



# Student Counselling Service

[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student.counselling/home](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student.counselling/home)

0131 650 4170

Iris Sloan Assistant Director





# Outline

- Responsibility
- What is mental health?
- How to respond in the moment
- Boundaries and confidentiality





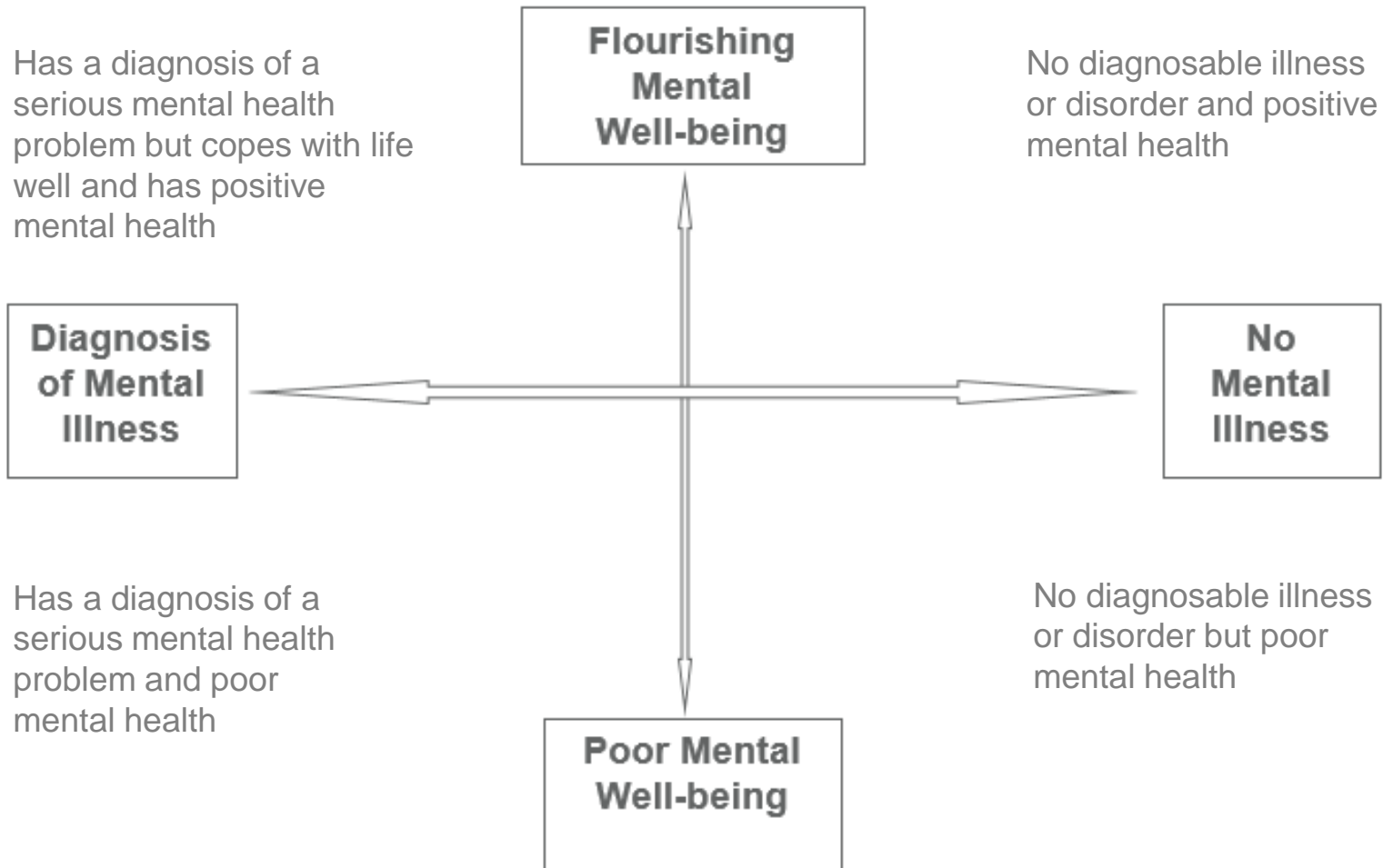
# Whose responsibility? - Ours

Academic and support staff have a key role in supporting and promoting student mental health.

- Relationships with teaching staff are some of the most important and influential
- Can provide students with opportunity to seek help and support at early stage
- A learning environment that appears unsupportive may result in students choosing not to disclose difficulties of any kind.



# The mental health continuum



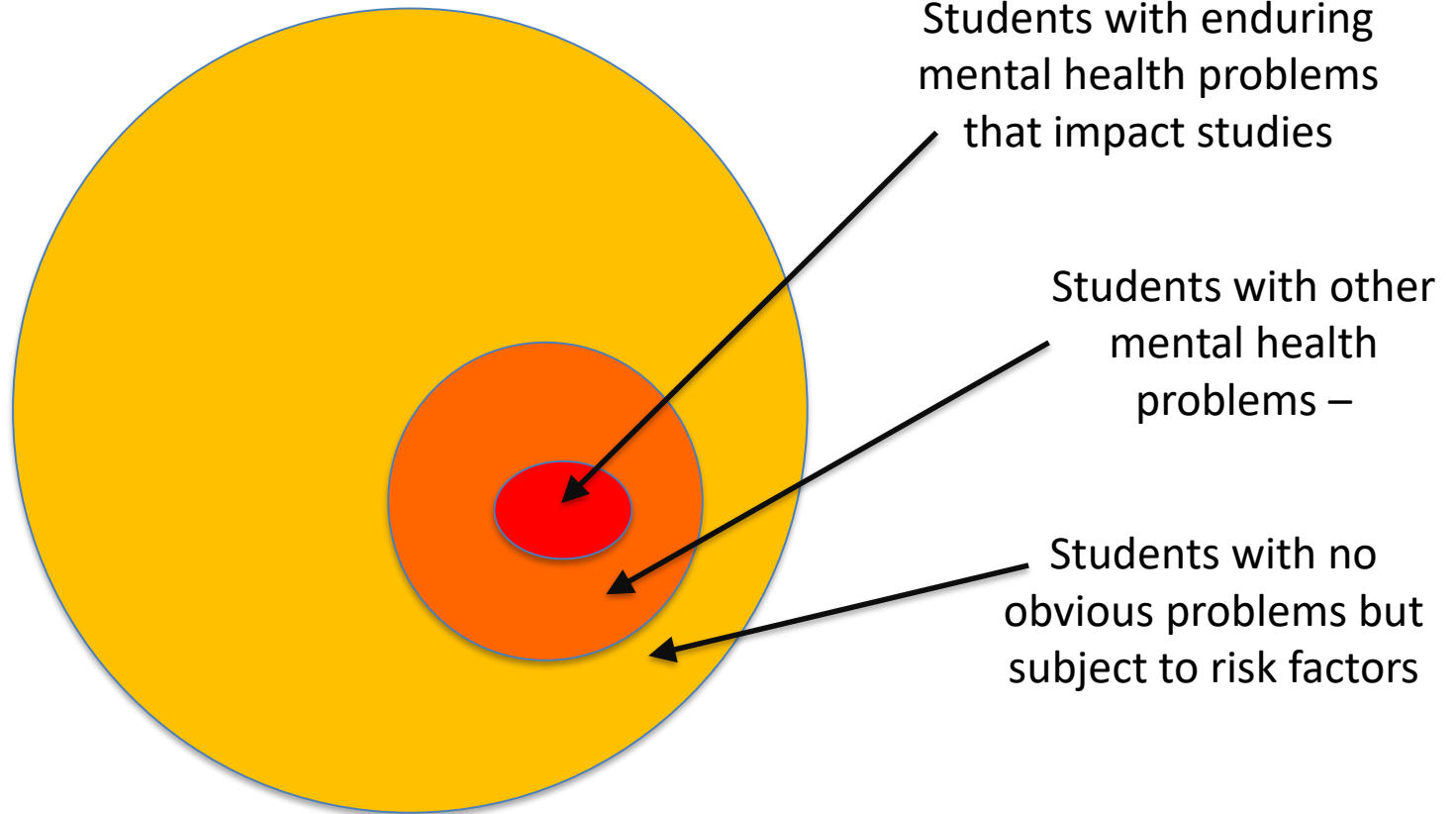


## Common assumptions

- That students with a diagnosis of a mental illness have poor mental health.
- If students have a specific mental health diagnosis that it affects them all in the same way.



# Who needs support?





## What issues do students seek help with?

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Self and identity issues
- Relationship difficulties
- Study related problems
- Coping with a wide range of life events





# Where are we?

Appointments on six sites: Main Library, Holyrood campus (Paterson's Land and Moray House Lodge), KB, ECA, Vet School







## Responding to Distress

- Express your concern
- Listen – avoid problem solving
- Agree – what you can do/what the student can do
- Signpost to other services
- Review
- Record





## Effective Listening involves:

- Listening without interrupting
- Listening actively – doing all that you can to understand what is being said to you
- Resisting the urge to fix the problems by offering advice
- Putting aside your own feelings and attitudes temporarily so that you can listen without judging
- Expressing genuine concern for the person





# Boundaries and Confidentiality

- Access: how and where can a student access you?  
Appropriate location
- Time: when are you available to students and for how long?
- Learning to say 'no'
- Confidentiality:
  - don't promise complete confidentiality





# Self-harm

- Often done in secret
  - may be used by the person as a coping mechanism or as a release
- Self-harm should not be thought of as failed suicide
  - the two are very different
  - self-harm is not a desire to die but a desire to feel better though increasing self-harm could indicate greater risk of suicide



## Suicidal ideas

- Thoughts of suicide are distressing and frightening and the person needs help even if they don't have immediate plans to act on the thoughts.
- Suicide can be prevented by asking a direct question about whether or not the person has suicidal feelings and showing a willingness to listen without judgement.
- If a person is at immediate risk they should not be left alone and help should be called as a matter of urgency.





# Be aware of your role

- Be realistic about what you can do
- Signpost on
- Inform a senior colleague if you have a serious concern about a student or are not sure what to do





# Helping Distressed Students Guide

- <http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/student-mental-health/helping-distressed-student>

