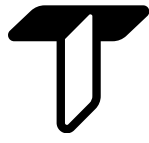




**Inspiring
Achievement,
Improving
Lives.**

**The TalkCampus
Impact Survey 2024**





Introduction



For the TalkCampus Impact Survey of 2024 we wanted to address the questions that did not just flow from what students were telling us; we also wanted to address the questions of those that support them.

The key was not just addressing whether the peer support element of the TalkCampus Community 'worked', that it has improved the mental health of its users, but also if any improvement in mental health might have real world impacts, which could improve their future lives.

To achieve this, we reviewed the latest research evidence on the effectiveness of peer support, and also developed a Theory of Change that described how peer support could be effective. Our Theory of Change encapsulated various change mechanisms such as making connections, building relationships and role-modelling recovery, plus process outcomes such as empowerment, fostering hope in the future, and critically, greater social functioning. The latter was a hugely important aspect, as we were not only alert to the high levels of loneliness reported in recent research on students' wellbeing, but also that the impact of the pandemic had reduced social confidence in current students.

In improving mental health, we also wanted to find out if we were helping students attain to a higher standard, complete their course, and improve their employability. We developed a survey of carefully worded questions, derived

from the Theory of Change, to address these issues. But we also used standardised scales, as used in other research, so we could examine how well we were doing, and benchmark any achievements against other outcomes research. There were some impressive results, but the journey of trying to improve the current and future lives of students continues and evolves, as does the unsettled world that we live in.

Good mental health is not the end of the journey, but a prelude to enjoying and participating in a life worth living. To that end, our ambition is that TalkCampus students flourish at College or University, attain well, but also know how to overcome or bear life's challenges, in order to reach the goals that are important for them. Increasing equity for all is part of our community's values.

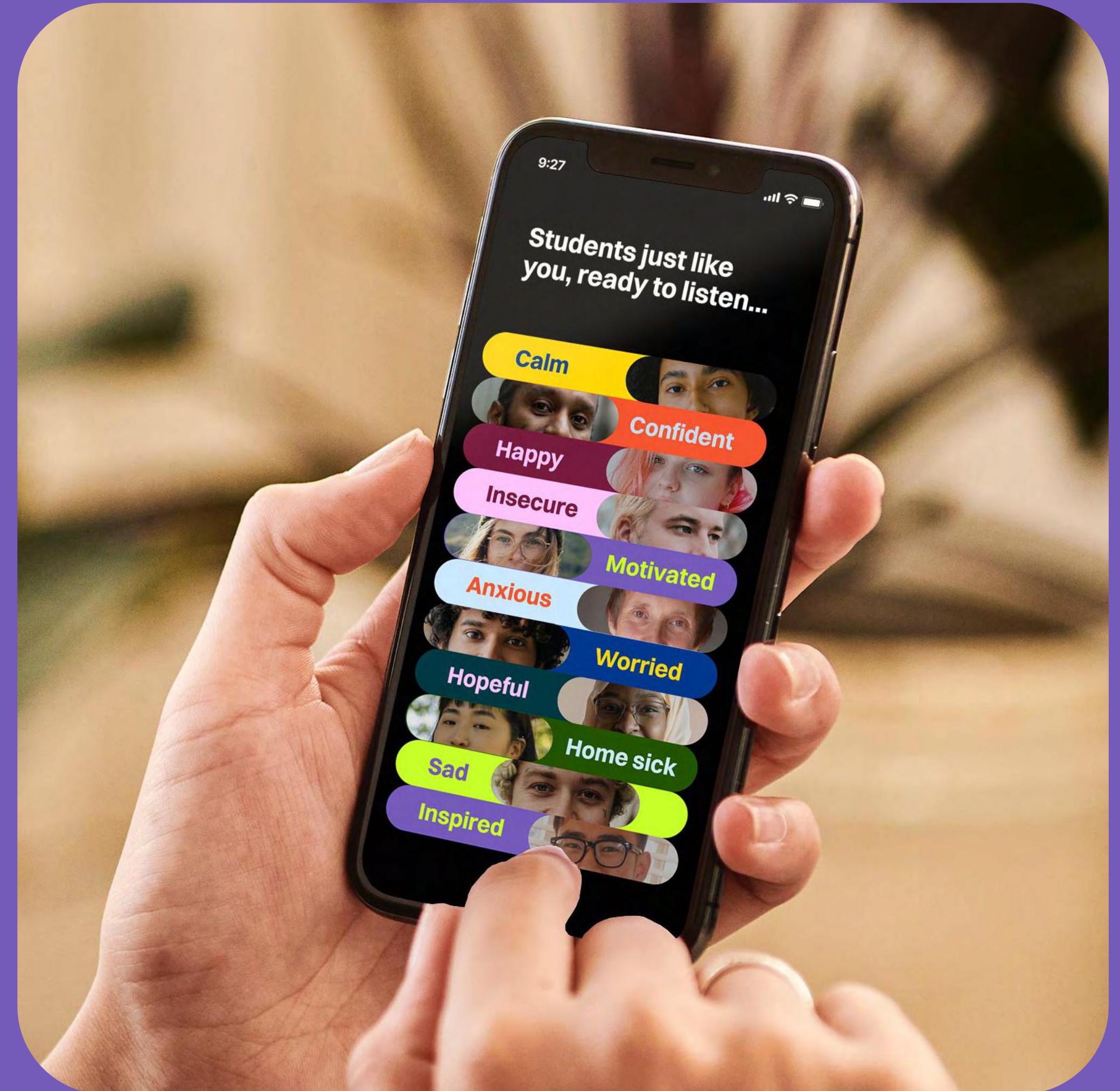
But all of this would be of limited worth if the voice of the student was not prominent. Our survey included multiple opportunities for students to express themselves, and tell us what they found helpful. We hope their words add weight to our survey results, and we'd like to thank them again for their generosity, compassion, and tolerance of adults who may not fully comprehend what being a 21st Century student is like.

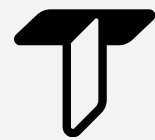
We hope this survey helps you recognise the value of our peer support service, and helps us improve yet more lives, as we continue to develop, together.





Mental Health, Attendance, Attainment and Retention

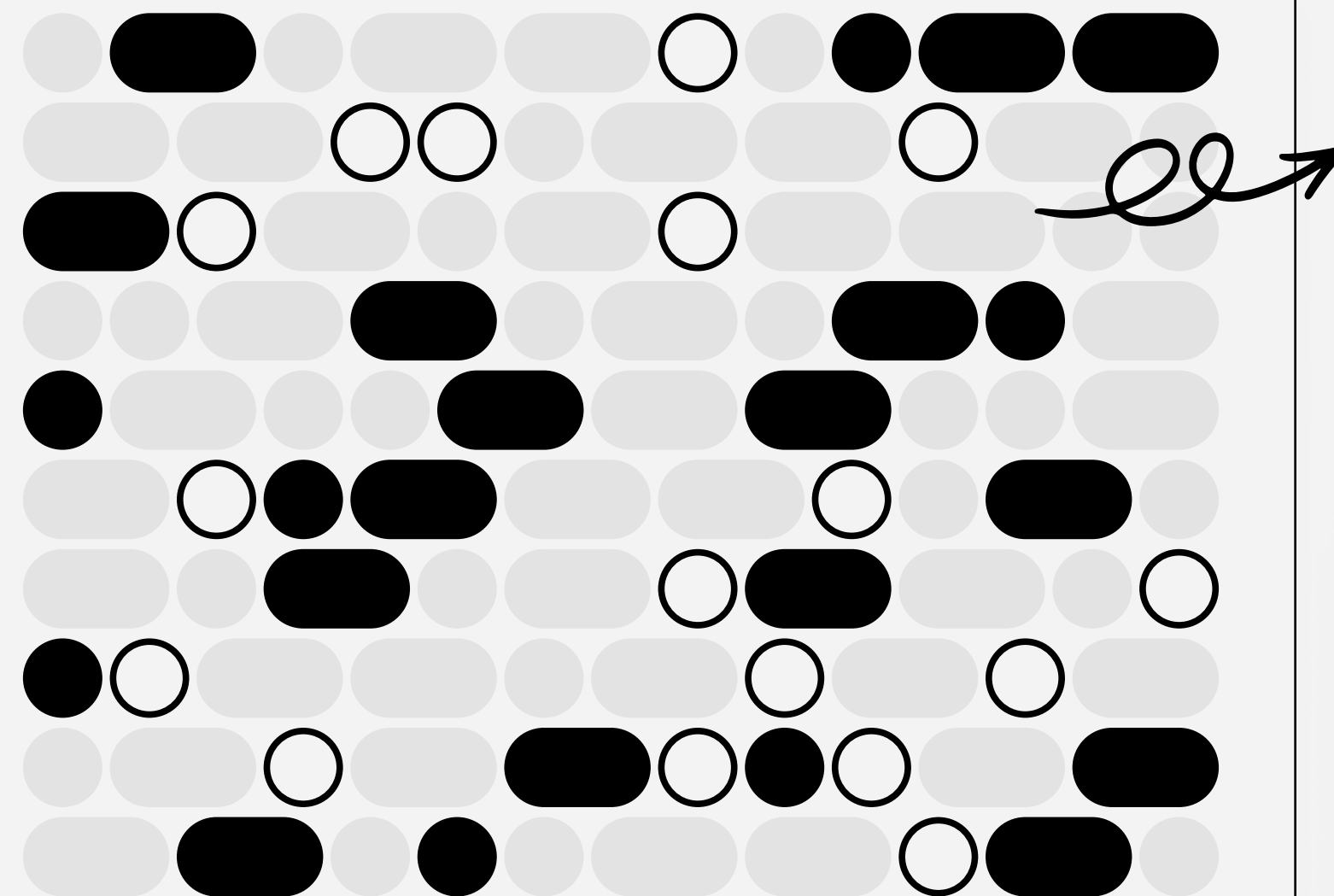




Mental Health, Attendance, Attainment and Retention

Mental health challenges are distressing to experience, but they also add additional burdens for any student, by disrupting opportunities to achieve or participate in activities that would improve their mental wellbeing.

We asked the students on TalkCampus to what extent mental health challenges did impact on their academic performance.



40% of TalkCampus users felt that emotional or mental difficulties had hurt their academic performance for more than 5 days in the past month, with only 17% stating the difficulties had impacted on their work for less than a day.

The TalkCampus community supported engagement and participation for most students, and many students found the support of peers had a positive impact on motivation and achievement.

This positive impact also extended into their ability to participate in activities, socially, though to a lesser degree, as many students struggle with social confidence and connectedness.

65%

of students report that the TalkCampus community makes them feel less isolated, and motivates them to achieve goals and complete work.

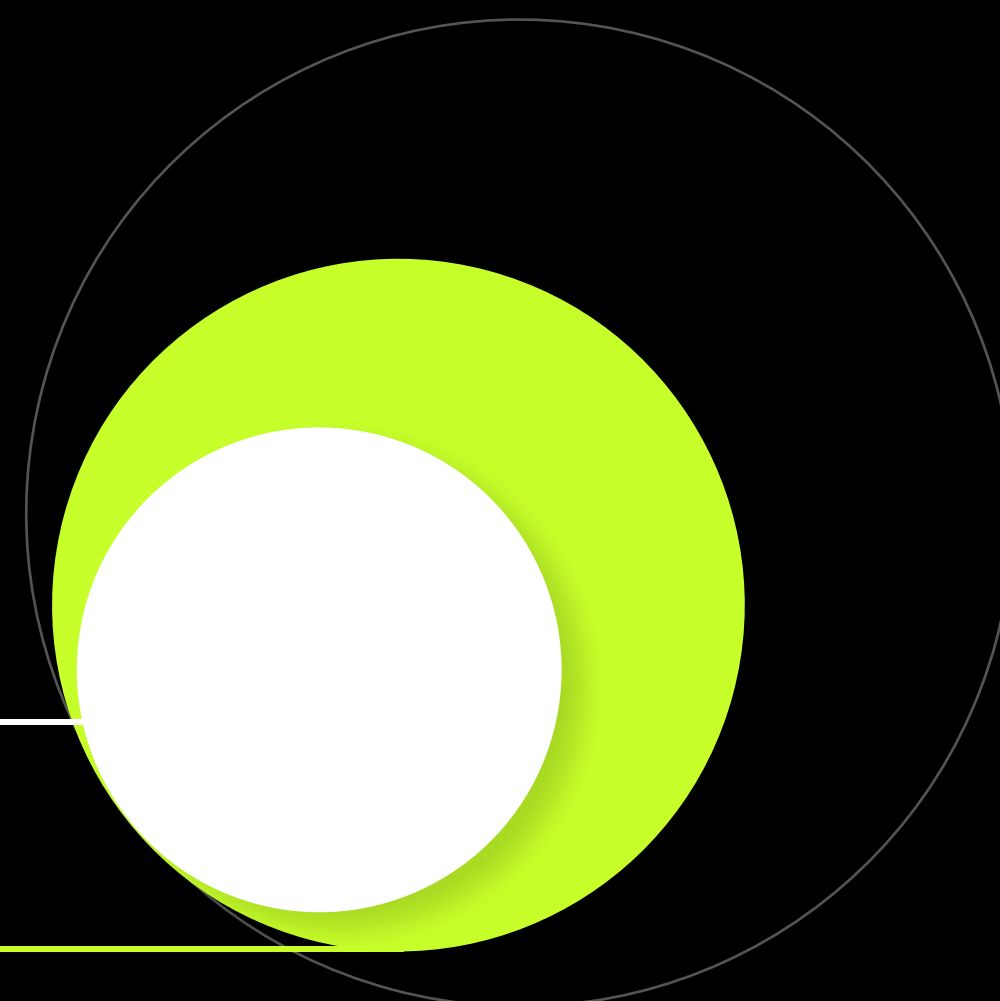
45%

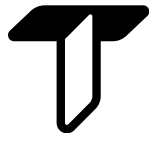
of students believe that the TalkCampus community helped them to feel more confident socially, and take part in University or College activities.

Yet whilst students felt emotional or mental difficulties had impacted upon academic performance, they did not appear to be impacting upon motivation or attendance to any great degree.

49% of all respondents missed no days on campus in the last month.

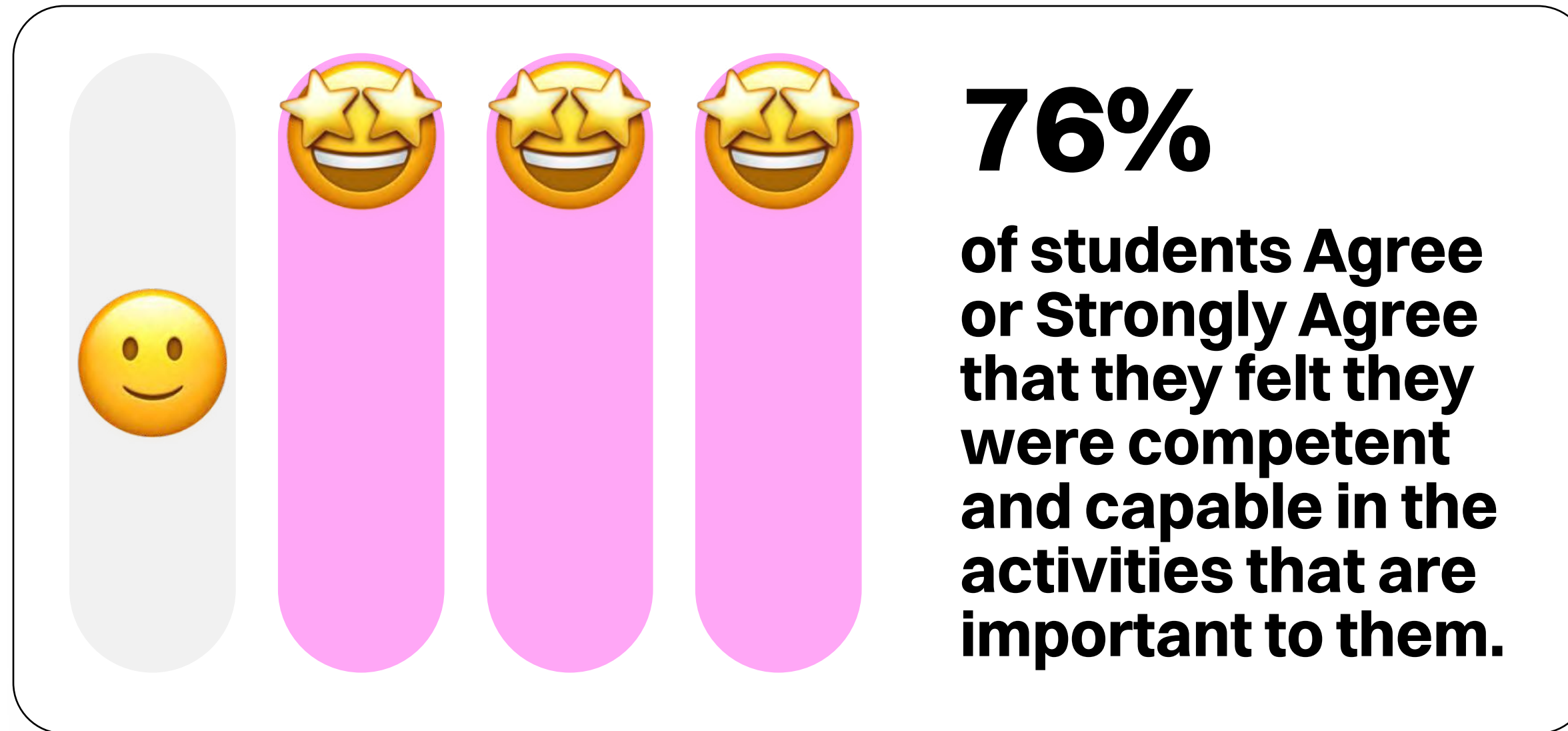
70% In total, missed no more than 3 days on campus in the past month.





Engagement and achievement were also addressed by 2 questions in the Psychological Wellbeing Scale, which was used to assess how many students experience positive mental health.¹

In the Psychological Wellbeing Scale section of the Survey, users reported a significant experience of engagement and competence in their activities.



Finally we asked if the TalkCampus Community had supported students in continuing with their course, when they had felt like dropping out of their course.

41%
of students had felt like dropping out, but the peer support from other students, who had also experienced that struggle, helped them continue with their course.

This figure is somewhat complicated as 59% of students may simply have not considered dropping out.

Although the students who had considered dropping out will be spread across a number of universities, the economic value of those students continuing with their course, as suggested by the Healthy Minds Value of Counselling Calculator,² would be approximately an increase in \$4 million in lifetime earnings, and \$1.7 million in tuition. Healthy Minds also indicate that retaining students offers further benefits to the University or College, such as enhancing their reputation, and even the increase in alumni donations is significant.

Support in attainment and completion of the course has very many positive aspects, not least the future employability of the student, which will also have a positive impact on mental health across the lifespan.



¹ The Psychological Wellbeing (Flourishing) Scale, is an eight-item (eight question) summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2009).

² The Healthy Minds Return on Investment Calculator (R.O.I.) for College Mental Health Services and Programs (https://umich.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6xN9QUSIFgtRQh)



Does TalkCampus Improve Mental Health?





Does TalkCampus Improve Mental Health?

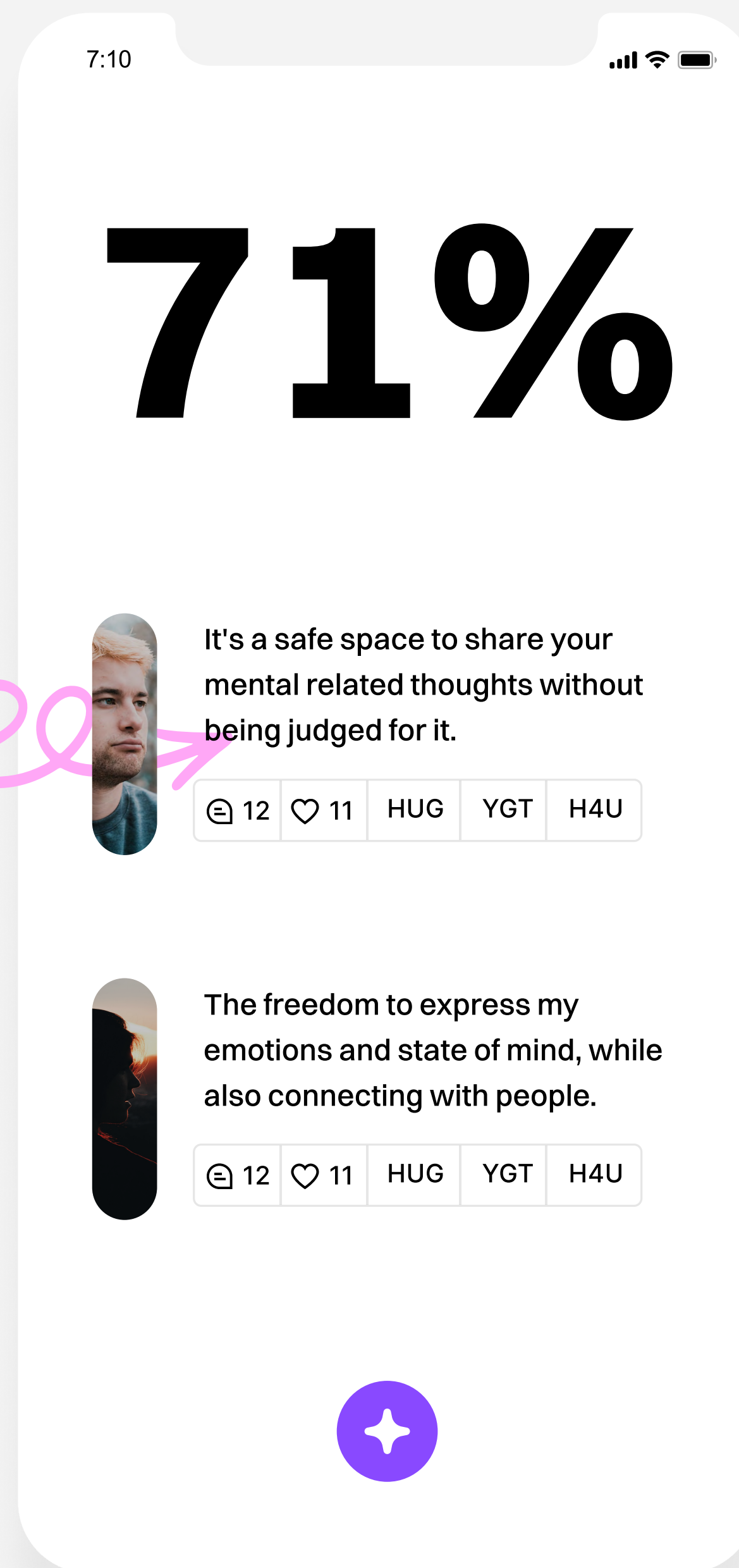
This critical question was addressed in two ways.

Firstly we asked students using TalkCampus, directly, if they felt the peer support of the community helped them, and if so, in what ways did it help them.

Secondly, we also asked students to complete a standardised scale, the Psychological Wellbeing (Flourishing) Scale, as described above, to assess their degree of positive mental health.³

What Students Told Us

Most students did feel that access to the TalkCampus community improved their mental health.



of students Agree or Strongly Agree that the peer support of the TalkCampus community has improved their mental health.

³ The Psychological Wellbeing (Flourishing) Scale, is an eight-item (eight question) summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2009).

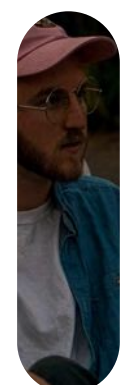


Unpacking what it was that supported their mental health, increased mental health literacy and accounts of recovery were positive agents of change:



It's good knowing others are fighting a similar battle.

🗨️ 11 ❤️ 4 HUG YGT H4U



There will always be someone who wants to help.

🗨️ 22 ❤️ 6 HUG YGT H4U



Learning to recognise yourself, learning to better understand other people's emotions. More sympathy and more patience dealing with others for myself.

🗨️ 18 ❤️ 3 HUG YGT H4U



66%
of students **Agree**
or **Strongly Agree**
that they
understand their
mental health
better because
they have learned
from other users
talking about their
mental health.





Narratives of recovery from peers with lived-experience of mental health difficulties not only promoted the early recognition of mental health challenges, but also promoted help-seeking behaviours. Hearing from peers who understood the landscape of supports, and hearing of their positive experiences of accessing support, was highly motivating for those who may have been ambivalent about accessing traditional supports:

But it was the reduction in feelings of isolation, through participation in a safe, non-judgemental community, which embraced diversity, that provided the opportunity for connections with 'people like me'. For minoritised groups, this was especially powerful, and promoted a sense of belonging, which is fundamental to positive mental health.

69%

of students Agree or Strongly Agree that members of the community have helped them get the support they needed.

79%

of students Agree or Strongly Agree that the peer support of the TalkCampus community helps them feel that they are not alone in their struggles and helps them to feel that they belong.



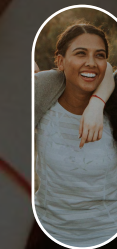
What helps? The accessibility, the stark variety of users, the international crowd! Understanding that the human condition is shared beyond race, gender, and nationality, etc, makes my problems feel that much more relatable.

🗨️ 11 ❤️ 4 HUG YGT H4U



Finding YOUR people

🗨️ 7 ❤️ 7 HUG YGT H4U



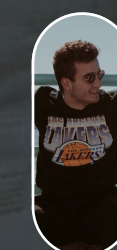
Accessibility and anonymity

🗨️ 3 ❤️ 6 HUG YGT H4U



That I can talk with people across the globe.

🗨️ 7 ❤️ 7 HUG YGT H4U



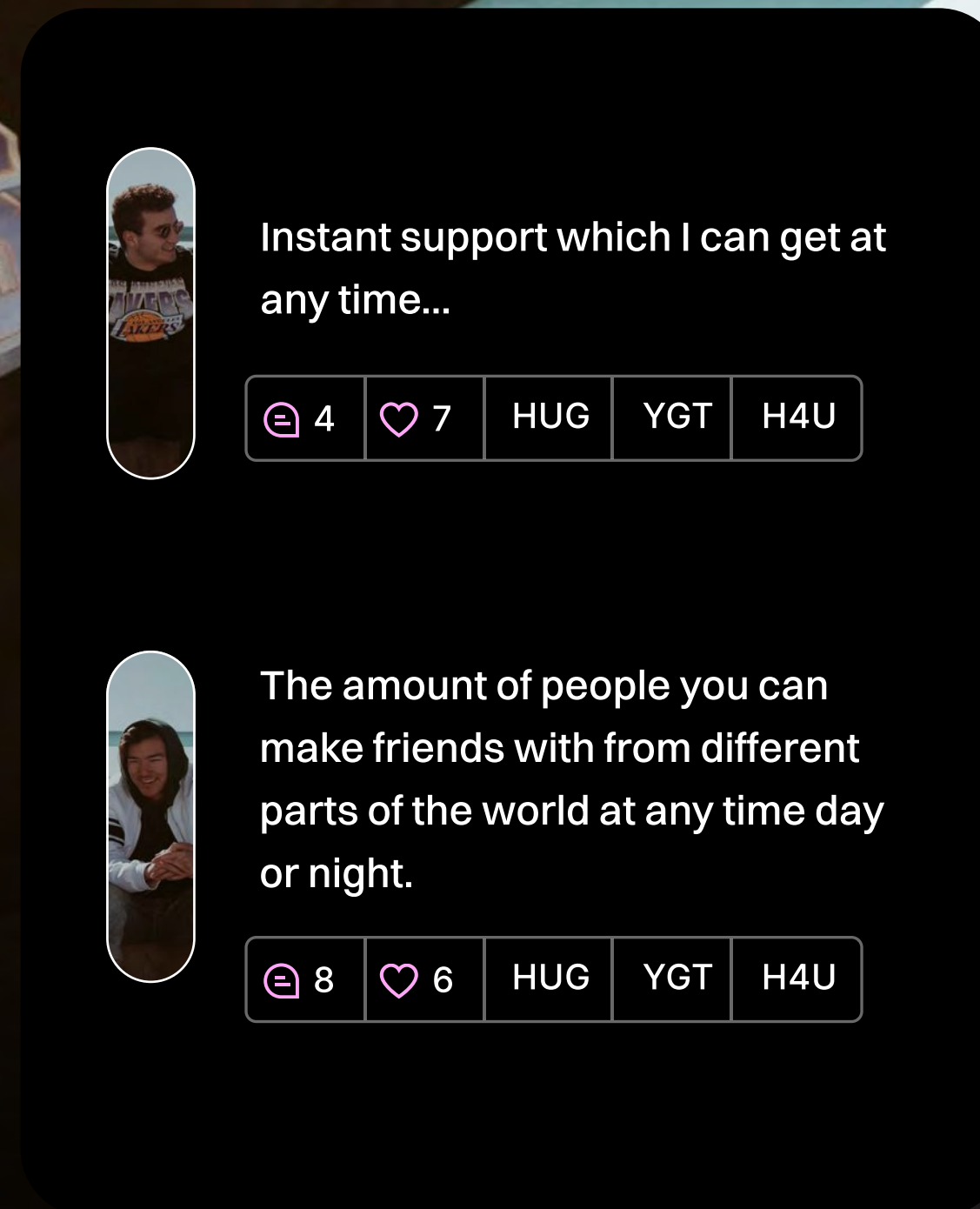
The LGBTQ+ people using the app

🗨️ 11 ❤️ 8 HUG YGT H4U



Students also reported that, inevitably, their use of TalkCampus was episodic, given the demands upon their time, and encouragement to engage on campus. Yet knowing it was there, as a permanent support, and easily accessible, in the background, was immensely supportive:

65%
of students stated that knowing they can access this community at any time of the day or night helped them to feel safe and sleep better.

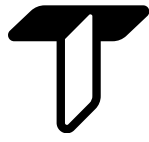


As good quality sleep will support both positive mental health and academic performance, this suggested that availability of TalkCampus and access to it were therapeutic. TalkCampus for many was a secure-base, in unsettled and unpredictable times.



How many TalkCampus Users Experience Positive Mental Health?





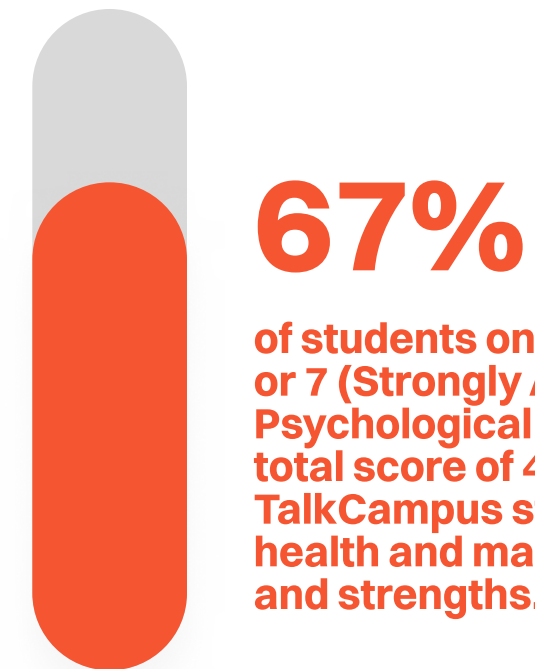
How Many TalkCampus Users Experience Positive Mental Health?

As stated above, it was important to consider the student responses to the specific questions that evolved from the Theory of Change, with those from a standardised scale. We used the Psychological Well-Being (Flourishing) Scale (PWB), as used by The Healthy Minds Network,⁴ in their 2022-2023 survey of students in the US.

Positive mental health (psychological well-being) was measured using The Psychological Well-Being (Flourishing) Scale (PWB), an eight-item (eight question) summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2009).

On completing the scale, the scores range from 8-56, and a score of 48 is used as the threshold for positive mental health.

A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.



of students on TalkCampus scored 6 (Agree) or 7 (Strongly Agree) for each item on the Psychological Wellbeing Scale, giving each a total score of 48 or higher. Thus 67% of TalkCampus students have positive mental health and many psychological resources and strengths.

Whatever their mental health challenges, many students were experiencing positive mental health and well-being.

In order to understand what it was that promoted their positive mental health 3 questions stood above the others:



of TalkCampus students Agree or Strongly Agree that they actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.



of TalkCampus students Agree or Strongly Agree that they are competent and capable in the activities that are important to them.



of TalkCampus students Agree or Strongly Agree that they are a good person and live a good life.

The enormously positive impact that peer support has on self-esteem and self-efficacy, and of having opportunities to support others was not entirely surprising, but still heartening to see evidenced within a standardised scale. As 'Giving' is one of the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing',⁵ it was made clear that peer support was a two way process, and perhaps it is not the receiving of support that is the most powerful aspect of it.

“ Being able to help and get help is great. I always love seeing people get better and grow. In this community, when you're happy, others are happy for you. And when others are happy, I'm happy for them. ”



⁴ The Healthy Minds Network is one of the United States' premier research organisations contributing to adolescent and young adult mental health, with principal investigators at the University of California-Los Angeles, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and Boston University.

⁵ 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', New economics Foundation



Isolation & Loneliness





Isolation and Loneliness

Given how corrosive the pandemic, amongst other issues, has been on social connectedness, with the restrictions of lockdown occurring at key stages of social development for millions, it was critical that the survey addressed the issue of loneliness and isolation.

Loneliness has not just an impact on mental and physical health, it has a direct negative impact on academic performance.⁶

The TalkCampus students told us:



81%
of TalkCampus students feel they often, or some of the time lack companionship.

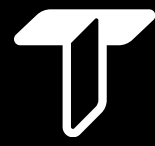


83%
of TalkCampus students often, or some of the time feel left out.



82%
of TalkCampus students often, or some of the time feel isolated from others.

⁶ 'Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation', The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

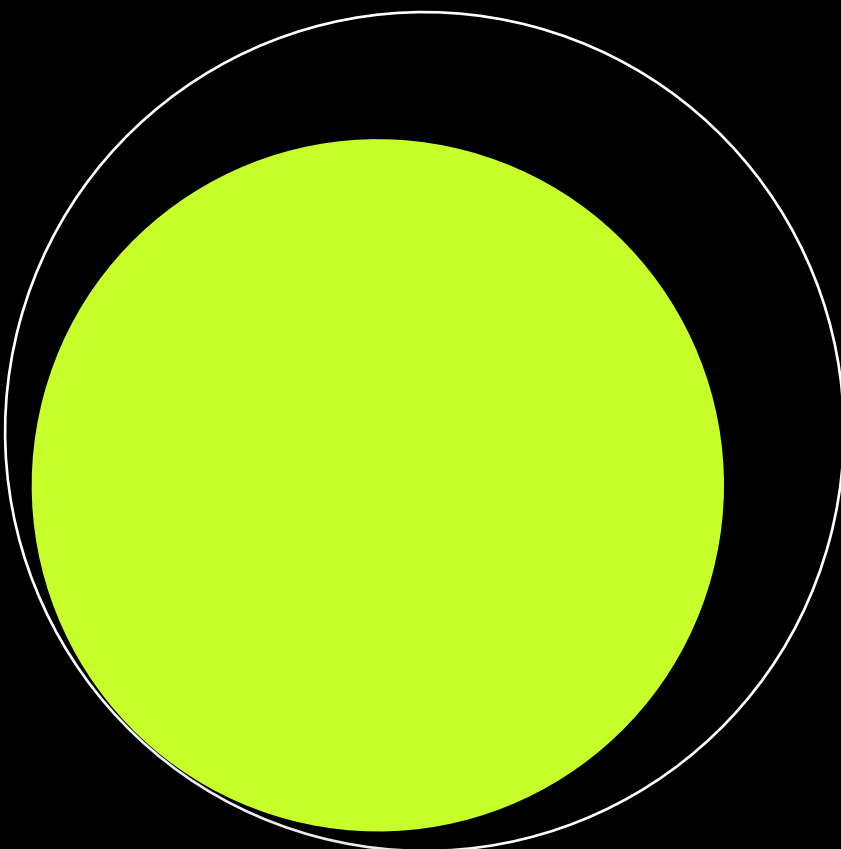


“ You can share anything you want, and most people do reply to your posts. It’s like they won’t ignore you and will respect you for who you are; they won’t let you feel left out. ”

Whilst young people experience more feelings of loneliness than any other age group - twice that of those over 75 years - there is less loneliness reported by TalkCampus students than 92% of students who reported feeling lonely, for example, by the UK Government⁷ research in 2023.

However, the TalkCampus students reported higher levels of loneliness than the 60 % of students who reported it in the US Healthy Minds Network Survey of 2022-2023.⁸

This suggests that TalkCampus is a safe and supportive space for those that are experiencing loneliness, and offers them some social connection, a place to build social confidence and start to connect more with others.



79%

of TalkCampus students agree or strongly agree that the peer support of the TalkCampus community helps them feel that they not alone in their struggles and also helps them to feel that they belong.

⁷ 'New government research shows 'lonely' seems to be the hardest word for students'

⁸ The Healthy Minds Network Study 2022-2023 Data Report





We can make good friends here from whom we can spend our time with! To be honest I have some of my friends but they are busy in their own world so I can't communicate with them on daily basis like if I feel low I can't talk to them but here the people are there for you all the time whenever you need they will be someone for you....giving you strength, advice and helping you to cope up with the situation indirectly... Which I loved the most about this community 😊



22%

Given the impact of a pandemic, the TalkCampus students are at different stages of recovery, and some are still struggling with social connectedness. Habits were formed in isolation, and for many, social confidence was lost in face-to-face situations.

For a great number of students, there are significant obstacles to offline social connections, and over a quarter of TalkCampus students had not spoken to anyone offline in the previous 24 hours.

22% of TalkCampus students reported that they talked to 5 or more people face-to-face in the previous day, but 26% had not spoken to anyone face-to-face in the previous 24 hours.





Mental Health and Physical Activity



Mental Health and Physical Activity

Activity, in many areas of life, is good for mental health, and physical activity itself can have a very positive impact on mental health. Yet poor mental health can undermine efforts to be physically active.

We wanted to understand how physically active the TalkCampus students were and asked them how many hours a week they spent exercising.

Although there may be a question of what young people define as exercise, the TalkCampus users appear less active than the students surveyed in The Healthy Minds Network Study of 2022-2023.

41%

of TalkCampus students spend less than an hour a week exercising.

62%
of TalkCampus students spend 2 hours or less exercising a week.

In The Healthy Minds Network Study of 2022-2023, 29% of the students surveyed exercised less than an hour per week.

Whilst this level of activity is clearly a concern, remembering the recent life experiences of today's students is helpful, as during phases of healing and recovery, such as a bereavement or trauma, some stillness can be helpful.

Conclusion

The 21st Century Student has the unenviable task of both recovering from the pandemic, and subsequent global stresses, whilst trying to develop and achieve in preparation for a happy and healthy adult life. To do so in the company of those in the same situation offers comfort, but also connections with the hopes and aspirations that every student nurtures, no matter how privately. On days when despair and hopelessness have prominence, the respect and attention from those who understand how that feels, from the inside is, ironically, peerless in its power to reintroduce hope and determination where it was lost.

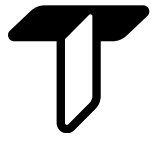
Most of the students using TalkCampus experience positive mental health whilst still struggling with feelings of loneliness and low social confidence. They are more engaged and encouraged to achieve by their peers, yet seek further help when it is needed.

There are encouraging signs that TalkCampus is supporting, perhaps inspiring attainment, and that is good news. But like the students we support, we will strive to develop further, to ensure even more students get the most from their University or College years, and leave with a brighter future.

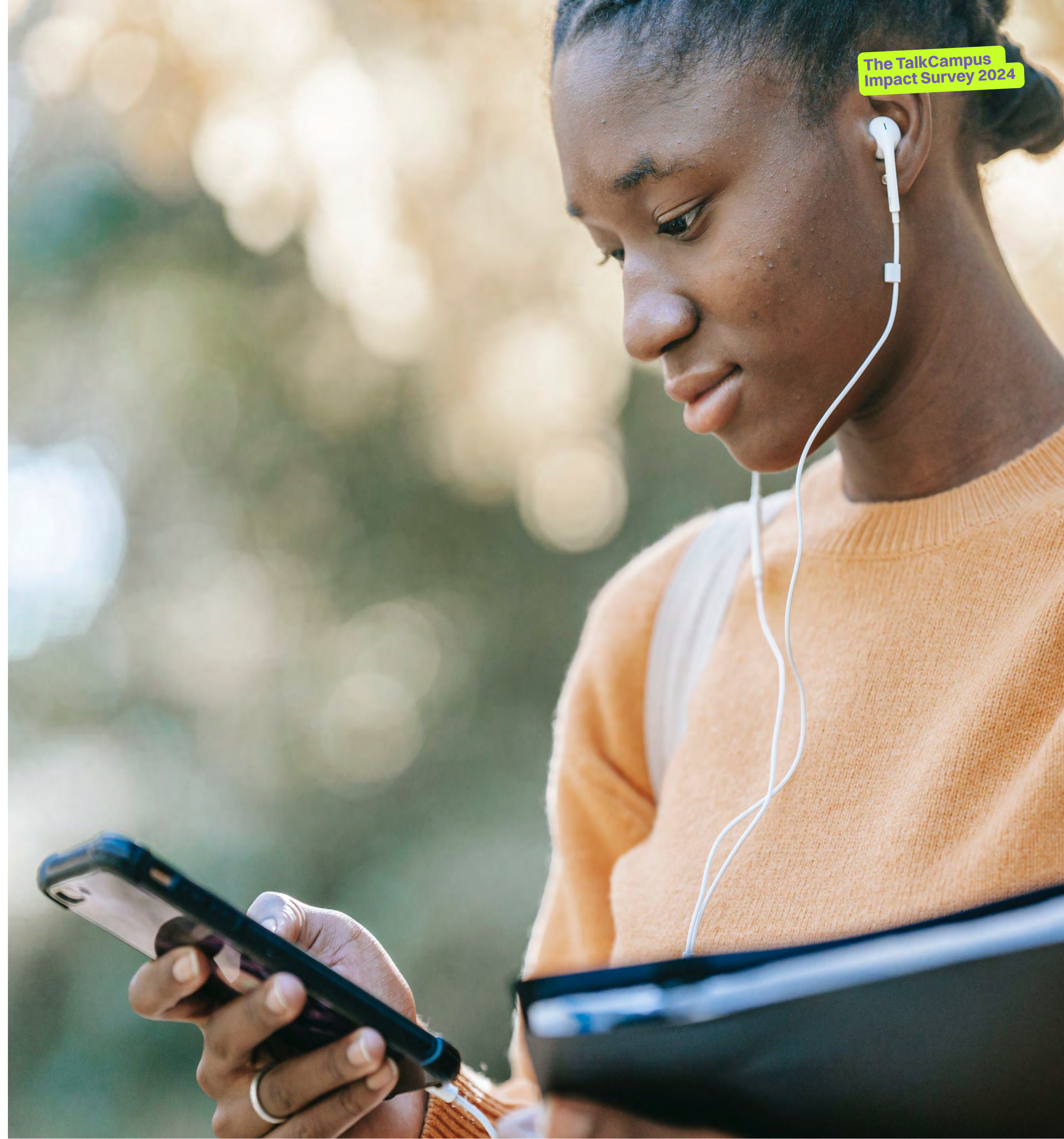
They deserve that.

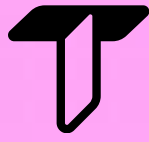
 **TalkCampus[®]**





Case Studies





“

I am from India, 26 years old, and currently a student. I joined the app for several reasons. At the time, I was feeling lonely, had no friends, and barely spoke to anyone. I had recently lost my brother, which left me grieving deeply. During those days of isolation and heartbreak, I sought out somewhere where I could connect with people and talk. Additionally, my career prospects didn't look promising; I was failing my exams, and my dreams seemed distant, contributing to my depression.



This has been the only place where I truly felt like I belonged. I've used many apps before, but none have provided the same sense of connection. It has helped me tremendously, especially with my loneliness, as I've made many amazing friends who truly understand and have stayed with me through hardships. The platform creates an atmosphere where you can be yourself without fear of judgement, and I've always found help there. Whether it's through helpful comments sharing similar experiences that resonate with me or friends who listen with empathy when I need it most.

The platform has also helped me with my studies. Some of my friends there have really motivated me to study when I had lost all hope. Their encouragement pushed me forward, and as a result, I enrolled in a new course after I dropped out from the previous one. So far, my studies are going well. And I am hopeful about a better future. Also I met a bunch of friends who were in the same situation as me and were doing the same courses. Their experiences and guidance was also very helpful.

What keeps me coming back? Initially, I struggled to articulate it, but after much reflection, I realised it's not solely about the support. What really helped me was the realisation that I wasn't alone in my feelings and struggles. Connecting with others who were going through similar hardships was invaluable. I learned from their experiences and found motivation in their stories.

Apart from everything else I will always be grateful for the friendship I made there. It was indeed a beautiful experience.

”

**Anonymous
User**



I started using the app a couple of years ago. I tried joining several platforms that were similar but for some reason, I always came back to this one. I think I found my safe space and I feel comfortable. I've been through a lot, dealing with problems in my relationship and taking care of an autistic child. Sometimes I feel suffocated. The platform helps me a lot, it's my way of expressing my emotions by making posts. Regardless of whether the posts are about sadness, strengthening, reminding or motivating myself.

The platform ultimately helped me better recognize other people's emotions, and get to know various unique human characters from various countries. And it helps me control my emotions in dealing with other people, not only on the platform, but I apply it in my daily life. The community taught me that not everyone is strong, there are people whose feelings are fragile when they are faced with problems. This became a lesson and reflection for me, making me learn to be a better human being.

What really helped me was probably seeing those who were facing problems, struggling to get out of them. It makes me feel like I'm not alone in this world. There are posts that sometimes when I read on my timeline, inspire me to get back up and not give up.

What makes me always come back is that I realised that there are many people who need to be heard, I just realised that by doing that, it was indirectly helping me too. Maybe one form of my happiness is knowing they are happy because of me.

I don't know about other people, but for me, it's not just a mental health platform, it's a place that can give me light in my darkness.



**Anonymous
User**



Anonymous Users

“

I joined the app because a friend of mine said he was depressed and it was my first time even hearing the word. I didn't know what it was like to be depressed, I didn't know what to say, I didn't know how I could help. When I joined the platform I had a really hard time opening up. I had never asked for help before or actually talked about my problems. Getting guidance from the other users really helped me learn how to open up and how to talk to others. Their support really made me learn that it's ok to open up, it's ok to talk about it and that the community is there for me.

I use the platform daily, it's amazing to be a user, you get support from others and you can support others. When I need a safe place to express my feelings, I always go there. The community aspect has been crucial in making me feel less isolated, knowing that there are others who understand and empathise with my struggles has been a really comforting and empowering experience. It's really good to be able to connect with just anyone and everyone, and since there are so many people it's easy to find someone who understands.

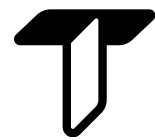
”

“

In Lebanon getting help for mental health is taboo. If I tell my parents I want to see a psychologist - they are going to ask “Why? What have you done wrong?”. TalkCampus is really a safe space, I have never encountered hate comments and it gives the opportunity to express without being judged, it's different to other social media. People already know they shouldn't judge. It works on a trust basis. I feel safe and confident posting.

I joined the platform for the opportunity of being a buddy. I find being a buddy motivating - I never thought about the happiness I could get from volunteering, seeing the change in someone else. I didn't expect to have these feelings in a good way - being proud of someone making a change no matter how small.


”




Quotes







 Being able to help and get help is great. I always love seeing people get better and grow. In this community, when you're happy, others are happy for you. And when others are happy, I'm happy for them.

 The accessibility, the stark variety of users, the international crowd! Understanding that the human condition is shared beyond race, gender, and nationality, etc, makes my problems feel that much more relatable.


 It's good knowing others are fighting a similar battle.


 Accessibility and anonymity.


 Finding YOUR people.


 It's a safe space to share your mental related thoughts without being judged for it.

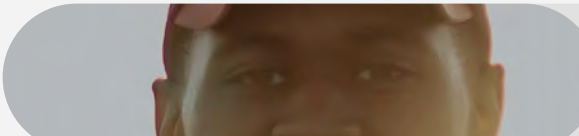
 The freedom to express my emotions and state of mind, while also connecting with people.


 There will always be someone who wants to help.

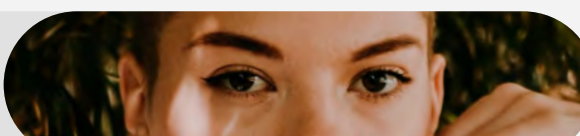
 Instant support which I can get at any time...

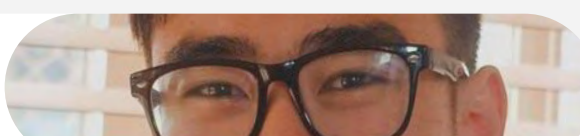
 That I can talk with people across the globe.


 The LGBTQ+ people using the app.

 Learning to recognize yourself, learning to better understand other people's emotions. More sympathy and more patience dealing with others for myself.

 Private diary. Also, groups.

 The amount of people you can make friends with from different parts of the world at any time day or night.

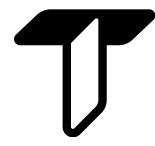
 You can share anything you want, and most people do reply to your posts. It's like they won't ignore you and will respect you for who you are; they won't let you feel left out.

 We can make good friends here from whom we can spend our time with! To be honest I have some of my friends but they are busy in their own world so I can't communicate with them on daily basis like If I feel low I can't talk to them but here the people are there for you all the time whenever you need they will be someone for you....giving you strength, advice and helping you to cope up with the situation indirectly... Which I loved the most about this community 😊



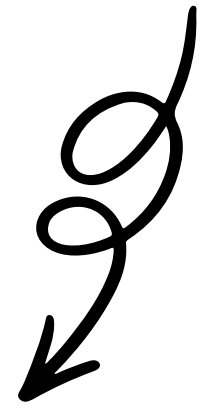
We asked users, what's the best thing about this community?





To learn more about how peer can help your institution...

Schedule a quick preview of TalkCampus



talkcampus.com/book-demo

