

Looking After Your Own Mental Health and Wellbeing



Welcome to the May 2021 CPWY Committee Blog!

The past 14 months have been a huge challenge to all in our sector, not only for ourselves and our pharmacy teams but of course for our own families. So much has been said in previous blogs and articles about the herculean efforts our sector has done and contributed to fighting this pandemic.

I wanted to address a situation that is often difficult to discuss. I wanted to make sure that every pharmacy team member is coping well with the additional burdens and pressures we are facing every single working day.

From my observations our workforce has gone through a rollercoaster of emotions. Anxiety, stress, exhaustion, despair, financial uncertainty, physical illness for those who have been affected by COVID-19, along with the emotional issues with having to balance all the work pressures with family life and the demands of home schooling and managing our children's own health and wellbeing. It has been a tough time for us all.

We are not robots; we have had to take a huge impact working through these challenges over many months without a break. It's so important that we recognise burnout and look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

We spend so long caring for our own staff and our communities that often we neglect ourselves. We are not immune. We are good at advising others of how to improve their own health and wellbeing, but will we listen to our own advice? Below are some easy steps for all of us to work through and a good discipline to keep ourselves physically and mentally well.

Talk About Our Feelings

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled. It is not a sign of weakness. It's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy.

Keep Active

Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you concentrate, sleep, and feel better. Exercise keeps the brain and other vital organs healthy and is a significant benefit towards improving your mental health.

This does not need to involve training 7 times a week to become an Olympic triathlete, but walking, jogging, and a moderate cardiovascular workout a couple of times a week will help you feel physically and mentally fitter.

Eat Well

Your brain needs a mix of nutrients to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that is good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

Drink Sensibly

I have heard over the last 12 months about individuals consuming significantly more alcohol during different stages of lockdowns to help “cope”. We often drink alcohol to change our mood. Some people drink to deal with fear or loneliness. But remember the effect is only temporary. If you recognise that your own drinking habits have changed over the last years, it’s important to take positive action.

Take a Break

A change of scenery or a change of pace is good for your mental health. It could be a 5-minute pause while at work to get some fresh air and a walk round the block, or more structured breaks during the week. A few minutes time out can help to de-stress you. Give yourself some me-time. Now that it is getting lighter later in the evening, it’s good to switch off after a busy day at work and get some fresh air.

Do Something You are Good at

What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past? Enjoying yourself can help to beat stress. Doing an activity, you enjoy probably means you are good at it, and achieving something boosts your self-esteem.

Ask for Help?

None of us are superhuman – even pharmacy teams! We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things do not go to plan. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you cannot cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear.

Pharmacist Support are an independent trusted charity which is always available to you and your teams to support you. Their vision is clear – **No one in our pharmacy family will face challenging times without us by their side**. Email them info@pharmacistsupport.org or call one of their freephone numbers 0808 1682233 - <https://pharmacistsupport.org/>

You cannot look after your pharmacy team and your local community if you do not look after yourself. It is OK not to be OK.

Keep well and keep safe.

Ashley Cohen

Committee member of Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire

Resources

Wellbeing Resources Available for Community Pharmacy Teams

These details are also on the CPWY website COVID-19 page here: <http://www.cpwyl.org/covid-19.shtml#HandW>.

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NHS Resources

These details are also on the PSNC website Staff Wellbeing and COVID-19 testing page here: <https://psnc.org.uk/the-healthcare-landscape/covid19/wellbeing-and-testing/>.

[Access the support via the NHSE&I website](#)

NHSE&I has organised a range of psychological support for all NHS staff, including those working in community pharmacy, during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes:

- [Free access to a number of wellbeing apps](#) (*Unmind, Headspace, Sleepio and Daylight*).
- [Access to helplines and apps](#).
- [Short online guides](#) to help develop new skills and help improve your experience at work.
- [Confidential staff support line](#), operated by the Samaritans, which is free to access from 7.00am – 11.00pm, seven days a week.
- [#LookingAfterYouToo](#): Coaching support for primary care staff.

Pharmacist Support Resources

[Pharmacist Support](#) is the profession's independent charity for pharmacists and their families, former pharmacists, trainees and MPharm students. The charity's [free and confidential support](#) includes a suite of [wellbeing resources](#).

West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership (ICS)

[Information](#) on who to contact in a crisis, plus local info and support.

The ICS partnership has made resources available that have been selected by experts as representing best practice and being accessible to all health and care colleagues. They have been brought together to support health and wellbeing with a focus on all areas of life, care, and work. This is a longer-term offer, with the intention to sustain beyond COVID-19. It recognises that we are all individuals and may require different support at different points, during these challenging times. Access the resources here: <https://www.wyhpartnership.co.uk/our-priorities/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources/new-workforce-health-and-wellbeing>

Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub

The West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership (our ICS) has been launched and can be accessed here: <https://workforce.wyhpartnership.co.uk/>. The hub has been developed in recognition that COVID-19 has impacted all aspects of people's lives. Changes to routine and working environment, loss of colleagues, friends and family members and prolonged periods of stress may have put you under extraordinary strain.

If you work in a health and care environment and are experiencing feelings that are difficult to cope with, the hub experienced mental health workers are here to support you and find the extra help that is right for you.

The West Yorkshire and Harrogate Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub is completely confidential and offers advice and support that can help with a range of issues. The Hub team is developing its advice and support for issues such as emotional wellbeing to bereavement, debt, domestic violence and relationship issues.

Whether you just need some general wellness advice, or more extensive psychological support, the hub is here to help you. For further information visit the hub website here: <https://workforce.wyhpartnership.co.uk/>.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub complements the other wellbeing support available to pharmacy teams. A summary of the support can be found on the PSNC website here: <https://psnc.org.uk/the-healthcare-landscape/covid19/wellbeing-and-testing/> (see the wellbeing section towards the bottom of the webpage).

You may want to consider having a wellbeing conversation with those in your pharmacy team. This animation may help you in starting a wellbeing conversation: [What is a wellbeing conversation? - YouTube](#).

CPWY Tribute and Thanks to West Yorkshire Community Pharmacy Teams

Community pharmacies in West Yorkshire have been working tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure patients and the public can continue to access their medicines. Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire has created this tribute and thank you for all community pharmacy teams. You are all amazing! Thank you. The tribute can be found [here](#) and on twitter [here](#).

Sign up to the PSNC mailing list to ensure you receive the weekly newsletters, alerts and updates [here](#). Sign up to our mailing list [here](#). Join [CPWY Connect](#) on the social media site Telegram and connect with pharmacy teams across West Yorkshire. Join by [clicking here](#).

Details of the CPWY Connect Zoom Events are on our website in the [training section here](#).

Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire's Role: We recognise and understand how much you and your teams are having to cope with right now. Please remember, you are not alone at this time. We're here to support you, providing advice and information on COVID-19, as well as pushing to make sure your work is properly recognised and fully supported throughout this pandemic. You are our eyes and ears - please let us know of any problems and we will do our best to help.

For COVID-19 related issues email: covid-19@cpwy.org / For non-COVID-19 issues email: info@cpwy.org