GTC
Mental Health Supplement

THE GUILD OF TELEVISION CAMERA PROFESSIONALS

#BeKind

Issue 3

When you need some support

Contact the GTC Welfare Officer, Chris Yacoubian welfare@gtc.org.uk or the GTC Mental Health First Aider, Sally Garrett mhfa@gtc.org.uk

SAMARITANS
116 123
(24 hours a day 365 days a year)
FREEPHONE

CALM Zone
0800 585858
(5pm till midnight 365 days a year)

MIND
0300 123 3393
(9am-6pm Monday to Friday
except bank holidays)

Rethink Mental Illness Advice Line
0300 5000 927 (9.30am-4pm Monday to Friday except bank holidays)

SANE Mental Health Helpline
0300 304 7000
(4.30pm-1030pm 365 days a year)

National Suicide Prevention Helpline
0800 689 5652
(6pm till midnight everyday)

Papyrus Hopeline
(for under 35 year olds)
0800 068 4141
(24 hours a day 7 days a week)

Switchboard LGBTQ+
0300 330 0630
(10am to 10pm daily)

Young Minds
Parents help line 0808 802 5544
(Monday to Friday 9.30am till 4pm)
They also offer online and text help for parents and children

NSPCC/ChildLine
0800 1111 for 18's and under or 0808 800 5000 (Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm

Online Help
hubofhope.co.uk
JAAQ.org

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GTC Mental Health resources can be found online at:
www.gtc.tv/about-the-gtc/mental-health-and-other-helplines.aspx

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Contact: administration@gtc.tv

Please don't give up on someone with mental illness. When the 'i' is replaced by 'we'.... Illness becomes wellness!

With celebrities such as singer Lewis Capaldi and Marvel's Spiderman actor Tom Holland temporarily stepping away from their careers to look after their mental health, it seems that mental health issues are being talked about more openly and taken more seriously than ever, so it only seems fitting that we at The GTC, check in with our members with Issue 3 of our Mental Health Supplement.

The GTC Mental Health Supplements were born out of the tragic loss of one of our colleagues, and as someone who has suffered from mental health issues in the past, it brought home to me that I was not the only person suffering from depression and that it was a subject that needed to be talked about again, and again and again.

Issues 1 and 2 can still be downloaded at **www.gtc.org.uk/publications/gtc-mental-health-supplements.aspx** and they covered a variety of topics including

- Looking for the signs of mental illness within yourself, family, friends and colleagues.
- Where to turn for help.
- PTS.
- Working away from home.
- Working in dark studios and the affect of lack of vitamin D.
- The stresses of freelance life.
- Money worries.

In this current issue we want to be as inclusive as we possibly can as mental health does not discriminate, so we have turned to support groups including those for people of colour, LGBTQ+, neurodiverse, women, parents and older and younger people to see what help is available for us who work in the media and also for our family and friends as their mental health can also have an affect ours.

Since the release of the past 2 issues I have had people contact and ask for help and I would never say no to helping someone but I also want to make sure I am giving them the correct advice. Would I be able to help? What if I gave the wrong advice?

So what do you do when someone asks for help, or where do you turn to for help yourself.

I have spoken to a lot of people who work in the mental health sector, whether that be nurses with over 20 years experience or people who are mental health first aiders for the company they work for.

No matter who I have talked to the advice is still the same.

A&E or call 999

If someone is suicidal or in immediate danger either take them straight to hospital or call an ambulance.

Every hospital has a psychiatric team.

Talk to your gp

Yes its hard to get appointments and yes it could be days or weeks before you actually see them, but logging in with them is the first step in the right direction.

Google NHS mental health

The internet is a great tool, type in NHS then your borough or county and it will bring up a list of local health centres.

Ring a helplines

There are loads of helpline, some open 24/7 365 days a year, others only open at certain time, but they are there to give advice and most importantly listen. There are general ones like the Samaritans or specific ones for children, LGBTQ+ etc

Join a help group

There are lots of help groups out there is you look, from Andy's Man Club to BECTU's LGBT group. Find one that works for you, one where you feel comfortable to talk, one where others feel the same and talk.

If you know someone who needs help now ring 999

Last year Calm Zone posted a useful check list on their Instagram page www.instagram.com/calmzone

Workplace Bullying – What Can You Do?

It's a sad fact of life that bullying exists in the workplace. It's important to remember, however, that we have the power to stand up against this type of behaviour and create a positive work environment for everyone involved.

So, what can you do if you or someone you work with feels that they are being bullied at work?

First and foremost, don't blame yourself. Bullies tend to target others to exert power and control, so it's worth remembering that their behaviour says more about them as a person than it does about you. You are talented and valuable, and no one deserves to be mistreated.

Build a network of support - most of your friends will have had their own experiences which can help the situation feel relatable and less isolating. Surround yourself with colleagues and friends who genuinely care about you. Having a strong support system can give you the confidence and strength to face any challenges that come your way.

Although the last thing you want to do is relive these moments, keep a record of any bullying incidents that occur, including dates, times, and details. This will be invaluable if you need to report the behaviour and also helps with your perspective about how often this is happening.

Is it possible to communicate with the person bullying? Speak calmly but assertively and only if you feel comfortable and safe doing so. Express how their actions are affecting you. Sometimes, individuals may not be aware of the impact they are having, and a simple conversation can resolve the issue. If there's ever a doubt or concern regarding your job security or position, or if the power dynamics just feel off, it's essential to trust your gut and maintain a safe distance. Remember, you deserve a positive and respectful work environment.

Report and escalate when necessary. If the bullying continues or worsens, it's essential to report it to the appropriate person within your workplace. Whether that's a supervisor, production manager or HR representative, seek guidance on how to handle the situation effectively. There will be someone you can have a private talk with.

Take care of yourself. Self-care is crucial during challenging times. Engage in activities that help you relax, unwind, and reduce stress. Surround yourself with positivity outside of work to maintain a healthy balance.

Remember, we are all here to do what we love in this crazy industry and create amazing content together. Let's support and uplift each other, ensuring a safe and respectful work environment for everyone involved. Together, we can make a difference!

#bullyingatwork #support #positiveworkplace #filmindustry #tvindustry #fusioncoaching #metoo #safeworkingspace #confidence #tvcrew

The Film + TV Charity **is here to help**

FILM + TV CHARITY

As with helplines and help groups, there are also numerous charities set up to help people and a few are even tailored for people who work in the media industry.

Every year The Film and TV Charity provides support to thousands of people in the film, TV and cinema industry, with the goal to support them in overcoming personal and professional obstacles.

Some individuals may need support with rebuilding their confidence or dealing with difficult situations. Others may require assistance in learning new skills or turning their dream projects into reality.

The charity also offers practical solutions, such as emergency grants and mental health support, to provide the necessary help.

By providing support and services, they ensure that talented individuals who work behind the scenes, both on set and in offices, can continue pursuing their dreams and achieving success. They want them to feel fulfilled and have opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Their long-term mission is to offer everyone working in film and TV a community to belong to. belong. They want to make work better by offering a helping hand to everyone working behind the scenes, and build an inclusive industry community that offers support. They state that to catalyse change they need to address the challenges and inequalities faced by the people who are the heart of our industry, and to amplify under-represented voices, advocate for better work and take action.

They believe that the key to successfully meeting these are goals is through a combination of:

- Direct action to support individuals during times of need, including financial assistance, counselling and advice, and signposting to specialised help
- Supporting individuals and grassroots organisations dedicated to improving the lives of industry workers
- Working with organisations across the industry to drive widespread, meaningful change
- Encouraging everyone in the industry to take part in and champion better, more inclusive working practices.

Justine Walton who works for the charity, said: *"I am Justine, the Bullying Adviser for the Film and TV Charity. I provide one-to-one support to anyone experiencing bullying, harassment. or discrimination at work, whether it's current or historical. It's completely confidential, so it's not a reporting service, I don't escalate issues on a caller's behalf. I am there to provide a safe space and a sounding board to help people understand whether what they're going though is bullying, harassment, or discrimination. I can also talk through your rights and options what strategies they might be able to develop to protect themselves.*

I have a background in production, so I am familiar with a lot of challenges industry workers and crews face, (especially freelancers and people on short term contracts). I am also aware of the issues and the fears people have when it comes to reporting. People feel very vulnerable when it comes to speaking out and worry that drawing attention to unwanted behaviour or conflict will be ignored, dismissed – or worse, cause them to lose their job or not be rehired.

People worry that they'll be made to feel as though they're the problem. They don't have any faith that the person they're meant to report to (who is often the person they want to complain about) will address it and if the perpetrator is in a senior position they'll be kept on and they'll be let go of. Generally, people feel that the environments they work in are so stressful and overstretched it's easier just to leave or keep going 'til the end of the run. I think people feel that training and policies

> The Film and TV Charity was founded in 1924 by E.W. Pashley Peall, Reginald C. Bromhead and J. Brooke-Wilkinson, members of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association.

are often "tick box" exercises rather than a measure of accountability and don't really impact on the way they do their job."

Justine went on to give me a brief history of the charity and explain why it was set up.

"The Film and TV Charity was founded in 1924 by E.W. Pashley Peall, Reginald C. Bromhead and J. Brooke-Wilkinson, members of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association, the Cinematograph Renters Society and the Incorporated Association of Cinematograph Manufacturers.

Initially the Cinematograph Trade Benevolent Fund (and later the Cinema and Television Benevolent Fund), was founded to help people working in the screen industries to overcome a spectrum of personal and professional challenges. The benevolent fund model was in place until 2018 when the newly renamed Film and TV Charity launched the Film and TV Support Line, a free, 24-hour resource that offered those working in the industry access to counselling, legal and financial advice.

2024 marks the centenary year for The Film and TV Charity. The charity now focuses on supporting the mental health, financial wellbeing, and physical health of people, and to promote equity and inclusion in the industry. The charity's long-term mission is to offer everyone working in film, TV and cinema a community to belong to, and wants to make work better for all. Through our work we want to both offer a helping hand and catalyse real long-term and sustainable change.

The charity's services include: a 24/7 free and confidential Support Line and live chat, free counselling, legal advice, online resources including a freelancer wellbeing hub, Bullying Advice Service, including an in-house Bullying Adviser, packages of bespoke support including Stop-Gap Grants and financial guidance and work and wellbeing support. The Charity also launched the Whole Picture Toolkit in 2022 to help support better mental health in productions.

Our free and confidential Support Line is available 24/7, via phone or Livechat. It's offers in the moment support and a listening ear, provided by accredited counsellors. The Support Line can also refer you for ongoing one-to-one Counselling (up to six sessions which are free and available through video link, telephone or in person, within ten miles of your home). You can also be transferred for financial or legal advice. We also have a specialised Bullying Advice Service and a one-to-one Work and Wellbeing Service".

Looking Glass research found that: **filmtvcharity.org.uk/research-impact/reports/looking-glass-22-report**

- Incidence of bullying and intimidating behaviour within the industry is high (56% of respondents had experienced workplace bullying). This ranged from deeply personal criticism and humiliating jokes on a one-off basis to targeted abusive behaviour over an extended period (2019)
- Workers in Production and Development are most likely to have experienced bullying or sexual harassment at work. Findings were particularly stark for women – roughly three quarters of women in production had experienced bullying (73% compared with 67% across the survey overall) (2019).
- Disabled women were at greater risk of sexual harassment – more than half indicated they had been sexually harassed (2019)
- We found that experience of bullying was strongly associated with feeling undervalued at work. Together, these two factors were found to be the greatest drivers for considering leaving the industry due to concerns about mental wellbeing (2019).
- In 2021 we added specific questions about racial harassment and discrimination, and asked about people's experiences in the past year, so data are not directly comparable, but nonetheless clearly reinforce the conclusion that bullying, racial harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment and discrimination all remain problematically entrenched in the industry.
- Racial harassment and discrimination are widespread. Four in 10 (39%) of Black and Global Majority people in our industry had experienced racial harassment or discrimination (which are illegal) in the past year.

The new questions on racial harassment and discrimination make clear the mental health impact of these damaging experiences. Of the 39% of Black and Global Majority respondents who had experienced racial harassment and discrimination:

- Most said it had negatively affected their mental health
- Many said it had negatively affected the quality of their work
- Many said it had made them consider leaving the industry

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Bisexual workers are more likely to experience bullying. Bisexual respondents reported a higher incidence of bullying (51%) than the average (40%). Women also report being bullied much more than men. 43% of female respondents had experienced bullying in the past year, compared to 34% of men.

Bullying is difficult to quantify because it has no definition in UK legislation. The generally recognised definition is behaviour that is *"offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting; an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone"*. It can range from quite nuanced and subtle forms of behaviour and are quite often woven into the culture of a job. They can be behaviours that are quite hard to identify like micro-management, undermining, unrealistic expectations, setting people up to fail and having a blame culture. Or it can be the experience of being marginalised or left out of meetings and work-related social activities. The point is that bullying is subjective – it doesn't have to be intentional to constitute bullying. So, what some people might consider *"harmless banter"* could actually be really hurtful or offensive. In a work context, the key to thinking about whether behaviour is acceptable is to ask whether it's professional. If it undermines you or interferes with your ability to carry out your job then it isn't appropriate and you have every right to articulate that.

- Whereas the first survey revealed the extent of the pre-existing mental health challenges in the industry (a shocking 9 out of 10 people said they had experienced a mental health problem) and highlighted a lot of the underlying the structural and cultural issues that contribute to this. The 2022 survey painted a picture of the impact of the pandemic and subsequent production boom.
- One particularly alarming finding was that the proportion saying that culture and values were having a negative impact on mental health was much higher in 2021 at 51%, compared with 29% in 2019.
- 65% of respondents to Looking Glass '21 said they had thought about leaving the industry in the past year because of concerns about their mental health, compared with 63% having ever considered this in 2019.
- On the positive side, there was a significant increase in respondents saying that they thought that the industry was capable of providing support.

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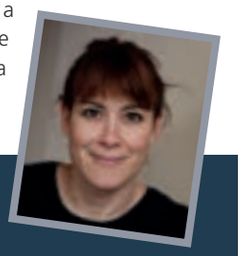
are more vulnerable than ever. Applications for our Stop Gap Grants increased dramatically during the writers and actors' strikes in the US and has remained 50% higher than in 2022 since the strikes ended. Insights from our recent Money Matters Report (released 30 January) show:

- 45% of respondents said they were having difficulty managing financially
- 25% said they had *"very much struggled"* to pay their mortgages or rent over the past six months.
- 42% had less than £1,000 in savings (which may mean they will struggle to pay tax for the year)

Our Whole Picture Toolkit https://wholepicturetoolkit.org.uk/ has a wealth of resources to help put wellbeing on the agenda on Productions. One of the key recommendations is to hold a Wellbeing meeting early in the run, in order to talk about effective and respectful collaboration at work. It helps to have senior leadership buy-in and to make it clear where policies are kept, indicate who you can talk to if you have concerns and how concerns will be responded to. Just having the opportunity to acknowledge that wellbeing is important and letting you know that you will be supported if you're struggling is really helpful. I think it makes easier for people then to articulate concerns – even if it's just to say to colleagues *"we were going to try and work together to make this a positive experience for everyone and it's not feeling like that, can we address it and try and figure it out?"* can help. The Toolkit then includes ideas for how to have Wellbeing check ins and ways of collecting feedback or debriefs at the end of production. The Toolkit has a document called Working With Me which some people have said was a game changer.



Justine Walton

Justine joined the Film and TV Charity in 2021, to set up and run the Bullying Advice Service. The BAS has supported over 200 individuals from all areas of the industry and at all levels. Justine advises people about their employment rights and best practice in the industry, as well as providing ongoing emotional support. Justine worked in unscripted television for twenty years before retraining as a Counsellor.

The Rory Peck Trust is proud to celebrate 30 years of supporting freelance journalists and their families. Since our launch, we have helped over 3300 freelancers worldwide, helping them to continue their vital work.

We offer:

- Assistance Grants
- HEFAT Training Bursaries
- Risk & Safety Helpdesk

Find out more at

www.rorypecktrust.org

First Aid For Mental Health

by **Sally Garrett**

Dock10 Studios opened in 2011 on the site of the former Manchester Ship Canal docks and is now home to 10 television studios, that film everything from The Voice to Naked Attraction and CBeebies to Comic Relief. I have freelanced at Dock10 for nearly a decade and over the last few years I have seen posters around the building that say not only who the First Aiders and Fire Wardens are but also who the Mental Health First Aiders are.

I recently spoke to Head of Risk Management for Dock10 Ltd Paul Houghton, to find out why they felt the role of Mental Health First Aiders was needed at the company, how they trained people, what the training entails and how it helps both their staff and freelancers like myself.

Paul told me 'The broadcast industry is a pressurised stressful business and particularly in live TV this has been documented in many reports from industry bodies. Add to this the pressures of running a TV studios and post facility where the timely provision of services and projects is need to keep everyone working and the pressures of normal family life, then the environment can become very stressful. Dock10 realised this could be an issue and started to look at ways stress could be managed. To manage the stress in the workplace we have to take in to account the whole business from the way we manage our capacity to the way in which people work and to talk to people about how they are and if they are being unduly stressed. One of the first actions was to raise the awareness of Mental Health and to start to remove any stigma that might be attached to saying you had a problem. Then there needed to be away to help people who were having issues, so the decision was taken to train some Mental Health First Aiders. The role of the MHFA is not to treat people but to help them to find a route to professional support. This support might be through the dock10 employee support programme of by identifying suitable services in the community.

All the MHFAs are staff at Dock10 who volunteered for the role. They attended a course provided by an external provider, in Paul's case it was Mental Health England and it was a three day course which takes you through the basics of mental health and how recognise and respond to people who are in crisis. Paul said the course is quite challenging from an emotional point of view and can make you question how you look at the world and mental health.

> One of the first actions was to raise the awareness of Mental Health and to start to remove any stigma that might be attached to saying you had a problem.

The role of MHFA is to be there for people in crisis and sign post them to help, to be there for anyone who might not be in crisis but wants to discuss something that is concerning them at work or in their life in general. MHFA are not practitioners so can only point people at places to get help but hopefully they can help people in crisis get to that help. As a team of MHFA we work to promote mental health in the business and run activities in conjunction with the company Participation Group to improve mental health.

Paul went on to say that they have people come to the MHFA team and talk about their concerns and mental health issues. It might not be *"I need a MHFA to talk to"* but just a chat with a colleague about things.

I asked Paul what kind of help is being asked for? He explained that in my case he has spoken to people about where to get help with stress issues, accessing mental health services for children, what services are available on the Employee Assistance Program and how to get help with work issues.

Paul said that companies like Dock10 benefit from having MHFA's, anything that can raise awareness and remove the stigma of mental health issues is good not only for people but for the business. If mental health issues can be resolved quickly then people are happier, work more effectively, are not off sick as much and the work place is more positive and productive with people enjoying work.

Over the last few years there has been a noticeable increase in people accessing MHFA especially since the effect of the pandemic, cost of living increases and the global political situation is having an impact on our mental health.

Finally, I asked Paul is there was any advice he would like to pass on, he said *'If you feel you have issues then get some help as soon as possible talk to someone, GP, charity or MHFA and use the services that are there to help Employee Assistance, local authority Mental Health services. Getting early intervention can sort things out, leaving it will make it worse.'*

I also spoke to a few other Mental Health First Aiders to get their perspective on the role.

Norman is a Partnerships and Content Manager, A couple of years ago his company HR department asked for volunteers to become Mental Health First Aiders across our different offices. After having a mental health episode at work many years ago, and receiving support for this from senior management, he wanted to give something back and help others in the same situation.

He completed a two-day L3 Adult Mental Health: Workplace First Aider course with St John Ambulance - where they learned the difference between the role of a Mental Heath Responder and First Aider, plus how to support someone in the workplace who is experiencing either a mental health episode, crisis or condition.

Norman said *'Support can be provided in different ways - either over a coffee in a safe space, or virtually over a Teams meeting. I've had experience of providing support both ways. It may not be the case that everyone approaches you - if you spot the signs that someone might be struggling, you could ask them if they fancy a chat (which is something I've had to do with a colleague).'*

As a MFHA, we provide non-judgement support to colleagues, offer self-help advice and signpost to where they can receive further support, but importantly we cannot diagnose a mental health condition. Usually I would invite the colleague to explain their situation through asking open questions, and trying to help them identify the probable cause/triggers of their mental health episode. We would then come up with a plan for next steps and I would arrange a follow-up at an agreed time to check in with them. Everything is kept confidential, except in the instance where someone expresses that they want to commit suicide or harm others - then it may be appropriate to seek professional help within the organisation depending on your company policy. We would also provide support to line managers helping someone return to work after a mental health episode.'

'Mental Health First Aiders help alleviate pressure from HR departments and also help to raise awareness of mental health within the workplace. Having advocates for mental health across the organisation helps open up the conversation and break the taboo.'

If you are willing to take on this role then definitely go for it - the training is really thorough and it is really rewarding being able to support the mental health of the people you work with. Remember that you are not there to diagnose and you don't need to have all the answers as you can signpost to other organisations for further support. As long as you are approachable, empathetic, calm and discreet, those are the qualities required to be able to fulfil the role.'

After my initial chat with Paul from Dock 10 he invited me to sit in one of the Mental Health First Aid meetings. I really didn't know what to expect but was made to feel welcome straight away. There were 6 MHFAers in the room, plus another who was online. They told me that at their maximum there was 20 MHFAers at Dock10 but currently there was 12. 6 years ago the company only had 1 or 2 MHFAers but since the stresses of Covid many more people have volunteered and they are currently in the process of training more staff members.

> The MHFA team have a diary where each month they try to organise clubs such as choir, book club and walking clubs.

When we were having a general chat one of the attendees said *"Mental Health Safety is as important as Physical Health Safety"* and we make sure measures have been put in place to make this happen.

Dock10's MHFAers are predominately there for staff but are aware that they employee a large number of freelancers. I told them that my from experience of a freelancers in that building I wasn't aware of what extent their help included. Together we talked about ways to make it more known. I learnt that in Dock10 if someone is wearing a purple lanyard then they are trained as a MHFAer. There is also a quiet room that can be used at any time of day by anyone who needs it. A rota is on the door and all you have to do is put your initials on a one hour time slot and the room is yours and no one will disturb you.

The MHFA team have a diary where each month they try to organise clubs such as choir, book club and walking clubs and then one off events such as Wellness Wednesday where people are encouraged to step away from the office and try a new activity.

Ideas like this are great because even though they are not advertised as a mental health activity, they still fall under the umbrella of self awareness, whether that be a physical activity or making new friends and talking or starting a new hobby.

As a freelancer I was able to tell them what affects my mental health at work for example unauthorised overruns and we talked about how they would try and put a protocol in place where common courtesy was encouraged to pre-warn people we were going to over run and give them 5 minutes to make the necessary phone calls and texts to organise alternative travel plans or childcare or cancel social events.

We talked about how they could make the roll of a MHFAer more accessible to freelancers, like the MHFA email signatures and more posters around the building, including areas such as toilets where people who are embarrassed to be seen looking at the information could do so in private.

One of the volunteers said how his MHFA email signature alone had triggered a conversation with one of their suppliers who was having a particularly bad day and he was able to listen and point the person in the right direction for help.

After the meeting finished it got me thinking what a great job the MHFAers do and as someone who since writing the GTC Mental Health Supplements has had colleagues asking for help and advice and me not really knowing what the right or wrong thing to say or what advice to give. I decided that I would like to train as a Mental Health First Aider and am very grateful that the GTC has agreed to sponsor me on this journey and in return I would like to be the GTC Mental Health First Aider to be able to signpost any of the readers in the right direction.

ANDYS MAN CLUB

#ITSOKAYTOTALK

Last year on the soap opera Emmerdale, character Paddy Kirk (Dominic Brunt) attempted to take his own life after struggling with his mental health. His best friend Marlon Dingle (Mark Charnock) organised a late-night lock-in at The Woolpack pub, where they held a men's help group, based on **Andys Man Club**.

Emmerdale worked closely with Andys Man Club and The Samaritans to make sure this subject was covered correctly.

Neil Waine from Andys Man Club said: *"Today in the UK three in four suicides are men. If this episode of Emmerdale can shed a light on how important it is for men to talk, we will be delighted as it may just reach that one man who sees that #ItsOkayToTalk and makes that brave, life changing step to go to an Andys Man Club. Kudos to Emmerdale for approaching this subject so head on and with such accuracy which we all felt was important."*

Producer Laura Shaw added: *"We've already seen Paddy speaking to his GP, being prescribed medication, going for counselling and talking to his friends and family, to help him with his struggling mental health. Our research showed that in addition to these things, many people find it easier to talk to strangers about their problems and so we wanted to show Paddy doing just that - opening up in a different environment and talking to strangers."*

"It was vitally important to us that we portrayed these scenes authentically, hence the scenes were shot on location at a real Andys Man Club venue and AMC carefully and brilliantly guided us through scripting and filming the scenes, so they were as true to life as possible. We hope if anyone watching is feeling like Paddy, like they can't talk to friends or family, they might be encouraged by these scenes to reach out to their own local club for help and support."

I recently spoke to Lucas who volunteers at Andys Man Club and has been the Head of Marketing and Partnerships at the charity for just over three years.

He first became involved after successfully applying for the role within the charity, and Lucas said he attended his first ever session in Hartlepool in early 2021 on the first day in the role.

"I entered the room not expecting to open up, but in the end, I spoke openly about my own struggles with anxiety which I experienced as a direct result of being the child of two people with severe addiction issues. This was the very first time I confronted my anxiety head on and spoke about the issues I faced as a direct result of it. In the weeks that followed, I continued to open up which in turn led to me being more open with my friends and family. Fast forward two years and I had a hand in opening a group in my hometown of Mirfield in West Yorkshire."

"The first Andys Man Club session ran in Halifax in 2016, with nine men in attendance on the night. The groups follow the same model they did on the first night and are now available in hundreds of locations nationwide, stretching from Plymouth to Aberdeen."

"Following the Covid-19 pandemic, Andys Man Club created an online function via Google Meet. This follows the same model and enables men who cannot leave their home due to a variety of issues to join sessions. In the long-term, we aim to have a location within 30 minutes travel of any man in the UK."

The group was founded after the death by suicide of Andy Roberts. Andy gave no indication to his family that he was suicidal, as a result, his brother-in-law, Luke Ambler, and mother, Elaine Roberts, founded Andys Man Club in the hope that men who struggled to open up had a safe space to do so.

Lucas added: *"At Andys Man Club, we run peer-to-peer support groups for men over 18 going through storms in their lives, every Monday at 7pm excluding bank holidays. Groups are free to attend with no registration required. We are there for any man who needs it! It doesn't matter if you've been through a storm in your life, if you're going through one or even if you just want to feel a part of something - AMC is open to men from every walk of life."*

"People contacting us can expect to be treated with dignity, kindness and sensitivity in relation to their issues. No judgement will be cast by anyone, either from a staff or volunteer perspective. Anyone contacting our staff team can ask any question they like, either related to the session or not, and anyone attending a group will be offered a warm welcome at the door followed by a free brew and biscuit. Also, in addition our volunteers are able to access a range of benefits through EAP software."

Luke explained that the group runs in exactly the same fashion every week, with guys sitting in a circle, passing a ball around and answering a series of five questions, the first three of which remain the same every week, the last two change:

1. How has your week been?
2. Give me one positive from your week
3. Anything to get off your chest?

Break - This is when brews and biscuits are stocked up on and where guys share their own experiences to help others.

Then there are two quick fire questions such as where is one place you go to feel calm or what is your favourite sandwich?

There is no pressure on anyone attending to open up, men can simply listen if they wish.

Lucas added: *"We have seen a huge increase in attendance since formation, from nine men in one location back in July 2016, to 4,572 men in 184 locations nationwide on March 18th, 2024. There has been a definite increase in attendance due to the fact we have created awareness across social media since our inception but other societal pressures such as the increase in cost of living and the breakdown of public services have undoubtedly led to our numbers rising."*

"I think that the most commonly heard issues at Andys Man Club are related to anxiety and stress. This could be due to anxiety being perceived as a sign of weakness which in turn prevents men from opening up around it. Andys Man Club is a safe space where displaying vulnerability can quite easily be reframed as a display of strength."

I finally asked Lucas if there was a message he would like to get out there to our male readers, or to their family and friends who can see a man in their family struggling.

"If you, or a friend or family member is struggling, please attend our group, or put as much effort as you can into encouraging a man to attend Andys Man Club. The toughest step is walking through the door for the first time but even if it doesn't work for you, it is only two hours out of your Monday night, and you should take a great deal of pride in putting effort into helping yourself."

GOING THROUGH A STORM OR JUST BEEN THROUGH ONE?

Find out more

More information is available via Facebook - Andys Man Club Instagram, Twitter, TikTok - andysmanclubuk LinkedIn - **#ANDYSMANCLUB**

Email: **info@andysmanclub.co.uk**

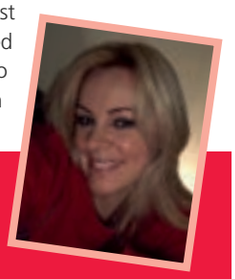
Show Love and be Kind

In a time when we are told to #bekind to ourselves and to others, Floor Manager **Bronwen Murphy** decided that we also needed to Show Love. So, in 2018 after losing a friend and colleague to suicide, Bronwen started a podcast to help people realise that it's ok to talk.

I recently spoke to Bronwen and asked her what inspired her.

I'm Bronwen, I have worked in television as a Floor Manager for 25 years and am a mother to two wonderful sons Tyler and Dylan. Being a single mother I have had to juggle between a career, and being there for my boys as much as I can. I look back now and am not quite sure how I got away with it, but they have reached ages 20 and nearly 19 and make me incredibly proud, so hopefully things will get easier now right? I have worked on many television shows over the years, some highlights have been The Big Breakfast, SMTV and CDUK, Big Brother, X Factor, T4 and Popworld, Bake off, Sewing Bee, Dancing on Ice, Saturday Kitchen, Top of the Pops, as well as MTV Awards, Brit Awards, Glastonbury Live at Worthy Farm to name a few.

I started hosting the Show Love Podcast in 2018 after a dear cameraman friend of ours took his own life and it was a massive shock. I realised that people don't talk to each other enough, especially in an industry where you feel you can't show weakness and can often feel very alone. I interviewed his flatmate who was climbing Ben Nevis to raise money for CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) without any idea what I was doing; to be honest I still don't but I have just recorded episode 36 and people seem to enjoy it. Every single episode is with a different person and loosely based on love (loving your life, how you find love, losing love and so on).



Fact File

Bronwen Murphy
Senior Floor Manager for Television and Events

Bronwen has been in the industry 27 years and has worked on pretty much every entertainment show over the last 25 years.

In fact Rylan Clark recently said *"as FMs stand in for presenters in run throughs that Bronwen must have 'presented most shows on TV'!"*

> Over the years I have witnessed many people suffer with their mental health in the television industry.

I find the people I chat to through inspiration, I have been lucky to have worked with some wonderful people, and I also get people suggested to me or I read about them and if I like the story, I chat to them too. For instance, Joe Lycett talked about being Pansexual, Tom Allen talked about coming out, Steps talked about how they all fell in love, Kerry Katona talked about mental health, and Sanjeev Bhaskar talked about kindness. I don't just speak to famous people though, I have had an Indian Princess, a female Detective Chief Superintendent, a playwright, an ex-criminal and many more. The topics are their story and I love that, as people can be so interesting! One of the things that does reoccur is how many people do suffer with their mental health, but brilliantly many have overcome some of the struggles they have been through, and they give out tips.

Over the years I have witnessed many people suffer with their mental health in the television industry, both celebrities, and crew and production. I always try to make sure anyone knows I'm there for them as we all should, and like I said before, losing a loving work colleague did shock many of us into really thinking about this more. The main advice that seems to come up is that we must not suffer in silence and know that you are not alone. Once you start talking to people around you about things that might be worrying you, you realise that many of the people you see every day in the studio or office are thinking and feeling the same things. Everyone has freelance fear, it's an odd way to make a living and/or have been in a toxic environment that is no good for your soul, a problem shared is a problem halved, choose someone you connect with, we need to look out for each other.

You can download Bronwen's ShowLove Podcasts from **podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/show-love-podcast/id1335490220**

Supporting the Next Generation: Mental Health in the Film and TV Industry

by **Rozemarijn Stokkel**

When I reflect on my career, I can definitively say that it has had its challenges. From feeling lost and not good enough in the initial years, to experiencing frustration and unhappiness in the middle, to finally feeling at ease now. The journey has been a rollercoaster. The film and TV industry is filled with waves of happiness, especially when creating something beautiful, sharing your passion with likeminded people. However, it also brings the worst feelings of isolation, lack of appreciation, and being lost among people who don't share your wavelength.

The younger generation, especially trainees and people just starting out in the field, face significant mental health challenges. They navigate a landscape filled with economic uncertainties and an industry undergoing transformative changes. Their concerns need to be acknowledged and taken seriously, as they fear the unknown future.

When speaking to trainees in the last couple of years, there have been interesting conversations. Some asked if it was normal to feel depressed between shooting days, to be exhausted due to long hours, and to feel anxious about their future and job prospects. Both COVID-19 and the latest Hollywood strikes have exacerbated these feelings. Some of my assistants and colleagues have left the industry due to their mental health situation.

The film and TV industry is demanding, with long hours, low pay at the start, and high expectations. Resilience and stamina are essential to succeed in this competitive field. Not being asked for a job feels very personal, particularly when you lack experience, which understandably affects self-confidence. Social media exacerbates mental health issues by setting unrealistic standards and constant comparisons. Societal expectations add pressure on young professionals, making them feel they must constantly perform and achieve.

Fact File

Rozemarijn Stokkel
1st Assistant Camera

In 2008 I attended the Dutch Film Academy and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Cinematography. I then found my passion for focus pulling and specialised in feature films, TV dramas and commercials. I have been in the industry for 25 years and have been working as a 1st AC for the last 16 years. I moved to the UK 3 years ago and have been successfully working on numerous projects.

www.rozemarijnstokkel.co.uk
instagram.com/rozemarijnstokkel

As a senior on set, the role of the older generation in supporting young professionals is crucial. Mentorship and guidance from experienced professionals are vital. Strategies to support young professionals should include not only technical training but also mental support. Helping them understand and manage their mental health is as important as teaching them the technical skills of the trade. Preparing them for industry challenges by giving them real responsibilities and supporting them through tough times builds resilience.

Providing challenging tasks fosters growth, but it is equally important to offer support to ensure they don't feel overwhelmed. Mentors need to educate young professionals on setting boundaries, negotiating, and effectively communicating on set. By offering both technical and emotional support, mentors can help young professionals navigate the pressures of the industry.

A common fear among seniors is that the younger generation will take their jobs. However, those who have been mentored tend to support their mentors in return. Building a supportive relationship ensures mutual growth and success.

A call to action for industry veterans: take an active role in mentoring the new generation. Seniors need to be empathetic and supportive, guiding young professionals to find a positive path in following their dreams. It is crucial to protect trainees while teaching them to set boundaries, negotiate, communicate effectively on set, and support their peers by joining industry organizations.

By creating a supportive and realistic environment, we can help the next generation build resilience and achieve success in the film and TV industry. Through empathy, support, and shared knowledge, we can ensure that the future of the industry is in good hands, fostering a community where everyone can thrive.

Tackling Imposter Syndrome

by **Sally Garrett**

Over the last few years or so I have heard a lot of people talk about Imposter Syndrome, and when I googled it, the definition rang true with certain feelings I have, especially around my work life.

I have a conflict in work, and it seems the older I get, the worse it gets.

I get extremely jealous of colleagues and the jobs they get (and I know social media plays a huge part in this). I see people the same age as me or younger than me, getting opportunities that I never had and probably never will, and it's *"why them and not me."*

I've spoken in a previous issue of this supplement, about my own insecurities about not getting certain jobs or working with certain camera supervisors and the constant thought that I don't get chosen as people don't like me or I am not good enough at my job. Even recently I have been getting more *"big jobs"* that I am super proud to have worked on but even then, the little voice of doubt tells me I only got the job as they need to fill the 'quota' of female camera operators.

The Oxford English Dictionary says

noun: imposter syndrome

The persistent inability to believe that one's success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved as a result of one's own efforts or skills.*"people suffering from impostor syndrome may be at increased risk of anxiety"*

When I mention Imposter Syndrome to colleagues, I am surprised by how many of them have replied by saying that they have it and that comes from camera assistants all the way to camera supervisors and DOP's.

I decided that if so many of us suffer from it then I would ask what coping methods people use to try and conquer it.

First, I spoke to Integrative Counsellor & Therapist, Rachel Richards to find out how Imposter Syndrome is diagnosed and what advice she would give someone suffering from it?

Help, I feel like an imposter! - A guide to Imposter Syndrome

By Rachel Richards
Integrative Counsellor & Therapist

Most people have heard of the term 'Imposter Syndrome'; it is often discussed in social media posts and blogs, lending it something of a 'pop psychology' reputation. As an integrative counsellor in North Wales, I find imposter thoughts often come up in the therapy room, whether the client recognises the problem in those terms or not. Clients rarely present with 'imposter syndrome' as their main concern. Instead, imposter thoughts emerge as part of a more obvious problem such as depression, anxiety, chronic stress, burnout or feeling stuck. The term 'Imposter Syndrome' has given us a useful language shortcut to describe what is actually a very complex, adaptive response to a particular set of circumstances. The term can be misleading because this is not a clinical condition or diagnosable psychological syndrome, it is a common human phenomenon – an adaptation rather than a disorder.

Originally identified in the '70s by academics Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, it was termed Imposter Phenomenon (IP). Interest in IP has re-emerged as it is now so relevant in 21st Century high-achievement culture and the pressure to excel. This article takes a closer look at the concept of IP, its historical context, how it manifests and develops, and what we can do if we're struggling with IP or recognise it in others.

What is Imposter Phenomenon?

Clance and Imes noticed prevalent imposter thoughts and feelings across their female student group in the '70s, and their curiosity led them to conduct a 5-year research study, subsequently published in 1978 as the acclaimed 'Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention'. The study participants typically discounted their achievements to an extreme degree, despite clear evidence of success, and the research focused on the reasons underlying the tendency to separate 'success' from 'self'. Clance & Imes identified a loop of behaviour that only served to maintain the problem; the women had an initial worry about being 'not good enough' and would try to compensate with excessive effort, resulting in success … leading to the conclusion that 'proved' the irrational belief, that excessive activity and constant striving is the only route to achieve and maintain success. And so, a cycle is firmly established for maintaining a pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving which has one fundamental goal; to avoid failure and being 'found out'.

> Most people have heard of the term 'Imposter Syndrome'; it is often discussed in social media posts and blogs, lending it something of a 'pop psychology' reputation.

Who suffers with imposter thoughts?

The simple answer is, almost everyone.

Having imposter thoughts generally means worrying about performance or competence in specific areas, and tends to surface in relation to professional, academic or perhaps parenting roles. Imposter thoughts are a widespread phenomenon across all genders, professions, cultures and ages, and it's likely you will recognise having felt some or all of its characteristics, if only fleetingly. There is a shortage of widescale research in psychology terms, but current estimates suggest 70-80% of the working population experience it at one time or another. Imposter sufferers are often very competent or accomplished people. Famous examples include Elton John, Maya Angelou, Michelle Obama, Tom Hanks and Venus Williams - people who produce excellent work, the results of which are recognised and even celebrated. They have all admitted to imposter thoughts and an underlying worry that they do not deserve their success or the high esteem in which they are held. In short, they don't feel connected to their own success and see it as something outside of them.

IP was originally thought of as a gender specific issue (linked to the outdated idea that it is distasteful for women to boast of their achievements whilst men are encouraged to do so, and women's tendency to blame themselves when things go wrong whilst men are more likely to externalise failures and blame other factors). Later, men started to disclose similar experiences. Further studies developed the concept and found widespread reports of imposter thoughts amongst minority and underprivileged groups. Feeling different (in any way) may be a key indicator – for example recent research has linked IP with ADHD, because of the associated difficulties with goal-directed and organisational skills.

Recent arguments have focused on social issues and cultural oppression as the springboard for IP and questioned whether it is a cultural problem because of societal expectations on us all, or an intrapsychic experience rooted in childhood. It could be either, or both; everyone will have a different experience. The current social justice movement and efforts being made worldwide to close equality gaps will help with cultural expectations, but the rise of social media comparisons plays a significant part in keeping imposter thoughts going. IP has even been conceptualised as a necessary tool in capitalist societies because it serves the idea of striving for endless progress – the need to be 'bigger, better, strong, faster'.

Imposter sufferers tend to experience extreme personal self-doubt despite clear evidence of competence and achievement.

- I'm fake
- I've fooled everyone
- I'm winging it/it was a fluke
- I won't be able to repeat it
- I don't deserve this success
- I had a lot of help
- I wasn't that good
- I was lucky
- They are being kind/ they're just saying that
- Anybody could do what I do
- Everyone else knows what to do, they are the real professionals

Certain conditions can exacerbate IP -

- **doing something new** or being in a particular situation for the first time (feeling 'consciously incompetent')
- **being observed** and therefore feeling scrutinised and judged (particularly common in creative industries where there is an element of performance, an audience, and subjective judgement)
- **being the 'odd one out'** or feeling different in some way (tapping into our fundamental human need to belong).

Imposter thoughts vs low self-esteem

IP and low self-esteem are closely linked, but low self-esteem is usually more preventative. For example, the person with low self-esteem often procrastinates and doesn't even get started on a new task or role because they 'know' (feel strongly) that they don't have what it takes and assume they will inevitably fail, so it seems futile to even try. Thus, they manage to avoid the risk of failure - but feel stuck.

How do we recognise IP?

Instead of being able to rationally assess the reality of their situation, the sufferer engages in a huge 'discount', re-framing their competence as something that is happening despite their lack of skill or personal ability. Good results are not owned but are seen as something external to the person. Reframing might include self-talk along the lines of:

Imposter thoughts are normal and even helpful if they are proportionate and manageable, and having imposter thoughts implies an element of humility and emotional intelligence. Everyone has the capacity to grow and learn, so the occasional healthy dose of self-doubt provides us with appropriate

> Imposter thoughts are normal and even helpful if they are proportionate and manageable.

checks and balances, an opportunity for self-reflection and the motivation to strive for growth. At the opposite extreme is entitlement, and that's obviously problematic too; the sense of infallibility, misplaced confidence and lack of accountability repeatedly displayed by (say) Donald Trump or the Theranos founder & CEO, Elizabeth Holmes. After all, anyone who is so completely convinced that they know what they're doing (and that everyone else is wrong!) isn't to be trusted. For psychological health, we want to aim somewhere between the two extremes, because balance will lead us to perspective and authenticity.

When we suffer with imposter thoughts, we've let the emotional, impulsive (child) part of our brain take the driving seat in our lives, rather than our wise, adult brain which applies rational consideration and logic. The irrational belief is that 'my secret real self' will be seen, I will be discovered as a fraud, exposed, and shamed. The ultimate fear: 'I won't be accepted'. As a defence, the person may present a masked self who strives hard to hide a misplaced perception of incompetence and avoid the world seeing 'the person I'm worried I really am'. These patterns become our best adaptive attempts to respond to expectations placed on us and may not necessarily be harmful if our approach is balanced and functional. Doing this to extremes, however, to avoid being 'found out' - especially over a long period, may put our mental health at risk through excessive measures to compensate for perceived deficiencies. Conversely, we might hold back and stay in our comfort zone to escape judgement, leading to a sense of lost opportunities and unfulfilled potential.

When imposter beliefs are sustained over time and lead to maladaptive behaviours, we can see how depression, chronic health conditions, anxiety or burnout may result.

Typical adaptive behaviours

Behaviours associated with imposter thoughts might look like any of the following.

The Perfectionist sets impossibly high standards (often for self and others) and feels they must do everything correctly and thoroughly with great attention to detail, remembering everything, covering all bases. They often over-prepare. A drive for perfection is different from a wish to excel; it is driven by our inner child likely responding to a controlling or over-structuring person (often a parent or significant authority figure from childhood) who has imparted the message that you are only OK if you are flawless/never make a mistake. Striving for 'good enough' is the healthy balance, but this can be very difficult to accept for a person who has received 'be perfect' messages from an early age.

Linked to perfectionism is the Infallible Expert, the person who is in a hurry to become an all-knowing master, have all the facts, be a walking encyclopaedia of the subject at hand and have it all down perfect at the first attempt, rather than embracing learning and accepting mastery

as a gradual process to be enjoyed. This person might feel 'I am only professional/credible if I know everything there is to know' and they feel shame for not having a particular skill perfectly honed from the start. They may have a belief that they cannot be naturally talented unless it comes easily, that they shouldn't need to work at it. A realistic, balanced approach would be to acknowledge any skill/knowledge gaps and develop a strategy for gradually increasing competence by setting smaller goals and tasks. The key is accepting it is ok to be work in progress, and your contribution right now is worthy and unique.

There's also the Superhero, who takes everything on board and volunteers to get everything done, strives to please, takes care of all requests, avoids being a burden and never says no. They may muscle in and do things unasked or take on tasks that are someone else's responsibility. They think they must accommodate all requests and preferably anticipate what is needed before being asked. They may make assumptions and appear to imply others' work is not valid or can't be trusted, whilst at the same time they suffer because they're so busy assuming what everyone else needs that they squash their own needs and preferences because I am only OK if I am agreeable, likeable and accommodating'.

Then there is the Lone Ranger who feels asking for help will show vulnerability, which they find unacceptable and unnerving, so they are constantly engaged in struggle, typically turning down offers of help. They're on a mission to show off their brilliance and competence, and their energy is taken up in keeping going and putting on a display of competence. Beneath the surface there may be a deeply held feeling of incompetence or uncertainty.

Strategies to tackle Imposter Phenomenon

If you feel that you experience IP to the extent that you feel held back or burnt out, perhaps it's useful to look a bit closer and examine what's going on. How frequently and in what situations do you reframe your successful outcomes? Do you discount the reality of your work to an extreme degree? Do you hide your 'secret self' from others and if so, what 'mask' do you wear?

We've seen that achieving success is not the answer to Imposter Phenomenon. Success simply sets up the loop and doesn't address the underlying, unhelpful belief. Tackling IP means changing thoughts and behaviour, and feelings will follow.

1. Normalise (and befriend) Imposter Phenomenon

Clients often find it a relief just knowing how common and widespread imposter thoughts are and acknowledging that they may serve us, enabling us to reflect, evaluate our performance and decide what we want to turn our attention

to next. The key is to find perspective so that our imposter thoughts don't drive unhelpful behaviours. Knowing so many people struggle with imposter thoughts helps us to see Imposter Phenomenon as a continuum of human experience that simply needs to be managed to maintain healthy balance. Problems will only arise when we sit for too long or too often at either extreme. Normalising is a good first step to reduce the power of imposter thoughts over us.

2. Check your assumptions of others

It's easy to focus on our own perceived shortcomings or gaps in knowledge and sometimes difficult to remember that others are equally flawed. We are very good at telling ourselves false stories about how competent everyone else is. Unfortunately, we get a front-row view of our own internal thoughts, doubts, failings, mistakes, regrets… and all we ever see of others is their polished presentation to the world. We forget that everyone else is experiencing their own troublesome thoughts, doubts, failings, mistakes (and they are, because every human has them). It's often helpful to remember this.

3. Identify your source(s)

If you find yourself thinking in extremes (I am incompetent, they are perfect, I never do well, I always make mistakes) it's time to get curious to understand the underlying voice and source. Can you identify your imposter thoughts as rooted in cultural & societal expectations, or are they more interpersonal? The answer will be different for everyone.

Addressing imposter thoughts cognitively to reach a more realistic, balanced view may be helpful where the source is cultural rather than interpersonal. Persistent imposter thoughts might be usefully explored with a therapist who will help you expose internalised beliefs about success, failure, effort, and performance, and how you may have adapted to those beliefs

> We've seen that achieving success is not the answer to Imposter Phenomenon.

in ways that are not sustainable. A good therapist will work with you to gradually peel back the layers and dismantle the outdated beliefs that no longer serve you, replacing them with something more balanced and functional.

4. Self-awareness

Every human is a unique package of skills, abilities, knowledge, interests, values, attitudes, experiences, and personal qualities, so the thought, 'anybody could do what I do' is irrational and limiting, especially in the context of creative work. It discounts what an individual has to offer.

What is your unique personal package of skills? Think long-term and clarify your professional goals and values. What do you believe are the necessary components and characteristics of a meaningful professional life? How do you measure success? What are the areas of work that you feel less confident about? What do you want to focus your attention on, and what can you disregard?

Linked to this is the need to keep comparisons in check, because we all know comparison is the 'thief of joy'. Your work is unique; nobody else has the same skillset, values, and qualities as you, and nobody else would approach the task at hand in the same way. Learn to value the uniqueness of your contribution.

5. Feedback and mentorship

Identify your professional role models rather than aiming to please everyone. Seeking feedback or mentorship from those whose work you value or whose careers you'd like to emulate, can provide surprising information about how others view your strengths and skills. They may identify aspects you've not appreciated in yourself before and help bring perspective. If you do receive unwelcome feedback, try not to swallow it whole. Instead, be curious. Do you really subscribe to that person's opinion? If so, what is the grain of truth in their feedback, and how can you use that for improvement and learning? Try to avoid spending energy on the opinions of people whose values don't align with your own.

6. Practice self-compassion

Re-shaping imposter thoughts isn't as simple as telling yourself that you are good enough, or it wouldn't be such a widespread issue, but it is important to pay attention to how we talk to ourselves. Our brains take seriously what we tell them! Avoid telling yourself extreme untruths like 'I am stupid/ I should know this/I must do better' etc. Do you really take on board those critical comments you're offering up to yourself? Would you say them to someone else? Would you accept them from someone else?

7. Embrace vulnerability

Author Malcolm Gladwell wrote that we cannot grow without stretching ourselves and we cannot stretch ourselves without making mistakes. Taking on something new feels scary because you can't be sure you have the complete toolbox to know how you'll do it from the start.

Cillian Murphy advocates a risk-taking approach when it comes to accepting new roles, admitting he is driven by extreme challenges and actively seeks work that pushes him and makes him think 'how am I going to do this', because professional growth will be the reward.

Give yourself permission to work outside your comfort zone, to not know everything, to make mistakes. Get comfortable with the idea that valuable learning is worth

Author Malcolm Gladwell wrote that we cannot grow without stretching ourselves and we cannot stretch ourselves without making mistakes.

a little discomfort on the way. Acknowledge new skills, consciously taking a step back to clock your progress. What may seem like very small achievements can sneak up on us so we fail to notice the result, which is often greater than the sum of its parts. Unless you do notice all the changes, it's very easy to stay focused negatively on 'what I still need to learn' rather than positively celebrating how far you've come.

8. Social Connection

Imposter thoughts thrive in secret, leading to a feeling of shame and isolation. Research shows that social support is a crucial buffer for IP, so freelance and peripatetic creative professionals may be particularly vulnerable. Sharing imposter thoughts is part of the normalising process, giving a sense of belonging which fosters confidence. The more people who seem to be 'like us', the more likely we are to open up about our own struggles and share our imposter thoughts and vulnerabilities, which helps everyone.

We're all capable of experiencing fraught feelings as we try to reconcile how we experience ourselves, how we present ourselves to the world, and how the world reflects that self, back to us. Wise, accomplished people are often those who befriend their imposter thoughts and use them as fuel for shaping their professional life, giving themselves permission to make mistakes on the way. The answer is in managing self-doubt and making imposter thoughts work in your favour rather than eliminating them, and with support that is achievable.

It is not possible for anyone to truly feel confident all the time, but we can all have moments and periods of confidence - and that is enough.

Rachel Richards is a qualified counsellor and a Registered Member of the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy since 2012. She works with a sexual abuse charity and has a small private therapy practice in North Wales. Rachel works with adults, children and young people.

Reference:

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Further reading:

1 Huecker MR, Shreffler J, McKeny PT, Davis D (2023) Imposter Phenomenon StatPearls Publishing

2 Tulshyan, R & Burey, JA (2021) Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome, Harvard Business Review, February

Life Coaches Liz and Jo are regular contributors to GTC In Focus. Here is their take on Imposter Syndrome and how they would tackle this challenge.

Imposter Syndrome: Are you afraid you aren't good enough? You're not alone.

At some point most of us have felt like we aren't good enough. But when does it become a problem? So how can we overcome it and go on to excel in our chosen careers when Imposter Syndrome rears its ugly head.

Sound familiar? Well, you are not alone according to a national study* of 3,000 UK adults conducted by Funding Guru, 62% of us have experienced imposter syndrome at work in the past 12 months. I suspect it's even more than that as this taboo subject is so much more common than we realise. I think this knowledge should be the first step to helping us cope with it as really most of us at some point in our lives have been nervous, scared and anxious we aren't up to whatever lies ahead.

As a coach there are a few things I recommend to clients that they can do to help themselves overcome this often debilitating state. We look at coping mechanisms to deal with the syndrome and make plans to take action to help the anxiety it can cause:

Acknowledge and accept it: The first step is recognising that you are experiencing impostor syndrome. Understand that many successful people, even those you admire, have felt this way at some point in their career.

Understand the roots: Reflect on the underlying causes of your impostor syndrome. Is it linked to past experiences, upbringing, or a particular environment? Understanding the origins can help you address the root causes.

Talk about it: Discuss your feelings of impostor syndrome with someone you trust, such as a friend, mentor, or therapist. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can provide you with support and different perspectives.

Challenge negative thoughts: When you catch yourself thinking that you're not good enough or that you don't deserve your success, challenge those thoughts. Ask yourself for evidence that supports these thoughts and counter them with evidence of your accomplishments and abilities.

Set realistic expectations: Understand that nobody is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. Set realistic expectations for yourself and acknowledge that it's okay to make errors and learn from them.

Celebrate your achievements: Keep a record of your accomplishments, both big and small. Celebrate your successes and remind yourself of what you've achieved over time.

Develop self-compassion: Treat yourself with the same kindness and understanding that you would offer to a friend. Avoid self-criticism and negative self-talk.

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The first step is recognising that you are experiencing impostor syndrome. Understand that many successful people, even those you admire, have felt this way at some point in their career.

Set goals and take action: Break down your goals into smaller, manageable tasks, and take steps toward achieving them. By setting and achieving goals, you can build confidence in your abilities.

Learn continuously: Embrace a growth mindset. Understand that you can always improve and learn new things. This perspective can help you feel less like a fraud and more like someone on a journey of growth.

Avoid perfectionism: Striving for excellence is admirable, but aiming for perfection is often unattainable and can contribute to feelings of inadequacy. Recognise that it's okay to have imperfections and areas where you can improve.

Remember that it's common: Impostor syndrome is more common than you might think. Many high-achieving individuals experience it. Knowing that you're not alone in feeling this way can be reassuring.

Professional help: Finally, if impostor syndrome is severely impacting your mental health and well-being, consider seeking professional help from a therapist or life coach who specialises in self-esteem and self-confidence issues.

Overcoming impostor syndrome is an ongoing journey and it's crucial to be patient. As we get older and progress in our careers, feelings of inadequacy may well arise, but it's our reaction to those feelings that truly counts. Remember, you're not alone though. By practising self-awareness and self-compassion, we can prevent these doubts from holding us back.

Why is exercise good for mental health?

The biggest benefit of physical exercise for our mental health is the release of feel-good brain chemicals like endorphins. Endorphins relieve pain and stress in the mind and give us a feeling of enjoyment during the activity.

by **Sally Garrett**

Endorphins are one of the many neurotransmitters in our brain that determine how we think and feel about certain things. When these are activated during exercise, they release chemicals throughout the body which not only help us get through the activity but improve our general mood.

These chemicals include:

- Dopamine
- Norepinephrine
- Serotonin
- Adrenaline

NHS online states that being depressed can leave you feeling low in energy, which might put you off being more active but regular exercise can boost your mood if you have depression, and it's especially useful for people with mild to moderate depression.

Any type of exercise is useful, as long as it suits you and you do enough of it. Exercise should be something you enjoy; otherwise, it will be hard to find the motivation to do it regularly. The NHS also go on to say that lots of GP surgeries across the country prescribe exercise as a treatment for a range of conditions, including depression. To stay healthy, they recommend that adults should do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity every week.

But if you have not exercised for a while, start gradually and aim to build up towards achieving 150 minutes a week.

Any exercise is better than none and even a brisk 10-minute walk can clear your mind and help you relax.

I, for one am not a fan of exercise, never have been, never will be and at the height of my depression, the thought of getting off the couch and leaving the house for a walk was unbearable. But now, especially since I have had my daughter, I make sure we get out the house for a walk every day, whether that's walking to and from school or to a park or just around the block. Come rain or shine we leave the house and walk.

Many camera operators, especially those that do more physical things like handheld and steadicams, rely on exercise to protect themselves so they can prolong their careers without injury and fatigue.

I spoke to camera supervisor Gareth Beeson about the importance of fitness for our job and how it has helped his mental health.

How long have you been a camera supervisor?
Only really over the past few years.

How did you get into camera operating?
I was lucky enough to be staff at MTV when they still had studios - I trained there as an assistant, then went freelance and moved up around 2010.

Have you always been into fitness?
Not at all. I was very much of the *"doing your job is enough of a workout"* camp for many years. I only really discovered fitness over the past ten years or so and then really picked it up when I started training at Wild Training (in Loudwater) with James Griffiths. He's a coach and gym owner and has been a great teacher. I've introduced other people in the industry to him and his approach to fitness and they've all loved it. Can't recommend him enough.

Do you believe that being strong in body and mind is useful, especially in our career?
Absolutely. This business presents so many challenges to endure and overcome. If we're looking at a career in this industry of any length, then we need to stay as healthy as possible for as long as possible. Training to increase our physical strength means that we're prepared for the physical parts of the job, as well as undoing some of the damage that our job does to our bodies. I had shoulder and back problems caused by the imbalances of handheld camera operating. Training bilateral movements helped correct and then to prevent that.

When did you realise that mental health and physical health ran hand in hand?
Very early on. I started climbing, just indoor bouldering, and discovered that after I had been climbing, I felt good for days afterwards. I always think of it in terms of your conscious mind being so focused on the movements you're doing, so focused on just staying on the wall, that your subconscious

mind has time to sort everything out. We spend so much time picking over things consciously that exercise can act as a kind of enforced break from overthinking and anxiety. The same thing is true whether you're climbing, learning a dance step, or pulling a truck. As long as it's something you enjoy. And it works every time, even if you have to make yourself go.

Has there ever been a time when you think being physically fit has helped your mental health?

Not specifically, necessarily, but when times have been hard, and I feel like I haven't perhaps achieved what I want to achieve in one aspect of my life, personal or professional - I have always known I could go to the gym, or do a home workout, and achieve THAT. And that gives me a place to start again. When I did my first Strongman competition, I entered it because I felt it was something that I could not do. The starting weights were all far beyond me, but James trained me, and I worked hard, and got there, and competed, and achieved things that felt entirely impossible at the beginning of that little journey. Now I always have that to look back on. I always know that if I set my mind to something, it is achievable, and I believe that's true for everything, and everyone, given enough time. That's an attitude I carry with me personally and professionally now. It's a gift we can all give ourselves by challenging ourselves physically. I remind myself of it when times are hard.

Do you use exercise as a way to destress?

Absolutely. I have an unofficial two day limit for not exercising. On day three I have to do something, or I'm not a nice person. And I have never regretted a workout, no matter how little I felt like doing it. The stress hormone, cortisol, makes us not want to exercise, it makes us want to eat sugar instead, which is why we crave crap when we're stressed, or tired. Exercise is a much better way to regulate it, and we come away feeling virtuous too, as a bonus.

Do you have any advice or words of wisdom about the correlation between physical health and mental health?

I wouldn't class it as wisdom - but the most important thing I think is to find something you enjoy, over something you think you should do. You'll keep returning to it, and it'll become part of your life, rather than remaining an obligation.

Mental health issues so often revolve around a perceived lack of control, and regaining control can feel impossible. Our physical selves are much easier to exert control over, so when we doubt ourselves, mentally, we can remind ourselves that we are still able to master ourselves, to some degree. We can move our bodies, and when that one part of ourselves is in control, then the other parts might not seem so insurmountable.

Gareth Beeson

Gareth Beeson started as a studio assistant at MTV 20 years ago and is now an experienced live music and event camera operator, supervisor and DOP. He's worked on a variety of high profile jobs with some of the industry's most critically acclaimed directors, and been lucky enough shoot bands from ABBA to ZZ Top, and almost everyone in between. He considers his job infinitely preferable to real work.

Gareth's work diary is handled by MyCrew **www.my-crew.co.uk**

THE MINORITY REPORT

by **Sally Garrett**

@the_tv_mindset recently said that 'new research exposes an overwhelming lack of diversity. 90% of those working in arts are white, nearly 70% in managerial positions are men and just 1% of those managers are black' they go on to say that 1 in 12 creatives in TV and Film are from working class backgrounds and despite all talk of levelling up, most still are London based'. The lowest level in a decade.

So, what does it feel like to be part of a minority group?

I recently spoke anonymously with a variety of people to find out what it felt like to be classed as a minority in the camera department, so whether that is a person of colour, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+, female, a person at the end of their career or someone just starting out.

I told them that when I decided I wanted to become a camera operator, at 14 years old, I was warned that it was a very male dominated job and I needed a degree in Physics to succeed. Being neither male nor good at science, only made me became more determined to get the job.

So I was curious whether others had also been warned about starting a career in the TV industry.

"Yes, I have. In both career guidance and South Asian culture, working in television is often not seen as a viable career option and there is very little representation within the industry for me. It was presented that this would hinder my chances of being successful. I was never academic enough nor had any interest in following stereotypical professions such as medicine, law or accountancy. Although my stubbornness prevailed in the end, I often felt under pressure to be successful to a verifiable metric to prove that I belonged in the industry."

"I was told by many that simply by getting my name out there and the fact I'm transgender I would be able to get on all sorts of jobs because the industry was focusing on hiring people from minority groups. While this is true it would only help me find individual higher profile jobs. I've noticed many of my peers getting far more work from different sources and that work proving to be more consistent over time, while I've been lucky to work on many one off jobs, I can't help but notice the lack of repeat hiring after a very successful outcome on the first job."

Have you ever experienced discrimination at work?

"Yes, I've experienced discrimination in the past but not so much these days. I would say it has upset me at times as I've felt that I've not been good enough and have felt I've had to justify my position. I feel it's made me be quite tough as a person because I've had to build up a resilience to it over the years."

"I once turned up to a job to be informed how relieving it was that I spoke English, as simply seeing my name on the call sheet suggested this wouldn't be the case! Also, despite the advantage of being male in a male-dominated industry, I'm not nor would I ever want to be considered as 'one of the boys'. I feel that this may have hindered certain opportunities for me and has certainly impacted on my mental health. Be-it having a sense of exclusion and rejection or anxiety over being an awkward presence on certain jobs."

"I think at work people do notice you are a woman, and unless they have worked with you a lot, then there is an element of wondering how good you'll be. We've still got a long way to go before your gender really isn't seen as important."

"I have definitely experienced micro aggressions as they're called. Where you're excluded for being different and or female. The manor in which these moments happen are difficult to explain on a case-by-case basis as it is describing how people make choices based on their unknown prejudice.

A loose example might be the division of work where the more skilled jobs are allocated to the white cis males in the team and less skilled tasks are given to those who fall into minority groups or women."

"I've experienced loads of discrimination at work. Older men in power trying to touch me inappropriately. So much so I've had my breasts reduced.

If people in power or work mates start talking smut or telling rude jokes to me, I ask them not to. They continue.

I've had a head of camera's text me smut when I was younger. My friend who isn't in Broadcasting went mad and said I should report him. I didn't accept that full time job at that big TV place as I didn't want to feel 'indebted' to anyone. I get my jobs through hard work not through my looks or whatever else men may be after.

I've had another head of camera's send me photos of their bodies showing me their tattoos and muscles. I said I was married. They didn't seem to care. Again, I didn't complain about the terrible behaviour.

I've never reported anyone for fear of losing my freelance work. I have lost lots of my work anyways.

I wish I had been braver and spoke up. I would have been seen as trouble, but it seems I'm seen 'unreliable' anyways so what's the difference. May as well have gone down fighting."

"During my training I did feel bullied and was told on many occasions if "I didn't pull my socks up I'd be out." The guys that started with me didn't seem to get the same treatment and I felt all eyes were on me and I had to prove myself twice as much. If I did something wrong it was because I was a female and not able to cope. If the male trainees made mistakes, it was "oh never mind, we've all been there, try again."

> I told them that when I decided I wanted to become a camera operator, at 14 years old, I was warned that it was a very male dominated job and I needed a degree in Physics to succeed. Being neither male nor good at science, only made me became more determined to get the job.

"I have experienced lots of discrimination over the years and it still goes on. It was always the guys at work that got the opportunities to train on jimmy jibs, techno crane and steady cams."

"I've had a head of camera tell me 'You will never get this full-time job' even though I was already working there as a freelancer. He didn't seem to like my accent which wasn't British or posh."

"I have also been in some very awkward situations over the years, where men, some in a much higher-ranking position have behaved very inappropriately and made advances towards me. This has made my work situation very difficult at times."

With productions having to tick 'boxes' to become inclusive, I asked if anyone ever felt like they got certain jobs because they were a minority rather than for their skillset or on the flip side, whether they thought they hadn't got the job for the same reason.

"On OB's I feel I'm the token woman and minority. I'm happy to have the experience but it makes me feel bad about myself that I cannot be chosen on my camera work. I always try my hardest though. What more can I do? I doubt that I'm any good at camera and since the menopause I fear I'm losing my mind. I have brain fog and constant fear. It's horrendous."

"100% not being in the boys' club or wanting to be makes me 35th choice or worse simply so the crew banter can be preserved. When I am on all male except me jobs, I try to fit with the vibe but all too often conversations and banter slide in to misogyny making it very difficult to laugh along to."

"I think the frustrating thing about this is it's like being stuck between a rock and a hard place. It's great that opportunities have been opened to get more women and minorities into the industry, but it's going to take time for this to be normalised. I've been in the industry for 30 years, and I feel so lucky to be in a job I love. I was very aware that it was a male dominated industry, as there were very few

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women in the industry, on camera crews, when I started. Fortunately, I worked in a great place, and I had support from the male crew. I proved I could do the job well, and I felt accepted. The shift I've seen of late, is that when I'm now on jobs, it's been said to me on a few occasions, 'are you the token girl?'. I do find this offensive, especially as often it comes from men who haven't been in the industry as long as I have, but they appear to think I'm there solely to tick a box. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm happy to tick a box, but it's a shame that somehow, it's now being seen (by some) that I've only earned my place on the crew because of being female, regardless of the years of experience I have. It's a shame that after 30 years, I don't feel we're really that much further on, and the 'box ticking' has highlighted some camera operators' sexist attitudes. It'll be a few years before we're seen the same as doctors or teachers, where we are seen as equal, regardless of our gender."

"I've done a couple of jobs where this has been the case - a one-off booking, or a booking where they wanted a 'rainbow crew' - and whilst I know I'm good at what I do, it feels like a hollow victory sometimes. Although I guess I can't complain."

"I have been told on a few occasions over the last few years that they needed to add a woman to the crew! Making me feel like I've only been booked because I have boobs and not because I am actually good at my job."

"Recently I was asked to do the golf on the Olympics because they needed women. One cameraman I was sat with said "I wish I had a vagina so I could get more work!" I don't want to be asked just because I'm female so decided not to do it in favour of another job."

I asked certain people some tailored questions. Being neurodiverse, do you feel like you 'stand out' from your colleagues and have to explain yourself?

"Occasionally, although I try to avoid it because of the stigma attached with 'making excuses for one's behaviour by blaming mental health'. With me personally, it's actually other people that bring my neurodiversity to my attention rather than the other way round. It doesn't happen often and it's never in malice, but often I don't realise my behaviour is different unless someone else points it out. Since then, I've often thought, have I lost work/relationships because of this not being communicated, but at the same time, it's a difficult one to know how to communicate - how to time it and deliver it without tattooing it on my forehead.

I feel like I've mastered masking as far as I wish to master it - anything beyond is too much effort for me. I don't want to have to change my personality so much that it becomes tiresome, and if anything, I'd rather not fit in totally. I think being slightly different is more interesting and faithful to who I am. It's probably more the reflection outside of work on whether or not I fit in sufficiently, which affects mental health. Whether or not I've inadvertently spoiled relationships due to this. This has been exacerbated by the fact that work has been extremely quiet this year; I've noticed a lot of jobs I used to do, have been given to other people, and it leaves me wondering, what did I do wrong? Am I an imposter?"

Do you think people have treated you different since you told them?

"I wouldn't be able to tell. I've told a couple of people, who worked with me closely on some shows - people who were my techs and so I was often asking them to help troubleshoot things for me - and in stressful situations where things were going wrong, I had to divulge that my reaction in these situations may appear upset/blunt but it's because of how I deal (or do not deal) with those things in the moment; the emotion goes unfiltered. So afterwards, I had to divulge that I'm not being rude, it's just in the moment under stress I become very transactional and straight, and social cues break down."

Our job is definitely male dominated, are you ever made to feel like you don't fit in because of your sexuality?

"Yes, in sport. It's one of the main reasons I really don't like doing sport. They're just not my people, not my tribe. I can't engage in the conversation because it's just never really relevant to me, and the lower rung the sport, often the more basic and dated the conversation and humour becomes. Also, the way the LGBT community presents itself, or is presented in the media, stigmatises us, which means these people will have a preordained view of who I am, a view I can't really be bothered to counter, and would be an exercise that would change nothing anyway."

One common thread that came up numerous times was being a mum and the pressure put on us by others or even by ourselves. I know I felt like people would 'forget me' or assume I wasn't ready to come back to work when I was on maternity leave. I also get terrible 'mum guilt' about the long hours or working away from home (I know this also affects dads) for me personally, it is a big trigger towards my mental health.

"I've been told 'shouldn't you be home minding your kids?' And 'Don't you feel guilty about leaving your children this long?' All comments from men."

"I was the first woman at LWT to have a child and had to lead the way with that as they didn't have a clue what to do. They were very good to be honest and I was lucky to be staff, I worked right up until a few weeks before my due date and came back to work after just 3 months. I always felt very guilty about going back to Work so soon, but financially I was not in a position to take more maternity leave. I think being a working mum, in an industry where the hours can be long, the days uncertain and sometimes abroad is very hard. I felt tremendous guilt over the years."

"I don't feel like people take into consideration how much pressure is on a mum who is a freelancer. When the children are sick, I feel like it's all down to me. I've been told by a

huge company I'm seen as 'unreliable' when I questioned why the booker said that is what the supervisors feel and when I asked did any of them have any children (all male) she said 'No'."

How does it feel being the 'older' person in the business, do you worry about your life after work?

"I didn't ever feel I was being side lined due to my age. I was turning down shows because I didn't feel capable of delivering results in a way I could when I was younger and in better health. Ultimately covid drove me to draw a line under my career. Now and again some people would make old man comments, but it didn't bother me at all, in fact I used to think how lucky I was to still be working past retirement age."

"I am old. 69. My job is my career and my hobby. I love keeping up with new tech. I don't necessarily like doing new tech.

There is a natural parting of ways from many jobs that I am not offered and do not seek. The work I am continuing with keeps me in "beer money" and still plugged in."

I asked everyone if they would say there are any other factors of working in the media industry that affects your mental health, such as long working hours, working away from home/family, working in dark studios and being freelance?

"For me it's everything that comes with being freelance; unpredictability, dry periods, not knowing one's own value, feeling not good enough, wondering if you've lost clients, upset people; and most of all for me, as a neurodiverse person, the people skills element and how costly my potential lack thereof is to my business. I really dislike the correspondence side of my job. The emails beforehand, chasing up, making sure hotels *have been booked, parking has been arranged, access, egress etc - the most stressful parts of the job - and then when they often haven't been sufficiently arranged, this stresses me out hugely and I have to then write correspondence through this red fog. Then this leads to paranoia about how I corresponded etc - am I asking too many questions? But I need to ask them. Am I sending too many emails? Am I irritating the recipient?."*

"Being freelance has been scary of late, first with Covid, then the current recession. There's little support, and I don't currently see this as a safe job anymore, especially for the new generation to get into. I won't be encouraging my children to follow their parents into the TV industry."

"I would say the chopping and changing of hours can have a negative on me as these days my body is happier when it's in more of a regular body clock. Lack of daylight in the winter doesn't help either so I'll try to get some daylight and fresh air during any breaks I might have."

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> It makes me feel like a bad mother. I see why so many mums leave the industry. What's the point in trying so hard but never being recognised for your hard work. It's not worth your mental health and yet here I am again doing it all over again. It's a vicious circle.

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> I really notice a difference when I'm doing a job where there are more women, and it makes me realise how much easier and nicer my job would be if there were more women to chat to.

"I love the hours, the travel, the high-profile events. What I struggle with is keeping rates level. In an ever-expensive world rates are always hammered as low as they'll go and so few stand up for them. This is something I think about a lot and really affects my work when I'm being under paid. I often wonder if they push harder on girls for this and have found on some jobs the rates have been different for the same roles. Especially on travel work. IT'S NOT A HOLIDAY it's work!"

"Life as a freelancer in this industry, specifically with how volatile it is at the moment, is incredibly taxing on my mental health. There is a base-level anxiety around not having enough work to support my young family and it's hard to enjoy the quiet periods at home if I'm not present mentally.

Speaking out against long-hours, working conditions or other elements such as crew meal requirements can be portrayed negatively; I know I haven't spoken out in the past for fear of not being booked on jobs again if I was seen as 'difficult' or not a team player.

In our content-driven industry, I have worked on projects or regular programming where I am exposed to triggering debate, individuals/groups and footage. As much as I can separate the subject matter from my job as a camera operator, I have experienced residual negative emotions from either distressing content or things that don't align with my personal moral or ethical standpoint."

"Wondering when I will be paid. Sometimes it doesn't show up when it's meant to, and my husband grows annoyed. I feel like I'm constantly juggling as I have children and I feel my children are suffering as I put so much emphasis on my camera work. It makes me feel like a bad mother. I see why so many mums leave the industry. What's the point in trying so hard but never being recognised for your hard work. It's not worth your mental health and yet here I am again doing it all over again. It's a vicious circle."

"It is a very lonely industry to work in at times, as the only camerawoman on most jobs, I often never get included in the conversations and lunchtime breaks or activities they plan to do. I really notice a difference when I'm doing a job where there are more women, and it makes me realise how much easier and nicer my job would be if there were more women to chat to. Working on Wimbledon tennis and on the athletics where there are more women made me realise just how we are missing out. On those jobs we often set up our own whatts app group etc and chat on it, discuss problems and arrange to meet after work sometimes which makes it so much more enjoyable. If a man was working with an all-female crew, I think they would feel vulnerable and left out the same as we do?

This job has played a major part on my mental health and still does to this day when I am treated so unfairly."

"The constant rejection and unfair dismissal have played a major role on my mental health, you can only take so many knock backs as it starts to destroy your confidence.

I know it's not because of my ability, (I've even been told this numerous times when I've been taken off a job,) but it still doesn't help.

I have worked on well-known shows for sometimes many years and have been dropped for different reasons. Once it was because the director took a fancy to a young guy he fancied and wanted to make a gap for him. One popular series still going that I worked on for many years was because the female production manager wasn't keen on having women on the crew and told the supervisors of the relevent departments to make up excuses to get rid of us. This has happened to a few of us over the years and the said person has only come to light when we have bumped into each other and chatted to realise we had all endured the same experience. On the same said show I had to mentor a sobbing colleague who was hiding in the toilets and about to walk off the job due to the awful comments she had had to endure. I just wish we had a HR department we could go to on these jobs. I realise BECTU is a union to help but that seems to be for much bigger, wider problems, not one that effects just me and would be difficult to prove and I am not aware of any other help groups."

"I've learned if you speak up and try to defend your name then you are struck off freelance lists. Women are meant to be seen and not heard. If you're not from the UK you have to work much harder to be taken seriously. If you don't have a posh accent again more stigma. All of these things have given me imposter syndrome and sometimes I worry I shouldn't be doing this job at all. Maybe I am not good enough to be working at all."

"I have the rewards of having been jetted around the world to cover news and feature events. There is a feeling of achievement when different places come up in conversation and I can say I have been there or will keep this to myself as to not show off.

Costs. When I was in Saudi Arabia for 8 weeks prior to the build-up to the first Gulf War I returned home to my 1 year old who proceeded to cry when I tried to hold her. I was heartbroken."

"Social Life always hung on a thread, as one phone call would scupper dinners, plays, birthdays. It leaves a scar where every time the phone rings, I jump even though I know as a freelance I can simply say "not available"."

"A long running soap opera did have a slight impact on my mental health because of the relentlessly miserable environment created by the story lines, meal breaks and dehydration. In fact, I cannot even bear to hear the opening title music anymore, so maybe I am underestimating the impact that show had on my mental health. My physical health became more of a problem due to the increasing pressures to produce the show cheaper and faster combined with my long-standing respiratory illness that hadn't really impacted me until the recording schedule became so laborious for me. I became increasingly frustrated that others who I assumed were healthier than me were apparently unaffected by the shows demands. It took me too long to summon up the courage to refuse to work on the show and for that matter even watch it. When I announced I would not work on the show ever again the first knee jerk reaction from my line manager was that it could lead my redundancy but at that stage I was prepared to confront that outcome. Fortunately, I managed to restart my career again in Comedy and Light Entertainment and everything just got better and better.

> I really notice a difference when I'm doing a job where there are more women, and it makes me realise how much easier and nicer my job would be if there were more women to chat to.

I asked everyone if they felt comfortable speaking with their colleagues about mental health issues.

"I feel as comfortable as I ever have discussing mental health with colleagues with whom I've developed a close relationship/ friendship. I think the industry and society as a whole is moving in the right direction with providing a safe space for people to be vulnerable about their struggles. There is still plenty of room for improvement. As I respectfully look at my fellow straight male-identifying demographic in the camera department (simply to be specific to me), I feel this is an area where vulnerability and struggle can still be seen as weakness and leads to unintended tension and toxicity for all if left unchecked, and perhaps stifles further conversation around mental health. This obviously isn't a straight-male-centric issue, however I have observed and experienced more openness around mental health within female-identifying and LGBTQ+ groups in my time in this industry outside of the camera department."

"Absolutely not, to nearly all the people I work with. I'm paid to do my job and I can't be bringing my problems with me to work, or I'll likely not work with them again or for a very long time. Even if I'm on a job I'm constantly selling myself for the next one."

"I feel the general lack of conversation around struggles with addiction needs to be addressed in media. It is still considered a taboo area despite so many factors within the industry contributing to it. Addiction doesn't discriminate, and often those affected directly or indirectly by it suffer in silence for fear of losing work and/or their reputations."

"I think there's a stigma attached to mental health at the moment, where 'everybody has poor mental health' so it's not really an excuse. To some extent I agree, I think everybody experiences stress and anxiety at some point and it can't be used as an excuse 100% of the time, but on the flipside, I think the world is becoming an increasingly stressful and upsetting place to exist in and I think all of us are inching closer to breaking point. At least I am, anyway."

"I rarely speak about it with anyone. I try and cope alone and it makes me more of a hermit. I suffer from anxiety and depression since I've been young. It's funny what a smile can hide. I would never want anyone feeling as low as I do so I always try and be a happy and positive person inside and outside of work."

Have you learnt any coping techniques to help control your mental health, do you find exercise helps, talking to family/friends, turning certain jobs down that will trigger you?

"One of the most important acts I've ever taken to enhance both my professional and personal life is sober living, exercise and taking up regular mediation practice. Whilst I have some great war stories from my younger days working and partying hard in this industry, alcohol was a vice that was slowly and insidiously isolating me from accessing a more mindful way of thinking and being able to deal with life on life's terms. I'm not suggesting that everyone immediately lay down their shot glasses! For me personally, it was the catalyst to achieve improved emotional and physical well-being alongside a daily spiritual practice.

My partner and I str*ive to be as communicative as possible regarding our mental health and I have a solid friendship group in and out of the industry who also champion openness around struggle. I have personally found it comforting to speak to trusted colleagues and friends in the industry for the mutual identification we experience."*

> I feel the general lack of conversation around struggles with addiction needs to be addressed in media. It is still considered a taboo area despite so many factors within the industry contributing to it.

"Swimming and walking. Writing and reading books. Going to the cinema alone. Walking along the sea front. Cuddles from my kids. I've self-referred myself to do CBT and starting soon. Taking deep breaths and trying to think of calm times so I can control my anxiety."

"Freelancing means that I now concentrate more on what I don't want to do, as opposed to chasing work."

"I am strict with rates I turn down all low-rate work, it angers me when others take it but that's life I guess at least I value my worth.

One of my favourite ways of thinking about value is to think of the bottle of water at a service station, It's three quid. However, that same bottle of water in a town you can buy for 50p. Go to where you have value.

What I'm trying to say is I cope with pressure and improve my mental health by being in a place where I'm wanted and valued. Be that with family or among younger less experienced crew who are keen to learn. Teaching others is a rewarding experience for me when done in small amounts."

One final word from one of the contributors

"I hope for future for women and other minorities become easier. It's hard out there. If more people acted kindly, then the world would be a better place"

GYASI SHEPPY

Gyasi Sheppy is a well-known CBeebies presenter, best recognised for his beaming smile, big laugh and bright clothes, but recently Gyasi posted a picture of himself on his Instagram page holding a packet of antidepressants.

The wording alongside the picture states "Professionally, I'm standing in the sun and it feels like things couldn't be better this year" but "Life has conditioned me to always believe bad news is around the corner, or that I don't deserve good things, or I'm going to ruin everything good" Gyasi went on to say that he took himself to the Doctors office and told him "I am not okay-help!"

"I was diagnosed with GAD (Generalised Anxiety Disorder) around April 2015 and it certainly didn't come as a surprise. I had had bouts of depression on and off from my early twenties too. I'm not ashamed to admit that I spent a lot of my twenties growing up emotionally and learning how to handle and regulate them. Past trauma taught me to just suppress everything or the opposite, let it all out in the unhealthiest ways.

I am always acutely aware that as somewhat a public figure, my image and brand have to align. Because of my life experiences and coming out the other side of them. Because of losing myself for so many years in my twenties I made a promise to myself to strive to be my most authentic ME on and off screen. The public figures I admire most are the ones who are not trying to paint an image of a certain type and have a real genuine honest connection with their followers or fans.

A lot of what I was putting out into the world was false and a facade. I can admit that now, I can look back at that version of me now and see that I was so deeply unhappy within myself but couldn't let people know that. Whereas now I'm wiser and older and a lot more unapologetically me, I feel I have a somewhat of a safe space within my own social media channels to let my amazing and supportive followers know when I'm not the best and will be stepping back temporarily and checking in on myself.

I did feel fear posting the picture on Instagram, but we live in post-pandemic UK and the world is changing. Meaning things that were once maybe considered private or "things we don't talk about publicly" have been very much catapulted into mainstream conversation. Things that were once a taboo subject no longer are. In terms of CBeebies and my "CBeebies image" I think conversations and messaging around emotions and feelings can go hand-in-hand with the brand on and off screen. I couldn't possibly

do my job and paint on a smile and sing happy songs if I wasn't again, checking in on myself and being self-aware and identifying that my mind isn't where it should be. So, I am very much proactive on fixing that nowadays.

If I could choose one word that is important to good mental health, it would be ***RESILIENCE****"*

Resilience: noun

1. The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.
2. The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape.

"I chose this word because I thought that as a mental health crisis survivor who still struggles with depression and anxiety, I never realised until I was probably about 30 how resilient I actually am.

Poor mental health and depression aren't your birth right or inheritance. It's something you have survived because YOU are the opposite of that. If you have an enormous will, enormous heart and enormous capacity for survival, take all that darkness and use it to help other people who are walking through the same. I've used my trauma to position myself in society to create happiness, to make people smile, to laugh, clap and most importantly to forget the hard parts of life, even if it is just for a few hours. I've used my darkest experiences that life gave me, and I've turned it around. You too are resilient.

Dear friends, thank you for asking me to write this foreword. Remember you are loved, and the world is SO much better with you in it."

Gyasi x

gyasishepp

And finally...

As I mentioned in the introduction, these mental health supplements stemmed from a very sad place, where a friend and colleague thought the world would be a better place without him in, he couldn't have been more wrong.

Even as I am writing this, the news of a well-respected Producer, John Balson, ended his life citing bad practice, being overworked and unrealistically low budgets in factual TV as contributing factors.

His wife's statement took aim at the TV industry for the way in which it treats freelancers and the mechanisms by which it engages them. *"The loss of my husband is not just his life; it's a failure of the industry," she said. "The industry can find a replacement the next day, but there will never be another John."*

Things have to change before even more people suffer.

Author Matt Haig wrote 'For When You Reach Rock Bottom' *"You have survived everything you have been through, and you will survive this too. Stay for the person you will become. You are more than a bad day, or week, or month, or year or even decade. You are another self at a point in the future time looking back in gratitude that this lost and former you held on. Stay."*

Be kind to yourself and others.

Sally

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