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# Riding the Waves

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# Aims of the project



The overall aim of the study was to explore the ways in which students on a professional programme developed emotional resilience by analysing the interaction between the epistemological (ways of knowing) and the ontological (ways of being).



# Methodology

- A qualitative approach was used to determine the sample, data generation and analytical and interpretive decisions.
- A focus group was used to generate initial issues and questions and to determine the broad interview framework
- 11 in depth interviews were then recorded, transcribed and analysed through categorisation of key themes
- After the first 5 interviews emergent themes were identified and influenced the focus of subsequent interviews



# What is emotional resilience

- Exists within a continuum between vulnerability and resilience
- Emotional resilience is generally considered to be the outcome of a range of processes, including the strategies individuals use to cope with challenging situations

“The ability of an individual to adjust to adversity, maintain equilibrium, retain some sense of control over their environment and continue to move on in a positive manner”

(Jackson D, Firtko A .and Edenborough M. 2007)

# What is 'adversity' for pre-registration nursing students



## Examples

- Workload pressures – academic and practice based – combined with financial strain
- Combination of public and private emotional labour
- Juggling different identities and anticipated 'possible selves'
- Perceptions of 'deficiency' related to stereotypes and gap between philosophy and practice
- Dealing with ethical tensions and dilemmas

# What is 'adversity' for pre-registration nursing students



Example:-

*“ There was one lady who I was feeding who was dying and I was thinking of my auntie and I got quite upset about that. It does link with your personal life and you think , well I hope some- one is going to look after me one day – you don’t know what’s just around the corner. I must admit this last placement I’ve come back feeling emotionally drained.”*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Personal characteristics (e.g sense of humour) -

*“ A person came in who had a history of violence ..... and when I said to him ‘And how do you feel about finding ways of trying to manage this?’ He sort of looked at me and said “Well, you could try but nobody’s ever managed it” .... So I sort of laughed that off a bit and he was OK. He said it in a joking way as well.”*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Personal characteristics (e.g determination and courage)

*“Stabbing someone with a needle was not something I looked forward to. I felt very nervous before and once we did the theory I just said to all the staff ‘Any injections – it’s not because I want to do them or like to do them but just flood me with them. I want to get rid of that fear!’ Which is what I did.”*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Personal agency in survival (e.g. asking questions)

*“ I’m not one to be frightened to ask questions....  
It’s not good bumbling through your life  
pretending to know everything.”*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Personal agency (e.g thinking differently )

*“A lady needed her leg washing but she only had a washing up bowl. I was with a staff nurse who said ‘Oh well, perhaps next time.’ I said ‘ have you got a carrier bag which we could turn inside out? And it was sort of improvising really with what they’ve got - I thought afterwards that’s a way of problem solving...”*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Immediate social environment (peer group support vital)

*“ We share experiences of practice ....She said ‘ It’s a good idea to do this and this and avoid this.”*

*“ It saves throwing yourself out of the window. You get to a point and you think I can’t do this ..... it’s a nice feeling to know you’re not alone ... everyone’s in the same boat and that’s very helpful.*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Immediate social environment (mentor support)

*“ Just once I got myself so upset that I phoned her... She said ‘I’ll send you an E mail and ring back later. I want you to just read what I’ve got to say to you first. And it was all about how far I’d come , her confidence in me ..... And you just think wow, if she’s got that trust in me and from then on I’ve been able to pick myself up. ...*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Wider social and cultural environment

*I found the staff really helpful and they had a particular management structure where you could go and offload about how you felt. It was really well set up for student feedback ... I'm quite an open person and if I'm upset I'd probably say so I wouldn't hide it to that degree but sort of explore about why I am feeling like that and ask do other people feel like this? So you feel just not on your own. .*

# Categories and dimensions promoting resilience



- Wider social and cultural environment (family –mostly very supportive although.....)

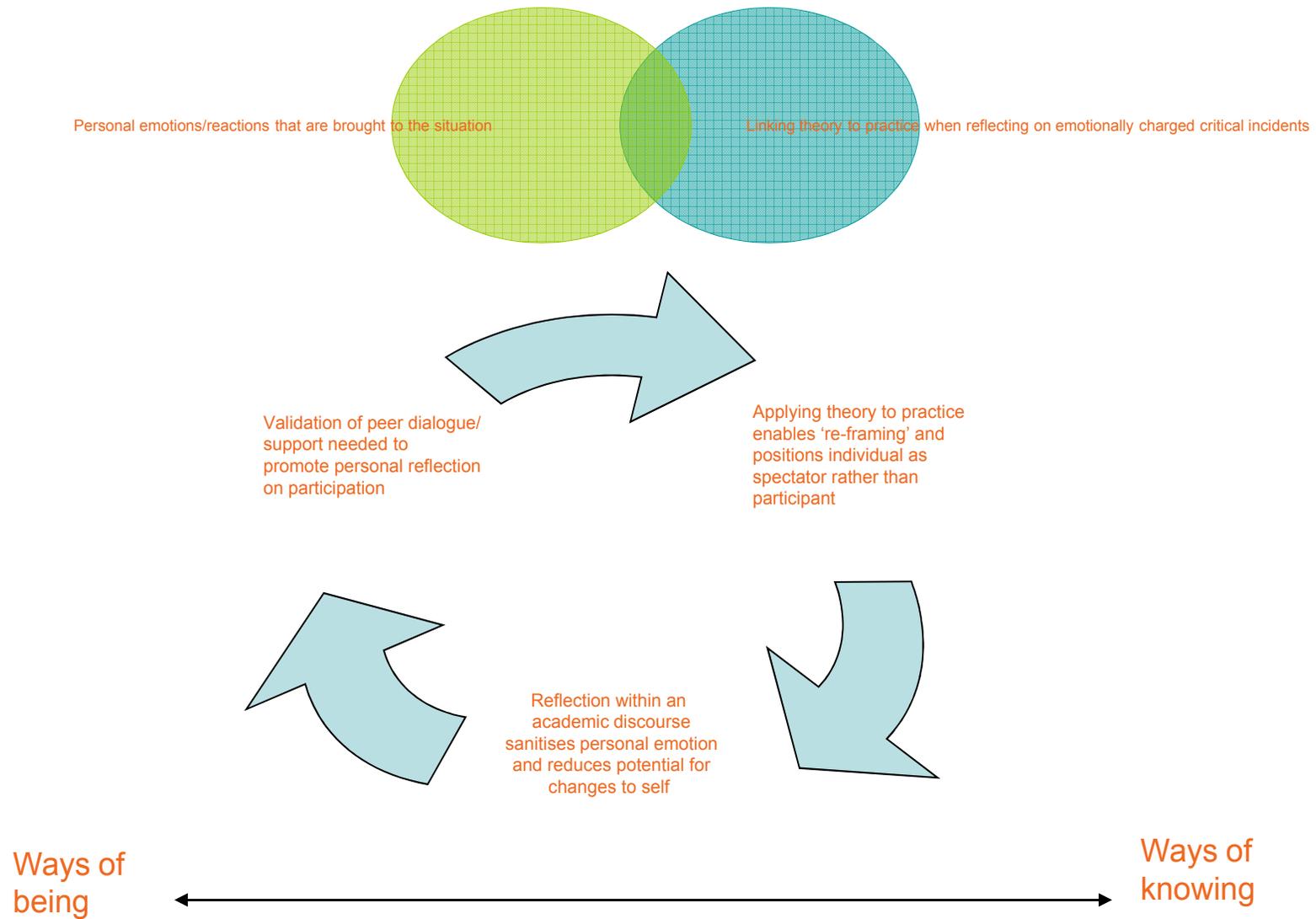
*I try to keep as much as possible away from family life, so although I might go home and moan and say “oh I’ve had enough of this” and then my husband will say ‘Well you signed up for it!’*



# Key findings

- The critical importance of peer support
- The importance of supporting individuals to re-frame
- The importance of valuing and utilising emotional capital
- The importance of a space for personal reflection outside an academic discourse

# Reflection: making it personal





# Recommendations

- Audio visual resources for mentor and programme tutor development
- Structures that facilitate peer interaction and support and validate personal reflection
- Methods using a variety of approaches – metaphor, poetry, art – to support reframing and reflection