

Flourishing in Personal Recovery

The Power of Words

Learning Outcomes

- For participants to understand the concept of *flourishing* in relation to personal recovery
- For participants to appreciate how the use of words can impact on our mental health and wellbeing
- For participants to explore ways in which they can use words to increase flourishing in their personal recovery

Word (n.)

Old English *word* "speech, talk, utterance, sentence, statement, news, report"

Word (v.)

c. 1200: "to utter;" 1610s, "put into words," from word (n.).

Utter

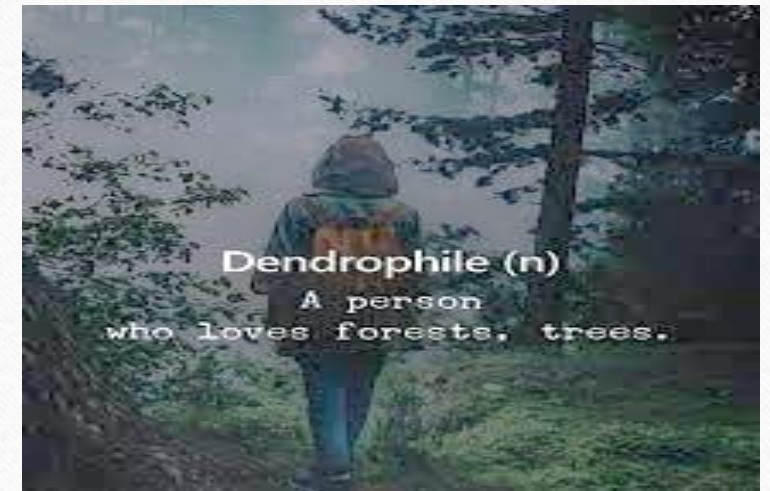
"speak, say," c. 1400, in part from Middle Dutch *uteren* or Middle Low German *utern* "to turn out, show, speak," from *uter* "outer".

- "Show"
- "To put out"



Some of my favourite words...but what do they mean?

- Psithurism
- Dendrophile
- Petrichor
- Aesthete
- Respair
- Flourish



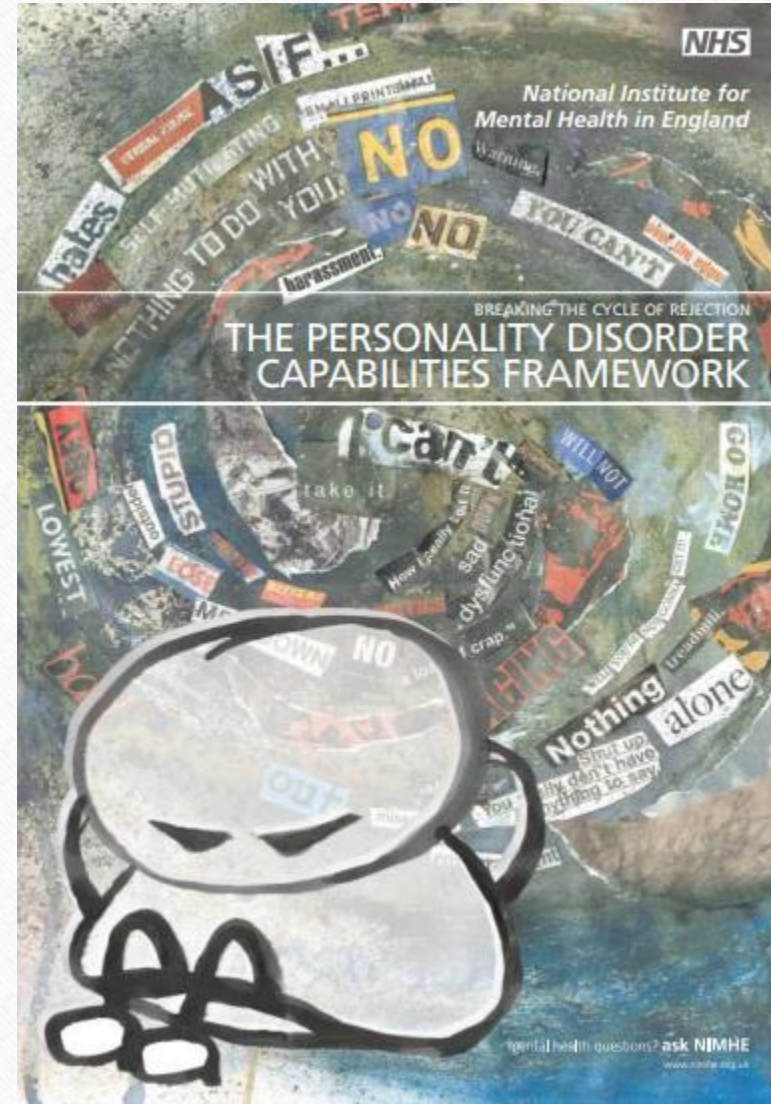
Words other people say to us



Sticks and stones
can break my bones
but names will scar
me forever.
Could you please just
throw rocks?

Stigma (n.)

- 1590s "mark made on skin by burning with a hot iron,"
- from Greek *stigma* "mark of a pointed instrument, puncture, tattoo-mark, brand,"
from root **steig-* "to stick; pointed".



Stick (v.)

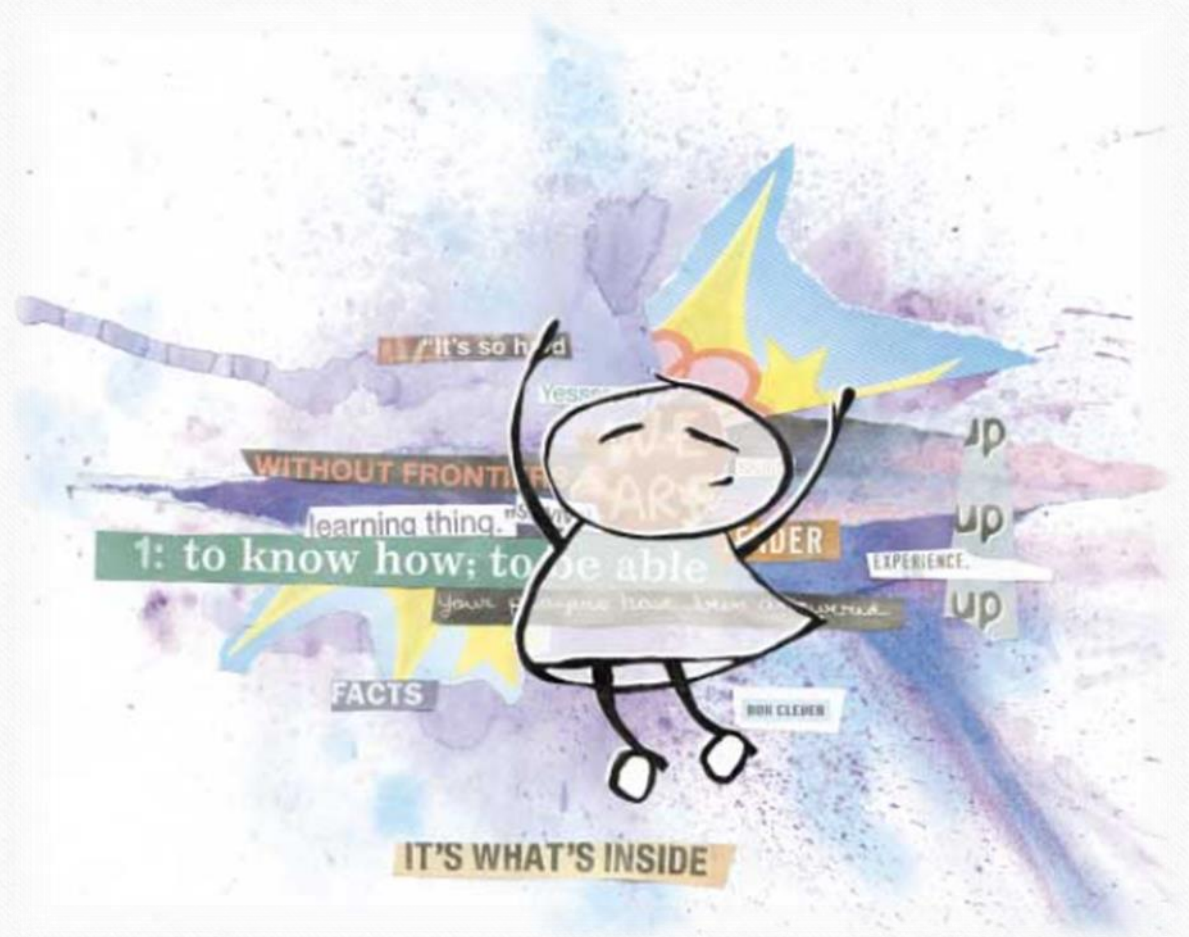
- Old English *stician* "to pierce, stab, transfix,"
- also "to remain embedded, stay fixed, be fastened,"
- Greek *stizein* "to prick, puncture,"
- *stigma* "mark made by a pointed instrument;"
- Old Persian *tigra-* "sharp, pointed;"
- Avestan *tighri-* "arrow;"
- Lithuanian *stingu, stigti* "to remain in place"
- Russian *stegati* "to quilt".
- "To remain permanently in mind" from c. 1300.
- "To *stick out*" is recorded from 1560s.



Words we say to other people

Reflection Question:

**Compassion for others begins
with compassion for self?**



(The Personality Disorder Capabilities Framework, NIMHE, 2015)

Words we say to ourselves

destructive thoughts will consume you.



drown them out with good ones.



How do you react to these pictures?



- **Self-criticism and self-compassion may stimulate the same neurophysiological systems as criticism and compassion generated externally, i.e., by others.**
- **A similar principle to how the external signal of food stimulate the appropriate (eating) arousal system (Gilbert, 1989, 2000) and (Gilbert and Irons, 2005).**
- **Neuroimaging studies of emotion often rely on people recalling or imagining having certain emotions (George et al., 1995).**
- **Activation in the brain regions when expressing compassion and empathy towards others were found to involve similar regions when engaged in self-compassion (Longe, et al. 2010).**
- **If the same physiological systems are activated by both externally mediated (e.g. criticism or praise from others) and internally generated processes (self-generated criticism or praise) then one might expect processes of self-compassion/reassurance to engage the same brain regions as those involved in compassion for others (Longe, et al. 2010).**

- However, the research is complex, because for people with high trait self-criticism the generation of self-reassuring/compassionate feelings can feel unfamiliar, fearful and even threatening (Gilbert, 2007, 2009).
- Rockliff et al. (2008) found that those low in self-criticism responded to compassionate imagery as if it was soothing and calming, whereas those high in self-criticism responded with threat type responses.
- Self-reassurance may therefore also be associated with activation in key components of the threat system e.g. the amygdala (LeDoux, 1998, 2000), in individuals with high levels of self-criticism.

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think about these studies?
- Can you relate to the findings?
- What questions do these findings generate?

Self-affirmations

- “An act that manifests one’s adequacy and thus affirms one’s sense of global self-integrity” (Cohen and Sherman, 2016).
- Bring about a more expansive view of the self and its resources beyond a particular threat and thus broaden their perspective beyond it (Sherman & Hartson 2011).
- Can help to see the many ordinary stressors of daily life in the context of the big picture (Schmeichel & Vohs 2009, Wakslak & Trope 2009).
- Can increase ability to overcome future difficulties, increasing coping and resilience for the next adversity (Cohen et al. 2009).



However...

- Positive self-statements can be ineffective or even harmful.
- Among participants with low self-esteem, those who repeated a positive self-statement (“I’m a lovable person”) or who focused on how that statement was true felt worse than those who did not repeat the statement or who focused on how it was both true and not true.
- Among participants with high self-esteem, those who repeated the statement or focused on how it was true felt better than those who did not, but to a limited degree.
- Repeating positive self-statements may benefit certain people, but backfire for the very people who “need” them the most.”

(Wood, Elaine Perunovic, & Lee, 2009)

Reflection Questions:

- *Repeating positive self-statements may benefit certain people, but backfire for the very people who “need” them the most.”* Why do you think about this view?
- Can you relate to these findings?
- How might we improve the effectiveness of affirmations?



Flourish (v.)

- c. 1300, "to blossom, grow" from Old French *floriss-*, stem of *florir* "to blossom, flower, bloom; prosper, flourish," from Latin *florere* "to bloom, blossom, flower," figuratively "to flourish, be prosperous," from *flos* "a flower"
- Metaphoric sense of "thrive" is mid-14c. in English.

Flourishing (adj.)

- 14c., "prospering, thriving"



What do you think it means to flourish?

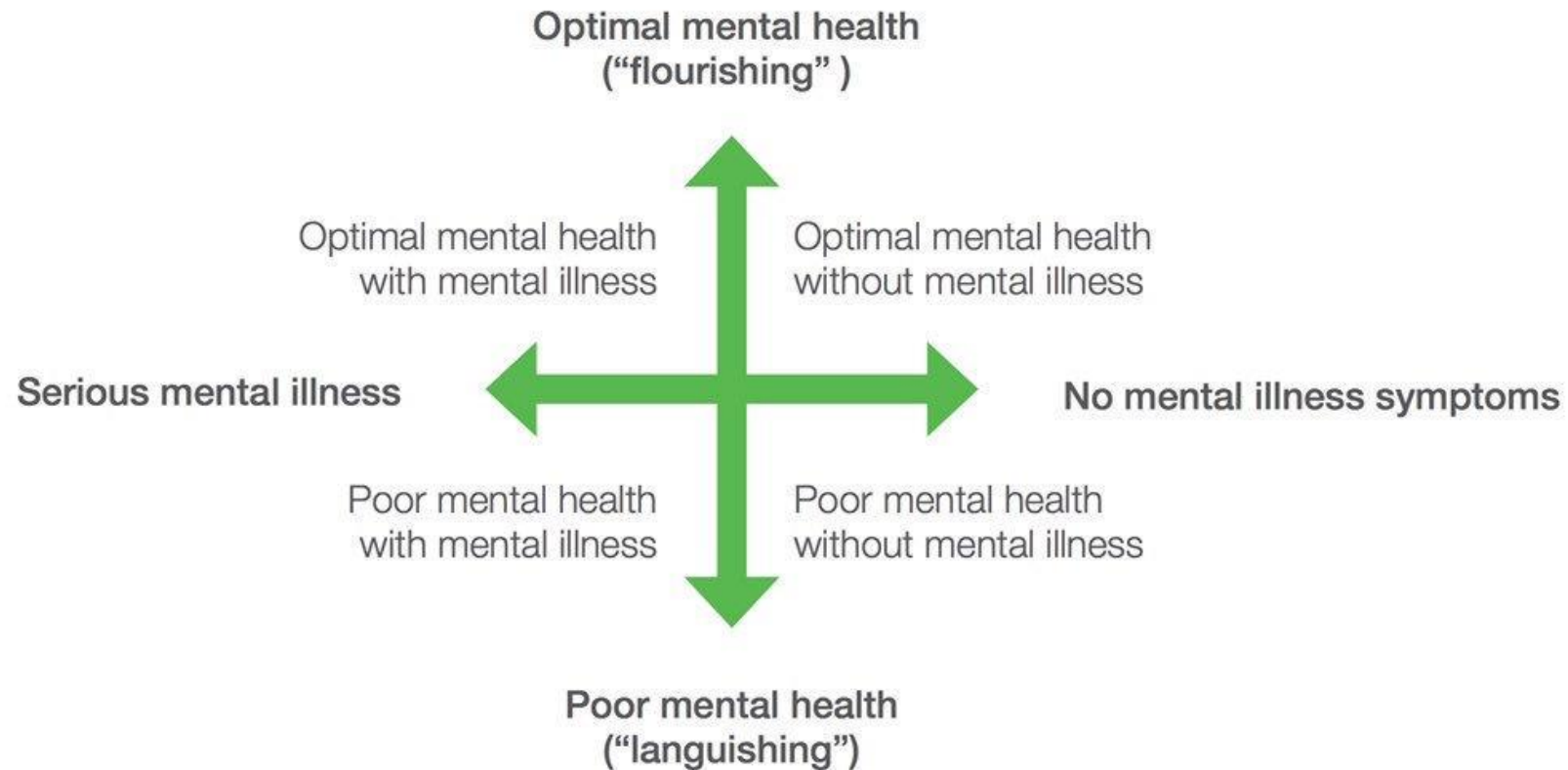
What does flourishing look like?



What does it
mean
to flourish in
personal
recovery?

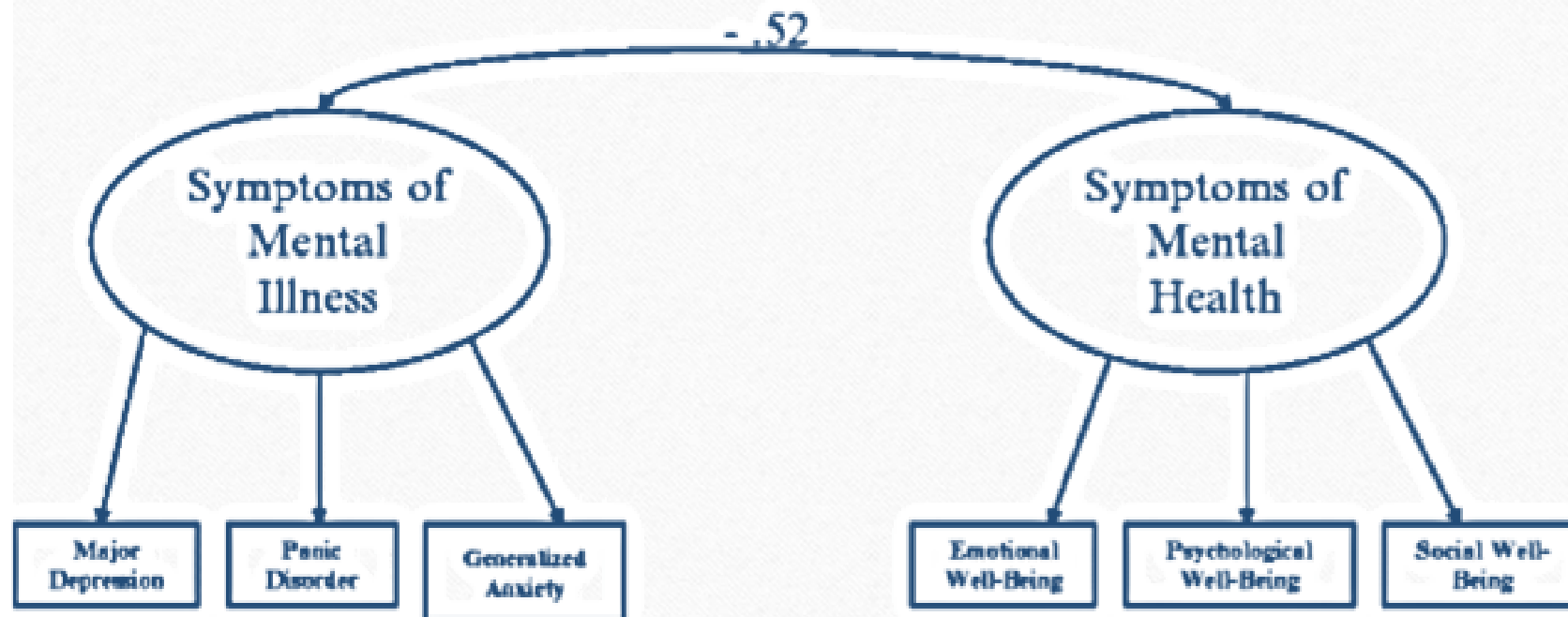


Figure 1: Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness



MacKean, 2011. Adapted from: The Health Communication Unit at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; based on the conceptual work of Corey Keyes

Mental Health as two Continua Keyes (2005)



Languishing

“Emptiness and stagnation, constituting a life of quiet despair ... individuals who describe themselves and life as hollow, empty, a shell, and a void.”
(Corey Keyes)

Languishing has been associated with:

- Poorer functioning
- Time off from work
- Being unable to manage life's daily activities
- Risk factor for mental illness



People who are languishing often “fall through the cracks” as their symptoms aren’t “clinically significant” enough to access services.

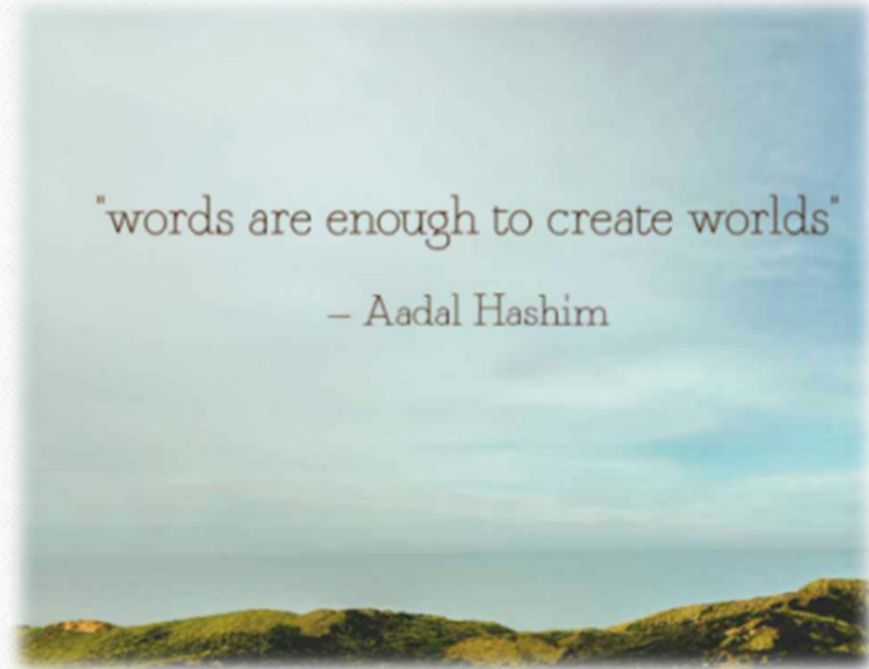


Reflection Question:

- What words do you associate with the concept of Flourishing?
- Try to create an affirmation using a few of these words.

"words are enough to create worlds"

– Aadal Hashim



Nine Words Self Reflection Process

Chapman-Clarke (2015)

- Combines mindfulness with creative writing
- Encourages one to become a “conscious change agent”

How to:

- Choose a topic you wish to reflect upon
- Write for three minutes (set a timer)
- Don't stop writing, don't edit and don't worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar
- Circle/highlight 3 words which stand out to you as significant
- Repeat the process two more times so that you have 9 words circled/highlighted

Reflection Questions:

(Chapman-Clarke (2015) refers to this as “mindful inquiry”)

- What have I observed about these words?
- What has surprised me?
- What realisations have I had?
- What am I aware of?
- What feelings have been generated in me?

You may be surprised by the results!

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