



29TH SEPT 2021

RESILIENCE

Content Synopsis

Psychological Resilience
Around the World exercise.
Understanding the Nature of emotions.
Understanding of the emotionally driven behaviours.

Dr. Abiola Muhammed-Ogunfowora



GOAL OF THIS WORKSHOP

- Develop a greater awareness of the important and functional role emotions play in our daily lives.
- Begin to view your emotional experience in three parts.
- Commit to monitoring your emotional experiences, identifying your response to emotional triggers.
- Develop a more open, approach-oriented relationship with emotions.

Dr. Abiola Muhammed-Ogunfowora

Community
Education
Network
Meeting



29TH SEPT 2021

- 10:00 Welcome and introductions:
Suzanne Kyle,
AONTAS
- 10:10 AONTAS Advocacy update
Dearbháil Lawless,
AONTAS
- 10:20 Resilience workshop for
community educators
Dr. Abiola Muhammed,
Al-Alfia Counselling Services
- 11:55 Final comments and close of
meeting
Suzanne Kyle



Community Education Network Meeting

INTRODUCTION



ALWAYS SO MUCH GOING ON IN THE BACKGROUND AT AONTAS!



The purpose of this meeting was to take a step back from the stresses and challenges of working during a pandemic and to use the space to focus on building resilience and practicing self-care. The meeting was opened by AONTAS Senior Community Education Officer, Suzanne Kyle, who introduced the speakers and reminded those present of the purpose of the meeting. Following a presentation by Dearbháil Lawless, Head of Advocacy, on the advocacy work of AONTAS, Suzanne introduced Counselling Psychologist, Dr. Abiola Muhammed-Ogunfowora, who facilitated a workshop on understanding and building

resilience. The approach was to explore individual emotional experience and how having an in-depth understanding of it helps build and sustain resilience. Participants were provided with a meaningful framework for understanding the internal experience, the tracking of emotions, and exercises that can be practiced daily to continue building resilience. The meeting provided support for community education practitioners themselves, as well as insights that could be used by CEN members in their own community education centres with learners and staff. It was especially beneficial given the challenges we face during this COVID-19 pandemic.

- 40 Attendees
- 23 Organisations
- 8 Counties

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Key Advocacy Updates

Dearbháil Lawless (Head of Advocacy, AONTAS) provided an update on key advocacy areas:

- **Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage (MAED) Fund** – AONTAS is continuing to provide feedback and support members where possible with their applications. AONTAS staff are collecting information on what worked well and not so well in order to report back to ETBI, SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science including how to ensure all ETBs have a consistent approach in communicating about the fund to local education providers



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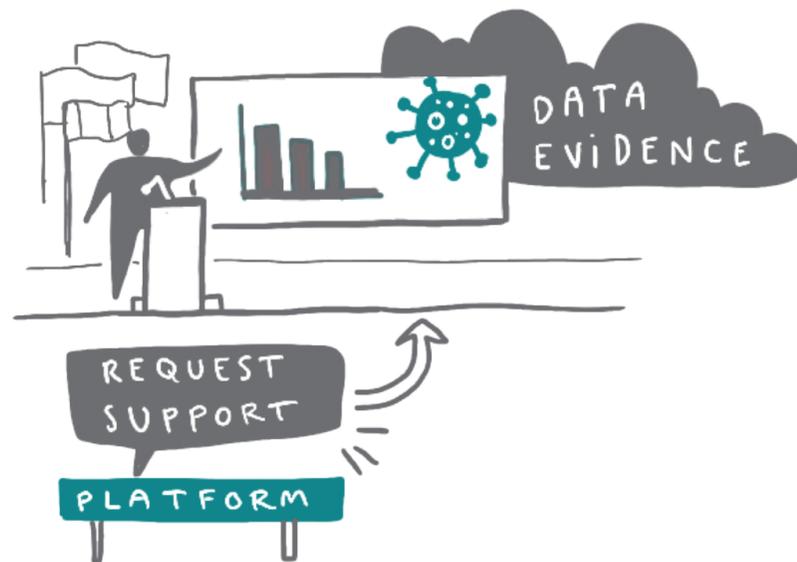
UPDATES

ADVOCACY

- **Tertiary Education Steering Group** – Niamh O'Reilly, AONTAS CEO attends these meetings with the Department and key stakeholders where AONTAS provides a weekly update on the needs and experiences of community education practitioners to Minister Simon Harris

- **Dual Conference on 'Adult Learning and Education – the Resilient Response to Future Challenges'** – AONTAS were in a fortunate position to be able to attend this (as most attendees were ministerial representatives from across the globe) and brought a very honest and transparent reflection of community education in Ireland. Further to this AONTAS are in a good position comparably to other countries in relation to the research and data we collect on community education

- **Policy** – Multiple policy submissions have been produced but one key update is that AONTAS has been invited to feed into the evaluation and potential reform of the Leaving Certificate. Dearbháil invited members to contact her directly if they wish to provide feedback on this



Community
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CEN members are encouraged to liaise with Dearbháil around of these issues if they have any feedback or areas they would like to highlight. You can contact Dearbháil on dlawless@aontas.com

[Click to email](#)

Resilience Workshop for Community Educators

Dr. Abiola Muhammed – Ogunfowora from Al-Alfia Counselling Services joined the CEN to conduct a workshop on resilience aimed at exploring how our emotional experiences can impact us personally but also professionally particularly in the work of Community Educators, and the challenges that can bring. The aim of the workshop was to equip participants with the tools to understand their emotional experiences and triggers, and take practical steps to support themselves.

RESILIENCE for COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE:

1. HOW I SEE STRESS
2. HOW I THINK ABOUT my EMOTIONS
3. WHAT COPING STRATEGIES I CHOOSE

TODAY WE WILL BUILD AWARENESS of our OWN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

DR ABIOLA MUHAMMED-OGUNFOWORA

FEAR ANXIETY
SADNESS ANGER

WHERE IN THE WORLD

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

I FIND IT HARD TO GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

WE USE THE SAME WORDS TO LABEL AN EMOTION... BUT THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE.

THOUGHTS PHYSICAL BEHAVIOURS

COLLECT DATA!

WHAT ARE THE TRIGGERS!

HOW MIGHT THESE UNCOMFORTABLE EMOTIONS BE USEFUL TO US...? PROFESSIONALLY? PERSONALLY?

* ALL EMOTIONS ARE IMPORTANT EVEN THE UNCOMFORTABLE ONES

* GUILT COMES UP A LOT FOR PEOPLE IN THIS SECTOR

STRONG EMOTIONS LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION.

HOW MIGHT WE PRACTICE NON-JUDGEMENTAL PRESENT-FOCUSED AWARENESS?

A LOT IS REQUIRED OF COMMUNITY EDUCATORS.

KEY! SUPERVISION and SETTING BOUNDARIES

WHAT WOULD A TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE LOOK LIKE?

I CANNOT CONTROL ALL THE MESS!

POWER IMBALANCES IN THE SPACE

HOW WE LEARNED TO DEAL WITH EMOTIONS AS CHILDREN HAS A BIG IMPACT.

IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE our own LIMITATIONS.

C.E. PRACTITIONERS OFTEN WORK WITH PEOPLE who HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA. HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT THESE PEOPLE? (AND OURSELVES)

HOW DO WE MANAGE EMPATHY FATIGUE?

DEVELOP more EMPATHY for others

SIGNAL: PAY ATTENTION to what is most IMPORTANT

DANGER! THIS IS NOT SAFE for ME.

OPPORTUNITY to grow

MOTIVATION LET'S PROCESS THIS

HOW REAL IS THIS FEAR?

LET'S SEARCH for CLARITY

SLOW DOWN SADNESS can be CLEANSING

ARE THERE SPACES WHERE YOU AS A PRACTITIONER CAN PROCESS YOUR EMOTIONS?

Dr. Abiola Muhammed explored the themes below and within each of these some key points and takeaways have been captured:

Psychological Resilience

- Resilience is the way in which we cope with stressors, adversity, change and opportunity and can often be influenced by our personal views and experiences
- The more negatively we view the emotional experience or the less time we give to thinking/processing it, the less likely we may be able to respond in a positive way and identify useful coping strategies

Around the World Exercise

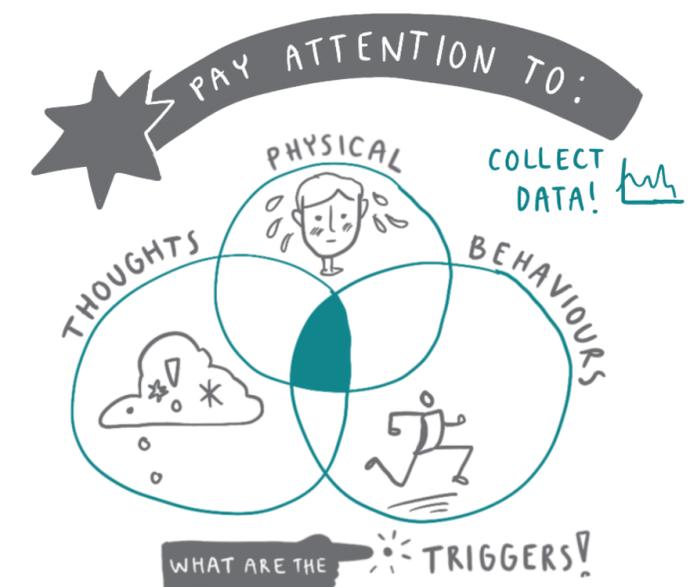
Dr. Abiola Muhammed carried out a mindful exercise with CEN Members asking them to firstly think of a place in the world where they felt happy, then to do the same with feelings of sadness and safety, and to focus on the physical and emotional sensations of being in these places. CEN Members reflected on this and some key observations are recorded below:

- Happy place evoked feelings of lightness, softness, warmth, freedom and motivation
- Sad place evoked feelings of tension, coldness, loss and emptiness
- Safety place evoked feelings of relaxation, cosiness, warmth, closeness



DR ABIOLA MUHAMMED-
OGUNFOWORA

The main point of the exercise was to highlight that although we all did the same exercise everyone experiences the journey differently; what sadness looks and feels like to one person may be completely different for another but for all of our emotions are important indicators and serve a purpose that is unique to each of us.

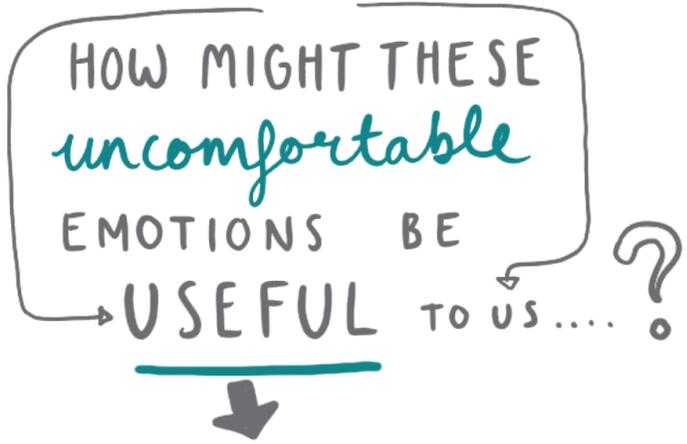
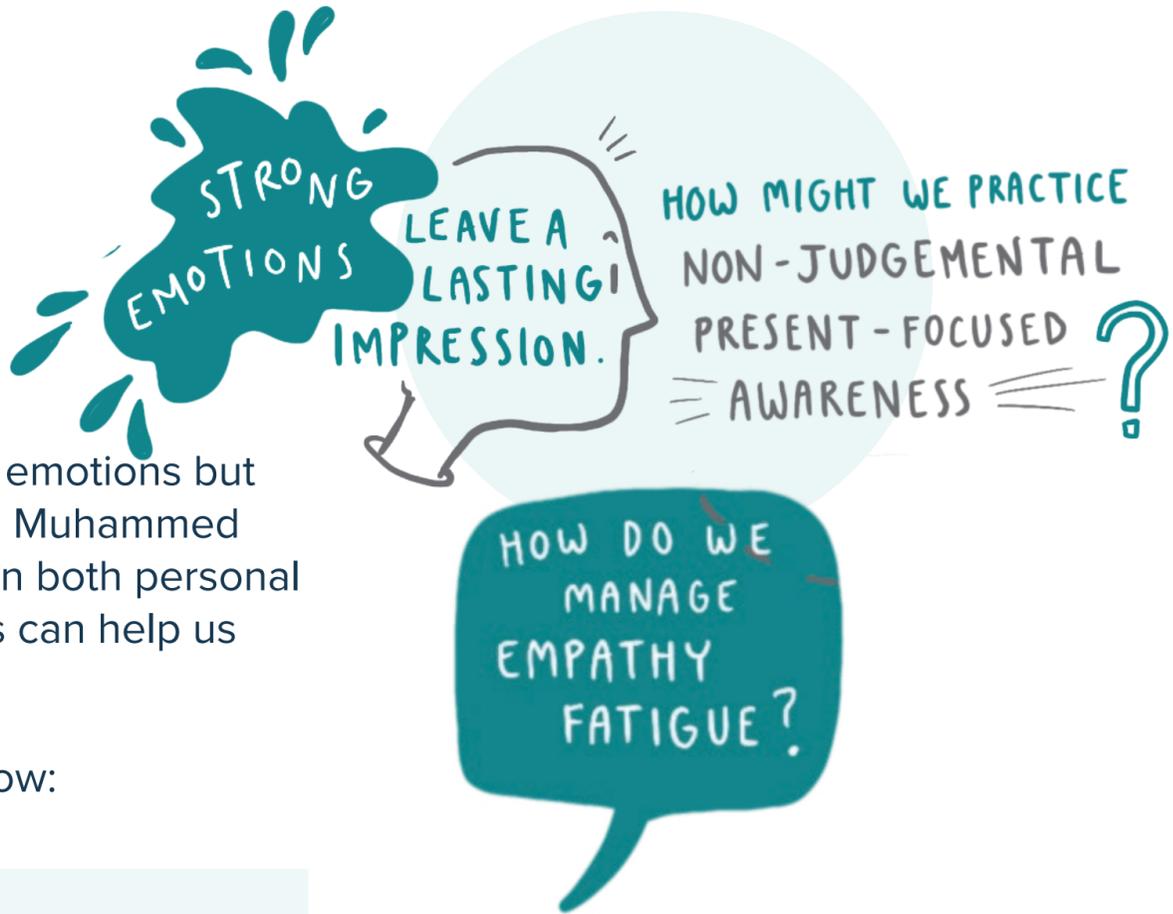


Understanding the Nature of Emotions

Fear, anxiety, sadness and anger are often construed as the ‘difficult’ emotions but even uncomfortable emotions serve a purpose in our lives. Dr. Abiola Muhammed asked the group to reflect on how these emotions have been useful in both personal and professional lives. Understanding the usefulness of our emotions can help us accept them and identify how we can use them in a positive way.

The feedback from the CEN members is summarised in the table below:

Fear	Anxiety	Sadness	Anger
Alerts us to danger	Alerts us to our situation	Helps us to process an event, circumstance or loss	Helps us identify obstacles & overcome them
Keeps us safe	Motivates us to respond	Allows us to empathise & support others	Alerts us to the fact that our values may be compromised
Prompts us to seek help	Helps us to question our fears & establish if they are real	Helps us to seek comfort & support	Lets us know a boundary has been crossed & how we can reclaim this
Helps us establish what is real/not real			Helps us change
Allows us to grow			
Helps us protect ourselves	Alerts us to the fact we may be dwelling or over worrying		



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Understanding of emotionally driven behaviours

There are 3 components of emotional experience:

- Cognitive i.e. *what I think*
- Behavioural i.e. *what I do*
- Physiological i.e. *how I feel*
- Being aware of your thoughts and how they make you feel and behave can help you be more resilient!
- Do not judge yourself for experiencing certain emotions, try to understand them to allow you to respond in a more thought out way (avoid the kneejerk reaction!)

Suzanne shared some of Abiola's helpful resources including the Mood Recording Form and the 'Thoughts, Behaviours and Feelings' Diagram after the meeting.



DR ABIOLA MUHAMMED-
OGUNFOWORA



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RESILIENCE

INTRODUCTION

welcome

ALWAYS SO MUCH GOING ON IN THE BACKGROUND AT AONTAS!



SUZANNE

UPDATES

ADVOCACY



DEARBHAIL

MAED FUND

SUPPORTING APPLICANTS



RESEARCHING & FEEDING BACK TO DEPT.

2-3 POLICY SUBMISSIONS PER MONTH

THE EXPERIENCES OF AONTAS MEMBERS ARE HEARD EVERY WEEK BY MINISTERS

THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-ACCREDITED LEARNING

CONNECTIVITY



EDUROAM for COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on ADULT LEARNING & EDUCATION

IRELAND is one of the FEW COUNTRIES that HAS GATHERED DATA on the IMPACT of the PANDEMIC on PARTICIPATION in EDUCATION



DATA EVIDENCE

REQUEST SUPPORT

PLATFORM

AONTAS HAS BEEN ASKED TO SUBMIT on REFORM of the LEAVING CERT.

QQI

NEEDS on the GROUND?

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT?

RESILIENCE for COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY to REFLECT.



DR ABIOLA MUHAMMED-OGUNFOWORA

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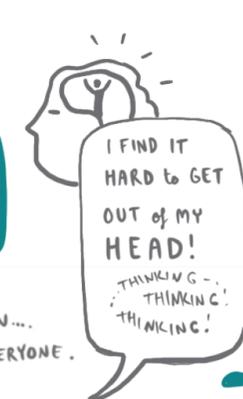
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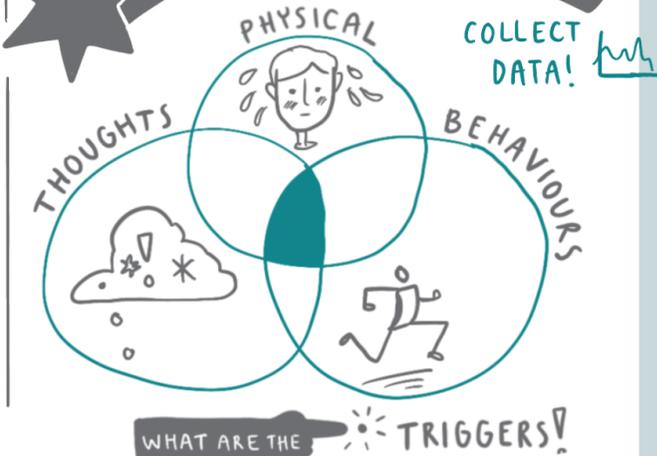
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I FIND IT HARD to GET OUT of MY HEAD!

THINKING - THINKING!

PAY ATTENTION TO:



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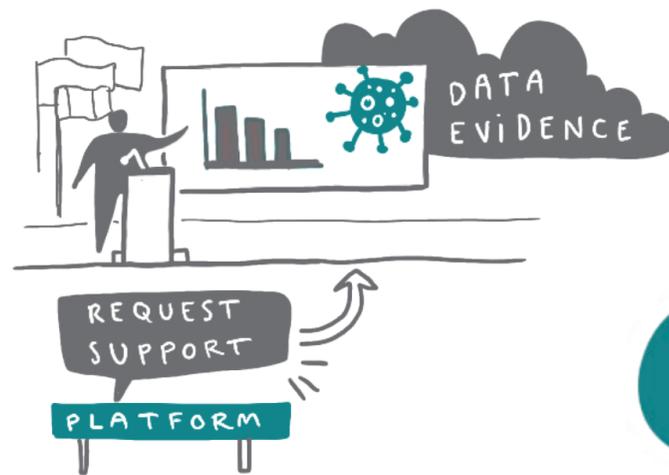
AONTAS

Conclusion

The aim of today's CEN meeting was to provide members with key AONTAS updates and to give members the space to explore and learn about resilience and the role of our emotions personally but also professional in the context of community education. CEN members reflected on the role of their emotions and what they are trying to tell us but most importantly how to respect and respond to our emotions in a way that serves us best. Being kind to ourselves, creating space to reflect and reserving judgement on our emotions are key learnings to take from today's CEN meeting.

Community
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2-3
POLICY SUBMISSIONS
PER MONTH



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HOW DO WE MANAGE EMPATHY FATIGUE?



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AONTAS would like to thank our guest speaker Dr. Abiola Muhammed and all our CEN members who continue to contribute and enhance the work of the CEN. Many thanks to our CEN Steering Group members for guiding and supporting the work of the CEN:

Cathleen McDonagh Clarke,
Exchange House

Ciarán McKinney, Age & Opportunity

David O'Brien, Soilse

Lia Clarkson, Warrenmount CED

Mary Hughes, LCEN

Mary Maher, DAL

Maura Kearney, Acorn Project

Rachel Morrissey, D8CEC

We recommend that AONTAS CEN members join EPALE (the European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) so that you can be included in our CEN EPALE groups and receive more information on our CEN meetings, including presentations and other relevant news and events.

You can register on EPALE by clicking here:

[Click to open link](#)

For more information on the AONTAS Community Education Network, or to become a member, please click here:

[Click to open link](#)