

# Mental Health Awareness Week – more self-care please

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We strongly believe in opening up conversations about mental health and know that for most people the impacts of the pandemic on our wellbeing will not suddenly lift on 21 June. As we return to what we have longingly referred to as “normal”, we encourage you to prioritise self-care, connect with nature and talk with someone about any theme related mental health.

The trainees have been reflecting on the activities they have done this year to support their mental health, in whatever form it takes.

## Alex Myers

I started doing yoga on YouTube quite early on into the first lockdown. I enjoyed this as a way to do some exercise and stretch, but I quickly found that it gave me the time to stop and focus on something just for me through the meditation aspect of it. Despite slowly coming out of this lockdown, and the gyms reopening, I have ensured that yoga is now incorporated into my weekly workout schedule.

I was reminded of a lost joy of mine near the end of last year when I became part of the Browne Jacobson Christmas Choir. I grew up with the performing arts, and singing is something that I have greatly missed. Being able to have the opportunity to sing, albeit virtually, really helped to remind me of this past love of mine and make my Christmastime that little bit more special.

Finally, I have a new form of self-care to try out provided to me in a lovely care package called “The Gratitude Habit”. Every day I set time aside to focus on the good and positive, whilst setting daily affirmations for myself. I’ve set myself the target of completing this every day until the book is finished.

## Hannah Collins

For me, over the past few years, being physically active has played a big part in staying mentally well.

I have continued to swim, cycle and run throughout lockdown – as a way to maintain fitness and a way to escape the monotony of the same four walls. During runs in particular, it has also been a great opportunity to expand my mind listening to podcasts – or when my mind is saturated, embrace some really loud music!

#MHAW21 is about connecting to nature. On that theme, my girlfriend bought me a kayak for my birthday this year, so if anything, our outdoor pursuits will increase post-lockdown!\* I certainly think the past 14 months have increased my connection with nature, which has been mentally beneficial, as a reminder to myself that there is still a world out there for us to enjoy.

(\*For the lawyers - relevant British Canoeing membership and insurance has also been purchased.)

## Harpinder Nahl

I think keeping active is super important for mental health. Pre-Covid I used to be a runner and was training for the Edinburgh Marathon and Milan Half Marathon before Lockdown 1.0 hit. The races were all cancelled of course (which I was secretly pleased about as I was suffering from a back injury), so turned to strength training instead of running (lifting weights, HITT workouts and yoga). This helped me keep my fitness levels up during the pandemic and allowed me to recover from my back injury. I also realised I prefer strength training over running and plan to continue with it going forwards.

### Sam Trevorrow

Walking to every park/public space and down almost every street within a three-mile radius of my flat has been a great way to get to know my local area.

Although, with most businesses and venues being closed I've found myself doing a lot of online quizzes. Getting family and friends together virtually to do the quiz as a team has been a useful way to regularly keep in touch. With everyone together on camera, it's been a good way to gauge how people are keeping and has been easier to pick up when someone is not their usual self.

Also, because I've had more time in the evenings and weekends during the lockdowns, I've got back into video gaming with friends. Most consoles have the option to create a group voice chat, so whether you're playing the same game together or not, it is a really easy way to catch up with friends (particularly with those who don't live nearby).

## **Sarah Thursby-Pelham**

"Days out on your doorstep" is my new catchphrase. I've embraced local sightseeing and have invested heavily in Ordnance Survey maps to find footpaths which conveniently pass interesting landmarks. What do Stonehenge, Uffington White Horse, Hadrian's Wall, Cheddar Gorge, Bolton Castle, Lindisfarne and Seven Sisters Cliffs all have in common? You can see them from a footpath!

I find fresh air, variety and physical exercise helps me to maintain my mental health. Planning walks around local sights has combined all three by encouraging me to be more creative with destinations, making walks into adventurous days out and helping me to break out of the lockdown routines. Compass, anyone?

Let there be basil. To the seasoned gardener, I am sure this will be obvious, but this activity has been pure magic to me over 2020 and 2021. I have recently discovered the joy of propagating basil from supermarket plants into a bountiful harvest.

Work from home lunches have never tasted better or made me feel so unashamedly accomplished. I highly recommend this pastime.

### Miriam Onwochei-Garcia

During the first lockdown I got an oil diffuser and I've found it really handy to help me get into 'work mode' in the morning and to switch off in the evening. It's been a game changer for creating different environments in the same living space. During the day I have scents that make me feel alert and focused and, in the evenings, scents like lavender oil and clary sage have helped me unwind.

Pre-lockdown cycling to work helped me process the day and get home feeling refreshed. I've really missed having something to bookend the transition between work and free time and having a small activity to mark the end of my working-day has been a good self-care practise. Sitting outside with a cup of tea, listening to an audio book or going for a short walk, have been great for that.

### Alistair Taylor

For my family lockdown meant the loss of a daily routine and the loss of access to wider social communities and shared spaces. Joe Wicks became a daily morning feature and made us feel part of a wider community of bouncy children and creaking parents all in the same boat.

To replace the local cafes we would visit, the garden playhouse was converted into a makeshift café accessorised with fairy lights and cushions.

We also started to really explore the walking routes we could access from our front door and sought out the wilder places, finding there was more on our doorstep than we thought. Coming face to face with a Roe deer stag on a walk one morning was a memorable highlight! Having this to look forwards to has really helped keep us stay positive and connect with nature and each other. We have kept up the walking and it is now a feature of our weekends.

If you have any concerns about your mental health, please do not hesitate to access help through any of these services and organisations:

- Your GP
- [The Samaritans](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [NHS Mental Health Services](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- Speak to someone you trust

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