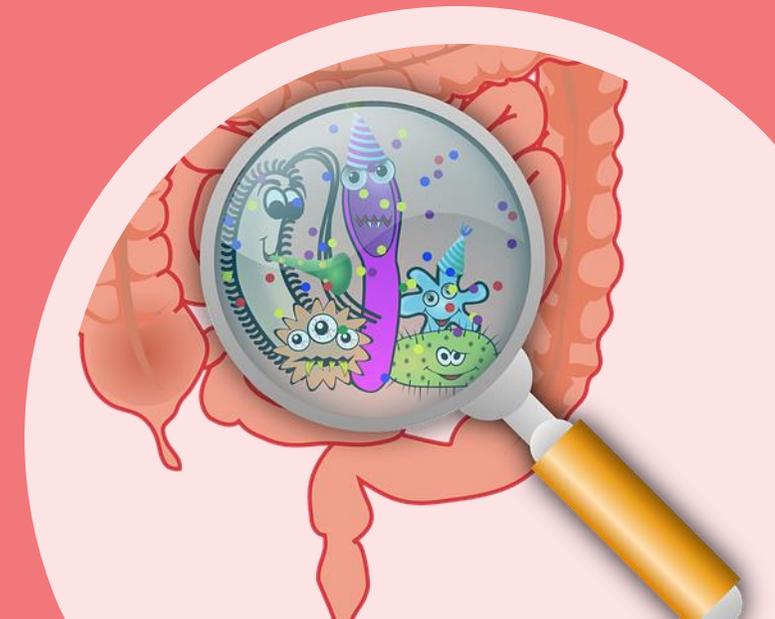
Accepting difficult feelings

- Emotional pain is like physical pain – it can act as a **warning system**, telling us something is wrong
- Our challenge when we have a strong emotional response is to slow down, recognise we are having strong feelings, identify what they are and approach with **curiosity**.
- Make space for our unpleasant thoughts and feelings without trying to get rid of them or deny them. Without the struggle, our emotions unfreeze.
- Trust that our emotions are telling us something important.



Treating the fever

- What happens when we have a fever?
- If we only focus on getting rid of the feelings, we haven't listened to what they are telling us about what's gone wrong in our life, or what we need.



Symptom

- Exhausted
- Hopeless

Underlying feeling

- Loneliness
- Disconnection

Need

- Connection

Symptom

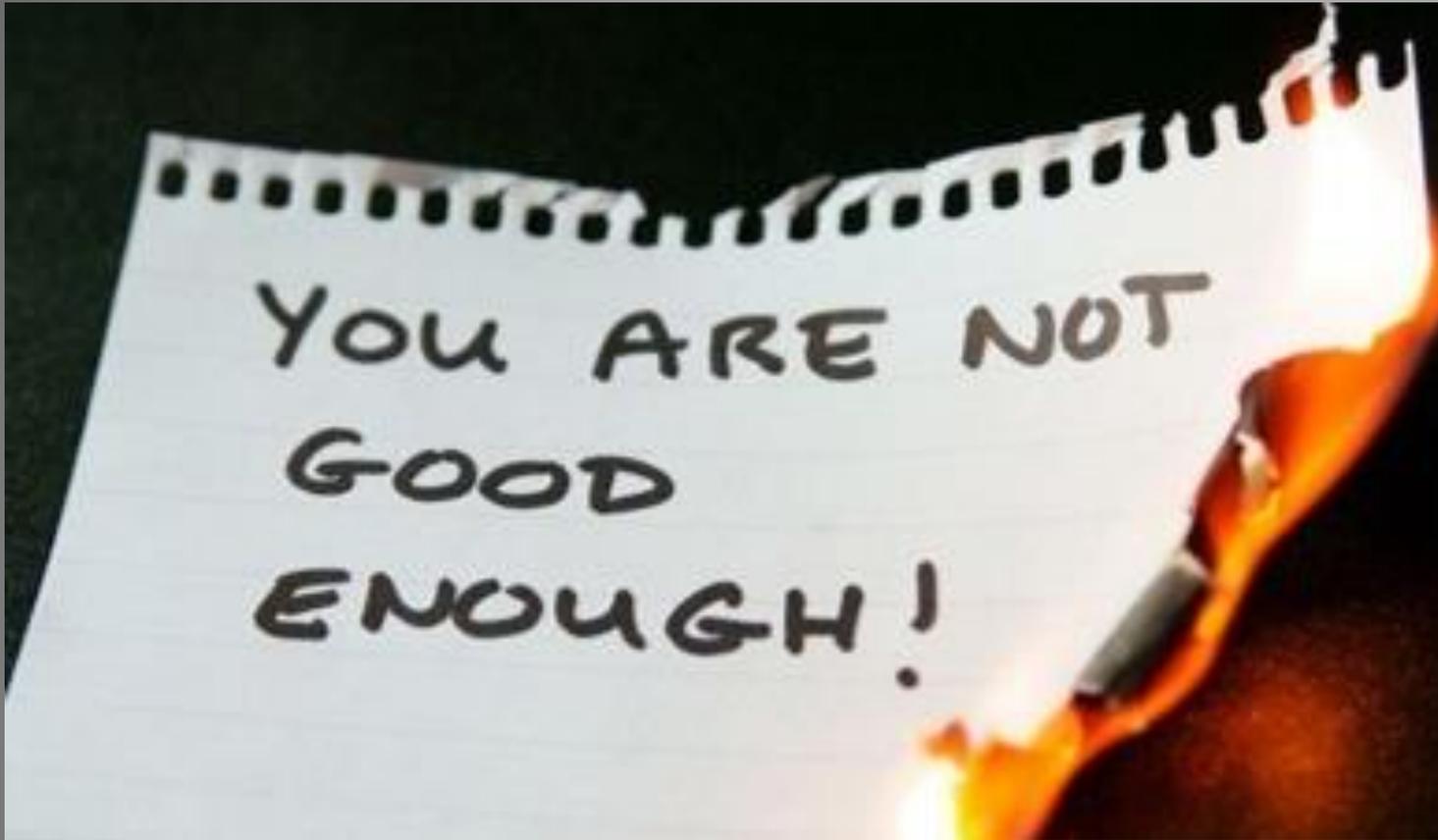
- Irritable
- Panicky

Underlying feeling

- Worthlessness

Need

- Acceptance



Harsh Self-Criticism

- A harsh and punishing inner critic can turn a bad day into something much worse.
- Think about how you speak to yourself in your worst moments
- Imagine that self-critic stepping outside of you

Four questions about my self- critic

1) How do I feel when I speak to myself that way?

2) What is the cost of speaking to myself this way?

3) What is the purpose of the self-critic? (and is it working?)

4) How would I treat friend who is criticizing self?



Recognising we are not alone

- We often compare our insides to everyone else's outsides. Our backstage footage to their highlights reel.
- This makes us feel abnormal and alone
- Recognise that suffering and personal inadequacy are part of what it means to be human
- **Common Humanity:** Our flaws and mistakes are what connect us to everyone around us, rather than what isolates us

Building Supportive Communities



"What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured."

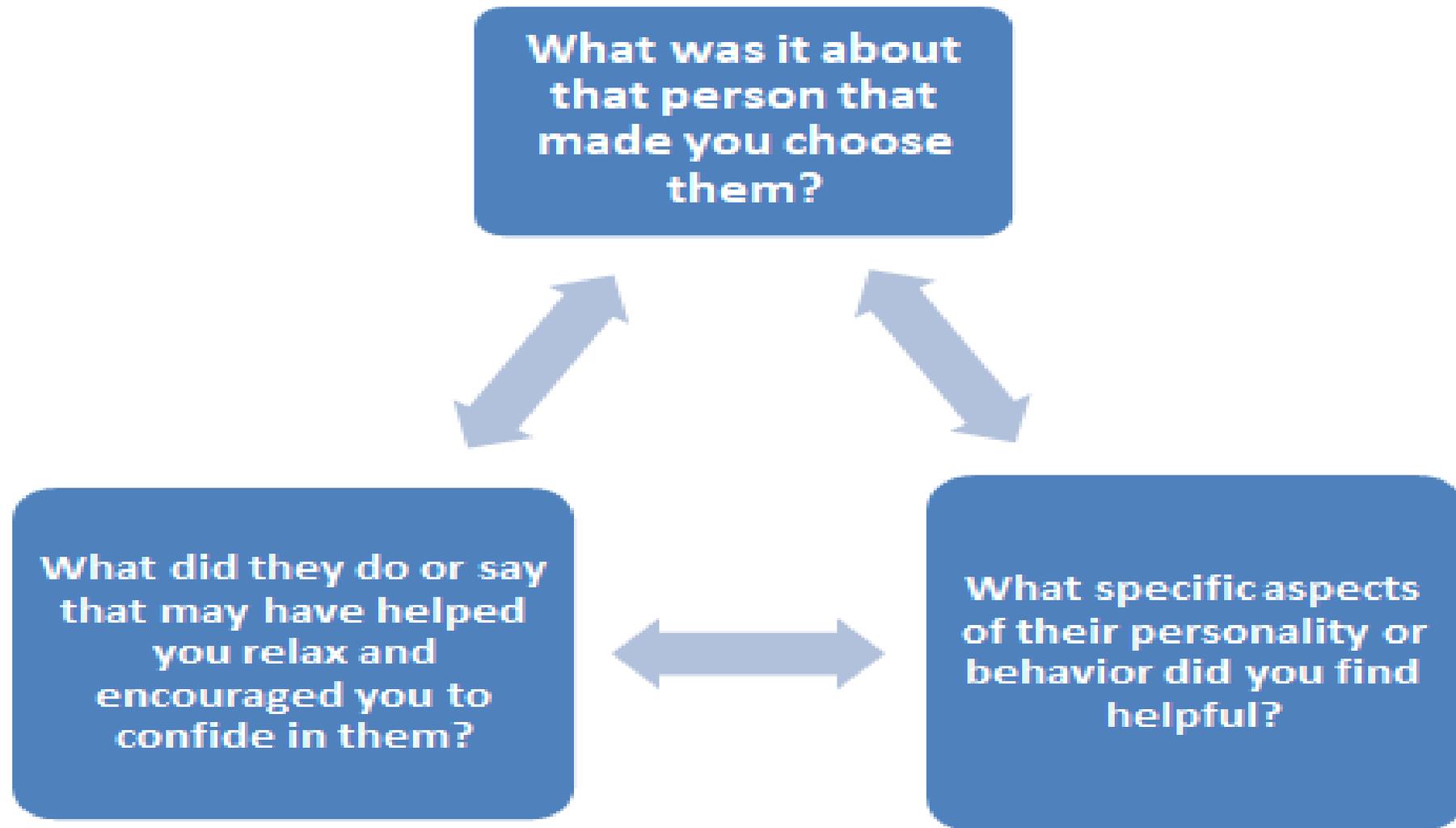
Kurt Vonnegut



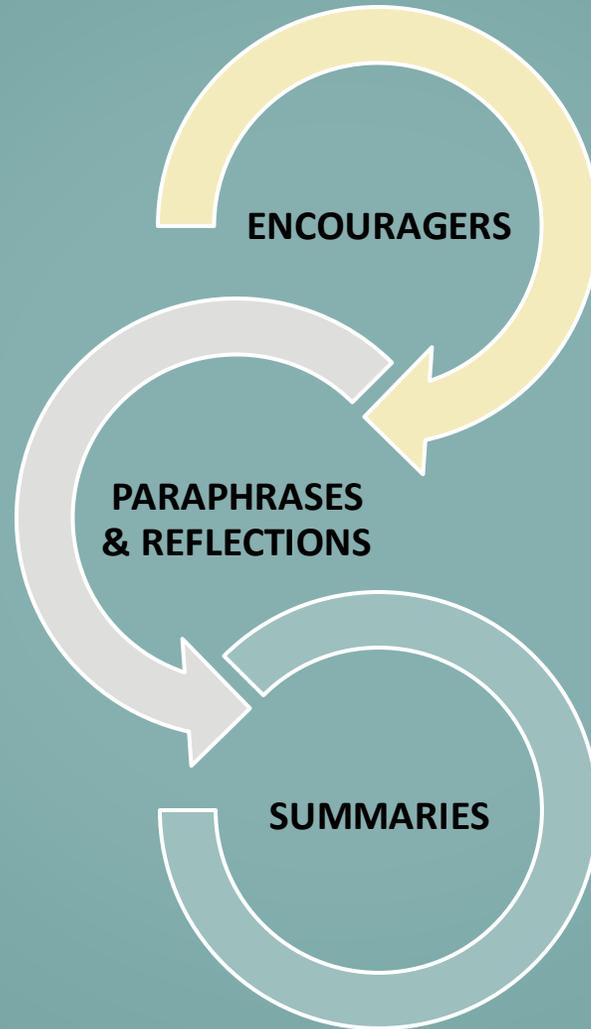
Enhancing a sense of belonging

- Join or create **communities of solidarity**
- **Actively ensure that everyone is included.** Look for those on the margins, and seek to include them.
- **Inequality and oppression are hurtful** – watch out for it in yourself, challenge it in others.
- **Always remember that everyone is doing the best that they can in any given moment.**

The 'Ideal' Helper



ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS



- ENCOURAGERS, PARAPHRASES AND SUMMARIES CONVEY THAT WE ARE **WORKING TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER PERSON.**

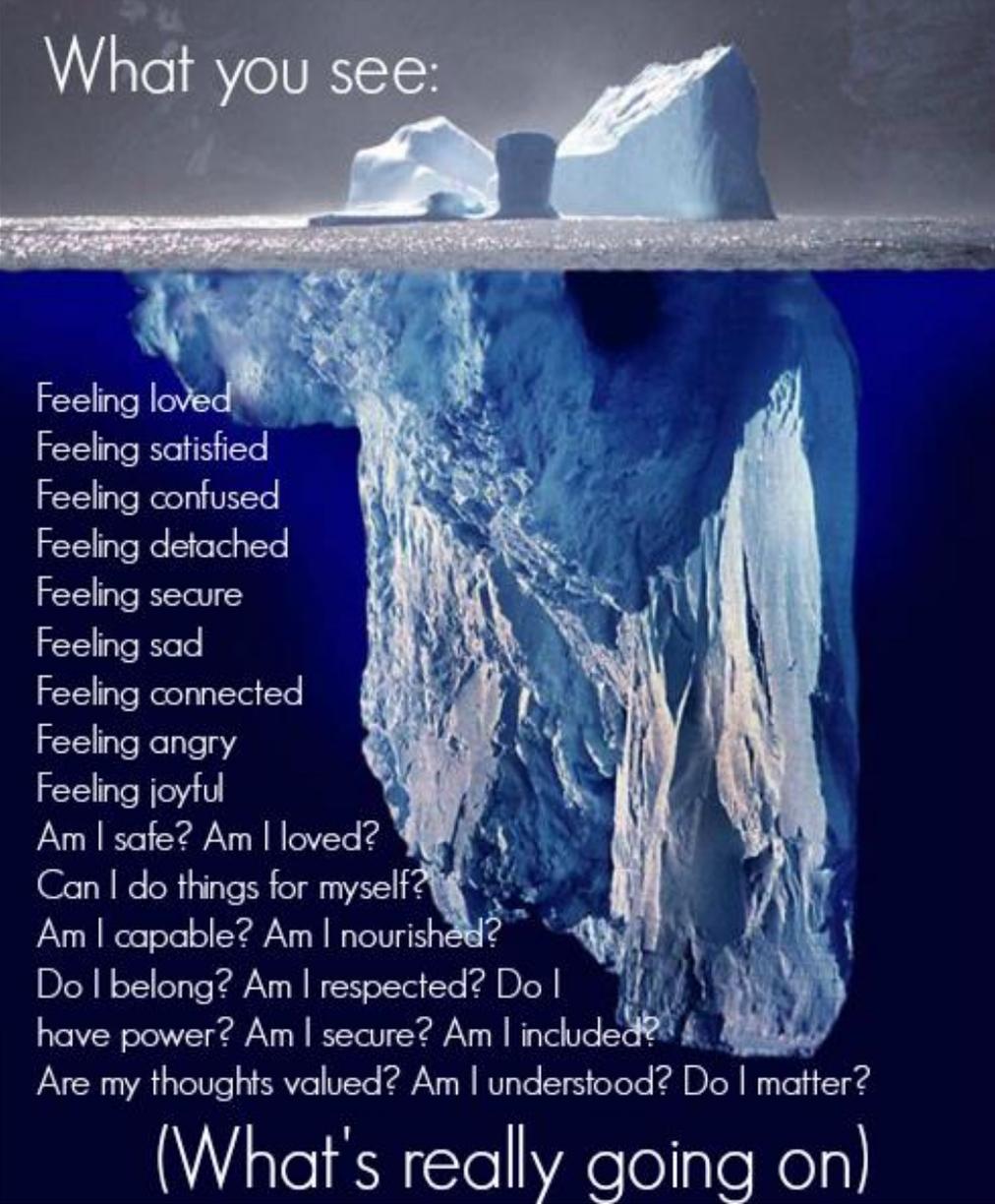
EMPATHY VS. SYMPATHY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw>



Foster a support network, and build communities.

What you see:



Feeling loved
Feeling satisfied
Feeling confused
Feeling detached
Feeling secure
Feeling sad
Feeling connected
Feeling angry
Feeling joyful
Am I safe? Am I loved?
Can I do things for myself?
Am I capable? Am I nourished?
Do I belong? Am I respected? Do I
have power? Am I secure? Am I included?
Are my thoughts valued? Am I understood? Do I matter?

(What's really going on)



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Some sources of support

Senior Tutor:

<https://www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/>

PG support:

01-8961417

pgsupp@tcd.ie

Students' Union:

www.tcdsu.org

Graduate Students' Union

www.tcdgsu.ie

College Health Centre:

Ph: 8961556/ 8961591



Some sources of support



STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICE:

(01) 896 1407

www.tcd.ie/student-counselling

- Scheduled needs assessments
- Lunchtime drop-in appointments
- Daily Emergency appointments
- Staff consultation
- Focused therapy
- Groups & Workshops



01 897 1407

<http://student-learning.tcd.ie>

1:1 consultations

Workshops

Writing Groups

Online Resources



01 896 2438

student2student@tcd.ie

Student room

Out of hours support

Niteline

9 pm- 2:30 am every night of term
-Ph: 1 800 793 793 /
IM service on their website

Samaritans 24 hr helpline

Ph: 116 123,
call in to Marlborough
Street during the day for in-
person support

Local GP

DUBDOC – Ph: 454 5604

Self-help packs:
<http://cci.health.wa.gov.au>





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Postgraduate Student Support Group

GRAD CHATS

FRIDAYS 11.00AM-12.15PM
RUNNING FROM JUNE THROUGH TO AUGUST AND BEYOND ...

GSU COMMON ROOM
FIRST FLOOR, HOUSE 7

**ARE YOU FEELING CONFUSED OR OVERWHELMED ABOUT BEING A POSTGRADUATE
STUDENT IN TRINITY?**

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONNECT MORE WITH POSTGRADUATE PEERS?

**DROP IN TO THE SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATED BY THE
STUDENT COUNSELLING AND THE POSTGRADUATE
ADVISORY SERVICES**
NO PRIOR BOOKING REQUIRED



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