

# ENHANCING TEACHING PRACTICE

## *Communication Skills and Confidence Building for Journalists: a Pilot Study*

**Fiona McKay and Lynne Mennie**

The impact of lockdowns and e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has raised concerns about self-confidence and social anxiety emerging in students accessing higher education (Hawes et al. 2021). This has had a particularly marked effect in journalism education and employment, where strong communication and “team-player” skills are essential (Wenger et al. 2018). In attempt to improve the communication skills, confidence and resilience of a new S1 cohort, our solution was to introduce a mini module to run alongside one of their current journalism modules. This was designed and delivered by an external trainer with production, counselling, coaching and youth theatre management experience. Through a series of practical workshops and “playful” exercises, students were encouraged to develop their individual and group communication skills. In weekly, self-reflective submissions, students reported feeling more confident, less anxious, more bonded as a group, and more resilient, after each session. They also recognised their growth as applicable to their development as journalism students, their position as future journalists, as well as increased transferable benefits.

Hawes, M., Szency, A., Klein, D., Hajcak, G., & Nelson, B. (2021). Increases in depression and anxiety symptoms in adolescents and young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Medicine*, 1-9. doi:10.1017/S0033291720005358

Wenger DH, Owens LC, Cain J. Help Wanted: Realigning Journalism Education to Meet the Needs of Top U.S. News Companies. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. 2018;73(1):18-36. doi:10.1177/1077695817745464