



FRIDAY INSIGHTS



Mental Health Awareness Week



We received so many warm-feeling, inspiring answers on work/life balance, workplace mental health and kindness reflections from our clients we didn't want them to go unseen. So we've collated them all here in the hope they can inspire you and the conversations around mental health at work and home.

KINDNESS



1. What's your top tip/advice for a healthy work/life balance?

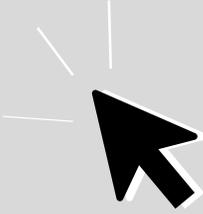


2. How can we continue to break down the shame and stigma around mental health in our workplaces and industry?



3. As kindness is the topic for this year's mental health awareness week, share a story about a time you experienced kindness

The Questions



4. Self-care and kindness to ourselves is super important, especially at the moment - how are you being kind to yourself at the moment?

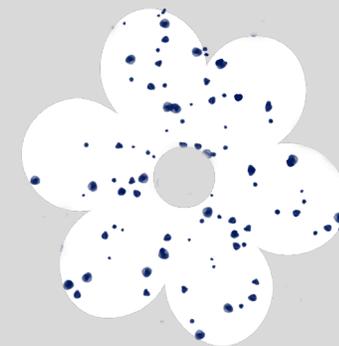


5. Lockdown heroesIf you could clap for anyone (in addition to the NHS and carers) who would it be and why?



6. Details of a mental health charity close to our heart, CALM

What's your top tip/advice for a healthy work/life balance?



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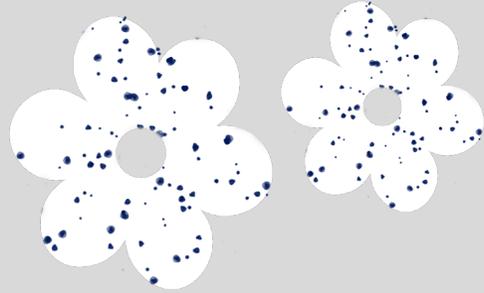
Don't take life too seriously. Times are tough and work is hectic, but do try and find time to have a laugh, get outside and do lots of exercise. For those with a family, remember to use this unique time to spend lots of quality time with them all. This opportunity is unlikely to come again! Working for the RHS I also have to say that the power of plants and gardening to improve our mental health is abundantly clear and one benefit of this crisis is that more and more people are understanding this and starting to grow. Long may it continue! Ian - The RHS

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Make sure you have personal time - every day! Whether this be relaxing with your family, seeing friends in a social setting or going to the gym by yourself. Having the time to decompress from the work day and knowing when to switch off is vital. Lorna - DTW

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It's important to have a clear distinction between work and personal time, especially now when being at home in the same environment makes that more challenging. I find scheduling breaks away from the screen helps and then that helps me to have a clear focus in the moments that I am working. But this is not always easy to maintain, so my top tip is to not be too hard on yourself if you have days where you are less disciplined. Take a breath, recalibrate and get back on track.

Emily - Finecast



It's one that everyone says but I have found instilling more of a routine than I usually would (and sticking to it) has helped me manage the balance between working from home permanently and then being in the same space for my downtime too. Creating space between these 'modes of being' by heading out for a good long walk once finished helps to feel like I have 'left' work. I also use a standing work space at the side of my living room that doesn't need to be fully packed away at the end of the day (like if I used the dining table as a desk permanently for example), but doesn't impact my space or act as a visual reminder/draw out of work hours.

Max - Finecast



I always take time to get away from my desk / computer for an hour at lunchtime. It's so important to remember to keep things in perspective. A good job is a very good thing, but so is being physically and mentally healthy. I always get outside of my workspace, even if for a short walk, or a nice coffee in a quiet cafe (pre-lockdown - now a nice coffee in the garden!) that does it for me. I allow my mind to wander and think of whatever I like. Read a book, call a friend, or go on Twitter. Or simply day dream. So in that hour I feel that I have reset my mind, and it makes me feel refreshed and ready to get going again in the afternoon.

Catherine - The Institute of Cancer Research

I'm into my fitness and think it's so important for my mental health, so I try to stay active as much as possible, whether that's playing netball or going to the gym. So at the moment, during lockdown, although I get up around the same time, as if I was commuting, I use this time to do some yoga. This means that I'm keeping my routine but doing a bit of exercise before starting work around the same time. I also block out my lunchtime every day to go for a walk in a big woodland area near my house and this allows me to try and get my 10k steps every day. If you can, I think it's also important to try and turn off your computer and stop replying to emails after a certain time so you can separate "home life" from "work life".

Moira - Carat





*Easier said than done but, perspective: Often I find myself so wrapped up in the moment with something at work it's like life or death, if I can try to step away (or if someone can drag me away!) for just for a moment, with the aim of getting some perspective on whatever it is I'm working on or whatever it is that's stressing me out that day/week/month it helps to try and see that thing as part of something bigger, either in the context of work or home life. That perspective helps me reprioritise if I need to. **Jane - Slimming World***

*Working from home, which many of us are at the moment, can be a real challenge. Not everyone has a designated office space and many are juggling childcare with work. Where possible, set clear times throughout the day to work and try to make this consistent. Try to make sure you're in an environment where you won't be distracted (or you're less likely to be distracted) and where you can focus. The more focused you are, the more productive you will be. Just as importantly, when you're not working - whether you're spending time with the kids, your partner or just having an hour to yourself to watch a movie or do a gym session - try to switch off from work. My kids are far happier having one hour of quality time with me than three hours of me juggling what they want me to do whilst also working. **Happier kids = happier and healthier me. Hayley - DTW***



How can we continue to break down shame/stigma around mental health in our workplaces and industry?



I think it is really important to break down the stigma of mental health by openly talking about it in team meetings and in the wider office environment. It does not need to be kept behind closed doors, but rather embraced as a real concern. As business leaders, it is important that we are the catalyst in driving change across our team members in how we think and talk about mental health in the workplace.

Lorna - DTW



Switching the working week up by setting fun quizzes and challenges also helps break any monotony at home 😊

In this current Covid-19 world, mental health is even more important. Simple steps like checking in on team members daily and asking how they are, how they are adjusting and do they need any support, is paramount.



Simply put, we need to talk about it more. In the same way that we talk about our physical health, mental health discussions need to become the norm if we are to break the stigma around it. 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. These are huge numbers and companies need to be equipped to support their staff and colleagues. Leaders of organisations should seek out training and initiatives to put support frameworks in place for people who want to have someone to talk to who isn't their line manager or colleague. We have trained up a number of people across the company as Mental Health Allies who are made visible to everyone. Emily - Finecast



<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/get-your-workplace-involved/employer-pledge>



The RHS has signed up to time-to-change. The training workshops and content that have been circulated internally as a result of that move I think have been really beneficial and have started to open up conversations; especially between managers and their reports. I would recommend this to any other businesses out there. Ian - The RHS





*Talk, talk, talk.
And be a really good listener. And try not to let fear get in the way. I feel that we're very lucky at the ICR to have Wellbeing advisors who will listen, and provide support and advice if you need it. Our advisors are all volunteers, and are giving their time generously on a wide range of wellbeing topics. They are not only a safe haven, but get very creative in their own ways to reach out to everyone at the ICR. Whether through lunch time craft sessions, mindfulness, garden trails, tea and talk....to make us aware of our mental health in ways that work for everyone.*

Catherine - The ICR



I think the most powerful way we can do this is by sharing ourselves and how we feel without the editing we are predisposed to apply by 'being polite/professional' and 'not wanting to burden others'. In being vulnerable and enrolling others in our own journey, it is often the case that others feel empowered by this and identify similarities in what you've shared that they recognise in their own life/experience. By creating an environment of feeling ok about not feeling ok, everyone feels more 'normal' about their 'abnormal' feelings or experiences. It's not easy but the more senior colleagues are able to be vulnerable in the right way with their teams and junior colleagues the more it breeds that safe place to share and develop empathy for each other.

Max - Finecast



Ensure that we keep having conversations about mental health and maintain a dialogue with those who might be suffering. If people are happy and comfortable to share their experiences, this might allow others to do the same and could potentially help people seek help, if they were not sure how to do so before. I also think it's really encouraging that companies have external, anonymous support, so employees can call and ask for help, for free.

Moira - Carat



It's really important to talk openly about mental health and wellbeing. By opening up those conversations we're showing others that it's good to talk and it's ok to not be ok – hopefully making it a little easier for people to open up about any anxieties they have.

Hayley - DTW

Not an expert on this one I'm afraid, but I suppose talking about mental health more, making sure there's no shame or embarrassment around it by creating a workplace environment that feels safe for people to be themselves, completely, and ask for help if they feel they need it.

Jane - Slimming World

As kindness is the topic for this year's Mental Health awareness week, share a story about a time you experienced kindness...

KINDNESS

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I've certainly been trying to ask people how they are more, strangers on my daily walks, local shops and business owners, neighbours and it's overwhelming how positive the response you get back from people and how energised you feel from those conversations and how those small acts of kindness can make an impact on their day and yours. Emily - Finecast

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It's times like these you realise a little kindness goes such a long way. I've seen so many lovely acts of kindness over the last few weeks and been fortunate enough to be on the receiving end of some from friends sending cards, gifts and messages to neighbours nipping to the shops for us, it's been a welcomed and much needed bright side to all this. Jane - Slimming World

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Coincidentally whilst writing this, my elderly neighbour has just brought around some lovely Flapjacks to thank me for picking up her prescription. These little acts of kindness have been really evident recently and have had a major positive impact on community spirit in my neighbourhood. Ian - The RHS

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Someone very close to me has been battling with his mental health for the last few years. At a time when he was really low, the Samaritans were there for him. To give back over the last few years he's volunteered at a local hospice. Last year his sister was on end of life and spent a few months at that hospice during which time he really got to see just how important that hospice is to many people. His kindness in volunteering came back to him to make the last few months of his sister's life as comfortable as possible where she was able to be surrounded by those who loved and cared for her. Hayley - DTW

KINDNESS KINDNESS KINDNESS KINDNESS KINDNESS

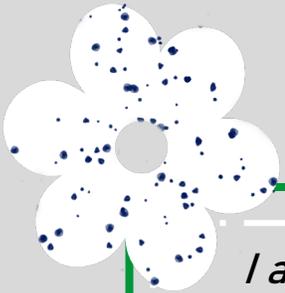
My neighbours (whom I get on with well anyway) have always passed me amazing gifts of central Asian food over the fence when they 'make too much' but they have really upped the frequency recently and also offered to get my shopping knowing I do not have a car and as they were going to a large supermarket anyway. Their kindness is something I always feel so grateful for as it comes completely out of the blue and often at times where it makes all the difference! Max - Finecast

I can't think of any one big thing, but it's often in everyday things. I'm not very materialistic, so unexpected gifts are not my thing. Just simple little things in the home, like someone doing things for me without being asked. Whether that's doing the washing up, or putting the rubbish out, or saying I'll sort dinner out tonight, you've had a busy day, you don't have to think about that it makes me feel, oh now I can put my feet up for a moment and relax. Catherine – The ICR

*My sister is extremely thoughtful and kind and if I'm having a tough time, she will often surprise me by sending small gifts or cards to cheer me up. Since lockdown began, she has messaged me every morning to ask how I am (unless I get there first!). For me, kindness is just about being there for someone and looking out for people. This doesn't necessarily stop at friends and family but can be applied to strangers too.
Moira – Carat*

I often think those little acts of kindness, rather than bigger gestures, mean so much more. Simple things like some-one making your tea, doing the ironing for you or making you breakfast in bed 😊 Lorna – DTW

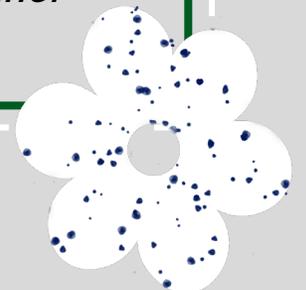
Self-care and kindness to ourselves is super important, especially at the moment
- how are you being kind to yourself at the moment?



I am ensuring that I do not place additional pressure on myself to be at 100% productive around the house, particularly at weekends. The rest I often deny myself with a busy social schedule in more normal times often eats this up entirely so being able to not worry about 'having to do something' all the time is great.

Max - Finecast

Referring back to the routine, I also ensure I walk at least 10k steps a day (easier with a dog 🐶) and continue to bathe and groom as I usually would (although I do have a mighty lockdown beard in progress!) which is very important for self-worth and fighting off despondency. I am also trying to build meditation into my week and think this is a key area of improvement for me - must ensure it doesn't get gazumped by other task based admin.



I used to use my commuting time to listen to podcasts, read a book, or generally take some time out for myself. Since lockdown, I'm not having this 'me' time which I really miss so I've been creating those moments by walking my dog and taking my headphones or having a bath in the evening and lighting a candle so I have some time to sit back and reflect on my day and what I am grateful for. It's so easy to feel like you're not accomplishing much when you are physically in the same environment and same routine, so it's important to recognise your accomplishments, however small they might be, and celebrate those. Emily - Finecast

Selfcare and self-compassion are all about practice (so I've read), it's like exercising a muscle (a part of the brain), the more you do it, the stronger it becomes and the easier it is to do. I know from experience that this is so much easier said than done and I definitely haven't cracked it myself, but I think mindfulness (in whatever guise works for you) is a good starting point. It doesn't have to be anything fancy or out of the ordinary - apps like Calm make it really easy to do wherever and whenever works for you. I've definitely found that the more I force myself to do it, using reminders and so on, the more natural it has become (at least to remember to do it, not sure I'm at the naturally compassionate bit yet!) Jane - Slimming World





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Drinking occasional G&Ts and ensuring the gin used is as high a quality as I can afford! Also making sure I spend as much time as possible in my garden, deadheading and watering my plants. It's working! My garden has never looked so good! Ian – The RHS

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Since lockdown started, I have made it a new morning routine to go for a 5k run pre-work. This gives me the opportunity to not only get in some daily exercise, but allows me to have a clear head for the new work day ahead. Lorna - DTW

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Alongside practising yoga on a daily basis (or trying to!), I've made time to read lots of books that had been sat gathering dust on my bookshelf for the last few months. During my “normal” life, I never seem to have the time so I'm really enjoying the slower pace where I can actually concentrate. I've also never been a person who listens to podcasts however I've found a couple that I really enjoy and so I tune into these on my daily walks. Moira - Carat

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Work is very busy so there's only a small amount of time each day I can spend with the kids. However, I'm a better mum when I'm healthy and happy. So even though I spend long days working, I often still have half an hour to 45 mins each night to do a home workout gym session. Although this comes out of time I could be spending with the kids, having this time gives me the break I need after a busy day at work and puts me in a better place mentally - I'm de-stressed and ready to switch roles and be mum. The kids then get a happier and healthier mum who can switch off a bit more and they get quality time with me. Hayley - DTW

I'm finding the isolation and lack of physical contact from family quite hard, as are many people right now. When you feel like this it can be quite hard to feel positive all the time. I'm lucky to be working, as I can work from home and having that routine is helping me. So for me, being kind to myself is trying to remember to be grateful. I try to think of at least three things to be grateful for, and I put that into my yoga practice as an intention too. To appreciate the little things. So today, I'm grateful for the love of my family who are around me (even if virtually), the birds that are still singing at the end of the garden, and still being able to enjoy good food. Catherine - The ICR



Lockdown heroes ...If you could clap for anyone (in addition to the NHS and carers) who would it be and why?



I would clap for the children. I have a 13 yr old daughter and the impact of not seeing her friends and having the usual social discourse and engagement is such an impact on their lives. Seeing how my younger nieces and nephews, who have adjusted and accept that they cannot play with their friends and cousins is just admirable.

The children are certainly mini-heroes in my eyes.

Lorna - DTW

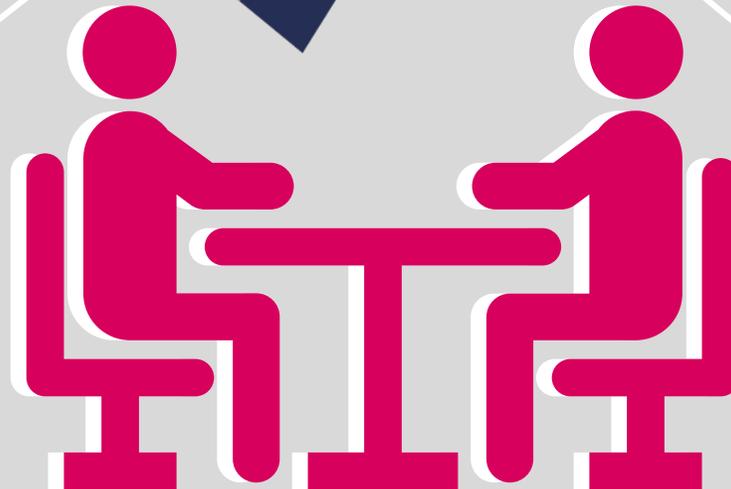


I would clap for my grandmother who just celebrated her 93rd birthday in lockdown and even though I try to call her often to cheer her up, I think it's more her cheering me up each time! I would also give a huge round of applause to my dog, Roobarb, who provides much needed entertainment and hugs every day to bring a smile to everyone in our household's faces.

Emily- Finecast

It would have to be the local and district councils who keep a lot of things running behind the scenes. They are responsible for bin collection amongst many other day-to-day activities that I think a lot of people take for granted. We would definitely notice it if they were not there!

Moira - Carat





I'd clap for the neighbourhood volunteers and community groups, who are going around making sure that those who are isolated, unwell or vulnerable, do not feel alone and have essential food and medicines delivered. Whether that's community volunteers, to go out and get your prescriptions, food and whatever else you need. Or the food banks that are offering vital support to those individuals and families who suddenly have found themselves on the poverty line. There are so many people demonstrating selfless acts, to help vulnerable people. They get my round of applause. Catherine – The ICR



Aside from all our amazing Slimming World Consultants offering the same amazing service they usually do, but in virtual form?! All the local pubs and restaurants doing takeaway /delivery service, they've been so resourceful in thinking up ways to keep their businesses ticking along – and to keep some of our favourite food & drink available to us (when let's face it, we need it!). Jane – Slimming World



Those people who are not working, who have been furloughed or are self employed and can't work but are being positive and helping others in any way they can. That includes my gym instructors motivating me and the rest of our group online (with regular video and written gym sessions) to stay healthy and stick with it, my neighbours checking if anyone in the street would like anything getting each time they go to the shops, my husband for doing all of the home schooling while I work long hours, the kids themselves for adapting to change and making me proud, and anyone else who is helping out simply because they want to help the rest of us stay sane, healthy and happy – helping us all carry on in these challenging times. Hayley – DTW



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