



# Mental Health Champions Update

March 2024

Welcome to the 4th edition of the Colleague Mental Health Champions newsletter!

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## Colleague Wellbeing and Occupational Health Updates

### A BIG welcome to our new Champions

We have just recruited 28 enthusiastic new Mental Health Champions to join our community. They will complete their training in April and begin the role in May.

Welcome Champions! Thank you again all for volunteering for this role, we really appreciate your time and enthusiasm. You will make a real and positive difference to the University culture. Please remember though not to ever feel pressured by this role – it is designed to be your role and you can make it anything you wish it to be that fits into your workload. We'll offer you ideas, training and inspiration along the way, but you won't be monitored as we want you to feel you have the autonomy to raise awareness, tackle stigma, role model and encourage an open, compassionate culture in ways that feel right for you.

### Latest Report from the Wellbeing and OH Teams

Anxiety continues to present as the most popular primary reason for using Spectrum Life in Q2, Q3 and Q4. Relationship issues continues to be a key reason (in the top five) for using our EAP.

The mental health absence headcount and days lost for mental health have increased. This could be as a result of more colleagues experiencing poor mental health, or indicate colleagues are feeling more comfortable disclosing poor mental health as a reason for sickness absence.



### April is Stress Awareness Month

Colleague Wellbeing and Occupational Health will be sharing information about a variety of tools and resources available to colleagues and managers in the Weekly Bulletin throughout the month. Click [HERE](#) for a one-page summary of these tools and resources you can share with your teams.

### University Mental Health Charter

Terri Watkins gave us a fantastic overview of the '[University Mental Health Charter](#)' we're trying to obtain.  
Recording: [HERE](#).



### Groups and Networks

All University of Exeter colleagues (current, temporary, visiting and retired) and PGRs from any of our campuses, are welcome to participate in the wide variety of groups, networks and activities listed on [this brand new page](#).



Digital, Professional Services and Faculties' Updates

The HR department has a regular monthly Tea and Talk slot where anyone can talk about a subject that would be of interest to the department as a whole. Erika Morgan and Terrie Dakin in HR delivered a session on their role as Mental Health Champions to 42 people from the HR Department in February.



### Sleep Tight for Spring

It's that time again when the clocks spring forward (31st March)! For those that find themselves watching the clock at odd hours, Kirsten Whiting recently hosted Daniel White 'The Sleep Guy' for a webinar to talk about the importance of sleep on health and wellbeing and in turn on productivity, and introducing an understanding of circadian rhythms.

[Watch the recording here](#) (using password **.cP98Mku**)

### Grief and Tough Topics at Work

Kerry recently attended a Hospice UK webinar on 'How to Talk About Death at Work'. She has summarised her 10 top takeaways below.

1. Dealing with silence is harder - just say something!
2. Listen - make them feel heard and safe
3. Be transparent - people want honesty not a polished or rehearsed speech
4. There is no 'one-way' fits all approach
5. Empower people i.e., 'how do you want to handle the next 24 hours, week, month?' etc.
6. You don't need to try and 'solve' it - just be there.
7. It's ok to get emotional yourself - just don't make it about you. Let them know you have your own support system so they don't feel guilty
8. Anniversaries and special days are tough.  
Continue the conversations.
9. Help set the tone and culture (particularly senior leaders) - share experiences and normalise conversations.
10. Messy is ok, we're all human.

### Upcoming Events

Stress Awareness Month - April

Wellbeing FIKA Event - 16th April (Penryn)

Garden Involvement Volunteers Event - 17th April (Exeter)

Happiness Habits 6 Week Course - 23rd April (online)

Mental Health Awareness Week - 13th May

## New Guidance Document Available

A suicidal colleague guidance document has been developed to aid colleagues in the rare event they encounter a suicidal colleague. The document gives guidance on how to respond - when to offer listening and empathy, when to signpost to a qualified health professional, and when to call for more urgent assistance. [Click here to view.](#)

## Financial Wellbeing Seminars

Affinity Connect are running a series of webinars in May, June and October to help colleagues take control of their finances and support future plans. [Click here to reserve a place](#) and see the full range of financial resources offered by the Colleague Wellbeing Team.

## World Bipolar Day - 30th March

Bipolar UK have some great digital resources on their website, including webinars on [women and bipolar](#), and [bipolar symptoms](#), plus a free, short [e-learning course](#) where you can earn your 'Bipolar Ally' badge!

## NICE Guidelines

Evidence-based recommendations for health and care in England and Wales. They help health and social care professionals to prevent ill health, promote good health and improve the quality of care and services. NICE provide [different sets of guidelines](#) on how illnesses can be recognised, assessed and treated (both physical and mental). There are 2366 current sets published, with more in development.

## Training Update

### Imposter Syndrome

The University has developed a 2-hour Exploring and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome workshop, to help colleagues recognise how this manifests and navigate strategies for dealing with the self-doubt and negativity it precipitates. [Add your name to the waiting list here.](#)

### Empower@Exeter

Building on the workshop topic above, Learning and Development Manager Jayde Kirby has also developed a highly recommended 3-session programme, which delves deeper into the areas of developing self-confidence, adopting a growth mindset and empowerment. [Add your name to the waiting list here.](#)

## Cartoon Time

# Finding time

Hello... what's this?!



# Carving out time



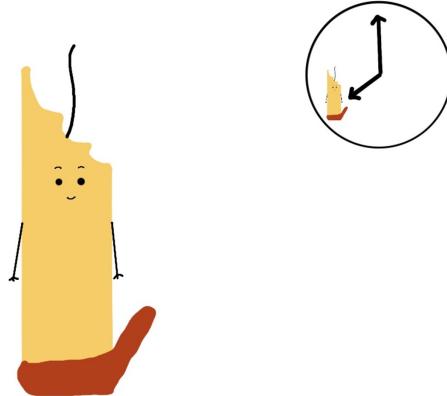
# Making time

## Time (one portion)

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 4 deep inhales   | dash of humour       |
| 4 slow exhales   | pinch of playfulness |
| 1 full attention |                      |
| 1 full awareness |                      |

Optional: bubble bath, closed eyes, nature, crackling fire, relaxing sounds

# 'me time'



Thanks to Caitlin for this fantastic cartoon and reminder to take time for you! Caitlin [@specialagentCK] produces a daily web comic series #doodlewax. [Check it out!](#)

## Positive Thoughts

what NICE thing  
are you going to do for  
**YOURSELF**  
this week? ❤

Thank you to our wonderful champions for your care, compassion and enthusiasm in striving to help fellow colleagues and friends improve their mental health! If you are interested in helping create the next newsletter, or have any new ideas please email [ColleagueWellbeing@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ColleagueWellbeing@exeter.ac.uk)



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