

HALCYON PODCAST SEASON 1 E06

Men's mental health - Building trust to open up mental health conversations

A resource to further develop the ideas and recommendations in this podcast.

In this episode our young Interviewees share the importance of teachers listening.

Here is a visual idea that I use in training with young people who I am training as mental health ambassadors. It can also be used in training sessions with staff to promote a culture of trust and openness to talk about mental health.

Imagine a set of drawers...

When we talk to others, we tend talk in these three ways;

Top drawer

The weather, football, what we had for dinner, what we're doing at the weekend.

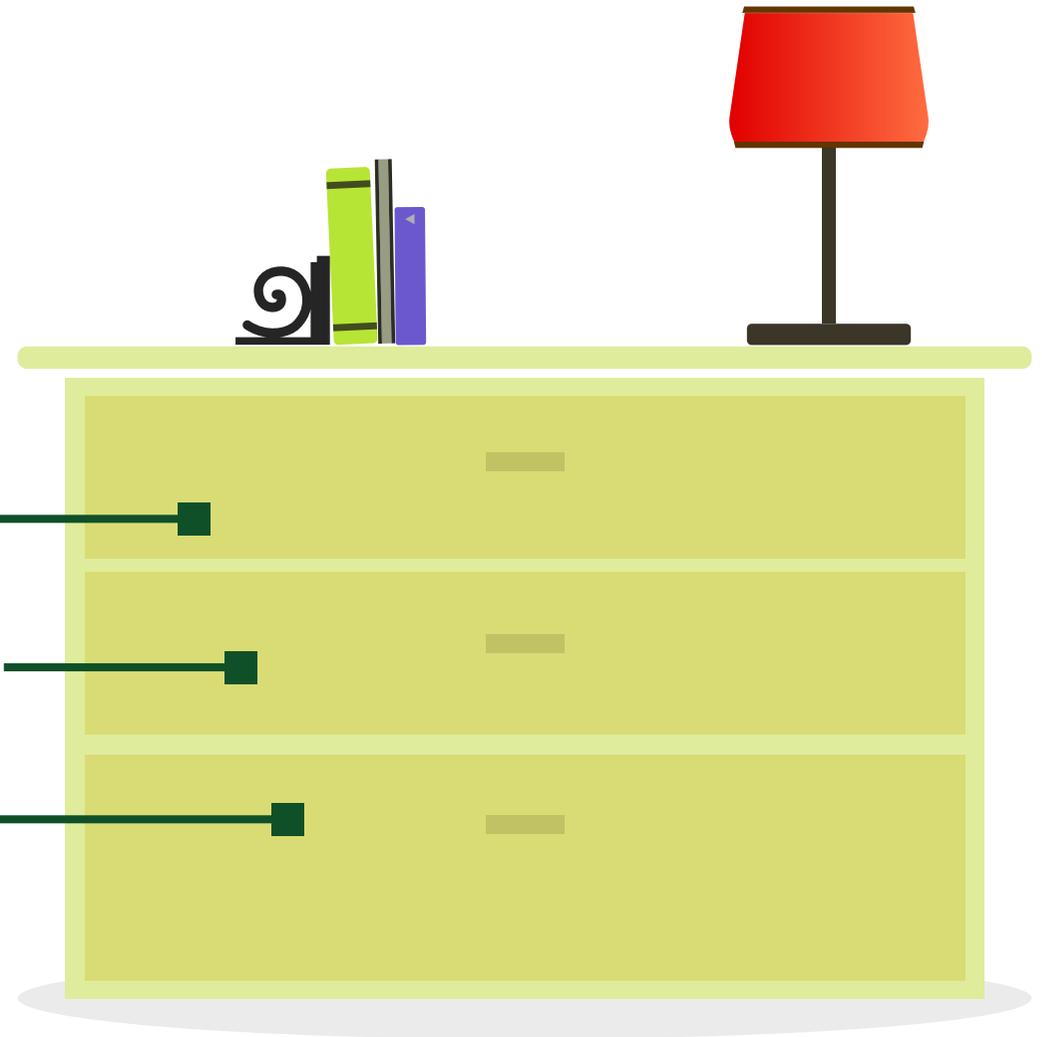
Middle drawer

Favourite activities, family, opinions, likes, dislikes and opinions on current affairs.

Bottom drawer

Worries, fears, secrets, self-doubts, home life difficulties, self-reflections

When we think about anyone sharing information and worries with us, we realise that students and indeed adults are not likely to share bottom drawer stuff with us if they don't know us.



So consider:

How can we promote conversations about mental health, emotions, worries, fears or problems – the bottom drawer stuff – with students and adults, when they don't know us?

One thing only – we build TRUST

We can break this trust down further:

- We are reliable (including we do what we say we will)
- We actively listen
- We are relatable
- We won't spread the information
- We validate and understand their point of view

And if we don't know the answer or how to help, that's OK. We can explain that while we don't yet know how to help them, together we will find someone who does.

This is a straightforward approach that ensures the right conditions are in place for students and adults to open up about their mental health and well-being.

Further resources

In an article for [SecEd](#), Clare Stafford, CEO of the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, interviews Dr Andrew Reeves, Director of the Trust's Programme for universities and further education, about his work with boys and young men.

He makes insightful observations around what is affecting boys' mental health and what can be done to help. Clare sums up his advice with the following points:

Five tips: Supporting boys' mental health

- Make sure boys and young men know what support is available in school for mental wellbeing.
- Use clear, positive language to promote it, e.g. "A toolkit for dealing with...".
- Create safe, respectful spaces for boys to talk.
- Promote mental wellbeing as having equal status to physical wellbeing.
- Use locations such as the gym for posting clear, simple messages about mental health.

This article also recommends a short film – [A Letter to My Younger Self](#) to help young men who may be struggling with their mental health. This was a collaboration involving young people and voluntary agencies, funded by Into Film and [malikfund.org](#).

This is a powerful film to use in lessons to help open up discussions with boys about mental health. It does contain mention of bereavement however, and I recommend teachers listen to the whole film before presenting it to others.

Join the Halcyon Education Academy

We run a [12 week online course](#) giving you the tools and strategies to put mental wellbeing at the heart of your school. It stems from our **10 Steps to a Mentally Healthy School** document which you [can download here](#), along with our [progress tracker](#) to help you prioritise your work.

"The course allowed me to work at my own pace and complete the tasks needed. We have changed our practice as a result and now do a whole school assessment."

For further help or advice, please feel free to [book a call](#) with me or send an email to anna@halcyon.education

