

# Wellbeing, safety and access from a critical perspective

Petra Boynton

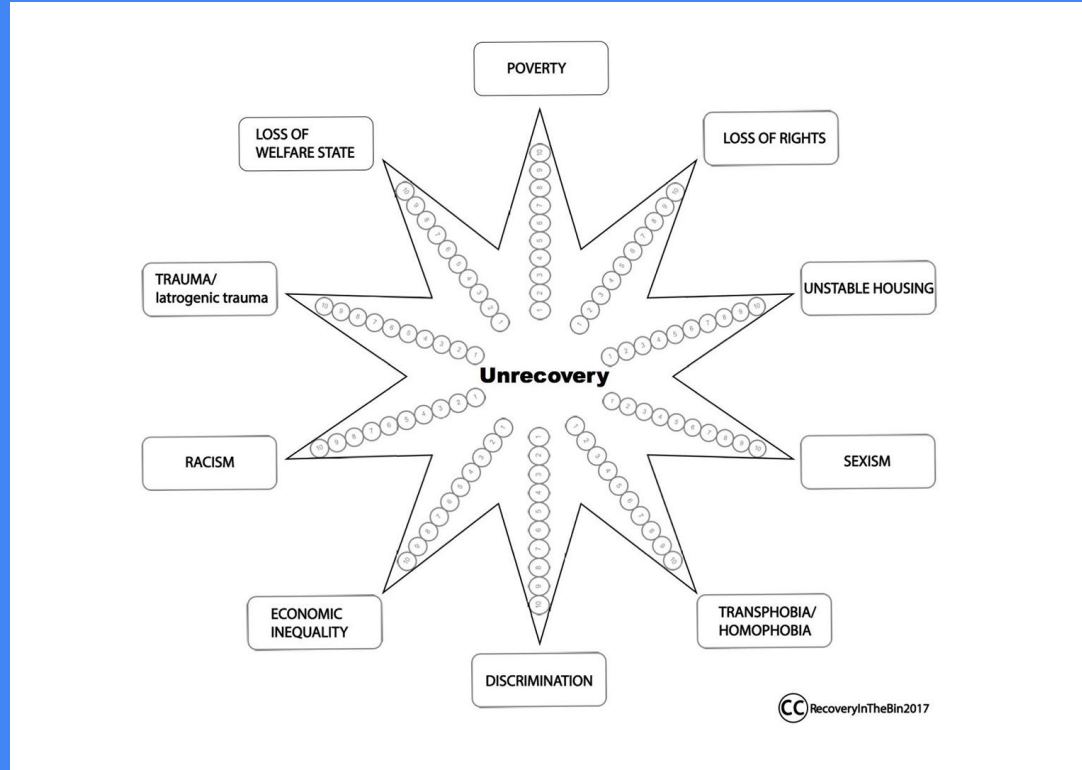


# What do we know?

- High levels of dissatisfaction among students and staff
- Reported increase in mental distress
- Cuts to external support services and charities, plus increased demand for them
- 'Academic mental health' has become a hot topic
- Research on this subject variable in quality and impact
- Solutions ignored in spite of a legacy of work around inequalities, access and harms
- Much of the research and practice is depoliticised, ignores diverse experiences and needs, and does not hold institutions accountable

# What's going on inside universities?

- Industrial action (all sectors)
- Publish or perish
- Metrification
- Competition and glorifying overwork
- Precarity
- Funding cuts/deficits - "I have to pay to work"
- Bureaucracy
- "Suffering is a badge of honour"
- PGRs adversely affected
- Low wages
- Pensions and pay
- Bullying and sexual harassment
- Inadequate training, supervision, instruction and equipment
- "I don't know what I'm doing"
- Visa/access
- Hidden curriculum
- Rapid transitions on/offline teaching and learning
- Extractive practices
- Student and staff histories, needs and changing circumstances
- Relocation
- Loneliness and isolation
- Emphasis on research but patchy or poor research tuition and dissertations impacted
- Access, safety and wellbeing (including studying sensitive topics and secondary data)
- Silo working
- Research waste
- Violence on campus, within the university system, enacted by academia
- Drop outs, leavers-by-choice, redundancy
- Legal changes and challenges



The Unrecovery Star - Recovery in the Bin (2017)

# Students and staff who are vulnerable

- Low income
- Estranged
- Working class
- From an ethnic minority
- Disabled
- Have learning difficulties
- Physically or mentally ill
- Parents or carers
- Care leaver
- Self-funding
- Refugee or asylum seeker
- Part time
- LGBTQ+
- On placement or doing fieldwork
- International
- Older/mature
- Working or studying remotely
- Women
- Indigenous
- First-gen
- Bereaved
- Trauma and/or SEMH

Nothing will change if it is the universities, research councils, and other educational institutions that are **causing or worsening** our difficulties.

# How to stay in control (even) when you don't feel like it

- Keep records/receipts
- Correspond via email
- Gather witnesses
- Use mentors/third-party support
- Know and cite regulations
- Create a support network
- Sign up to a Hub
- Report issues!
- Coaching/counselling



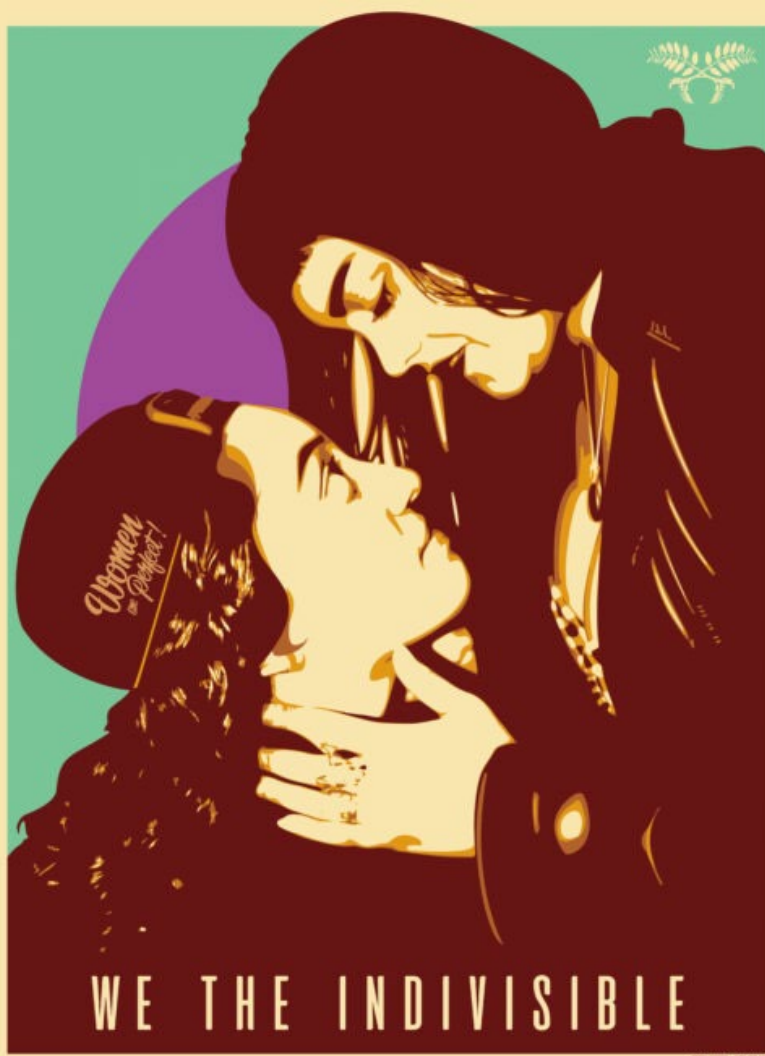


Ways to  
comfort  
yourself



- Rest periods and holidays
- Hobbies (e.g. sport, crafting, cooking)
- Bathing, hair washing, or brushing
- Venting and righteous anger
- Catching up with friends and family
- Being in nature
- Gentle exercise
- Try anxiety busting techniques
- Film or TV (favourite shows)
- Relaxation and meditation
- Reading or listening to stories
- Pick your own treats
- Care for yourself as you would your phone!





## Alternatives to 'resilience'

Persistence

Fortitude

Resistance

Rebellion

Defiance

Stubbornness

Obstinacy

Tenacity

Bravery

Humour

"No ought without support"

“She thinks she can read, but she can’t”

“I see absolutely nothing in her”

“Fidget bottom”

“Show off”

“Chatterbox”

“Incompetent”

“Thick”

“Defiant”

“Could try harder”

“Lazy”

“Careless”

“Dolly day dream”

“Moody”

“Flighty”

“Challenging”

“Distracting”



“Certainly I did not single her out among our students as a high flyer”

Thanks for  
listening!

[info@drpetra.co.uk](mailto:info@drpetra.co.uk)

