Practical Tips for the PPIE team in being aware of their own self-care and anticipating and supporting RUG member's emotional needs

Public involvement can be a positive experience for many people. However, it can also cause negative emotional impacts. Supporting emotional needs is part of the UK Standards for Public Involvement. This guide highlights what these needs might be and how people should be supported.

While symptoms differ from person to person, you may notice some changes in behavior:

ANXIETY

- appearing restless, tense and on edge
- avoiding certain activities
- becoming overwhelmed or upset easily
- finding it hard to make decisions and/or having difficulty engaging
- referring to being constantly worried and appearing apprehensive.

DEPRESSION

- finding it difficult to concentrate on tasks
- turning up late
- feeling tired and fatigued and/or being unusually tearful or emotional
- getting angry easily or frustrated with people
- avoiding being in a group
- being vulnerable to stress and anxiety
- drinking alcohol to cope with other symptoms of anxiety and/or depression
- having a loss of confidence and negative thought patterns

Possible responses:

1. Offer support.

Ask the person if there is anything you can do to support them, what they need. This may include advice about where to get assistance. The person may not wish to take up your offer, but it's important to let them know support is available.

2. Develop a plan.

Good planning prevents confusion. If they want to remain in the group, then we need to plan how we can make sure their needs are met. Don't make assumptions about what the person finds challenging or what will benefit them. Rather, talk about it together as you work through the best approach.

3. Being inclusive.

Experiencing anxiety or depression can make people feel less confident at times. Help the person to feel more comfortable by including them as they find helpful thus overcoming any possible fear of stigma – actual or perceived – that could affect confidence. Speak openly about mental health conditions and encourage others to do the same.

4. Staying in touch.

If a person has taken some time away from the group, as part of their returning and feeling valued it is important to keep in touch will them, this makes their return to the group smoother and easier.

5. Address the causes.

If a specific incident or response has contributed to their condition, it's important that we listen to their views and take action where appropriate. This can help to improve outcomes for the individual and for the group.

6. Set clear expectations.

State clear expectations for all involved if there has been a clear cause, where everyone agrees to be flexible to allow for any changes that are needed to support the person. Any agreed modifications should be implemented gradually to allow for adjustment. Make your own limitations clear.

7. Maintaining confidentiality and privacy.

While it's important to inform the wider group of any changes that affect them, the details of the user involved must remain confidential unless they give their permission. Talk to the person about what they would like other group members to know and how they'd like to share this information.

SUMMARY:

- Listen to the concerns / distress
- Reassure, empathise, normalise
- Do not probe only ask what is relevant
- Be honest and clear about limitations
- Devise a plan to manage situation

Debrief and Self Care for the PPIE Team

It is important to hold regular team meetings to reflect on practice, identify positives, the challenges of distressing stories and their impact on individual team members. This enables team members to explore any feelings they have and find solutions to problems that arise. Issues and dilemmas presented by the RUG can be clarified and resolved and the stress levels and welfare issues of the team monitored.

After a traumatic or stressful incident team members may need a debrief to enable their distress to be aired, shared worked through. Within Mental Health meetings Professor Chew Graham will provide a debrief with team members when necessary.