

Dramatic arts as a teaching and learning tool to promote mental health

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What is mental health?

“...a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

(WHO, 2004, p. 12)

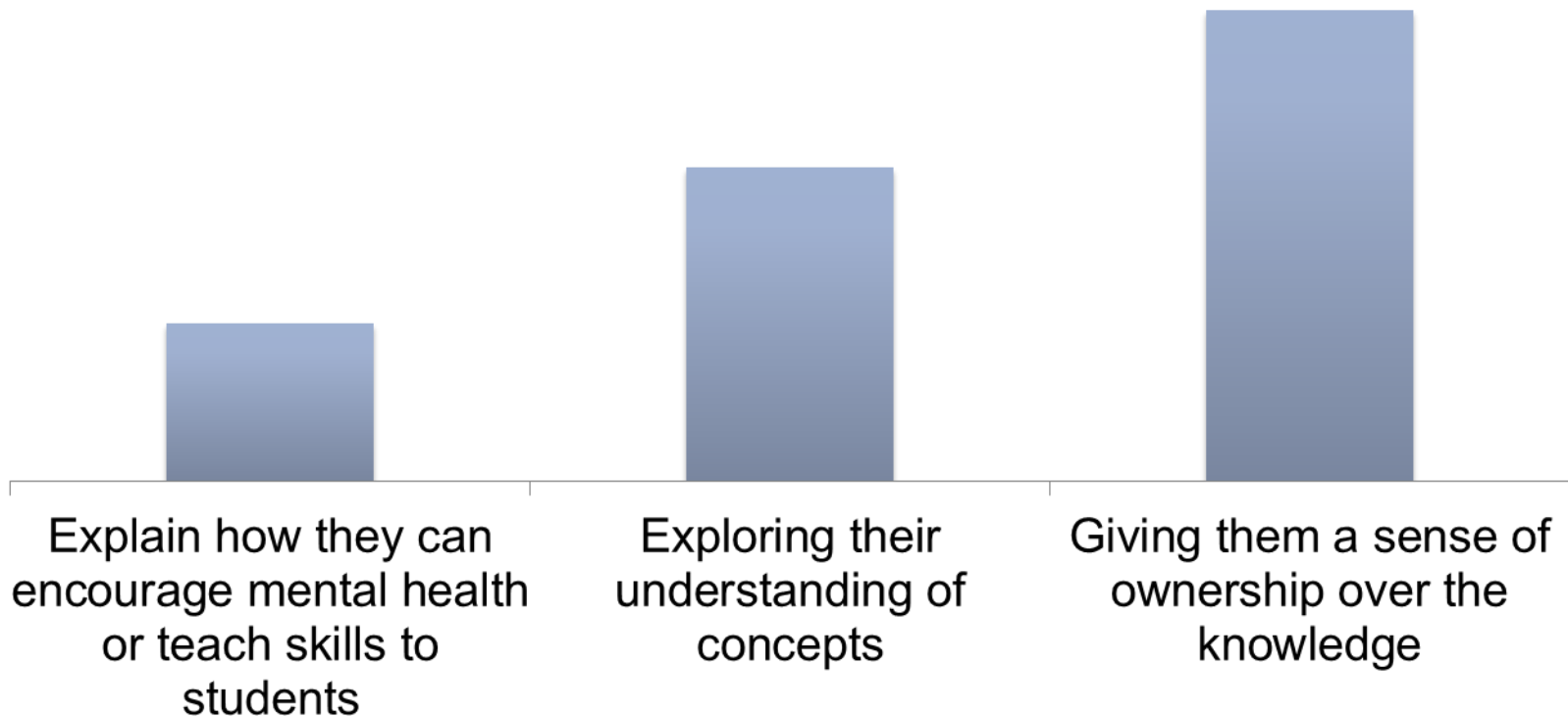
- Mental health
 - = positive capacity
 - = social and emotional wellbeing
 - = behaviour, thoughts and emotions
 - ≠ **mental ill-health**

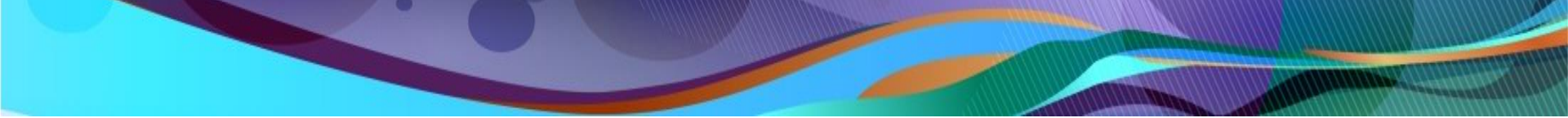
...spectrum of problems that interfere with an individual's cognitive, social and emotional abilities including both 'mental health problems' and 'mental illnesses'

Teaching mental health and mental ill-health

- It is important: best response for mental ill-health is evidence-based promotion, prevention and early intervention
- Can be difficult
 - Size (crowded curriculum)
 - Safety, sensitivity
 - Sensationalism, shock

Mental health with teaching professionals





So starting with that first part...

... encouraging mental health, creating mental ill-health awareness
and teaching mental health skills in school students?

MindPlay drama competition



- Est. 1997
- Everymind
(in 2014, partnered with headspace)
- **Aims:**
 - Awareness of mental illness
 - Awareness of mental health and help-seeking
 - Creativity and connection

MindPlay drama competition



Year 11 students, Hunter region



Script writing workshop



Research and write 10-15 minute drama piece on mental health related topic



Audition



Grand Final

MindPlay drama competition



- Evaluations – positive experience and powerful learning experience
 - for students and audience

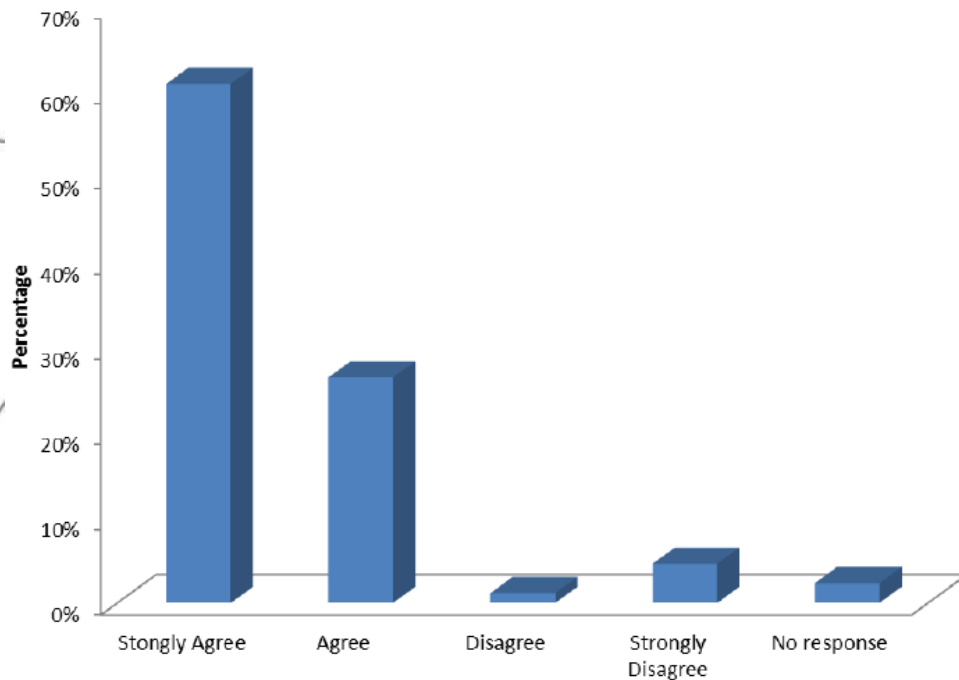
What does MindPlay mean to you?

- Themes in student focus groups:
 - Impact on family
 - Awareness
 - Disseminate information

MindPlay drama competition



- Evaluations – positive experience and powerful learning experience
 - for students and audience

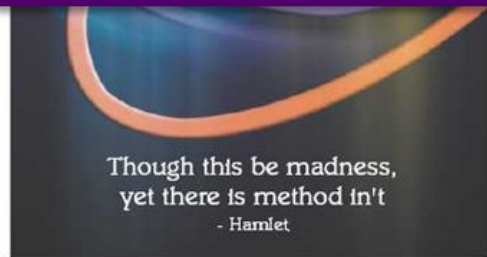


MindPlay provides opportunity to learn about mental health and mental illness

MindPlay drama competition



For these reasons,
Response Ability
includes filmed
MindPlay drama
pieces



- Evaluations – positive experience and powerful learning experience
 - for students and audience
- Student-led, authentic student views
 - drama can be an important way to express emotions

Visual expression of emotion evokes behaviour change

- intentionally experiential, audience influenced change thoughts and behaviour

Express difficult to verbalise concepts through narrative

- relatable concrete meaning

First MindPlay film: *The Black Dog*

- Positively rated
 - Frequently used
 - Set of activities
 - Getting old (filmed in 2000)
-
- Scoping study: 2012
 - Desire for new films



Second MindPlay film: *Deep Breaths*



Theme: Resilience



Why is this film important?

- Dual purpose
 - exploring one way to teach to school students
 - explaining concepts appropriate for audience (pre-service teachers)

Resilience

important idea, can be difficult to conceptualise

Explores anxiety

most common mental illness (adolescents and adults)

Why is this film important?

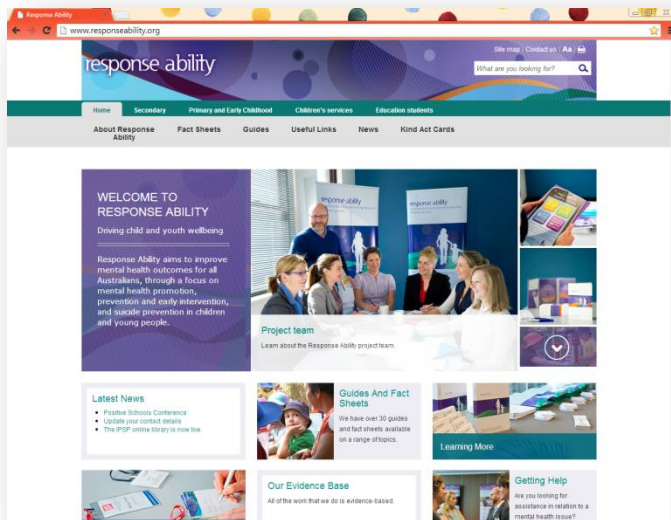
- Added layer of complexity compared with filmed case studies, documentary, or lecture
 - Authenticity, adolescent-centred
 - Emotion to change behaviour
 - Unique
 - Engaging, distinctive, easier to process

Why is this film important?

- New films requested by lecturers
 - Film and activities distributed via USB and online
- Contact us to learn more about model of MindPlay and mental health promotion.



Response Ability Teacher Education initiative



Thank you

