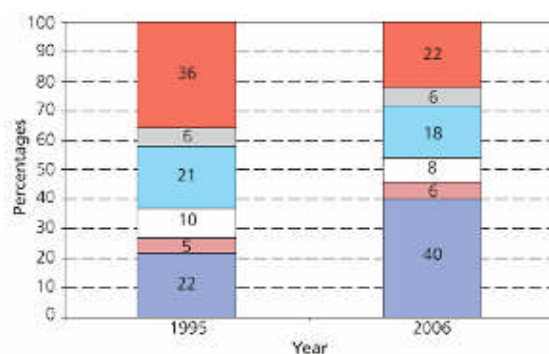


## JCP-LSC EMPLOYABILITY CONFERENCE

- Considering what's worked in past is useful, but it's a different economy now.
- Going to take a step back from our everyday perspective, a VERY big step back, to consider human evolution and nature.
- This perspective has helped to inform CG's approach to working with unemployed clients...and will increasingly assist with our success as we start to deliver Flexible New Deal, Sector Routeways/Young Person Guarantee, JCP Support Contracts, Response to Redundancy, Skills for Jobs, LEPs and other employability initiatives around the UK.



- This perspective comes at a time when the House of Lords considers the issues of a modern society where there's a million more people on Incapacity Benefit compared to 10 years ago. And this is not just a UK issue, the same pattern is being seen in Australia, the US, G7 and so on.
- This rise has almost completely come from an increase in Depression.

The catalyst to CG's approach was an old friend, Steven Owen.

A huge success, with a prestigious MBA, living in a large city apartment with a highly stressful high-level management consultant job, parties, contacts, a hidden self-esteem problem and a prodigious cocaine habit.



I found him living on a boat and taking up acting and photographic model jobs.

His boat was modest, but had everything he needed for day to day living: a fridge, cooker, shower...

I had no idea that he had been severely depressed and had even considered taking his own life just 18 months before.

- Now, humans have instinctive needs which are compromised - by modern, mostly urbanised society.

- We are all social animals – our frontal lobes have developed and expanded to develop EMPATHY. This minimises conflict and predicts the needs of others.
- This is more likely to guarantee a share of resources and avoid personal injury.

- This is CRITICAL as for 99.5% of human history we've lived in small tight-knit groups/communities of hunter gatherers.



- Steve had chased goals alien to 99.5% of our instinct, physiology and psychology. He had lacked the frank feedback about behaviour that he would have received in a supportive, tight-knit community.

He was trapped in loops of anxiety, worrying about his place in a hierarchical system for which our homo-sapiens brain is simply not designed.

- Humans are better at living in urban environments IF we were securely attached to care givers in our formative years - If we feel complete.
- If we are not totally sure of ourselves from a secure upbringing, the emotional & cognitive demands of modern life can spiral our neurochemicals into varying states of psychiatric illness.
- There is an epidemic of insecurely attached, psychologically vulnerable individuals in modern urban society.

- The extended family has been replaced by broken families
- Rearing parents are now working ones
- Young parents are more stressed and isolated
- We may have failed to rear our children effectively.



- In the West we have gained much more personal freedom and material wealth...but at a cost.

- There are ever increasing work and social demands, but less social inter-dependence.



- We have started to **chase different – and often inappropriate – goals**. Ones often out of reach, promoted by Hello, OK and glamorous US-based dramas.

- The body's instinct to crave high calorific and sweet foods means that with a sedentary lifestyle and ready availability of those foods, our arteries furr, waistlines bulge and angina/heart attack is now the biggest killer in the west.
- Depression is the same, there's a cultural and biological mismatch.
- The WHO calls depression the "scourge of the west: it will be the biggest cause of disability after heart disease by 2020."
- Now, there is increasing evidence that Depression is present in ALL mammals – from tests on rats & apes. There was a fallacy of the "happy savage" – the Victorian notion that more "primitive" societies don't experience depression - *despite* the prevalence of universal issues such as births, deaths, love lives, water, shelter and food issues...
- Depression is often caused by reasons such as exaggerated expectations, low self-esteem, lofty goals, status battles, divided loyalties: timeless dilemmas that are exaggerated in *our* modern world.
- Depression – or a withdrawal from society and a lack of motivation - is often triggered by failing to achieve a goal.
- Since the '60s there's been the idea that depression is frequently due to "loss of rank" – and modern media reminds people of their true place in the social hierarchy.
- Whilst reading OK and Hello might provide momentary escapism, it also embeds a feeling of failure and discontent.
- People in Britain on benefits no longer have to strive for what Paul Keedwell calls "the archetypal goals": food, a roof over our heads, inclusion in group activity, social contact – – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs -



- These are all provided by benefits, TV and the internet.
- Instead they strive for the wrong status (which today is most easily achieved by being a celebrity).
- If an obstacle arises briefly, humans become sad and "eustress" arises.
- If we cannot overcome a persistent obstacle, this becomes "stress" and sustained stress leads to depression. Thus with a protracted frustration of our archetypal needs...or these new social

aspirations (“Esteem Needs” on Maslow’s hierarchy) then we are more likely to become depressed.

- This leads to isolation. For most of our history this isolation leads to a realisation... and then a return to society with more realistic aspirations, acceptance, or new ideas.
- In modern society with no new routes of achieving impractical goals, people simply get more depressed and superficially satisfy themselves with false status symbols (how many of your clients have no money to rub together, yet have the latest phone or flat screen)?, and superficially satisfy themselves with social contact via TV/the internet...and no deep-down readjustment.
- Those that are depressed are readily written-off by doctors, which leads to Incapacity Benefit, which widens the benefits trap, which makes it more difficult and risky to find a job that matches childcare, rent and other benefits.
- This leads to more isolation and not having workmates, which leads to longer term depression and a lower likelihood of returning to work.

It is a downward spiral: the BEST thing to do to help prevent depression is get that person back into work ASAP.

*“There is a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental well-being. Worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and well-being. Work can be therapeutic and can reverse the adverse health effects of unemployment. Overall, the beneficial effects of work outweigh the risks of work, and are greater than the harmful effects of long term unemployment or prolonged sickness absence. Work is generally good for health and well-being.”*  
*“Is Work Good for your Health and Well-Being”, Gordon Waddell & Kim Burton*

- Steve and many psychologists now believe that Depression is there to force individuals to CHANGE. Radically.

- a period of depression for several weeks (Aborigines’ “Walkabout”, Native Americans’ “Dreamquest” etc) is a period of introspection needed to discover who we are, what our fundamental needs priorities are, and how to go about meeting them. Then we are welcomed back to our supportive group as a stronger, more settled person.



- Stan still sees old friends struggling for status and trying to be top of the pile due to their desire to be accepted and please all in spite of themselves...or even trying to please *themselves* in spite of themselves. “Struggling to be content”.

- Many may never be content or liberated without first becoming depressed. This has far-reaching implications regarding the treatment and prevention of depression. Are drugs the right option? Should they be written off on Long term sick?

- This changes how CG goes about dealing with unemployed learners. One to one meetings are essential, as are group training sessions.

- We now provide IAG sessions with this coaching perspective and wider understanding.

- How often do beneficiaries not turn up to interviews, despite really wanting to attend the day before?

- It is down to low self esteem and the worry that if they're seen to try, and then they don't get the job, their confidence – and social image – takes a battering. So they just don't turn up so they cannot lose.

- We've found that even stating this to someone before an interview massively increases their chances of recognising that tendency in themselves, and they resist the urge to "flake".

- Not everyone that sits in front of you will be depressed, but the same human nature exists within all of us.

- This helps us  to recognise and address issues with beneficiaries or the long term unemployed with a different – and more effective – perspective. Being able to encourage more realistic expectations, offer frank feedback and guiding beneficiaries "one step at a time" towards their goal, will have a huge benefit for individuals, and the UK economy as a whole.

