

# What do young people and professionals around the world think about active ingredients for preventing and supporting depression and anxiety?



## What are 'active ingredients'?

Active ingredients are things that are important in preventing or helping with depression or anxiety.

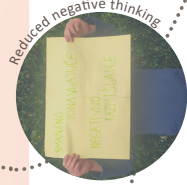
We can think about it as 'cooking a dish': when cooking something, we need to use the right ingredients for the dish, but different people may use different ingredients because of what they like or dislike, or because of what is available to them, or because of their culture.

This is true for depression and anxiety as well: there are a lot of 'ingredients' that could help, and some people may like or use some ingredients more than others.

**W** **wellcome** **The Wellcome Trust, which is a global charitable foundation, created a list of 26 active ingredients that they thought may help young people aged 14-24 years with depression and anxiety.**

They then worked with researchers around the world to find all the evidence demonstrating whether these active ingredients work for young people or not.

But the Wellcome Trust also wanted to know what young people and mental health professionals thought about those ingredients. In particular, they knew the list was not definitive or fully complete, and they wanted the help of young people to find out other ingredients that could be added to the list.



## About the project



We spoke with 120 young people with lived experience aged 14 to 24, and with 63 professionals from different disciplines (including researchers, clinicians and policy makers) from eight organisations across the world to hear their views on active ingredients.

The project team consisted of:

- Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC)
- University of Leicester
- Euro Youth Mental Health (EYMH).

We were commissioned by The Wellcome Trust to run this project from September 2020 to January 2021.

We would like to thank our peer researchers, peer advisors and partners on this project from across the world: FANET (Kenya), Kids Haven (South Africa), FRAME (India), Hussaini Foundation (Pakistan), Hayat Foundation (Turkey), ASEC (Brazil), FPCEUP (Portugal) and Hearts and Minds (UK).



*It was indeed a unique experience for me as I communicated with the youth of my age as well as professionals of my field and I observed that the youth has a lot to share, but that there is a gap between youth and professionals which needs to be filled. We should provide platforms for young people where they can express their views and bring young people and professionals closer together.*

- Zeenat from Pakistan



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World Partnership for Children in Vulnerable Contexts

## What did we find?

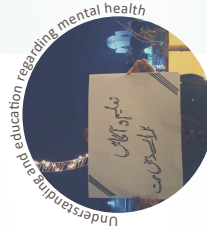
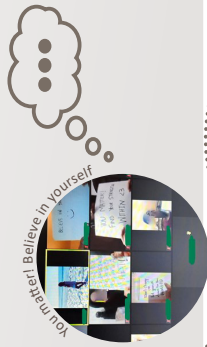
Generally young people and professionals liked the 26 active ingredients and they felt that most of them could be helpful for young people to prevent and help with depression or anxiety.

Young people spoke a lot about the wording of the ingredients and said that they needed to be written in a different way so that they could be easily understood. The active ingredients “*Reduced avoidance of feared things*”, “*Better gut microbiome function*” and “*Reducing levels of inflammation in the body*” were particularly difficult to understand. Some active ingredients were also hard to translate (for example ‘*perfectionism*’ and ‘*self-compassion*’), because the words do not exist in some languages.

## NEW ACTIVE INGREDIENTS

Many new ingredients were also added by young people and professionals, particularly around the role of family, schools, community, and society. Some of the new ones are:

- **Feeling understood and accepted by family and friends**
- **Taking time to learn and understand yourself**
- **Awareness and education about depression and anxiety**
- **Relationships with family**
- **Practising religious or spiritual beliefs**



These are ranging from the individual to the society. For example, the theme “*Understanding and accepting yourself*” includes active ingredients such as “*Improved view of self and self-confidence*”, “*Being kind and respectful to yourself*” and “*Taking time to learn and understand yourself*”.

## ORGANISING THE NEW LIST OF INGREDIENTS

We found only a few cultural differences between the most helpful active ingredients when talking to young people and professionals in different countries. Everyone we talked to had their own preferences! So, when using the list of active ingredients, it will be important to tailor it to each young person and to allow them to choose what works best for them.

The original 26 ingredients were separated depending on whether they helped with depression, anxiety, or both. Young people and professionals said that these separations were not needed, because most active ingredients were helpful across all areas.

Based on what they said, we reorganised all ingredients into **11 themes or topics**, grouping together ingredients that were related or similar.

## What can we do next?

We hope that this list of active ingredients will help young people to build their own recipes to tackle depression and anxiety. But having a recipe and being able to cook the dish are two different things. Next, we want to give young people, families, and communities the tools they need to use these active ingredients.

- We suggest using one list of themes and ingredients globally, with the option for young people to make the list fit for them.
- Individual young people, rather than their family or mental health professionals, should be able to decide what active ingredient they use (with guidance from adults where appropriate).
- Young people can be valuable mentors in their schools and communities. They could help their peers or younger children to access and benefit from the active ingredients’ findings.
- We should think about the best ways to train professionals to use the list of ingredients, and how young people can play a role in the training.



*I really enjoyed the co-facilitation and hearing back from the cross-continental focus groups. We are all in different stages due to cultural and societal differences, so it was really important to find approaches that help every young person.*

- Lurdes from the United Kingdom

