



The Artist and the Academic - A collision of insight.

Mental health and mental illness are one of the biggest issues facing young people today.

Cameron Ralph and Richard Mclean have both lived through schizophrenia and their goal is to ensure that no young person has to suffer from mental illness the way they did. They both believe that if they had received more mental health education during their youth, they would have been much better equipped to handle their illness.

They now offer a 75 minute seminar that aims to humanise mental illness, break down the stigma and fear associated with the disease and give students the coping skills required to build resilience.

This seminar combines the experience of two lifetimes to deliver a challenging and insightful program that will teach students what mental illness is, when and where to ask for help, and how to offer help.

The 75 minute seminar combines brainstorming and visualisation whilst utilising visual aids and role play to make the students comfortable with talking openly about mental health.

However, the biggest impact of this presentation is Richard and Cameron's storytelling ability.

When students are presented with a strategy or skill it is one that has worked in the daily lives of the two presenters.

Real life examples are always used. Each component of the presentation is always explained with a "When I was in this situation I did....." example.

Key benefits to students:

- **Information:**
 - Identifying mental illness
 - Understand what mental illness is
 - Different types of mental illness
 - Understand stigma and disability
 - Understand the links between physical and mental health.
- **Communication:**
 - Who to talk to
 - How to ask for help
 - How to offer help
 - Remove the fears of asking and offering help
- **Coping skills:**
 - What to say
 - Specific starters
 - How to help yourself
 - Ways to keep mentally fit





- **Resilience:**
 - All of the information, communication and skills lead to increased resilience
- **Other Benefits:**
 - Inspire and motivate the students to embrace the challenges that life presents
 - Students gain a personal insight into mental illness
 - Break down the stigma and stereotypes associated with mental illness
 - Students learn that people with mental illness are normal people
 - Understand that people with mental illness can be successful and happy





Speaker Bios:

Richard McLean

Richard is an ex illustrator and news graphics artist for 'The Herald Sun', and 'The Age' newspapers. He has a Bachelor in Fine Art and Associate Diploma in computer aided art and design. Richard is the author of 'Recovered, Not Cured, a journey through schizophrenia', (Allen and Unwin, 2002) and designer and artist of 'Strange Currencies of Ego and Soul', (2008)

Since his autobiographical account of schizophrenia was published, he has become an advocate for mental health recovery and education, especially with young people.

He has spoken from Parliament House, Canberra, to the school of religious and philosophy studies, in Montreal, Canada, outback Australia, and is heavily affiliated with, and does public speaking for SANE Australia, of which his book was awarded SANE's 'Book of the Year'.

Richard has spoken widely to consumers, carer groups, school groups, much radio and television. He has also worked as a consumer consultant for DHS.

Richard was recently asked, and presented a case to the National Curriculum deciders of VTAC on what to include in high school literature across all subjects pertaining to the celebration of diversity, mental health, sexuality and media.

Cameron Ralph

Cameron has a BSc with Honours in Zoology and is currently a leading PhD candidate at Melbourne University. He has publications in national and international journals together with a wealth of teaching, lecturing and public speaking experience. He combines these qualifications with his personal journey of living with and recovering from schizophrenia.

After 5 years of treatment Cameron took control of his life and has now been off medication and treatment free for nearly 2 years. He is a living example that mental illness has an end point and that it is not a life sentence.

Cameron's journey showed him that the mental health sector was not catering to the needs of young people. To address this huge gap in the mental health system Cameron launched **People Like You**, which, is a mental health organization for young people who are affected by mental illness.

www.peoplelikeyou.com.au is regarded as inspiring and insightful and Cameron has spoken to high school students, patients and carers where his honesty and insight are always beneficial.





Testimonials:

“He was inspiring and did more to crash down many of their beliefs about people with a mental illness in 30 minutes, than I could have in weeks of ‘teaching’.

Teacher Kaylee MacKenzie, Bright Secondary College

“The Manager of our Collaborative Therapy Unit, which has a research project focussed on mental illness and substance use, described Richards’ presentation as the best personal account she had ever heard.”

Ross Johnston, MHRI

“His connection with people, and the youth in particular, was immediate and inspiring. Richard’s presence and openness also greatly assisted in the ongoing cause to de-stigmatise the issue of mental illness in the community.”

Cindy Nielson, Carer Advocate, Dubbo

“Feedback from the young people was overwhelmingly positive. It was clear that they could connect with his experience and valued his insights into the issues surrounding drugs and alcohol, stigma and relapse.”

Mami Luxmoore, EPPIC

“Cameron made a real impact on the issues we explored through out the day personalizing and making real the healthy living message to our young people. It was a valuable and unique contribution”

Peter Cooley, Youth worker Kangan Tafe

“Cameron, you personally defeat the social stigma associated with mental illness. The students had no hesitation in asking quite personal questions that they would otherwise have no opportunity to discuss openly and receive true information. You provided them a space and forum to rethink and clarify their current perception of mental illness and its impact on individuals, family, friends and the wider society.”

Amy Hill, Spectrum Youth Services.

