

The Creative Outlet

HND Graphic Design
Presents:

The Creative Outlet's First Magazine!

Health and Wellbeing Edition

In this Edition;

- You are beautiful, No Matter What (pg 9 - 10)
 - Autism, Wonderfully Brilliant (pg 15 - 16)
 - Cut the Stigma Around Men's Mental Health (pg 6 - 8)
- And much more!



Girls on the go

WELLNESS CLUB

Girls On The Go is a well-being community that hosts events for girls aged 18-65. Their mission is to combat the struggles of making friends and to create a fun, safe and supportive space for women and girls to come together. Through creative, fitness and social events they have brought entire friend groups together; one group even moving in together!



What started as a running group lead by two girls has transformed into something much bigger. They host many different types of evenings ranging from artistic things such as glass and tote bag painting , pottery and book clubs to more social and health related things such as charity runs. When it comes to their creative evenings, the response has been overwhelmingly positive as the girls have found it is a comfortable and fulfilling way to socialise as well as de-stress as well as taking the pressure off to drink in order to do so.

**“The best way to
make a friend is to be
a friend”
–Barbie**



HOW EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Hello reader, thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my article, thank you very much. I hope you enjoy reading it and maybe learn something new.

So what is the purpose of this article of this article?? Well we all know to a certain extent that physical exercise is good for you. But did you know it can all be incredibly beneficial to your metal health?

To start I will tell you the story of a person remarkable who is a big believer in the befits of exercise. A man by the name of Henry Cookey. Henry is an incredibly talented personal trainer and martial artist, who is the owner of the impressive ninja warrior training center and gym known as HC-FIT based in Sandhills, Liverpool.

Henry from a young age had in interest in fitness, at the age of four Henry was a handful. Energetic and rebellious his parents searched for a way to help put Henry's energy to good use. Thankfully one of Henry's dads' friends had a solution to there problem in the form of taekwondo. He had found that his own children had enjoyed it, while at the same time it had helped to teach them better discipline. It sounded like a great option so Henry's dad signed him up for a class. Thankfully it seemed that the taekwondo had the desired effect on Henry, as he got a lot of enjoyment from learning taekwondo, an interest that had sparked a passion for martial arts, even though he only took lessons for six months when his mother asked him to quit. However, this would not stop Henry's passion for martial arts as he continued to enjoy and idolize martial arts practitioners like Jackie Chan and Bruce lee.



HENRY COOKEY

Eventually during his D of E Henry found an opportunity to pick up taekwondo once again with a reignited passion. A passion that after pursuing a career in chemical engineering lead Henry to his taekwondo up to the Olympic level, A tough and challenging path but Henry was successful in being a reserve athlete for the 2014 Rio Olympics. In the process of training for the Olympics Henry began to do personal training to make money while training. That is where he discovered he enjoyed personal training, so much in fact that he went on to become a qualified personal training.

Another important inspiration that drove Henry after his Olympic training was Ninja warrior. Due to his interest in fitness Henry eventually discovered to world of the ninja warrior competition. At first Henry simply watched it but over time he began to believe he could do it himself, so after bragging about how good he would do at ninja warrior his partner. She told him he should sign up. So, when Ninja warrior came to the UK that is exactly what he did. Henry took part in one of the first Sasuke ninja warrior competition in the UK and went on to become a returning and popular contestant on Ninja warrior UK on Itv. The combinations of his passion for personal training, Ninja warrior a whole lot of research and hard work culminated in the creation of the HC-FIT gym and ninja warrior training course.

HC-FIT is a great place for a range of activates from general fitness to advanced ninja warrior training. But all in all, the most important thing that I have learnt about Henry's story is that finding a form of expertise that you are passionate about can-do wonders for both your physical and mental health. All you need to do is find the right place and the right activity. Now moving to the science behind why physical exercise is good for your metal health. I have done research into the topic of the positive effects of exercise on mental health using multiple sources. One of the best sources of evidence I was lucky to come across was from a ted talk by Dr Wendy Suzuki, a professor of neuroscience at New York university.

Wendy's ted talk was an incredibly detailed and engaging talk about the science behind why exercise is good for your brain. Exercise can have Immediate effects on your brain, even a single workout can increase levels of neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin and noradrenaline. All factors that are scientific know to help improve your mood, attention span and reaction time, and these effects can last for up to 2 hours.

On top of that continued exercise can have significant long term effects such changing your brains anatomy and function for the better, causing you to be in a better mood, have more energy, be more focused, attentive and can even improve your long term memory. So what causes all of these positive effects? Dr Suzuki explained that exercise helps create new brain cells in the hippocampus that improve certain functions such as your long term memory and Improved attention due to a larger hippocampus as a result of more exercise. More importantly exercise helps provide long lasting and protective befits for the brain that can last a lifetime, helping protect the brain, from neurological illnesses such as depression, Alzheimer's and dementia. All very positive effects, that you don't need to be an athlete to reap these rewards. Even just three to four times a week, attempt to get your heart rate up. Even if it is a simple as walking around more or taking the stairs instead of lift, all of this can help your brain become strong, and allow you to feel better in both the short and long term.





So where is a good place to start? Well there is a large variety of gym equipment here on campus at Southport College. At Southport College you have access to the sports hall that you can use for a wide range of sports activities. On top of that they have a well-equipped fitness suite packed with gym equipment, cardio machines, and free weights for Southport College students to use free of charge. Finally, you could even join college teams and by other departments for used for events and activities. I think all of this would make it a wonderful place to start when it comes to finding a form of exercise you enjoy.

To conclude this article, I'd like to circle back to the beginning when we were talking about Henry Cookey, and how exercise helped have a positive change in his life in multiple ways. I was lucky enough to be able to receive a quote from him, that I hope will help inspire you to find an exercise you enjoy. One that will hopefully help you in more ways than one.

“I could talk for hours about the benefits of exercise to mental health, but I'll give you the short (ish) version. If you wanna talk scientifically, when you exercise, your brain triggers the release of endorphins - hormones like dopamine, which produces feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, serotonin, which produces feelings of happiness and fulfilment, and melatonin, which helps you fall asleep when you want to. So even science tells us that exercise makes you feel pleasure, happiness and helps you sleep better, which all lead to better mental health. But even if we forget about the science, when you exercise you feel better about yourself, you make achievements that you're proud of, your body and image improve which improves your confidence and self-belief. All of these feelings don't just stop when you stop exercising, you carry them with you into everything you do and the rest of your life. It's pretty easy to see how it has such a big impact on your mental well-being and all you have to do is start to make a huge impact.”

College Gym Opening Hours Monday & Friday 12.00pm-1.00pm
Tuesday 1.00pm-2.00pm Wednesday & Thursday 12.00pm-2.00pm



Why men should talk about their mental health

While poor mental health can affect anyone, men are statistically far less likely to talk about it or seek help.

This is troubling, as in England roughly one in eight men have a common mental health problem like depression, anxiety, or panic disorder. Of course, it's likely this number is higher as many men never seek out help. This means a large amount of the population is dealing with poor mental health in silence, with no support.

Only around a third of psychological therapies are accessed by men, and this method of support can make a huge difference to someone who might otherwise be dealing with their mental health alone.

Around 40% of men surveyed said it would take thoughts of self-harm or suicide before they would reach out for mental health support. But the earlier someone seeks help, the sooner they can start learning effective coping strategies, getting medication, or accessing mental health advocacy.

Just talking about your mental health makes it easier to cope with. Below are five reasons why men should talk about their mental health.

Some reasons why men should talk about their mental health

Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 45 in the UK

In the UK, over 4,000 men commit suicide annually. Men make up 75% of all suicides in the UK.

There are many different factors at work that contribute to this, but if more men felt able to talk about their mental health, it would make a drastic difference for the better.

Men are more likely to adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms

Men are around three times more likely than women to become dependent on alcohol or drug use as a way of coping with their mental health.

Gambling levels among men have skyrocketed during the pandemic, which can further damage mental health through stress or guilt, and can often create a loop where men will gamble more to try to feel better, making things worse.

Social media can make men's mental health worse

Over a third of men say that social media has a negative impact on how they feel.

This number rises to almost 50% in men aged 18-34, who typically spend more time on social media.

Unrealistic expectations from social media can make men feel like they're not as attractive, successful, or active as other people, and put pressure on them to seem perfect, which can lead to mental health difficulties.

Previously, the pandemic has made men's mental health worse

Almost half of men said the pandemic made their mental health worse.

Isolation has of course had an impact on everyone, but with men less likely to reach out for support, or to ask how their friends are doing, it meant many men were struggling with no one to talk to.

Talking about mental health normalises it, and makes it easier for other men

While society has come a long way in terms of fighting the stigma around mental health, many men still feel that having mental health issues is a sign of weakness, something to be embarrassed or ashamed of, and that admitting it will cause others to see them differently.

But when more men come forward and talk about how they're dealing with their mental health, it makes easier for others to do the same.

Why men don't talk about their mental health

Besides existing stigma around men experiencing mental health issues, there is a deeper problem: generally, men aren't raised or socialised to talk about their feelings.

Many men are raised to be strong, stoic, to always be 'fine.' This is reinforced as they grow up, with other boys and men always acting as if nothing is wrong.

'From childhood boys are told to keep quiet about emotions and that men don't talk to each other... It became tiring and I became very withdrawn. I felt forced to conform.' – Mind focus group participant

However, things are getting better. Men are now three times more likely to see a therapist than they were ten years ago, and are now equally as likely as women to seek help from their GP if they're feeling low.

Social media has allowed men to speak out about their feelings, find support, and help others feel confident in sharing about their mental health.

As more men talk about how they're doing, it becomes easier for others to open up.

Warning signs of poor mental health in men:

Poor sleep

Lack of sleep, or feeling a lack of rest after sleep can be a sign of depression

Emotional outbursts

Sudden mood swings, explosive anger, or irritability at little things can be signs of poor mental health

Lack of motivation

A lack of motivation, or general low mood, is a sign of depression.

Low appetite

A low appetite or lack of interest in food can signal something may have changed mentally.

Excessive drinking or risky behaviours

Drinking more, gambling, or drug use can be signs of depression.

Support in College

But not a lot of people know that there are support services here that are free and could help you with your education.

These are listed down below, so that you can get the best support for yourself;

Finding Help Online Through the Southport College Website

Simply Searching for "Mental Health Services Southport College" you can clearly see that they provide a webpage full of resources that you are able to use for the service and use for free.

Some of the online services that they provide are;

- Kooth – An Online Mental Health Wellbeing Community which provides free, safe and anonymous online support for younger adults and teenagers
- CALM – Campaign Against Living Miserably – this is a charity that exists to prevent male suicide in the UK – 0800 58 58 58
- "Give Us A Shout" – A free and confidential 24/7 text messaging support for anyone that is anxious, stressed, depressed, suicidal and those who need in-the-moment support

- Papyrus – A national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide, who have resources to help young people who may have suicidal thoughts – 0800 068 41 47 or pat@papyrus-uk.org

Other support

There are also other resources as well, either online or in person around Southport

- The Reach Mens Centre - Based in South Sefton, they provide a range of services aimed at reducing isolation and improving the mental health of men in the area – 07504565764
- Sean's place – Another support group that focuses on sessions specifically identified to improve confidence and self-esteem for men whilst reducing symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety - 0151 922 5444
- St Leonards Youth and Community Centre – They provide a lively and connected community centre in the heart of Bootle in South Sefton, Merseyside, England
- Pinto Community Art CIC - Pinto Community Art provides Art Workshops which engage groups and individuals by using a friendly step by step approach to discover or improve their painting and drawing skills – 07444279117
- Mental Health Matters Sefton – Mental Health Matters (MHM) is a national charity with over 35 years of experience in delivering high-quality mental health and social care services. MHM has a hugely positive impact on the lives of people living with mental health needs in our local communities - 0191 516 3500

In an Emergency, please contact these numbers

- If in any immediate trouble, please call 999
- Samaritan – 116 123
- NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Mental Health Crisis Line - 0800 953 0110
- Police (Non-Emergency Situations) – 101
- Sefton and Liverpool CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) - 0151 293 3577 or Free-phone 0808 196 3550
- If a child is involved – 0345 140 0845 between 8am and 6pm
- If an Adult is Involved – call Sefton Council on 0151 934 3737
- Adult Mental Health Crisis Teams
 - o Liverpool & Sefton – 0800 051 1508
 - o West Lancashire - 01695 684356

Designed by Ian Dafilmoto
Article information from hfehmind.org.uk, Southport College and Sefton CVS

Unrealistic beauty standards lead to body dysmorphia, which is a mental health disorder developed in a person who immerses themselves in a sea of disappointment pertaining to their looks. They believe that their appearance has more defects than anyone else's.

People with negative body image are more likely to have an eating disorder and more frequently suffer from negative emotions such as depression, isolation, loss of self-confidence, obsession with weight loss. Obesity is also a risk factor for anxiety disorders.

**You are
beautiful no
matter what
Even if you
don't believe it**



26% of young women experience a Common Mental Disorder, such as anxiety or depression. *A study from the University of Manchester found that 73% of 10-19 year olds who identified as having self-harmed at least once were girls.

Experts have seen a “rapid” rise in self-harm among teenage girls, with reports of self harm among 13-16 year old girls rising by 68% between 2011 and 2014.

Remember that you're more than enough

Are you insecure about your skin and body image?

**That's ok!
We all worry about how we look. Here is some advice you for you to help you overcome your insecurities!**



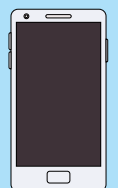
Open up! Don't bottle up your feelings.

If you are struggling with acne consider talking to a dermatologist. Its nothing to be ashamed of!



I know we are all tired of hearing drink water...
But its important to stay hydrated!

Take a detox from social media and unfollow accounts that promote toxic beauty standards.



Write positive affirmations and goals daily to help set yourself up for a good day.

Surround yourself with people that love you for you.



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy can also help while struggling with self image. You can help yourself break bad thinking habits by following 3 easy steps. What Are the 3 Cs?

1. Catch It - The first step in the Three C Method is to catch the negative thought as soon as it starts to bubble up.
2. Check It - Checking your negative thoughts can help you confront the thought and check in with yourself to learn why you're feeling that way.
3. Change It - Your goal should be to replace your negative thoughts with thoughts that are healthier and that help you reach your sleep goals.

ALAN WAKE



Creative Types: Problems

Studies have shown correlations between creative occupations and people who live with mental problems. Sometimes those problems effect the work of creatives. So here's a list of common problems in hope you can identify.

Imposter Syndrome:

An psychological experience of feeling doubt of your skills, talents, or any genuine success that you have achieved. Common traits of this are, low self-esteem, self-doubt in areas where you typically excel, distrust, and overpreparation.

Creative block:

When a creative person doesn't feel they can create at the moment or like they have no inspiration. Sometimes they find themselves making excuses, or getting fustated easelly when it comes to work.

Overwhelmed:

Feelings, expectations or events, that are too much or are affecting you very strongly, it can sometimes feel like you don't know how to deal with it, or feel as if you need or want to try and avoid it as much as possible.

Burnout:

A from of stress linked to work and includes being worn out physically or emotionally. Burnout can also involve feeling useless, powerless or empty. Burnout isn't a medical diagnosis but can be linked with other conditions like depression.

Lack of productivity:

When there are issues with workflow, poor decision-making or scope creep, can often make it feel like you're wasting your time. If a project's moving at a snail's pace, it can often disengage you from creating.

Isolation:

A state of being where you're separated from other people, events, personal joys, etc. Ether on purpose or because you're working too much. This can be becuse of, or can be linked to anxiety, stress, or depression.

Creative Types: Solutions

Studies have shown correlations between creative occupations and people who live with mental problems. Sometimes those problems affect the work of creatives. So here's a list of common solutions that creatives use to ease their mind

Comfort Media:

Certain media to ease anxiety and stress one way or another, either filled with amusing and welcoming characters and light and easy plots. Or filled with darkness, trials or characters that is relatable to the viewer metaphorically or literally. Depends on the person or the mood.

Dopamine detox:

A behavioral therapy approach that encourages self-regulation of unhelpful habits. It's simple pleasures like from food to sex and even socializing. It can help cure a wide range of ailments like low motivation or lack of focus.

Get some sleep:

One you've heard before, but is especially important for creatives who tend to stay up working. Increasing sleep can reduce stress and improve your mood, think more clearly and do better at work.

Taking a breather:

taking a breather is just, you stop what you are doing for a short time in order to rest. This can help kicking the brain back in gear and regain you're love for creating.

Having fun with side projects:

Something you do in addition to your main project. There are many benefits to starting a side project. Like providing an opportunity to learn new skills with lower risk. They can boost mental health by providing an escape from work and by increasing creativity and productivity.

Seek support:

Seeking support from other creatives can be really beneficial, even these two pages wouldn't have been possible, without the input of others. People you trust, can be trusted.

WHISPER OF THE HEART





AUTISM

Dunes

splash world

Dunes splash world offer quite nights for a calmer environment

WONDERFULLY

Different

Liverpool Community cinema

The plaza offers disability screening call 01519281530

The great little place

The great little place is a cafe that offers a wide range of employment focussed, autism specific supported work placements for adults that encourage learning new skills and improve people's health and well-being. These placement can be supported by e-learning.

There aim is to create opportunities for autistic people that will help them have ownership and understanding of their own lives and futures.

Advance solutions

ADDvanced Solutions Community Network encourages, supports and empowers the families of neurodiverse children and young people, who may also have specific learning difficulties or associated mental health needs.

Our engaging, community-based learning, coaching and mentoring programmes will help you and your family to better recognise, understand and meet your individual needs, enabling you to manage your day-to-day challenges

Buddy up

Buddy Up is a mentoring and befriending project for young people aged between 13 and 18 who have additional needs and disabilities and are at risk of social isolation.

The aim of the project is to reduce social isolation, increase confidence and independence skills by providing fun social opportunities in and around Sefton.

buddvup@seftoncvcs.org.uk

Sefton carers

support services

Sefton Carers Centre provides free advice and guidance, emotional and practical support, training and a range of holistic therapies for unpaid carers living in Sefton. 01512886060



IT'S OKAY
NOT TO
BE OKAY

always
BELIEVE
-in-
YOURSELF



GET FRESH AIR



YOU ARE ENOUGH



BE KIND
to yourself

PACE
YOURSELF

Talk to
someone



YOUR ONLY
LIMIT IS
YOUR MIND



BE KIND
TO YOUR
MIND



“You are
not your
thoughts”



'How to escape the Void'

THIS IS A SMALL STEP BY STEP TO HELP THOSE WHO BATTLE DEPRESSION AND NEED A LITTLE HELP WITH GETTING A HOLD OF TASKS THAT FEEL OVERWHELMING.

Step 1



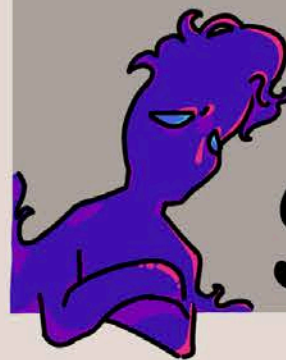
TIME TO START THE DAY!
BRUSH YOUR HAIR,
PUT IT UP
AND OUT YOUR
FACE

TIME TO REFRESH!
BRUSH YOUR TEETH,
AND RINSE YOUR
FACE WITH
SOME
SOAP AND WATER



Step 2

CHANGE INTO SOME
FRESH CLOTHES
AND DO ONE OF
YOUR FAVOURITE
ACTIVITIES



Step 4

Step 3

LET'S REFUEL YOUR BODY!
GET A GLASS OF
WATER, AND
SOMETHING TO EAT

Other things that could help;

IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TALK, THE SUPPORT HUB IN THE COLLEGE AND SPEAK TO AN ADULT WHOSE WILLING TO HELP.

SOME SELD HELP BOOKS CAN HELP; 'WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS NIGHT' BY DANIEL HOWELL, 'REASONS TO STAY ALIVE' BY MATT HAIG, 'COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY...' BY SETH J. GILLIHAN...

DESIGN AND MENTAL HEALTH

“Hard Work, Attention to Detail” and Paralyzing Fear: the Ups + Downs of Designing with Anxiety

Words by Emily Gosling

Mental health issues may not necessarily be a bad thing when it comes to making excellent work, but the fact is that certain conditions and ways of thinking can render work—be that solo, untethered creative work, or 9-5 agency work—either supremely difficult or impossible. Anxiety—true anxiety—is one such condition. It’s a double-edged sword: at times the self-criticism inherent with anxiety can encourage rigorous thinking. But that sort of detailed self-reflection can easily tip over into a state of perfectionism in which actually doing something can prove impossible. Like its frequent bedfellow depression, anxiety can strangle both a creative impulse and a person on a fundamental level. “Feeling stressed can negatively impact your ability to generate ideas and be creative, which can be additional stressor,” says Emma Mamo, head of workplace wellbeing at UK mental health charity Mind. Further complicating matters, employees working in the creative industries, like those in many other sectors, often don’t feel comfortable talking about mental health and stress. Of the workers Mind polled who had taken off work due to stress, just 5% told their employer they were too stressed to work. The remaining 95% gave another reason for their absence to avoid telling their employers the truth. “Anyone working in creative industries knows only too well the challenging nature of the job,” adds Mamo. “Many people tell us that despite being hugely rewarding, the combination of high stress, relatively low wages, and long hours make for a workplace that’s not always conducive to good mental health.



“This can be even more heightened if you’re self-employed or freelancing, worrying about where your next job and pay check is coming from, and not always having the security, routine, or line management support that you might otherwise have in a more ‘traditional’ setup.” Of course, such anxiety—as Mind suggests, is perfectly natural considering the nature of, and pressures inherent in, working in the creative industries. As psychologist-turned-creativity coach Eric Maisel

pointed out to us before, “there are scores of reasons that creative folks experience more anxiety without it being a mental disorder. If anyone had to put things out in the world like creative people do they would experience anxiety.” But sometimes, these expected stresses are part of a condition, and they become dangerous. That’s something that designer Matt Stokes, a designer and illustrator based in Brighton, on the south coast of England, knows only too well. Stokes has struggled with anxiety and low mood for the past few years, but recently went to his doctor when it got to the point where “it affects everything—not just work, but home life,” he says. “Work might not be the thing that started me feeling anxious, but it’s another factor that makes it worse and magnifies it.” Since seeking help, Stokes has found the CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) he was prescribed to be helpful. “It’s made me realize that I do a lot of things already to manage stress and anxiety, and it’s helped me understand what my triggers are. It makes you talk and think about [your mental health] more.” But Stokes notes that when it’s your job to be critical not only about how things look but why they are the way they are, it’s easy for that to seep into your own life, too. “I’m a naturally critical person, and maybe design brings it out in me more,” he says. “You have to constantly justify and defend things to people; everything I do is completely scrutinized, and you have to work through it. You have to be thick-skinned, but if I do good work I really care about it and want it to be right. Sometimes the marketing department might say ‘I don’t like the color blue’ or ‘my husband or wife doesn’t like it.’ Well, I hadn’t realized they were a key stakeholder!” The nature of making creative work for someone else—be that a client or an employer—means that designers are up against judgement, criticism, and baffling rebukes on pretty much a daily basis. As Stokes says, it requires a thick skin; but it also requires understanding that just as having aching feet is part of being a waitress, constant scrutiny is part of being a creative.



Rob Clarke is a UK-based designer working across type, logo, and font design. He also has a family history of anxiety and OCD. “I’ve learnt to live with many of my insecurities by facing them head on, but they will never completely go away. I’m generally a happy person, but I’m definitely a worrier and a glass-half-empty kind of guy,” he says. “As designers, we are judged by our skill and what we put down on paper for everyone to see—this can eat away at your self-confidence. I may spend longer on a project, over-analyzing and reworking elements. I lie awake sometimes wondering... Have I understood the brief? Do my designs make sense? Is it drawn well? Is it any damn good? Will I get another job? Should I give up!” Still, Clarke describes a flip-side to his condition that many designers I spoke to for this article also mentioned. “My anxieties have probably made me a more conscientious designer. Over the years I’ve worked hard, making sure what I’ve produced is of a good standard, paying attention to detail and never missing deadlines.” Edoardo Rainoldi, a design student based in Southampton, England, who’s suffered from anxiety for the past two years since his solo move to the UK from his native Italy, has also been grappling with depression for the past six months. He now sees a counselor weekly, and has been prescribed Xanax for acute attacks. Even so, he agrees with Clarke that anxiety has its positives for a designer. “Sometimes anxiety helps me since I always think about every problem with a project,” he says. “I’m very attentive with every single detail and I think about every scenario in which a user could use my product. Of course, being too attentive to details can put a lot of pressure on me and my mind. The product needs to be 100% perfect when it’s delivered (as you can imagine, quite impossible) and I wonder whether I could have done a much better job.” Yet while certain anxiety-making situations are part and parcel of being a designer anywhere, agency conditions can also play a huge role in exacerbating mental health conditions. Hannah Jones describes her last job as a graphic designer at a printing firm as a situation where she was “overworked, underpaid, treated like a factory worker, and very stressed out.” She describes being made to feel “worthless”—regularly singled out and humiliated. She became depressed, had a panic attack, and was later prescribed antidepressant medication, which she used alongside counseling in a bid for recovery. “I think being a designer means you are always slightly anxious—you’re working to tight deadlines for multiple clients who can sometimes be very unreasonable and very poor communicators,” says Jones. “I also genuinely feel that creatives have heightened ‘imposter syndrome’ experiences compared to other industries. I’ve just never felt as if I’m good enough, which I think is a major trait of creatives.” Jessica Christiana, a graphic designer at Indonesian advertising agency Dwi Sapta, has suffered with anxiety since her days at design school. She agrees that creativity and self doubt go hand in hand. “[Anxiety] simultaneously motivates you to become better, and tells you that you’re not good enough,” she says.



“It doesn’t really help with the work because I will be stuck in the infinite cycle of ‘I’m gonna make this one good’ / ‘scrap it because it’s not as good as I expected’ / ‘start over.’ The only thing that’s moving things forward is deadline but again, with anxiety, it becomes the time when you just make mediocre work because there’s no time left and you just say ‘fuck it, I’ll just make it this way.’” But what if you can’t reach the “fuck it” point? What if—like so many of us—the ability to say “no” is something you never quite managed to get a hold on? Designer and founder of the agency Brand Nu Radim Malinic found himself in a position where “no” had become an entirely foreign concept: he was working 18-hour days for a year straight, and eventually had a breakdown.

So how do you overcome that? Clarke emphasizes the importance of the way that we talk about mental health. “All employers should be aware of the different types of mental health conditions,” he says. “Designers in particular use the term ‘OCD’ as a way of describing their attention to detail when lining things up, which can be frustrating, hurtful, and only undermines the actual illness. OCD is, after all, a mental disorder and can be debilitating.” For the individual designer who’s suffering, maintaining a sense of perspective is vital. It’s not always easy to put into practice, especially when in the grip of anxiety, but it’s worth trying to remember that work, design, and being a creative person aren’t the be-all and end-all. It’s equally important to try not to equate who you are as a professional with who you are as a person. “When I think about my output of work, it feels intrinsically linked to who I am as a person,” says Stokes.



Here are some tips from Mind to help manage your mental health at work:

Avoid working long hours. Lots of deadlines can lead to longer hours but try to avoid this where possible because it will only leave you mentally and physically drained.

Take a break. Actually, take your lunch break and use other regular breaks to step away and get some fresh air, if possible. Regardless of how much you have left to do, it’s really important to get away from work and clear your mind. Don’t check your emails, don’t take any calls that aren’t absolutely necessary, and absorb yourself in a podcast or a book and relax. A break should be a break.

Schedule play time. Plan something fun to do for when you get your next day off. Having something to look forward to can make a big difference. Whether it’s a visit to a museum, a walk through your local park, or a trip to the cinema, try and put something in your diary that’ll help you achieve a good work-life balance.

Be assertive. It doesn’t matter how busy your work gets. Say “no” if you can’t take on the extra demands that are being asked of you.

Exercise helps use the hormones the body produces under stress, relaxes muscles, strengthens the heart, improves blood circulation, and releases endorphins. Cycle or walk to work if you can. Visit your local park. Sign up (and show up) to a new fitness class like yoga, Zumba, or spinning.

Try not to do too many things at once. You’re more likely to feel accomplished if you take on tasks one at a time until they’re complete.

Reflect on what you have achieved at the end of each day rather than worrying about what you have left to do or what you may have slipped up on. We all make mistakes. You don’t have to be perfect all the time so don’t be too hard on yourself if you don’t get everything right.





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