



European
Research
Council



Philosophy of Mind

*A six-session workshop series
based on
project PERFECT themes*

**Core questions and
ideas**



Session 1: Introduction and philosophical techniques

Core questions and ideas

- 1) What does 'philosophy' mean to you?
- 2) What does it mean to make an argument? Is making an argument always aggressive? Or can it sometimes be helpful?
- 3) Are there good and bad ways to make an argument? How can we tell?
- 4) Do you think our different beliefs and values affect our statements and arguments? Is this good or bad? And how can we tell?
- 5) Can we learn new anything by sitting back and reflecting on our own experience of the world? If you think yes, can you think of an example?

Session 2: Experiences

Core questions and ideas

- 1) What is an experience?
- 2) What causes our experiences?
- 3) If 2 people are in exactly the same situation, do they have exactly the same experience?
- 4) Do our existing ideas ever influence the way we experience the world?
- 5) Can experiences be usual or unusual? What is the difference?
- 6) Has anyone in the group ever seen an *optical illusion*? What are they and what do they tell us about how we see the world?
- 7) Are there some experiences that only people with mental distress or illness have?
- 8) Do you think that people without mental distress or illness sometimes have unusual experiences?
- 9) How does what we've discussed change or add to your thinking about experiences and mental health?

Session 3: Beliefs

Core questions and ideas

- 1) What is a belief?
- 2) What is the relation between beliefs and experiences?
- 3) Do our existing ideas and beliefs influence the new beliefs we acquire, or not? Why?
- 4) Can a belief be usual or unusual? What makes this so?
- 5) Does anyone know what “wishful thinking” is? In what ways is it good? In what ways is it bad?
- 6) Are there some beliefs that only people with mental distress or illness have?
- 7) Do you think that people without mental distress or illness sometimes have unusual beliefs?
- 8) How does what we’ve discussed change or add to your thinking about beliefs and mental health?

Session 4: Rationality

Core questions and ideas

- 1) What is rationality, and what does it mean to be rational?
- 2) What is irrationality, and what does it mean to be irrational?
- 3) Do you think there are lots of different meanings of 'rationality' and 'irrationality' or just the one?
- 4) If you think there are different meanings, do they apply in different situations? Is one meaning better than the rest?
- 5) What sort of ideas and behaviours are rational, and how should we decide?
- 6) What sort of ideas and behaviours are irrational, and how should we decide?
- 7) Are there some ways of being irrational that only people with mental distress or illness have?
- 8) Do you think that people without mental distress or illness are sometimes irrational?
- 9) How does what we've discussed change or add to your thinking about rationality and mental health?

Session 5: Models of mental health

Core questions and ideas

- 1) How is mental distress/illness and wellness/wellbeing related?
- 2) How different is someone who experiences mental distress to someone who experiences mental wellbeing?
- 3) Is it possible to arrange all people into two groups: those with mental distress/illness and those with mental wellbeing?
- 4) Do you think mental distress/illness and mental wellbeing are on a spectrum? To put it another way, do you think there is no sharp divide between the people who experience mental distress/illness and people who experience mental wellbeing?
- 5) How do the discussions we've had in other sessions change or add to the way you think about these questions?
- 6) What shapes mental health? Why do we have the experiences of mental health experiences that we do? Some people think it is because of our **genes**. Some people think it is because of our **personalities**. Some people think it is because of our **relationships and society**. Some people think it is a mix of all three. What do you think?

Session 6: Evaluating experiences and beliefs

Core questions and ideas

- 1) How should we decide whether our beliefs and experiences are good or bad?
- 2) Can any one belief or experience have *both* good bits and bad bits?
- 3) Can you think of an example?
 - i. An experience with both good bits and bad bits: what are they?
 - ii. A belief with both good bits and bad bits: what are they?
- 4) Can we decide to stop thinking about a bad experience, or get rid of a distressing belief?
- 5) If the experience or belief has some good bits as well as bad, what does this mean for how we deal with it?
- 6) Can reflecting like this, and asking these sorts of questions help our self-understanding?
- 7) What lessons from our discussions can we pass on to mental health practitioners? What can we do to get the message across?