



# MindMates

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# Why MindMates?

- 1) University students as a specific and unique group:
  - Between adolescence and young adulthood
  - Demanding transition in a time period characterized by social change, uncertainty, individualization and social fragmentation
  - Vulnerable to the development of emotional problems, mental disorders and suicidality



## University students as a high risk group:

- International research shows the prevalence of mental problems to be about 1/7, > average general population
- KU Leuven research among first year students shows:
  - High prevalence for emotional and mental disorders
  - High and persistent prevalence of suicidal behaviour
  - Low help-seeking behaviour
    - ✓ Experienced need for help is low. Only get higher in cause of depression/anxiety, severe substance abuse and suicidality
    - ✓ Barriers: cognitions, negative attitudes and structural elements
    - ✓ When student search help: family, friends, peers are often the first to be consulted
- 3/4 of the mental disorders onset before the age of 25
- Second most common cause of death: suicide

## 2) Intercept and reduce gaps in mental health care

- Gap between child/adolescent psychiatry and adult psychiatry
- Gap between 'mind'issues and help seeking (treatment gap)

## 3) Alternative to the classical approach to suicide prevention

**All of those findings let to the development of a specific and new prevention approach for university students: MindMates**

# Core mission of MindMates

University-wide prevention program:

- **improving general well-being among all students** by reinforcing protective factors (e.g. connectedness, mental health literacy, problem solving behavior) and by reducing risk factors (e.g. passive coping strategies, social isolation, mental problems)
- creating a caring and mental health promoting environment
- stimulating openness towards mental health



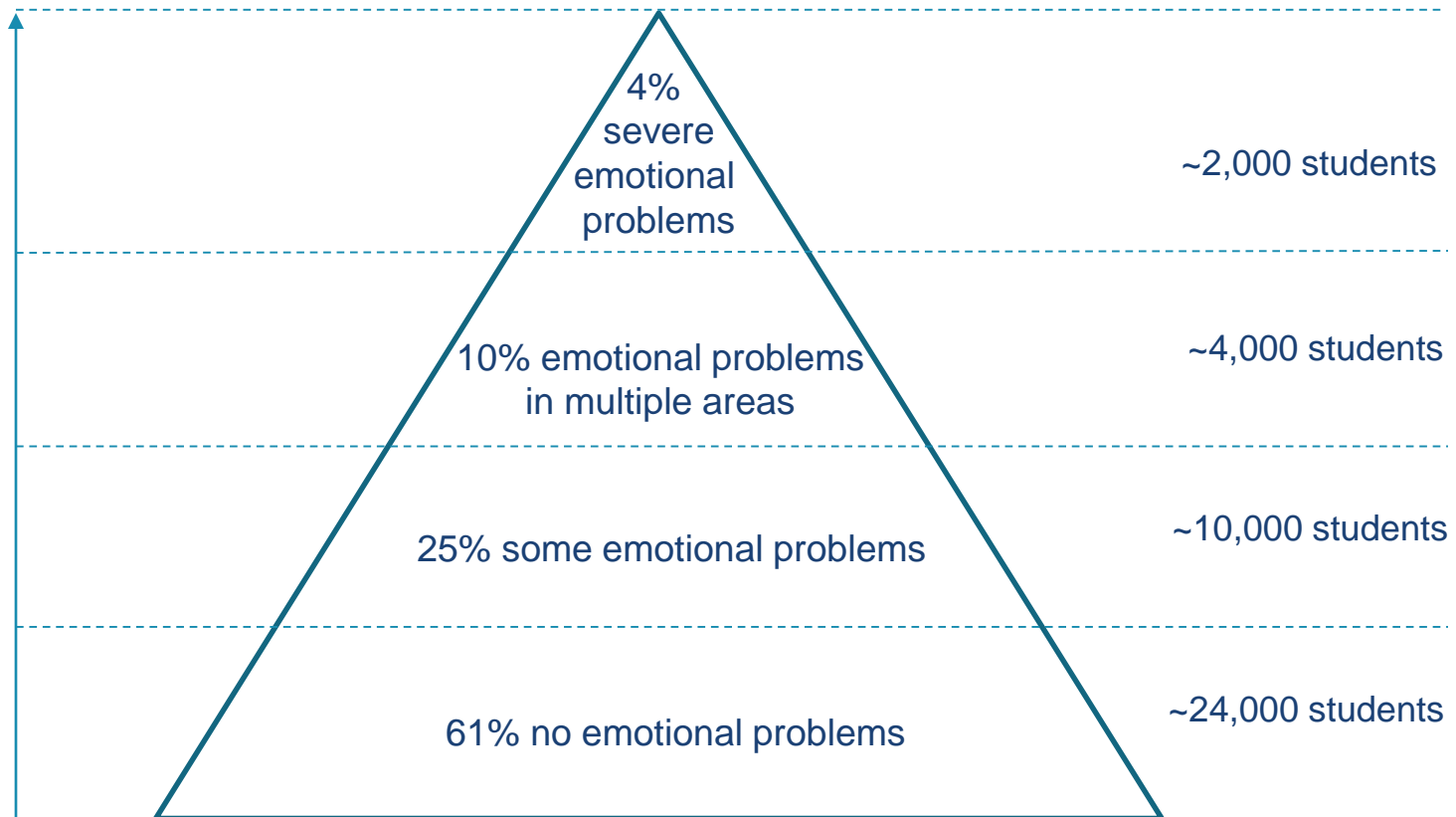
**MindMates**

# Strenghts of this project

- Public health approach to suicide and suicide prevention
- Integral prevention policy
  - Universal, indicated and selective prevention (USI)
  - Strong link with curation (prevention and clinical intervention)
  - Well-being-oriented and problem-oriented
- Prevention pyramid (Deklerck, 2008) as framework
- Scientifically monitored by the research project Fortune (team Prof. R. Bruffaerts)
- Coordinated and rolled out by the Student Health Centre
- Interventions are spread over the entire university
- For and by students

# Interventions of MindMates

## Emotional health at the KU Leuven



**FORTUNE**

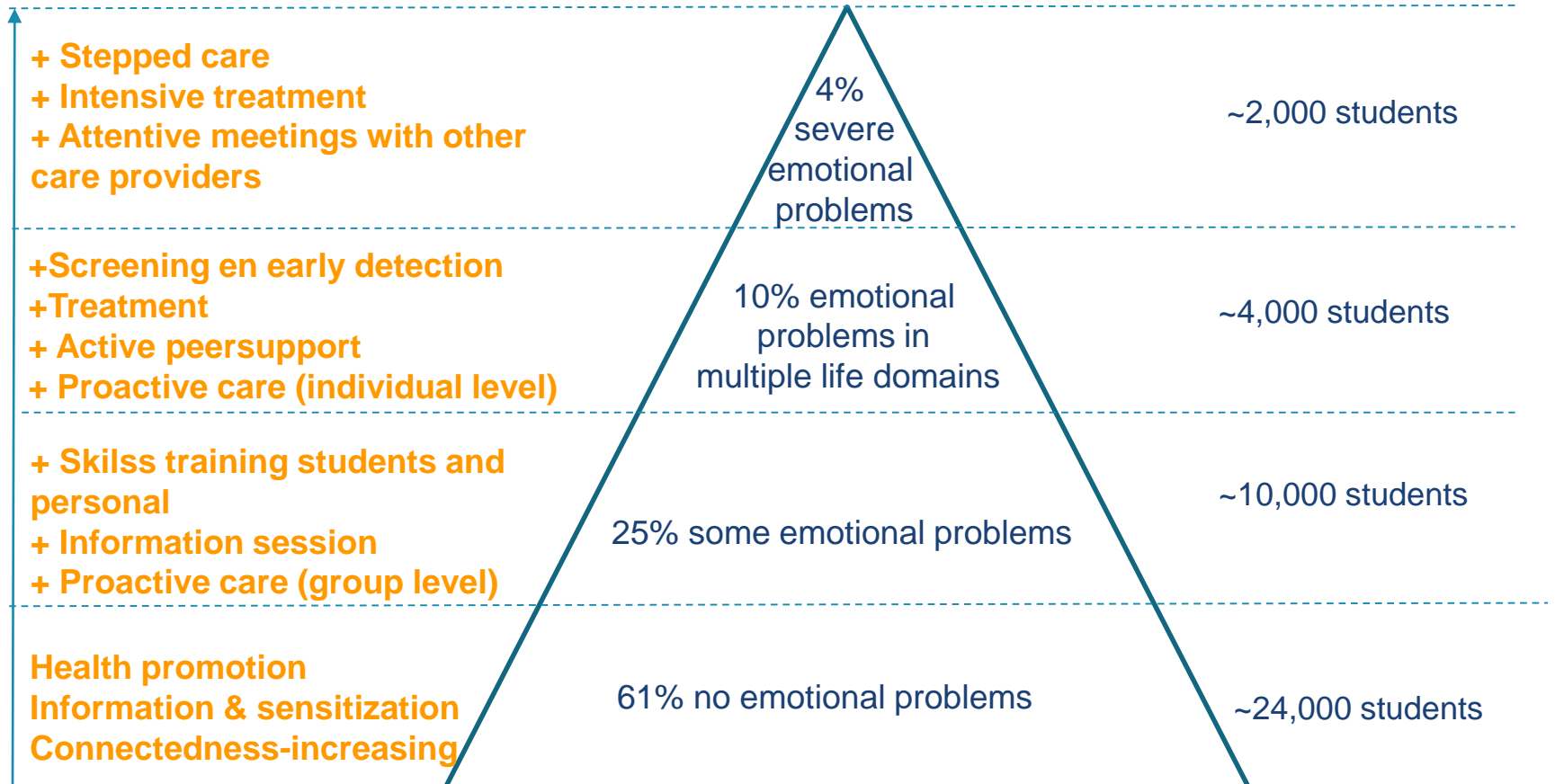
**KU LEUVEN**





## Interventions

### MindMates



**FORTUNE**

## Largest group: students that report no emotional problems (61%)

### Approach:

- Health promo (Campaign Team)
- Providing information and enhancing awareness concerning mental well-being (website [www.mindmates.be](http://www.mindmates.be), lectures, media)
- Increasing social cohesion and connectedness (Activity Team)
- Increasing or reinforcing resilience



## Second level: students that report some emotional problems (25%)

### Approach:

- Enhancing mental health literacy through skills and information training sessions for students and personal
  - Student workshops “Upgrade your mind”
  - Training for gatekeepers
  - Information session for student faculty unions
- Proactive care: if necessary the trainer refers students to another training or treatment option(s) within or outside the Student Health Centre (prevention ↔ clinical interventions)

## Student Workshops “Upgrade your mind”:

- Becoming a MindMate, recruiting volunteers
- Themes: selfcare and care for others, conversation skills, coping strategies, setting boundaries, professional help (where/how)
- Method: conversation, rol-playing, challenging current general assumption
- Practical:
  - Registration through website, no-obligation
  - Four sessions, weekly 1.5h
  - Max. 15 students
  - In Dutch and English
  - Led by a psychologisch SHC
  - Location: SCH or in living environment of students
- Based on: peersupporttraining of A.Ford (2015), Peer Helper Training Student workbook of M. de Jager & N. Ntlokkwana, [www.mindmates.be](http://www.mindmates.be)



## Training for gatekeepers in suicide prevention:

- Gatekeepers = intermediators who often come in contact with students, but not in the role of discussing or guiding emotional problems
- In prevention research pointed out as one of the most effective methods!
- Themes: basic knowledge concerning emotional problems and suicidality among students, do's and don'ts in conversation, information on suicidal process, signal detection, risk estimation, professional help (where/how), how to optimize suicide prevention
- Method: conversation, role-playing, sharing experiences, giving information, motivational interviewing, detection of myths and misconceptions as well as challenging those cognitions
  
- Practical:
  - Two sessions, monthly 2h + 1 follow-up session in the next semester
  - Groups of max 15, min 6 gatekeepers
  - Led by a Prof. Ronny Bruffaerts and Samira Akhtar
  - Location: working environment of the gatekeepers

## Information session for student faculty unions:

- New intervention: “Get to know MindMates”
- “Warm up” session
- Themes: What is MindMates, which interventions offers MindMates
- Method: conversation, interaction, sharing experiences, website
  
- Practical:
  - On demand
  - Groups of min 15 and max 30
  - 1 session, 2h
  - Led by a psychologist of SHC and a member of one of the MindMates teams
  - Location: facilities of the student faculty union

Third level: students that report emotional problems in multiple live domains (10%)

Approach:

- Screening and early detection by the use of the self test (website [www.mindmates.be](http://www.mindmates.be)), by GP (free preventive psycho-medical control for first year students), by Mind-Buddy, by MindMates coworkers
- Setting up treatment: referral to treatment options within or outside SCH
- Referral to other student services
- (Pro-)active peersupport by a trained follow student (Mind-Buddy)
  - More individualized technique to counter loneliness and emotional problems
  - Social and/or emotional support for a specific duration
  - Conditions to become a Mind-Buddy: participation student workshops, mental resilience, supervision every semester

Highest risk group: students that report severe emotional problems (4%)

Approach:

- Stepped care
- Intensive and personalized psychiatric, psychotherapeutic and/or psychosocial treatment (internal/external)
- Referral to other student services
- Optimizing crisis procedures
- Optimizing referral network + attentive meetings with other care providers
  
- Future: e-health



The MindMates interventions are frequently consulted and used:

- Visitors homepage website (since october 2015):
  - ± 60 000 Dutch speaking students
  - ± 7 000 English speaking students
- Participation selftest (since february 2015):
  - 2 520 Dutch speaking students
  - 384 English speaking students
- Average of 6 student workshops per semester
- Average of 2 groups of gatekeepers are targetted per academical year
- Growing MindMates teams
- Growing demands to get a Mind-Buddy for social and/or emotional support
- Start up info-session for student unions
- Continuous awareness campaigns, frequent connected-increasing activities

# Conclusions

- Student Health Centre of KU Leuven offers a solid and integral prevention policy with accessible interventions for Dutch and English speaking students (as a group or individually) as well as for personal
- The interventions take place in clinical world but also at school, work, in de university environment
  - which makes prevention a task of us all
- Not all mental health questions need a psychotherapeutic answer
- Connectedness as a protective factor is strongly targetted
- Together with the growing success of MindMates comes the growth of mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviour among KU Leuven students
- Growing interest from other educational institutions in the MindMates interventions

# Questions, reflections?



## **MindMates**

Together our minds can achieve  
greater things.

# Contact details

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# MindMates

Partners: Foundation 'Ga voor Geluk', Fortune, Loko