

## **Spotlight on mental health in the workplace**

The IOSH West of Scotland branch will be running a virtual branch meeting on 26th November at 1pm, focusing on mental health. A representative from the mental health charity [matesinmind.org](https://www.matesinmind.org) will be delivering a presentation on this area and will review strategies to support organisations with mental health, discuss mental health first aid and relevant training as well as influencing the mental health culture within an organisation, especially in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

One of the areas that is important for maintaining good mental health is to have time for hobbies in your life where you have the ability to **“SWITCH OFF”** from worries and stress and focus on activities such as painting, listening to music, undertaking exercise or just having some fun. This ability to switch off and relax and have time to enjoy yourself is crucial to maintaining a good sense of wellbeing.

During this current COVID-19 crisis it is important we look to increase our focus on mental health and wellbeing. Members of the West of Scotland IOSH branch have illustrated below how they can switch off and enjoy hobbies that help them relax or focus so they can forget for a while at least, both work and other worries. Below are some of the ways our committee looks after their own mental health and wellbeing and I would like to thank them for sharing.

**Fred Cullum** the current chair really enjoys creating stain glass paintings. He has many hobbies including: painting, photography, stained glass & glasswork, electronics, DIY, crafts, walking, and keeping fish.

***“Plenty of things to help me switch off.” Says Fred Cullum illustrated below two of his many creations.....***



**Antony Atencio** likes *“camping at weekends as well as gardening (indoors and out), home improvement/DIY, and hillwalking!”* He visits the gym or runs several times a week.



**William Lyon** likes walking his dog Poppy. He says *“one of my hobbies is to relax and take poppy down to the park for a runabout. She does all the running of course!”*



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**Lorna McBreen** likes catching the sunsets which occur regularly in Scotland at this time of year. She explains; *'Do one thing' ... turning off the laptop, walking away from my workplace (dining room table) and heading off for the weekend in my camper to hit the mountains nice and early to watch the sun rise :-)*

**Fiona Duff** likes – *“running, walking, boxing, cycling, reading and pottering in the gardening”* and **Susannah McIntosh** *“enjoy a weekend or mid-week cycle to a park or further afield as well as settling down to a night in of films or a new series on Netflix!”*

Another way to support yourself during the COVID-19 restrictions, is to regularly keep contact with others so you do not feel isolated. Reach out to old friends virtually and try and engage with colleagues, friends or family as often as you can. Try to speak to someone every couple of days where possible. If you notice a colleague seems lonely or is not engaging, try and engage with them with an informal virtual coffee.

Remember to be kind to yourself. Whether you are working from home on your own, with a partner or you have children to contend with, our current situation is extremely hard. There will be days when you are totally on it and other days when you just want to sit down and cry.

Be realistic with your manager. If you are finding it hard to cope speak to them. They may be able to offer your support or find a solution that works for you both.

Take care of yourself: Sleep and eat well and try to do some exercise to help you cope.

More information on mental health in the workplace can be found on the links below and at our next November 27th virtual meeting.

**Susannah McIntosh**

**Public Services Chair- West of Scotland Branch**

*Please note visit the IOSH West of Scotland website. (link) for additional information, suggested signposts for good mental health and list of useful information where colleagues can get help and support.*