

... with Professor Dame Til Wykes

'Feistiness in the face of a challenge'

One album

After considering jiggling round to Tamla Motown, chilling with Mozart and being uplifted by Tracy Chapman I have plumped for *Stop Making Sense*, by Talking Heads. This album reminds me of a crowded bus over the Andes with my two children, aged four and five, singing 'Life During Wartime'. The resonance of life under gunfire is not lost, especially with the current Syrian crisis.

One pressing concern

For years UK mental health services budgets were raided to shore up acute care. Promised investment is always jam tomorrow or recycled jam and never closes the gap on a service under increasing pressure. People with mental health problems are so often not heard or are silenced by thoughts of the discrimination they might face if they do speak out. Parity of mental and physical health seems impossible even in research.



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For example, in cancer, for every £1 the government spends on research, charities add another £2.75, but in mental health, charities add only 0.3p. We are not short of questions from scientists, the public and people with mental health problems. We just need the resources to answer them.

But all is not gloomy. People are speaking up in Parliament and in the media. The BBC have been active in getting information to the public in their drama and documentaries (e.g. *EastEnders*, Professor Green on suicide), demystifying and highlighting the problems encountered by people with mental health difficulties.

One holiday destination

Despite swimming with the seals in the Galapagos, watching the sunset in the Caribbean, breathing in the views from the Himalayas or freezing with the Northern Lights, I will plump for Ile-des-Pins, New Caledonia: a small island in the Southeast Pacific. It has a strong Melanesian culture without large hotels or the frippery of mass tourism – perhaps because it is so hard to reach. On my return visit after 15 years it still has talcum powder sand, a bright blue

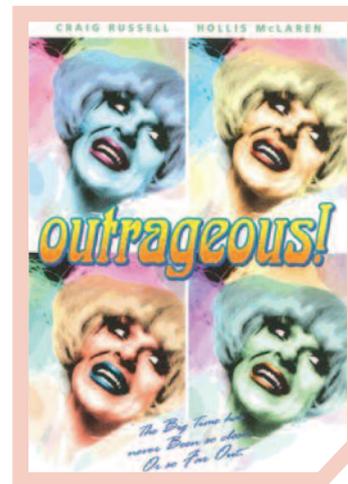
ocean, friendly people and a national sport, cricket, which is played only by women.

One inspiration

Mums can be scientists! Knowing inspirational (and normal) 'Women in Science' is a real support as I sit in rooms full of grey suits. So hats off to Sally Davies, Athene Donald and Jane Wardle – all of whom did their bit to show what is possible and have achieved important things for society.

One reason you became a psychologist

I wasn't tall enough to reach the books on architecture or accountancy.



One proud moment

Defying the odds to become a Dame. The predictive factors for getting a knighthood are a private education, Oxbridge degree and being a man. So coming from a working-class background, living in a council house for most of my early life, state educated and the only one of my generation to go to university didn't boost my chances for club membership. There must be some 'resilience factors' and they are probably an irritation with a slow pace of change, feistiness in the face of challenge, and strong family support.

One film

Outrageous (Canadian Film, Director Richard Benner, 1977, based on *The Butterfly*

Ward by Margaret Gibson). It's a comedy built around two roommates – an aspiring drag queen and a young woman with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. It tells of their problems and successes as they make their way in a world full of discrimination. Craig Russell's performances as Joan Crawford and Barbara Streisand are truly memorable. There's no 'happily ever after' ending, but there is hope that these personal journeys will produce fulfilling lives despite all the bumps in the road.

One paper

Jerome Frank's 1974 paper on the restoration of morale as the sole aim of any psychotherapy. Effectively what Frank was saying is that we are all just second-hand car salesmen flogging one paradigm or another to produce the same outcome – improved morale. He suggests that therapists should master as many models as possible and then match their approach to the individual before them. This was written way before the current enthusiasm for personalised therapies. I have often wondered if it would be possible to carry out a trial where different case formulations were randomly assigned to clients to see if there are any differences. The outcome would really depend on the therapist's selling ability. But it is probably (not definitely) unethical.

One secret for success

Patience and persistence – I ran a campaign to provide a National Statutory Minimum Wage, mainly to persuade trade unions. Even after it became Labour Party policy, it took another 18 years to be enacted. Boy, was that a day for celebration! Persistence is also vital if you want to be an academic – grants do not come easily, papers are rejected. You just need to keep trying.

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