Intervention ‘Teleblok’

Reflecting about an action to help students with their mental wellbeing during exams

Griet Speeckaert
Teleblok - Belgium
Principles of Teleblok

1. Anonymous & online
2. Volunteers
3. Listening eye
4. Every evening during the exam period
5. Students and their environment
Some numbers

- 24 evenings
- 30 volunteers
- 423 conversations
- 17.6 conversations per evening
- 25 minutes
- 80% higher education
- 76% female

Social support among students

Peer support
At what point during the previous exam period did you really feel supported by peers?

⇒ Emotional support through comparison

"When I met a friend and everything we said about the exams was the same, we recognized ourselves in each other's story."

⇒ Companionship

"The morning before the exam, drink coffee together, talk away the last doubts and wish each other good luck."
At what point during the previous exam period did you really feel supported by peers?

→ Study together

"At my old high school we had arranged with some fellow students from the neighborhood through a teacher that we could study together in a classroom. Got a lot of support to see each other studying and also during the breaks interesting conversations and motivational pep talk".

At what point during the previous exam period did you really feel stressed by peers?

→ Stress through ... comparison

"When you notice that others have already finished or are much more advanced with learning. Especially when I don't have anyone around to talk to or do anything else like sports. Then there's grinding in my head about what I don't know yet and what I should know".
At what point during the previous exam period did you really feel stressed by peers?

→ Stress due to exam stress

"We have a facebook group from our study field. Some students post the most stupid questions there. The questions and the sometimes even stranger answers cause me stress”

→ Stress due to emotional stress

"Especially when friends said they couldn't take the exam, I tried to listen to them, but it also caused me a lot of stress as they scared me that I wouldn't be able to do it myself. Because of their doubts I started to doubt myself"
Peer support – the numbers

- 42% cannot easily start telling others about worries or stress themselves.
- 7/10 does not want to burden fellow students with their problems.
- 88% indicate that fellow students can turn to them for support.
- 27% is not addressed by their peers
- 50% Flemish people does not know how to handle a conversation

Questions for a next survey

- How well do students recognize signals of psychological unwellness together?
- How often do students start a conversation with other students when they recognize signals?
- What are ways to show each other compassion?
- How can students be there for each other and still take care of themselves?
- How well do students know what to refer to?
- How can we strengthen that social network among peers?
Social support among students

Parents

How responsible do you feel for the results of your student?

"I feel it's my responsibility to lead him to a degree. He chose college and a direction that suits him. Now I also have to continue until he gets that diploma, even if it takes longer."

"I find it hard to digest that they are of age and yet we remain financially responsible..."
How responsible do you feel for the results of your student?

- 28% not at all responsible
- 28% not responsible
- 24% responsible
- 20% very responsible

How do you feel your support helps your student during exams?

- ask how the exam went
- Pamper with food
- keeping track of when my student's exams fall
- Putting exams into perspective
- encourage to start studying
- talking about how he's doing
Difficult moments

"If he comes home after a bad exam, it's hard to boost him and move on."

- Stress
- Irritable
- Digital devices

Encourage (83%)
Nothing (35%)
Conversation (27%)

Stress for parents during exams

"Countdown until it's over. My daughter is under a lot of stress and that radiates on everything. Hardly anything can be said or asked and that's difficult because it's a long period of time."
Stress for parents during exams

- 75% more stress
- 84% more anxiety
- 50% more pride for their student
- 50% more anxiety
- 41% more tired

Exams have an influence on relations

Tense relation with parents

Intense moments with parents
How do students rate their parents?

To what extent do you think your parent succeeds in supporting you well during the exam period?

- 11% not at all
- 16% not good
- 28% good
- 45% very good

What do students (not) appreciate?

**Appreciate**
- How did it go?
- Pressure to study well
- Push to start studying
- Meals and laundry

**Annoying**
- How did it go?
- Pressure to study well
- Push to start studying.
- Remarks on the use of digital devices.
Annoying questions

- How many hours did you study today?
- Is it really necessary to study so much?
- Wouldn’t you study a little more?
- Are you still on schedule?
- Did you pass?
- Have you been able to write a lot?
- What did they ask at the exam?
- How did the others do?
- Have you compared your answers to someone else’s?
- What are you gonna do if you don’t pass?

Students do not always tell everything
Why not?

“I’m ashamed because I know I study too little because I have trouble concentrating.”
“I’m afraid there’s going to be a fight.”
“Whatever you do, it’s never good enough.”
“When I tell something they stress when it’s sometimes not necessary and that’s why I tend not to tell some things”

Parental involvement in higher education

60% of parents feel that the college or uniforms is not open to parents of students.

"the schools should involve parents much more, we’re just the sponsors of our students."

"they’re adults, and it’s normal for communication to be through the student and not the parents.”
Needs of parents

- Self-care
- Technical questions
- Contact with the school
- Help with student support

Conclusions and questions

- Transition from secondary to higher education
- Parents
- Signal recognition
- Collaboration
- Introduction