



**‘To tell or not to tell’
Disclosing your mental health problems in an
educational setting**

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Menu

- Background of development of Disclosure-instrument
- Exercise
- The disclosure tool
- Evaluation study

Inez

Inez is 23 years old and a first year university student. At the age of 19, Inez became very depressed. She attempted suicide and has been admitted to a mental hospital for some time. She has been in day treatment at the same mental health organization for the past two years. The last year, Inez has been doing very well and she went back to study Economics again (at a different university). In an introductory meeting with a professor and other students, the professor asks Inez: “Inez, what have you done before you came to this university?”. Inez is surprised by the question and doesn’t know what to say.

Background

- 1) Frequently heard dilemma amongst students with mental health problems
- 2) Mental health and educational professionals do not know how to support these students
- 3) Other disclosure-instruments:
 - Focus on work instead of education
 - Lack certain important aspects (e.g. CORAL; Henderson)
 - Manuals contain too many pages (e.g. HOP; 103 pages; Corrigan)

Background

4) Positive results research on support with disclosure

People who receive support with making a decision whether to disclose or not (in a work setting)

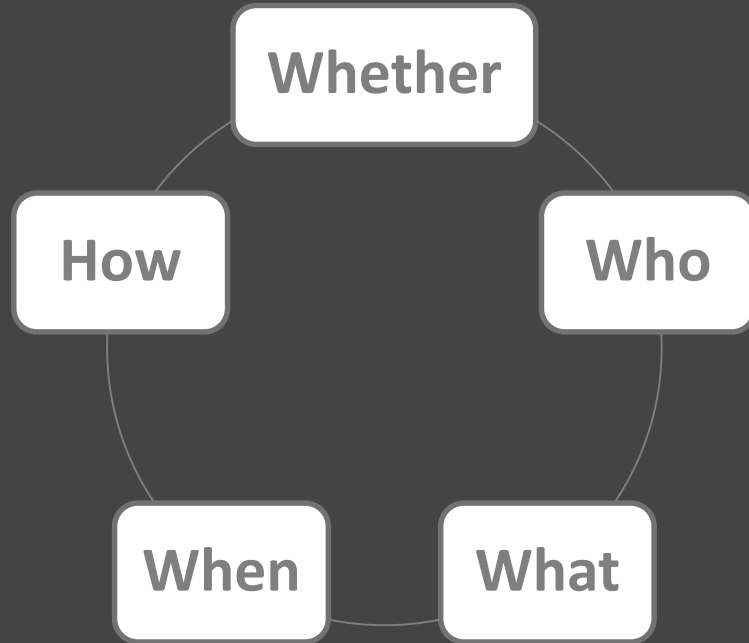
- experience less stigma stress (Rusch et al., 2006),
- experience less decisional conflicts, and
- more often keep their paid jobs (Henderson et al, 2013)

than people who do not receive support with this decision.

History of the disclosure-instrument

- First version has been developed in 2004 by Lies Korevaar (Prof. of Rehabilitation, Hanze UAS)
- That version has been further developed and evaluated in the European ImpulSE project (2014-2016) together with Norway, Portugal and the Netherlands (small scale research)
- In another project (2016-2018) together with two other UAS, the instrument has been further developed and evaluated on a larger scale

5 aspects of the skill Disclosing



Exercise: To tell or not to tell

- In couples; worksheet 'Whether to tell'
- Write down at least 3 benefits and 3 disadvantages of disclosing mental health problems in an educational context

Disclosing your mental health problems

To tell or not to tell?

a. What are the benefits of disclosing?

1.

2.

3.

4.

b. What are the disadvantages of disclosing?

1.

2.

3.

4.

c. Compare the benefits and the disadvantages. Which are most important to you? Rank the benefits and disadvantages of disclosing from most important to least important.

1.

2.

3.

4.

d. Did you make a choice? Do you tell or not?

Benefits

- More understanding and acceptance
- More interest, care and support from teaching staff
- Having access to certain adjustments/
rights/entitlements
- Not being seen as a troublesome student
- Being able to receive support and advice

Disadvantages

- Others may feel threatened, due to ignorance and personal experience
- The burden of having to explain your disability
- The fear of discrimination
- Feelings of rejection
- The fear of being singled out in class
- Misunderstanding by others of the disability's impact

Disclosing your mental health problems

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d. Did you make a choice? Do you tell or not?

Disclosing your mental health problems

Identify Who to Tell

a. Write down relevant people and also write down why you want to tell them:

b. Select the best choice (and explain why)

Disclosing your mental health problems

Decide When to tell

a. Identify appropriate moments during your study

b. Write down in which specific circumstances (e.g. the presence of others/location etc.) you could disclose

c. Choose the best moment and the most appropriate circumstances (and explain your choices)

Disclosing your mental health problems

How do you tell?

a. How are you going to communicate your message (e.g., by phone, email or face to face) and why?

b. What is going to be your tone of voice (e.g., (in)formal, neutral, happy, etc.)? Take the goal of your message into consideration.

c. What will be the structure of your message?

Disclosing your mental health problems

What are you going to say?

a. Assess the situation:

I have the following mental health problems:

This manifests itself in the following way:

I am successful with/in (concerning academic achievements):

But I have difficulty with:

I tell you this because:

This would be helpful for me:

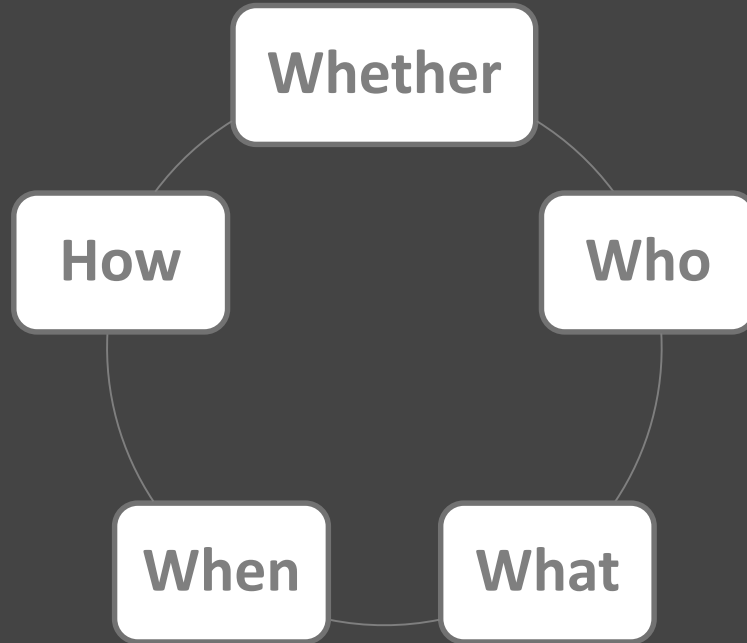
b. Decide what you want to tell:

Is everything you wrote down above relevant for the person to whom you want to disclose?

Do you want to tell everything or just a selection?

Write down exactly what you want to tell.

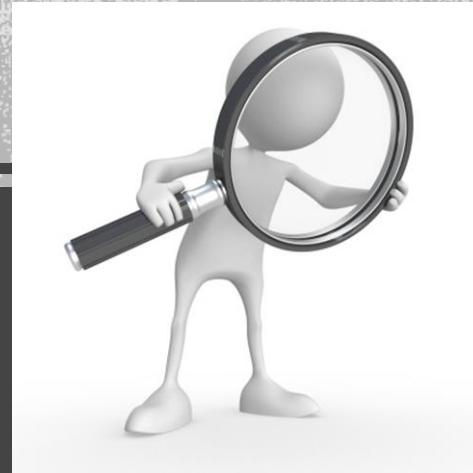
5 aspects of the skill Disclosing



Practical aspects

- Number of meetings: on average 4
- Duration of the meetings: on average one hour
- Location: quiet room / preference of the student
- Professional: from education or mental health; 2-day training in using the tool (given by expert by experience and trainer from research centre)

EVALUATION STUDY

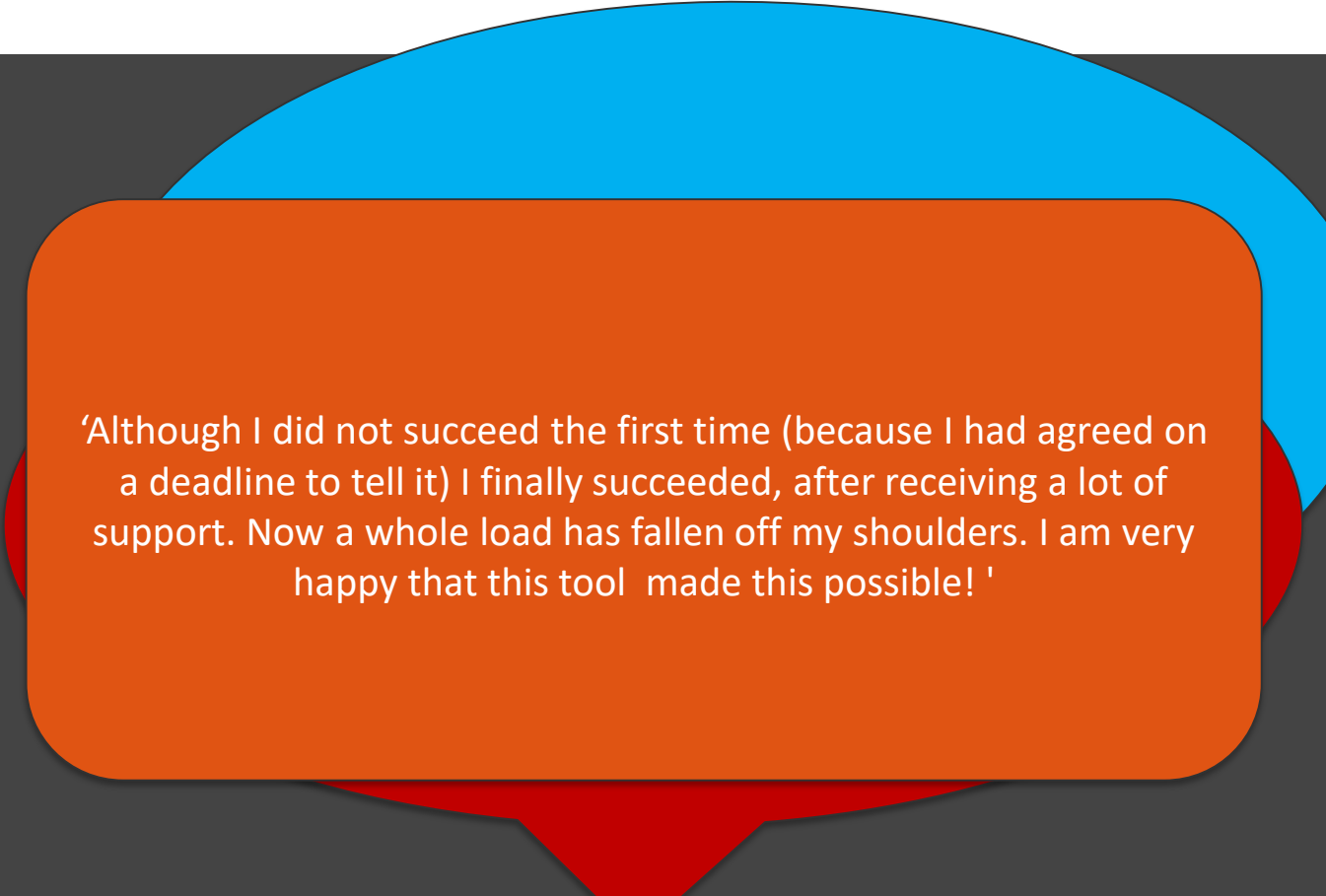


Project (april 2016-april 2018)

- Collaboration between three universities of applied sciences in the northern part of the Netherlands (Hanze UAS, NHL Stenden UAS and Van Hall Larenstein)
- Goal: further development, application and evaluation of the disclosure-instrument

Research questions

1. Does the degree to which the students are *concerned* about disclosing or not decline after using the disclosure-tool?
2. Does the level of experienced *decisional conflict* (uncertainty about a course of action) decline after using the disclosure-tool?
3. What are the *experiences* of the students with the disclosure-tool?



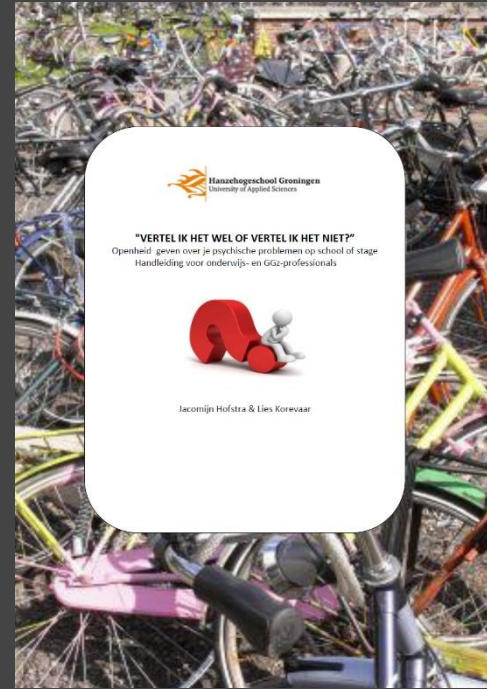
'Although I did not succeed the first time (because I had agreed on a deadline to tell it) I finally succeeded, after receiving a lot of support. Now a whole load has fallen off my shoulders. I am very happy that this tool made this possible! '

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Products



Manual for professionals



Workbook for students

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- Manual and workbook soon available in English www.supportededucation.eu
- Disclosure-app (work in progress)
- <https://40zvm.axshare.com/#c=2>



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