Introduction to Virtual Ability's Mental Health Un-Conference - May 7, 2020
transcript edited for coherence

Gentle Heron: I am glad some folks could be here at this hour.
I know there is "SL time", but... I like to respect the time of those who attend on time. Let's begin.
Hello everyone and thank you for coming on this tour today.
I will be presenting in voice+text. That is to allow maximum accessibility.
The text transcript of this session will be used as a public record of the event.
If you do not want your avatar name associated with this event, please IM me. And do not type in local chat.
You are welcome to ask questions at any time.
I will post several live links. You can click them, open in your browser, and bookmark for later perusal.
Ready to begin?
As you may know, May is Mental Health Month.
The Virtual Ability community often holds its Mental Health Symposium in May... but this year we have to do things a bit differently.
In 2020 we are going to hold a Mental Health Un-Conference.
You may be unfamiliar with the concept of an Un-Conference.
It is a series of presentations, field trips and discussions spread throughout the month.
It may include art talks or read-alouds or movie viewings or other forms of expression.
These will all relate to the broad general theme of Mental Health.
The sessions tend to be less formal than regular professional conference sessions, too.
One of the ways Virtual Ability promotes its conferences, and this Un-Conference, is through the monthly theme on Healthinfo Island.
The mission of HealthInfo Island is to provide timely, accurate, and accessible information on topics related to physical, emotional, and mental health.
And we try to ensure that all our communications are backed by evidence-based information
Displays and exhibits are static and asynchronous methods for communicating information, but they can be interactive and should be accessible.
Our larger poster sets we call displays, and the smaller ones we call exhibits, but the same design processes are used for both.
In the past we have included interactive items such as quizzes, notecard drop boxes for audience input, and interactive objects.
These topics, however, did not lend themselves to those types of interactivity.
But you will see other types of interactivity, because we know that interacting with content is a way to enhance both comprehension and memory.
Here is a reference for that statement: http://www.ncolr.org/issues/jiol/v4/n1/index.html and download "The importance of Interaction in Web-based Education"
There you go. An example of interacting with content.
We will tour the displays and exhibits in just a moment. On this tour I will also give information on how we made these interactive poster sets accessible.
I will provide you in a moment with a notecard about the displays and exhibits here on

Healthinfo Island for Mental Health Awareness Month.
I have inserted spaces on the notecard between the SLURLs for each poster set, so that if you wish, you can take some notes about features I will highlight.
You may also want to mark items you plan to revisit after this session.
Please click the poster behind me to receive your copy of the blank notecard.
Gemma (gemma.cleanslate): how long will this be here?
Gentle Heron: Healthinfo Island exhibits will be here all month.
(pause for notecard distribution)
That was your second interaction with content.
[I am going to walk to our first stop, but you can also hop on the SLURL.
Mental Health Awareness Month   Healthinfo Island (196,156,23)

Gentle Heron: Each poster set on this island has an entrance poster which, when clicked, gives a notecard of all the text in the poster set, plus descriptions of all images on the posters.
This is because our blind community members can not access the text on posters. That text is not ASCII text, it's an image. And of course they also can't access the diagrams and photos on the posters.
But with the Radegast viewer, they can read notecards. So this is an important accessibility feature for use in virtual worlds.
There are 20 posters in this large display. They do make better sense if read in order, so you will note the blue arrows on the floor indicating the intended path for those viewing the posters.
We are not going to go through any of the displays or exhibits today, although we will stop at least briefly at each one so I can point out some of the features that are important for accessibility and interactivity.
All of the poster sets this month are about some aspect of mental health as part of Virtual Ability's 2020 Mental Health Un-Conference.
Where do we find a list of these special months and weeks that serve as our topics?
Here is one site: https://www.awarenessdays.com/
and another: https://nationaldaycalendar.com/calendar-at-a-glance/
Pretty much anything you can think of has its allotted day or week or month. But different calendars do not always agree.
Oh well, time to move along again.
Our second stop is a short walk away, but you can use the SLURL if you wish.
Minority Mental Health Equity   Healthinfo Island (187,181,24)

Gentle Heron: This is another 20-poster display. Here from the topic you can see that we do not shy way from "uncomfortable" issues.
We aren't going to walk all the way through, but I will tell you that we have sort of a general format for the topics that are "Month of…" or "Week of…".
We usually begin with definitions. In this case we define health equity, mental health minority, and health disparity.
We follow this with facts, looking at the broad topic from a variety of viewpoints.
But we always want to be sure to cite sources.
If appropriate, we provide information on available treatments or ways to address

issues.

We often include stories of individuals who can sometimes address information points in ways that are memorable. You can see that on the next-to-last poster.

And we like to end, as you can see on the last poster here, with resources for those interested in learning more.

Our third stop is also close by.

Basic Facts About Depression   Healthinfo Island (172,154,22)

Come on inside this one.

You will see that providing adequate space to move and view each poster is another accessibility requirement.

In this smaller display, you will see that same basic format.

Here we have a definition, actually the formal definition given by the DSM-5.

Then facts. Some of these facts are more from the clinician's viewpoint…some from the perspective of a person with depression…and others from the viewpoint of family members, friends and co-workers of a person with depression.

We do provide general information about possible treatments, but from a layperson's perspective. We are NOT clinicians. We always encourage people to work directly with a licensed healthcare provider.

And of course we end with some additional resources.

To obtain the resource list, all you need to do is either access the notecard that is in the entrance poster which is named for the exhibit, or click the Resources poster.

That puts the resource list into your local chat. But it does not spam anyone else in the area. And it maintains your privacy, because you may not want everybody nearby knowing what information you are accessing. We try to include resources from other English-speaking countries besides the US, mainly the UK, Canada, and Australia.

Mermaid Celene (celenehighwater): It shows the info in local.

Gentle Heron: No Celene, only in YOUR local chat.

Now we are going to move to the other side of the island, to check out five Exhibits.

These tend to be smaller than the Displays. And they are more often topical, about a wellness or health or disability related topic rather than a "Month of…" topic.

There will be a bit longer walk to get to our fourth stop on the tour, but exercise is good for mental health, right? Or you can teleport if you wish.

Borderline Personality Disorder   Healthinfo Island (111,81,24)

In the exhibit areas, some have seating, but not all do. We want to encourage folks to linger over the information provided in the exhibits.

[This exhibit illustrates what I like to call PowerPoint Etiquette.

This rather long article has many excellent points about creating PowerPoint slides that will make great posters:

https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2018/11/inclusive-design-accessible-presentations/

These posters have limited text, and an interesting variety of images.

Some images are decorative while illustrating the point made by the text.

Other images provide additional information in graphical format.

Again, all the images on every poster are described in the notecard that you can obtain

from the entrance poster. We found those descriptions increase comprehension of sighted as well as blind users.

Moving right along…

Tips for Maintaining Mental Health   Healthinfo Island (99,37,26)

Notecard with all text and image descriptions again is in the entrance poster named Tips for Maintaining Mental Health

This exhibit is an example of a more generic topic.

This is my favorite poster here, I think, the third poster. The graphic is so simple, but so expressive. Cutting the T off of Can't to make Can

We find a lot of our graphics at Pixabay and Morguefile. They provide copyright-free beautiful photos and drawings. But we also take images from government websites.

If you click this poster (or almost any poster, really) you will see that we provide more information in the click text than we do on the poster. You do have to be aware of character number limitations, however.

And we cite our sources, even for generic information, because sharing our evidence base establishes the legitimacy of the information we are providing. Establishing your credibility as an information source is increasingly important in this time period, isn't it?

Next stop (why do I feel like a train conductor?)…

Dementia   Healthinfo Island (51,27,28)

It is more accessible for some on a tour to TP, not walk.

Here you see a rug on the floor that says "Begin here." We found that the arrangement of posters in this Exhibit was a bit confusing without that starting point established.

These posters follow the basic outline of definitions; facts which include statistics, taxonomy, causes and prevention; diagnosis and treatment; and the addition of information addressed specifically to caregivers. And of course a list of additional resources at the end.

But actually, all the live links in the click text are resources too, aren't they? That's a way to sneak in more resources!

Shall we move on again?

Dealing with Depression   Healthinfo Island (25,24,30)

Most of the posters in this set are addressed directly to the person with depression.

This is my favorite poster here, the third one. I really like that quotation. "He [and I would add she] who has a why to live can bear almost any how." What a great motto to try to live by.

If you click this third poster, you will see a link to a research paper. Looking at the URL, you may note that it is archived at the National Library of Medicine (NLM). We try to provide links to authoritative resources.

Now click on the second poster and look at the resources listed. We offer a mix of that type of relevant resource—the research evidence—with other perhaps more accessible resources. The links in this poster include an article in a popular journal and an organizational blog.

Now let's head to the last stop for today's tour.

How to Get Mental Health Help   Healthinfo Island (21,62,32)

Our final stop today is the high point of our tour. (Pun intended, sorry!)

We are at the top of a mountain.

[0This topic is one we expected readers to need to sit and think about.

We also knew we had two main audiences, individuals with specific mental health issues such as substance abuse, eating disorders, or suicidal ideation, and those of us who strive to aid them overcome these issues.

The issues mentioned here are common mental health issues in SL.

Look at the final poster. We do not generally refer to SL or other virtual world resources here, because these issues are significant enough that they need to be addressed by RL mental healthcare practitioners.

The final poster, however, is different. It refers to an SL resource that lists peer support communities here in the virtual world. And instead of a live link to click and bookmark in your browser, that poster gives you a landmark to the Path of Support.

Notice that the image on the poster shows the entrance poster at the Path, so you will recognize it when you get there. That is important for persons with cognitive or reading disabilities.

Gemma (gemma.cleanslate): I have sent several people there.

Gentle Heron: OK that is the end of the tour. Are there any remaining questions?

Gears (moru.gears): Does Healthinfo Island have more events lined up this month?

Gentle Heron: Event: ** Identity, Mental Illness, and Disability: How Second Life Has Helped

Facilitator: Jadin Emerald

Day: Thursday, May 7

Time: 9:00 am SLT

Duration: one hour

Place: Ethnographia Island

SLURL: Ethnographia (175,78,32)

Gemma (gemma.cleanslate) whispers: will it be videoed??

Gentle Heron: No, we have not made arrangements to video these sessions. Please know that we will have more events throughout the month.

I am even negotiating with PBS to show a really amazing video

There will be lots more good presentations throughout the month

Mermaid Celene (celenehighwater): Is there a schedule?

Gentle Heron: You can see the schedule on the Virtual Ability blog, our Facebook, and our website. but it is an evolving schedule. There will be more details to follow soon (we hope)

You are welcome to go back through all the Displays and Exhibits. The posters change every month.

Gemma (gemma.cleanslate): So much good info here. Lots of work goes into this place. I hope you don't do it all alone.

Gentle Heron: Gemma, we are a team. Eme Capalini built the island features. Mook Wheeler helps do the poster sets. And of course I am always open to volunteers- hint, hint, hint! Orange already volunteers. He posts and writes for the blog. We take suggestions for topics as well.

Mermaid Celene (celenehighwater): VAI has an amazing team.

Gears (moru.gears): thats wonderful. thanks again for the help and information Gentle
Dark (darknesscallsme.firegrave): So, there isn't a set schedule of monthly topics....it's a
fluid process that changes from year to year?
Gentle Heron: Yes Dark, it changes yearly and monthly.