



THE OLD MUTUAL
EDUCATION TRUST

🕒 19 Jun

SA's child mental health crisis

City Press Yoliswa Sobuwa

THE ROLE OF FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE FACILITATION OF HEALING



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

- South Africa faces grave and deep socio-political and socio-economic challenges that are hugely defined by its traumatic history of violent oppression and segregation.
- This context greatly influences the mental health of its citizens.
- Young people, in particular, are going through vulnerable periods of development in this context which threatens to derail a healthy transition into adulthood.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

- Our education system should deeply reflect on the role of education in the facilitation of healing in this context, on both a systemic and individual level.
- *The higher education sector should contemplate its role in both a contextual understanding of mental health barriers as well as appropriate interventions to contribute to the facilitation of healing.*

PURPOSE

- This session aims to explore and position our response to student mental health challenges within a contextual socio-political and socio-economic frame.
- We aim to explore if we are contextually relevant in our understanding of the depth of mental health barriers and systemic interventions for young people in SA.

THE STATE OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

- ❑ 20% of SA students need mental health support (formal interventions)
 - 4% require specialized clinical services
 - 14% require low intensity psycho-social interventions
- ❑ High rates of depressive disorder (15%), anxiety disorder (10%), attention difficulties (21%) and post traumatic stress disorder (21%)
- ❑ Anxiety rates are consistently higher at historically white institutions.
- ❑ Students who identified as black, Coloured or Asian are “at higher risk of mental illness” than their white peers at historically white institutions

Universities South Africa. 2022. Towards improving the mental of health of South African students at university. Retrieved at <https://www.usaf.ac.za/towards-improving-the-mental-health-of-students-at-south-african-universities/>

THE STATE OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

“We can’t begin to talk about the mental health of university students without talking about the mental health of high school students. What we find between 2015, 2017 and 2020 is that more students were arriving at university with pre-existing conditions. It may be possible to screen students on registration or early in their first year for those with histories of psychiatric conditions and target them for particular interventions.”

- Professor Jason Bantjes, South African Medical Research Council



Depression triggered suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in youngsters 15-19

..."Between 20% and 49% of those admitted to drug treatment centres in the first six months of 2020 were aged between 10 and 19,"

"90% of children in the country were unable to access mental healthcare"

"This unmet need was associated with poorer performance at school and risky behaviours such as substance abuse and criminal activities, which then affected skills development, readiness for adult life roles, social and economic independence, and ability to contribute to families' economic security"

City Press. 2022. SA's child mental health crisis. Retrieved at <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/sas-child-mental-health-crisis-20220618>

WHERE IT STARTS: THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF LIFE

THAT MOMENT WHEN



YOU WERE FIRST EXCLUDED FROM THE CITY'S RESOURCES

“In a country beset by poverty, inequality, social exclusion and violence, our biggest responsibility is to our children and adolescents. We need to identify early on those who have difficulties and try to rectify these challenges.”

Professor Linda Richter, Centre of Excellence in Human Development. WITS University

City Press. 2022. SA's child mental health crisis. Retrieved at <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/sas-child-mental-health-crisis-20220618>

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: CAPE FLATS

“Backyard learner makes distinction breakthrough”

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: CAPE FLATS

First university candidate

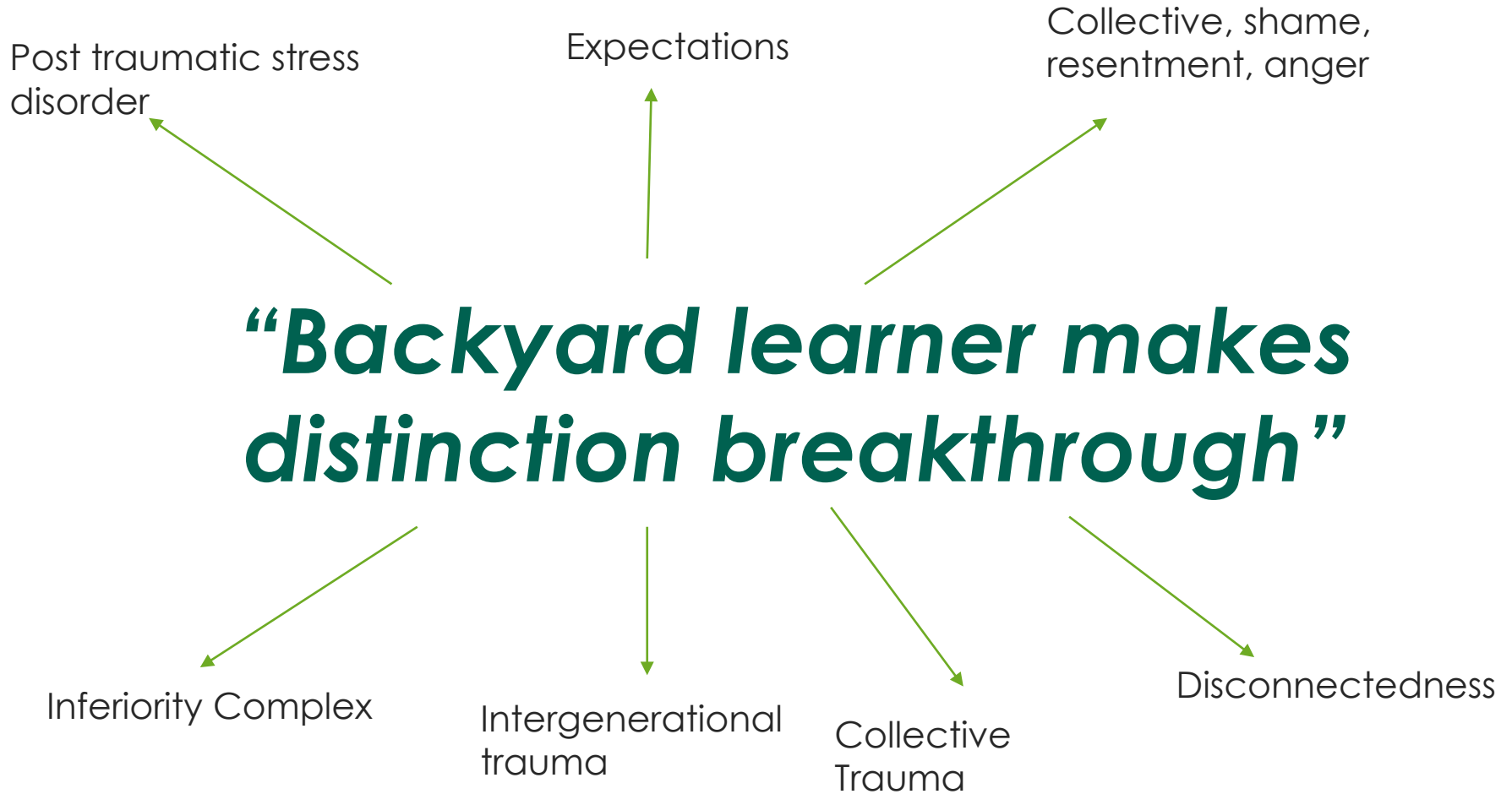
Success despite
immense physical
barriers

***“Backyard learner makes
distinction breakthrough”***

Inspire others . “If she
can do it....” The
resilience narrative

The system is doing
something
right?/She beat the
system?

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: CAPE FLATS



WHAT HAVE WE DONE AS THE OLD MUTUAL EDUCATION TRUST?

- Facilitating healing circles as an entry point, this helped us co-define with students the need for further interventions and how that should look.
- The facilitator was selected based on the ability to connect with students in language (phrases, contextual experiences and sayings), identity. *Our interventions facilitating holistic healing should be contextually informed.*
- *Renowned counsellor/Social Worker at Decolonial Mental Health, Zolani Metu, mentions that in addressing mental health related issues we should do it systemically, because usually vulnerable black youth do not have access to mental health care, and when they do the system alienates them and does not acknowledge and nor address their suffering in a way that is contextually relevant.*

DIALOGUE STARTERS

- What does healing mean and what is the role of the education system?
- Are we brave enough to talk openly about that which defines our political, economic and social contexts as it pertains to mental health issues? Do we acknowledge healing as a core part of social justice?
- Which factors make a systemic response to mental health barriers contextually relevant? / How does a contextually relevant mental health support system for students look?
- Are universities responding to this challenge appropriately and sufficiently towards real transformation?
- What should the role of Bursary Support organizations (forum) be in these conversations and in the design of systemic higher education solutions for mental health barriers?



THANK YOU

**GABEBA GAIDIEN
NKQUBELA APHIWE NTLOKO**

DO GREAT THINGS



OLDMUTUAL