Poverty, pathology and pills

15th-16th January 2019, London
Mental health in struggle: community action on austerity and welfare reform

Lynne Friedli

They proclaim, as a revolutionary principle, the Right to Work.
Shame to the French proletariat!
Paul Lafargue, 1883

Poverty, Pathology and Pills

De-stress Project
London
January 15/16 2019

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Summary

- Mental health impact of benefit changes
- Rise of psychological fundamentalism
- Workfare & the work cure
- Resistance

Mental health in struggle

Picture source: bellacaledonia.org.uk
“The experience of the United Kingdom... underscores the conclusion that poverty is a political choice”

UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty & Human Rights 2018

“Draconian sanctions & long payment delays drove claimants into hardship, depression & despair.”

“Changes to taxes & benefits have taken the highest toll on those least able to bear it, with the costs of austerity falling disproportionately on the poorest.”

“One actor has stubbornly resisted seeing the situation for what it is. The Government has remained determinedly in a state of denial.”

Mental health in struggle

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Positive thinking..........

‘Atos dalek: work or die’ Joanna @maddoggie2 20 Apr 2017
Psycho-fundamentalism

“The discipline of psychology, in its multiple forms, is nothing other than the discourse of production”

Strengths based lexicon

- assets; resilience; recovery; well-being
- agency; empowerment; confidence
- Autonomous; entrepreneurial; aspirational; motivated
- sense of coherence; hope; optimism
- Self + esteem, reliance, efficacy, management, examination, care, improvement
Psychological conditionality

‘Why do we have to recover from our personalities?’

CAPS People’s Conference Report 2014

Disabled people protest against US firm Maximus taking over work capability assessments. Photo: Peter Marshall
Becoming employable...

‘to appreciate the importance of mindset to employers - students will learn how to develop the right mindset which will appeal to employers’

A4e Engage Module

• assertiveness, confidence, understanding the benefits of work, motivation, coping with low mood

Picture source: Johnny Void

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Work cures: employment & health
‘embed employment into the wiring of the healthcare system’

Protesters tell doctors to ‘remember their ethics’ as they block Old Street roundabout

Islington Jobs on Prescription

‘Disability Confident’ creates opportunities for disabled people in the workplace.

‘Jaw-dropping’ profit from disability tests for Maximus
Enforcing employability

‘The work resistant personality’

Willingness to violate norms concerning work’


‘those reliant on benefits lack the dignity & self-respect of those who earn all their own money’ Jeremy Hunt, Tory Conference 2015

(emphasis added)

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Whistle while you work (for nothing)

The corporate need to translate socioeconomic dissatisfaction into a language of self-improvement has given rise to a whole industry of positive psychology & mindfulness.

Ivor Southwood The Black Dog

Building psychological resilience & well-being for those who are still claiming after 8 weeks through expressive writing & strengths identification.

‘failure to comply may result in loss of benefits’

Psychometric testing for JSA claimants

.... rooting out dependency and need

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Support to help you get further in work
Taking part in our new service trial

Dear Victoria,

Although you've succeeded in starting work, your household income is topped up with a Universal Credit payment.

You've been selected to take part in a trial to learn how we can best support people like you, to:
• help you find work, more work or better paid work
• reduce your reliance on Universal Credit, and
• encourage you to be financially independent.

What does the trial involve

We'll work with you to offer advice and support to increase your earnings, hopefully to a level where you no longer need to claim Universal Credit at all.

Because you do still get some Universal Credit, you will have to take part in the trial to keep your payments.

If you've any questions about the trial and what it means for you, speak to your work coach or contact us on 0345 600 0723.

Yours sincerely,
Nice work if you can get it...

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 21 June 2015. You asked

RE: Entrenched Worklessness Provision
Reference number: UI_DWP_101412
Estimated length of contract: 12 Months
Awarded value: £165,000
https://online.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk/Common/View%20Notice.asp?site=1000&lanq=en&noticeid=1649703&fs=true

For the above contract awarded to Vedas who deliver provision through Action Plans and has mandatory exercises and activities, such as:

1. Sundial Activity: customers to complete based on their personal circumstances.

2. Laws of Attraction & how behaviour is key to success.

3. Life Steps – to look at life and setbacks. How to deal with these events and the processes/techniques used to build back up the steps.

4. Barriers & Hurdles – identifying barriers and hurdles. How to overcome barriers etc.

5. Positive Thoughts Story - Trainer

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Vive la Resistance

“Paid work is often elusive or transitory – more like moving target than a destination”

Sharon Wright ESRC Welfare Conditionality

Mental Health Resistance Network
‘Streatham Job Centre Protest’

Psychologists against austerity
any dreams we may have had...

'are you tired, like we are, of trying to convince yourself that what you're doing is of value and, after failing in this, having to do it anyway?' Becoming Useless Manifesto
There is an urgent need to talk publicly about the relationship between injustice and our mental health #OccupyMovement
Recovery in the Bin
@RITB_

Time to Change: Ask for help. It's brave and strong to ask for help.
Service User: Please Help.
MH Service: NEVER FEAR we will SAVE you from DEPENDENCY.

6:29 AM - 4 Oct 2018

23 Retweets 52 Likes
Acknowledgements

Robert Stearn
Boycott Workfare
Ivor Southwood

Johnny Void
Vera Weghmann, United Voices of the World

Mental Health Resistance Network
Recovery in the Bin
Disabled People Against Cuts

Further information

http://mh.bmj.com/content/41/1/40.full

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