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Conference or Workshop Item

Title: 'Alternative' methods of coping: tattooing and humour as non-traditional methods of emotional expression

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‘Alternative’ Methods of Coping; Tattooing and Humour as Non-traditional Methods of Emotional Expression

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Lecturers and PhD Students
Overview:

• Coping

1. Humour

2. Tattooing

• Implications
Coping

Inappropriate  appropriate

‘Unhealthy’  ‘Healthy’
Part one: Humour and Emotion

Lauren Ward
Humour; What is it?

- Personality trait
  Humour as part of the person
- Way of coping
  Humour as a shield
- Communicatory tool
  Humour as an enabler
Communicatory Tool

• YP friendly way to talk
  *Teenage MH Forum/blog*
  *Pesky Gnatts CBT Child friendly*

• ‘Shared experience’ (Struthers, 1999, p. 1198)

• Frees up dialogue
Humour as a ‘Risky Business’
'The father of a three year old who was dying from cancer became increasingly depressed and tearful. He had developed a strong relationship with one of the community nurses and rang her every night. Occasionally, when he was so tearful, all the nurse could hear were long silences of heavy breathing. One day, when visiting him, the nurse said ‘you do realise that you sound incredibly lustful over the phone, heaven forbid that I should receive an annoyance call and I respond, ‘It’s okay, take your time’. The father laughed so much that he cried’

(Adapted from Jolly and Brykczynska, 1992, p. 245-246)
‘its not about **knowing** how to make clients laugh but to **recognise** and be able to use humour both spontaneously and confidently as a **resource** which enables **trust** to develop to tackle issues related to clients **mental health state**’

(Struthers, 1999, p. 1202)
Part two: Tattooing and Emotion
Tattoos: Background

Tattoos are a method for which people are able to communicate in ways in which they may not feel able (Way, 2013)

Previous research is predominantly negative – focus on young people and drug/alcohol abuse (Carroll et al, 2002; Brooks et al, 2003)

Motivations: fashion, enhancing individuality, rebel, sexual attraction, symbolic, friendship/love

Antoszewski et al, 2010
Tattoos: Media Influence

‘Are you sure that's allowed at Epsom? Tattoos and piercings at Ladies Day’ (Daily Mail)

‘Woman cuts off a tattoo of her cheating ex-boyfriend's name with a scalpel and POSTS the skin to him’ (Daily Mail)

Maine "gun tattoo" man arrested for stealing drugs (CBS News)

The ways tattoos can get you into trouble (BBC News)
Tattoos enable people to express who they are, display what they have overcome and state how they see themselves within their social world (Anderson, 2014).

Rejection of the ‘status quo’
(Dukes & Stein, 2011)
Skin as Projection

(Patterson & Schroeder, 2010)

Serves as a vehicle to mark the passage into adulthood; independence (Kang & Jones, 2007)

Links with spirituality; a reflection of moral character (Mun, Janigo & Johnson, 2012)
Skin as Modification

(Patterson & Schroeder, 2010)

Promoting positive self image after stress (Stitz and Pierce, 2013)

‘Reading’ someone through their skin (MacCormack, 2006)

Provides a narrative for emotion (Kosut, 2000)
Implications:

• Importance of being aware of these internal conflicts which regulate how we express and communicate with others as professionals.

• Through understanding, they can be used as resources to empathise, and create this mutual and shared understanding that is both personal and ‘professional’.