

## Top Tips: Using the Emotional Resilience Video Series in your Teaching

The emotional resilience video series consists of eight short videos that have been co-created with students, educators, academic researchers, and student mental health advisors. Each person was asked to share their insights from their experiences of learning, teaching, or researching a topic that they found emotionally challenging in some way.

These videos can be accessed on the [emotional resilience resource hub](#) and used in any combination to support university students to achieve any of the following learning outcomes:

- identify emotional responses to content
- understand the impacts of emotional wellbeing on study
- explore how the personal and emotional can overlap in the study of sensitive topics
- build a personal emotional resilience toolkit
- identify the benefits of engaging with sensitive topics for learning and wellbeing

This guide provides a summary of each video, ideas for questions and student-centred activities, as well as suggestions of resources to go further, which you may wish to try out with your students.

### 1. Student experiences of learning emotionally challenging content

These videos may be of particular benefit to introduce students to the impacts of mental health and wellbeing on learning.

#### 1.1. Video summaries

##### **Arabella Cox (02:30 mins)**

Arabella is a mature part-time criminology distance student who initially struggled with her diagnosis of bipolar depression. In this short video Arabella shares her experience of withdrawing from a course on mental health after she was triggered by some of the content. She talks about how she returned to study criminology, her insights into being triggered, and what she has learned from her study of sensitive content.

**Kyle Andrews** (05:30 mins)

Kyle studied social science at a distance whilst he was dealing with depression and anxiety. In this short video Kyle describes some of the challenges he faced in his studies including self-motivation, confidence, and work-life balance. He shares his insights on how he overcame these challenges and reflects on his capabilities and achievements.

### **1.2. Questions to consolidate understanding**

The following questions may be helpful:

1. How can mental health and wellbeing impact on learning?
2. How can sensitive topics impact on learning?
3. What does 'being triggered' look and feel like?
4. What challenges can students with mental health issues face?
5. How can these challenges be tackled?
6. What are the benefits of studying sensitive topics?

### **1.3. Student-centred activities**

You could design an activity that could include supporting students to:

- identify what they would do if they or someone they knew was triggered by study content
- identify barriers and enablers to engaging with available support if faced with mental health and wellbeing challenges during their studies

### **1.4. Going further**

**Student Minds** offer a wide range of [resources](#) to navigate the challenges that university students can face as well as help to [find support](#) for mental health at university for themselves, their friends or their loved ones.

## **2. Academic experiences of emotionally challenging research**

These videos may be of particular benefit to students who are undertaking their own dissertations or independent projects.

### **2.1. Video summaries**

**Steve Tombs** (04:26 mins) *This video has a content note for discussion of death, bereavement, disasters and the Grenfell Tower Fire.*

Steve is a Professor in Criminology who specialises in research and campaign work around state and corporate killing and avoidable deaths. In this short video, he talks about his emotional responses and how his personal and professional worlds overlapped in his research on the Grenfell Tower Fire.

**Sharon Mallon** (07:05 mins)

Sharon is a Senior Lecturer in Mental Health who specialises in suicide and suicide bereavement research. In this short video, she talks about her experience of doing research about the impacts of suicide on bereaved families. She talks about how she prepared herself for doing interviews with bereaved family members in their homes and what strategies she developed to process and manage the emotional responses she experienced during her fieldwork.

## **2.2. Questions to consolidate understanding**

1. What emotional challenges did the academics experience in their research?
2. To what extent do you think that not having a personal connection to a topic is protective?
3. What strategies did the academics put in place to help them to get through their research?
4. How could emotional responses in research be a useful form of knowledge?
5. What are some of the rewards of emotionally challenging research?

## **2.3. Student-centred activities**

You could design an activity that could include supporting students to:

- Develop a plan for doing emotionally challenging research
- Explore existing policy on emotionally demanding research that mitigate risks to student mental health and wellbeing
- Consider what a policy on emotionally demanding research could look like in their department or institution

## **2.4. Going further**

[Sheffield Emotionally Demanding Research Network](#) – this network was co-led by a postgraduate student Emma Nagouse. They co-produced a brand-new guidance paper related to Emotionally Demanding Research with the University Research Ethics Committee, which can be accessed [here](#).

Campbell, Rebecca (2002) *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape* (1st ed.).

Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203613511> (this book is mentioned in Sharon Mallon's video)

### **3. Student Mental Health Advisors experiences of supporting students**

These videos may be of particular benefit to help students to identify the key signs of emotional distress, develop their emotional resilience skills, and demystify accessing university mental health and wellbeing support services.

#### **3.1. Video summaries**

**Ashley Cave** (04:20 mins) This video has a content note for mention of suicide and childhood sexual abuse.

Ashley is a student mental health adviser working in a campus university with experience of supporting students with mental health difficulties. In this short video Ashley shares her experience of issues that she can find difficult that come up in her job and how this has been shaped by changes in her personal circumstances. She also talks about the key signs of emotional distress as well as the draw to and challenges of studying sensitive topics.

**Neill Boddington** (06:38 mins)

Neill is a mental health advisor at a distance learning institution with experience of supporting students and staff. In this short video he talks about how to spot some of the key signs of emotional distress, the benefits of creating a coping strategy, how to talk to someone about support needs, and offers some practical strategies to help navigate emotional responses.

#### **3.2. Questions to consolidate understanding**

The following questions may be helpful:

1. What are some of the key signs of emotional distress?
2. How does our sense of emotional sensitivity connect with our unique personal circumstances?
3. How can independent projects on sensitive topics be challenging?
4. What strategies are suggested?
5. What positive opportunities are there in studying topics that are emotionally challenging?

#### **3.3. Student-centred activities**

You could design an activity that could include supporting students to:

- identify what their coping script could look like by completing the sentence: 'when I feel, [X], I will, [X]'
- identify their own support needs

- identify what strategies work for them across different situations e.g., in a seminar, a lecture, in student accommodation, at home, or at work.

#### **4. Educators experiences of teaching and learning emotionally challenging content**

These videos may be of particular benefit to normalise emotional responses in teaching and learning identify and develop their emotional resilience skills.

##### **4.1. Video summaries**

###### **Anne Alvaer (04:18 mins)**

Anne is an Associate Lecturer at a distance university who teaches on a range of social science and access modules. In this short video, she talks about the kinds of topics that she finds emotionally challenging to teach and how she deals with her emotional responses. Anne also offers advice for students who are facing emotionally challenging content in their learning.

###### **Ruth Wall (08:19 mins)**

Ruth is an Associate Lecturer at a distance university who teaches criminology and social sciences. In this short video, she reflects on the emotional responses that she experienced in her teaching of emotionally challenging topics. Ruth outlines what educators can do to support students to engage with content that is emotionally challenging to study. She offers some advice for people who are going to be teaching and learning emotionally challenging content.

##### **4.2. Questions to consolidate understanding**

1. What did the educators find difficult to teach?
2. What strategies did the educators put in place to help them to deal with their emotional responses?
3. Why can it be difficult to express emotional responses in academic spaces?
4. What advice do the educators offer for students who are preparing to study difficult or triggering content?
5. What are some of the rewards of learning emotionally challenging topics?

##### **4.3. Student-centred activities**

You could design an activity that could include supporting students to:

- carry out a module content review and identify potentially difficult topics

- identify their emotional resilience skills or ‘what works for you’ (you may find the table below helpful)
- create a study plan to prepare students to identify what they can do if they experience emotional responses in their learning
- map what resources and support are available for students

**Emotional resilience skills can include:**

<b><i>Studying flexibly</i></b>	Taking a break; taking time out; studying in short bursts, studying ahead of schedule, opting out of group discussions/lectures, studying online or independently for some topics
<b><i>Social support</i></b>	Talking to and/or spending time with family & friends, seeking support from a mentor, tutor or counsellor, spending time with pets, connecting with peers
<b><i>Reflection</i></b>	Making connections between course content and personal life, work experiences, motivation for study. Please note that not all students will be ready to engage in reflection activities about topics they have lived experience of and/or find sensitive.
<b><i>Shift of study approach</i></b>	Taking a different approach to study which can be more detached, objective or have a sense of academic/professional distance. Extra planning and preparation to study a particular topic.
<b><i>Physical self-care</i></b>	Practices that involve movement and/or nurture the body can help to process emotions and provide a distraction. This can include doing exercise, going for a walk; gardening; sleep/rest; taking a bath/shower; favourite food/drink; and medication.
<b><i>Joy</i></b>	An activity that is joyful, which could be used as a reward, way to unwind or to switch off from study. This could include TV, film, video games & audio books; music and sound; hobbies; faith practices.
<b><i>Emotional self-care</i></b>	Practices that attend to emotional self. This could include mindfulness/meditation; positive self-talk & affirmations; relaxation; diary/journal.