

## Case Studies

What we set out to achieve with this project was to work on improving individual students' responses to stress in their lives and help them find a way of voicing the struggles and challenges they have experienced in their lives.

We followed the progress of two learners through their wellbeing journey over the 10-week course.

### Case Study 1: Student A

We interviewed an Entry Level 3 Student (Student A), who has been participating in the project consistently since September to find out the impact that the wellbeing programme and resources have had on her as an individual and as a student.

'A' is 32 and originally from Somalia. She came to the country at the age of 12 and was not given proper educational support. The events (bullying, racial abuse, neglect) that occurred during her attempts to engage with education triggered a 20 year long battle with depression and anxiety.

Her first re-engagement with education since 2004 was the course she has enrolled on at Morley College. The wellbeing materials and lessons have given her confidence to express her feelings and tell her story without any shame. She welcomed the opportunity to open up in class and break cultural taboos around the subject of mental health.

She felt that talking about these topics in class and reading about real people who overcome their difficulties enabled her peers to become aware of the support that is available in the community in terms of talking therapies. She talked about students having a 'way out of their situation, without feeling the pressure [of cultural norms]'. She liked the way that the tutor signposted the class towards sources of support at the college and in the local area. She said that this meant that 'students could think about what they needed in privacy and get help'.

On a personal level the lessons have helped her feel that she no longer needs to pretend that 'everything is ok' and that all she needed was the proper support.

She found the learning materials inspirational and motivating and loved the real life examples as they were 'relatable' and she felt that it was something she could attach her own aspirations to.

Since 2019 her physical and mental wellbeing has improved and she is having support from local mental health services. She attends the English class regularly and her attendance is 100%. She told me that she comes into class 'no matter what' and that sometimes her mother walks her to the door but she comes.

## Case Study 2: Student B

We interviewed Bridging to Level 2 (Student B), who has been participating in the project consistently since September, to find out the impact that the wellbeing programme and resources have had on her as an individual and as a student.

'B' is 55 and originally from Nigeria. After experiencing a traumatic family event as a child, she suffered depression and anxiety through her school years, impacting on her progress and achievement levels. After arriving in the UK, she settled down and had a family of her own, but the stress of her past has always impacted on her confidence and self-esteem.

Her first re-engagement with education was in 2016, when she began studying Entry 3 English and Maths at Morley College. 'B' was always committed to her studies but has found learning a constant challenge, and one frequently impacted on by her work and family commitments, rivalling her time and attention.

Since starting the wellbeing programme, 'B' developed a new thirst for learning and personal development, as she could immediately see how it all related to her life and studies. She has struggled with low confidence and self-doubt all through her life but now, through studying this topic, she says she has found a way to be 'bold and confident in front of others.'

'B' says her greatest challenge whilst studying this topic has been 'learning to be honest about how I was looking after myself.' She has now been able to reflect on how she treats her mind and body, including how her diet and stress levels impact on the balance of her wellbeing.

In terms of her studies, 'B' found that the programme has developed her English skills, as she has worked through the many related reading activities and produced a variety of written texts, including letters, articles and a leaflet around the topic. She has found the lessons and resources engaging and inspiring, leading her to achieve 100% attendance and homework completion rates over the 10-week programme. In particular, the frequent group discussions and final presentation have really boosted her confidence.

She is noticeably more self-assured in class and says that having the 'support of my tutor and my classmates helped me to stand up and present my ideas [on wellbeing] in a calm way.'

On a personal level, 'B' now carries the message of positive wellbeing with her through all aspects of her life, sharing her positive outlook with her family, her local community and her work colleagues. 'B' feels that learning about wellbeing has made her more resilient, helping her to keep the stressful issues in her life in perspective, and to better cope with them: 'there is always a good side to everything and when we focus on that our life becomes better.' She says she knows there will always be challenges and problems, but her new mantra is 'don't stress yourself, take things as they come!'