



The Open
University

Supporting adult learners' positive mental health

Transcript

SARAH MANDER:

Hello, I'm Sarah Mander. And this is my colleague--

NEILL BODDINGTON:

--Neill Boddington.

SARAH MANDER:

And we're here to introduce you to the badged open course, Supporting Adult Learners Mental Health.

NEILL BODDINGTON:

So Sarah, why did you want to develop this course? Was there anything that specifically prompted your thinking?

SARAH MANDER:

I'm an educator practitioner. So I'm at the chalkface with adult learners. And I see an increasing level of mental health need amongst them year on year. As a staff tutor at The Open University, I line manage lecturers and feedback from my colleagues, and also informed me that this was the same for them. As mental health needs increase, therefore professional development opportunities increase. And I felt that developing this course might meet some of those needs for our educator colleagues. Neill, you're a mental health expert. What knowledge and experience have you brought to the course?

NEILL BODDINGTON:

Well, I've worked in health and mental health roles pretty much all my working career, and including in colleges and university settings. And I've seen, in speaking to educators and to learners, how powerful and influential that role of an educator can be towards the learners' wellbeing and mental health. And I think sometimes, a lack of awareness and confidence, knowledge, can play a part in how much that educator can get involved and help to support a student, which is really important and can really make a difference to their education. So I think what I've tried to bring into this course is simplifying things to bring some easy and more simple considerations to what can really make a big difference in that learning environment.

SARAH MANDER:

For sure. Who might benefit from completing the course?

NEILL BODDINGTON:

Well, anyone who delivers adult education can really benefit from the course. Whether that's if you're working in a more informal setting, a more informal education setting such as a village hall or an evening class, delivering adult education through the local authority or maybe a charity setting. And then onto colleges, universities, and even anyone delivering postgraduate courses. But it's important that it's not about the level of education that we're really thinking about here. Because all learners, everyone has mental health. And our learners are going to bring their mental health, whether that's positive or maybe less so into that learning environment. And it's going to influence both their learning as well as that environment influencing their mental health.

SARAH MANDER:

It's so true. We do all have mental health, don't we? And yes, as an educator studying this course, you can benefit from studying. It'll help improve your knowledge of a range of mental health illnesses. You can acquire some strategies, possibly a small toolkit to best support adult learners who you work with. And also you'll be able to signpost appropriately, both within and external to your own organisation. Importantly, you'll be able to respond appropriately to crisis situations. And overall, your confidence will increase in respect of supporting adult learners who experience mental health needs. This can be more fulfilling for your role and impact positively on your sense of professional efficacy.

NEILL BODDINGTON:

Fantastic. So how was the course structured?

SARAH MANDER:

The course is structured into eight weeks with different topics. For example, it commences with an introduction to learner mental health and progresses into more specific topics, such as stigma surrounding mental health and potential issues of inclusion, such as cultural barriers of mental health. The course finalises with consideration of wellbeing and resilience, and the importance of educators looking after our own mental health. Included within each week to support this are wellbeing activities, which you can use with your learners.

NEILL BODDINGTON:

Yes. And the course has a range of other activities as well that help to keep it interactive and engaging for yourselves. So things like videos, there's reflective tasks to aid your learning. And there's some quizzes as well. As Sarah said, it's over eight weeks, but you can study at your own pace. And at the end of the completing the course, you're rewarded with a digital badge that you can use to enhance your CV. And I think you'll really enjoy the course. I certainly enjoyed Week 8 looking at, educator wellbeing is often overlooked. So I think it's a really important week that we've included. And also one that I think everyone will benefit from, because it's so important to be able to bring positive wellbeing for yourself forward and

into your learning environment. So how about yourself, Sarah? Which one did you take the most away from?

SARAH MANDER:

Well, Week 6 stood out for me. It covers social and cultural dimensions of mental health in learning environments where you'll learn about the importance of cultural belonging in mental health. It recognises the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. And overall, develops skills to enhance inclusive practice by diverse learners. Thank you for your interest in this course and The Open University. We hope you and your learners enjoy and benefit from enhancing your mental health knowledge.