CultureCase

The arts engagement barriers faced by those with anxiety or depression

This research was conducted by **Daisy Fancourt, Louise Baxter** and **Fabiana Lorencatto** at **University College London**

Summary

This paper explored ‘barriers to engagement in participatory arts activities amongst people with either depression or anxiety’. Active participation in the arts is known to generate a mixture of positive outcomes: it often makes for increased health and wellbeing. The paper identified a number of barriers faced by those with mental health problems and offers guidance on how they might be overcome.

Those with mental health problems felt less ‘psychologically capable’ and less ‘physically capable’ of engaging

This manifested itself in knowing ‘less about different types of activities available’ and being less confident about making plans to engage in them. Physical barriers were often about lacking the skills or having the energy or strength to engage.

They also ‘appear to have fewer social opportunities to engage’ as well as lower ‘automatic motivations’ and ‘reflective motivations’ to engage in arts activities

Meaning that ‘they know fewer people who engage in arts activities, they feel less support and encouragement from peers to engage, or they feel it is less socially acceptable to engage’. Motivational barriers came in the form of

developing ‘less strong habits of engaging’, or deriving ‘lower enjoyment from engaging’ or being sceptical of the ‘benefits of engaging’ or not seeing themselves as ‘an artistic person’.

The data came from the ‘Feel Good’ project, a large ‘citizen science’ experiment in 2019 promoted by the BBC

The sample of 6,867 people was divided into four: those with ‘no mental health problems’, those with ‘depression but not anxiety’, those with ‘anxiety but not depression’ and those with both conditions. Participants were asked how often they took part in a large range of activities that included singing, dancing, painting, knitting, gardening cooking, etc.

Keywords

wellbeing **mental health** **survey** **UK**

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