



# Mind Your Mates 2020

## Week 4: Keeping Well

This week aims to:

- Look at what our 'mental wellbeing' is and what it means to care for it
- Take a look at how to manage our wellbeing within the workplace, at university and at home
- Explore how our guest writer, Ross, reframed his own mental health and depression





# Hello,

We're here for Week 4 of Mind Your Mates, and this week we're going to be looking at our mental wellbeing and how we can look after it.

Regardless of whether you have a diagnosable mental health condition or not, we all have **mental health**, in the same way that we all have **physical health**.

Interestingly, The Mental Health Foundation explores the link between the two, stating that “poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems” whilst “**poor mental health can negatively impact physical health**”.

In this week's newsletter, we'll be looking at a range of techniques and tips to help you explore what works best for you and helps keep you feeling at your best.

We also have a guest feature from the brilliant Ross Shipley, which explores how he reframes living with depression and chooses to focus on the positive perspectives and insights it has given him throughout his life.

Let's get into it!



# What is mental wellbeing?

Your mental wellbeing is about how you're feeling right now, and how well you can cope with daily life.

Having good wellbeing *doesn't* mean you'll always be happy. It's normal to feel sad, angry or low sometimes. But having poor wellbeing for a long time can mean you might start to find things more difficult to cope with.

Having good wellbeing can help you to:

- Feel and express a range of emotions
- Have confidence and positive self esteem
- Have good relationships with others
- Enjoy the world around you
- Cope with the highs and lows of life



# What factors can affect my wellbeing?

We are all different, so what affects your wellbeing may not be the same for somebody else. However, common factors are:

- **Difficult or stressful life events**
- **Your physical health** - how much sleep you get, what you eat and drink, if you take drugs and alcohol or if you have any health problems
- **Your environment** - housing conditions, financial difficulties, stressful workplaces etc.
- **Being able to recognise and communicate your emotions**
- **Your relationships** with the people around you





# How can I look after my wellbeing?

These will vary for everyone, and what helps you right now may not be the same as what helps you in the future. These are Mind's top tips to look after your wellbeing:

- **Learn something new** - this can be a great way of improving our confidence and give us a sense of achievement
- **Be active** - regular exercise can improve our mood, confidence, energy levels and help us sleep better
- **Eat healthily** - a balanced diet, staying hydrated and reducing sugar and caffeine and improve our mood and energy levels
- **Get enough sleep** - good quality sleep gives us more energy and can reduce stress levels
- **Do things you enjoy** - have fun, spend time with a loved one, practice a hobby, watch some films
- **Connect with others** - go for a meal with some friends or family, join a club or begin volunteering, make plans for the future with loved ones
- **Do things to help you relax** - spend time in nature, try meditation, listening to music, have a bath
- **Ask for help when you need it** - talk about how you're feeling, don't bottle up feelings





# Wellbeing in the workplace

If you're finding yourself stressed or overwhelmed often at work, the following suggestions may help you to manage your wellbeing:

- **Ask for help** - everyone needs a hand from time to time, set realistic targets with your manager and let someone know if you need a little help
- **Balance your time** - try not to overwork yourself and ensure you take your breaks and use this time to relax and rest
- **Reward yourself for your achievements** - it can be easy to focus on what needs to be done next and forget to celebrate what you've already accomplished
- **Be realistic** - you don't need to be "perfect" all of the time, no one should expect that of you
- **Make a Wellness Action Plan** - map out what's causing you stress, make use of any existing support systems within your workplace. More information for these is available on the [Mind website](#)



# Wellbeing at university

Whilst mental health problems can occur at stage of life, reports have shown that **1 in 4 students** experience mental health problems at some point during their time at university, with half of those saying they **struggle to complete daily tasks**.

- **Loneliness** - You aren't alone if you're feeling lonely whilst at university. Remember that people only post their highlight reels on social media, and most people don't share openly if they're struggling with loneliness. You may find it helpful to fill your time with volunteering opportunities, or societies to try and meet new, like-minded people.
- **Academic stress** - If you're struggling to adjust to the work load of university, you're not alone. Let your tutors know what's going on for you or try speaking to your university wellbeing team. They may be able to set you up with some extra support outside of lectures or with extended coursework deadlines.
- **Financial difficulties** - Managing student finance loans and budgeting can be difficult - speak to your universities financial support teams for advice. You may be entitled to bursaries or extra support, and they may be able to help you with an easier budget to manage. A part time job alongside your studies could also help you meet new people and earn some extra spending money.





# Ross's personal story: Reframing My Depression

“An old saying that came to my attention a few years ago, and it resonates more loudly with every passing year: **“The flip-side of crisis is opportunity”**. The unfortunate nature of this idea, however, is that we rarely recognise the opportunity until we become somewhat numb to the crisis. My personal take on this is that the more we communicate, sharing our feelings and fears honestly, the sooner we are able to see opportunities and capitalise on them.



It's been a decade since I first noticed the depression creeping in. It still behaves in the same way, but by speaking openly and sharing my experiences past and present, I have learned a few things about learning to embrace it. “Why embrace it? It's awful!”. Well, that's where you're wrong.

**It's uncomfortable and exhausting. It's also a deep-rooted part of me, formed by my life experiences and is just as valid as the rest of me.**

Depression brings opportunities for evolution, so long as our eyes are open to them. It has helped me feel love and friendship in ways I never imagined. Friendships forged by a mutual understanding of mental wellbeing have a strength all of their own. I feel I'm kinder and more generous than I was before; It makes you appreciate the gifts you have, and drives you to share them freely when you're able to.



# Ross's personal story: continued

“Depression, at its worst, makes everything grey. I’ve learned that grey is a wonderful colour, because once embraced, it brings freedom! Black and white cease to exist and life becomes more fluid. If I don’t feel strong enough to do something today, that’s *fine*. Try again later, or tomorrow. If I feel strong enough to do something amazing today – great!



One of the things that has helped me to co-exist with my “Black Dog”, is that what I’m feeling isn’t actually sadness. Depression is a physical inability to feel happiness or joy. Read that bit again, it’s important.

Above all, none of this would have come to me if I hadn’t talked about it. Talking really hurts sometimes, but it is absolutely the right thing to do, and we should all be doing it. If someone isn’t ready to listen to you, then keep trying different people until you find someone who is. The failing isn’t yours!

**York Mind were the single biggest turning point in my journey and I’ll always be grateful for that. They taught me to read my own map, and I discovered things on the way that I’d never even imagined.**

Depression is painful, but also brings so much potential for personal growth. I’m no longer afraid of living with my mental health, it is valuable and worth talking about. Yours is too and there are people who can help you realise that.”



## To summarise:

This week our focus was on helping you look after your mental health and wellbeing. Hopefully we've given you some ideas of how you can support yourself going forward at home, studying or within the workplace.

Next week is the final week of our Mind Your Mates 2020 campaign. A big thank you for joining us so far!

Don't forget to keep in touch via social media using the hashtag **#MindYourMates2020**

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See you next week,  
York Mind

