

'Why use the SEJ in Education? - Preventing Student suicide'

As an educator, I have seen first-hand how young people can suffer from mental and emotional distress but did not have the necessary skills to cope or manage themselves. It does not matter what the issue is, they feel unable to take appropriate action. They wait a long time for support services to help them and sadly it may be too late, and for those who have taken their own lives, it has been.

Last year, I received the devastating news of the loss of a young person I knew who graduated not long ago. They had struggled with mental health challenges throughout the course of their study. But they are not an exception, more and more we hear of young lives cut short. In an article in 'Top Universities' the headline writes: 'One UK Student Dies By Suicide Every Four Days'

There has been longstanding concern over the mental health and suicide risk of university students in the UK and internationally. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in the UK, suicide is the most common cause of death for boys aged between 5 and 19, and the second most common for girls of that age. Data from the ONS indicate that the rate of suicide among university students in England and Wales has increased in recent years.

Sir Anthony Seldon, vice-chancellor of the University of Buckingham and a campaigner on student well-being, said: "Student suicide rates and emotional distress levels could be reduced at university if we acted differently."

A Guardian newspaper article commented, "...Suicides among children and young adults peak at the beginning of exam season it has emerged and added to fears that pressure to get good results is harming their mental health. Exams are sometimes the final straw that leads to someone under 25 taking their own life, according to a major inquiry. While experts pointed out that the causes of suicide are always complex, they said academic problems could play a significant role..."

The UK government published a Green Paper in December 2017 to tackle the Mental Health challenges facing children and young people. A recent NUT survey found that 84% of teachers agreed that 'the focus on academic targets means that social and emotional aspects of education tended to be neglected'. These are all well and good intentions but that alone will not save lives.

It is not just up to the government to make changes. With every comment we make to these young people such as 'Oh why didn't you study harder you should have got an A*' 'if you don't get an A* you won't get any decent jobs' 'you are not trying hard enough.' etc...

I asked myself 'Why not equip and enable them to manage their own lives? Why not teach them how easy it is to handle life as and when it presents itself so that they can thrive during their studies instead of just surviving?' The answer is to teach them the SEJ Process so they can reach their full potential and prevent further escalation into mental illness or attempt in ending their life.

The SEJ works for them because it's simple, effective and immediate. They do not need to wait to see a counsellor or support services (which since they feel stigmatised, they often do not seek) and this is a powerful reason why the SEJ works for these young people. They learn it once and apply it straight away to the issues that concern them, it works every time in every situation. The simplicity and the universal application of the SEJ can be easily taught and is applicable in Education, it can be taught to a 5-year-old as well as to a 25-year-old, as it truly is limitless in every sense.

We as educators/parents/carers have a moral and social responsibility to make this happen as a matter of urgency. I am a passionate advocate of the SEJ because I know it can and will support educators and young people to make changes in their lives so these devastating statistics will become a thing of the past.

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