

ISSUU.COM/ANALOGZINE



Editor's Note

After a few issues in, it was clear that the majority of content being submitted was on issues with mental health, depression and anxiety. I felt it was time for us to devote an entire issue to this subject. There is of course some optimistic subject matter here, so I hope it will prove useful to anyone reading it. However, this is just a scrappy little indie fanzine. If you are struggling, please seek advice, guidance and above all try to find the best way to look after yourself.

All is love

Alex

@thatwouldbealex

See No Evil. Hear No Evil. Speak No Evil.

by Cyrus Crashtest

For the last couple of months I've been contemplating suicide on a regular basis – not in the sense of considering it as a path for myself, but rather more because of this months cover. I had difficulty in finding a way to convey suicide (and more broadly touch upon mental health) without falling into various traps, or doing something so surreal that all meaning would be lost.

I have issues myself: anxiety and probable PTSD, depression (which I have been dealing with since I was a kid), and reading up on the state of things regarding the issues has at times sent me to dark places within myself and caused more than a few rewrites of this piece. My own family and my friends have been affected by suicide and I count myself lucky that I've never had such an urge regardless of how bad things have gotten for me. See, even though at times it would worsen my state by doing so, I never had much of a problem talking about what was going on in my head, and I never ran short of a willing ear or somebody I know reaching out in one form or another because they saw there was something going on with me. One friend dragged me out of my hole after a breakdown and did so much I was even able to socialise again. A few years later something happened to them that would ultimately lead to them becoming suicidal. I'm glad to say they're still here and that they've even gotten married. All I did was keep on reaching out to them just as they had with me.

This brought me to the Three Wise Monkeys: See No Evil. Hear No Evil. Speak No Evil. Regardless of how lucky I've been in relating my experiences / having friends reach out and so on, I've also had the opposite where people I met, employers, even doctors did not want to see the problems, my family didn't want to hear about it and with those people at least, I was muted and could not speak about it. This is a common issue and no doubt a contributing factor in the decline of the mental health of many and it should not be the case.

See No Evil. Hear No Evil. Speak No Evil. Make it change!

"Thanks to Linus, Elvin and Sooz for their input!

@cyrusthehermit

The Travelodge

by Tony Evans

My brain has always been a bit odd but the last few years it has been odd-er. The last six months it got worse and the last three months have been the worst. So far. Yeah, it's a jerk alright.

Long story short, I have recently been diagnosed with anxiety and 'severe' depression. Maybe it's my anxiety that's severe, I dunno. The assessment results don't make it clear. Either way, Yay! At the time of writing I'm two month into taking antidepressants and deep into 'mood management' classes. The CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) sessions are difficult but weirdly, it's harrowingly reassuring to hear people, all with different issues, come together and talk about the same thoughts and feelings as yourself.

Something that I'm really struggling with more than usual currently is social interaction. The simple stuff is even harder now. I've a history of making up excuses not to attend things even though I probably would like to go.

Meeting new people is very challenging for me. I get tongue tied and self conscious and feel that I'm making people's experience worse for merely being there. Sometimes I go quiet, sometimes I overcompensate. Either way, afterwards I'm embarrassed and ashamed of it but for the most part, I can get through it. Starting a conversation remains one of the hardest things in the world for me so industry parties are torturous. Last years GDC was filled with many such experiences but I can only thank Charles Cecil for looking after me at the Ukie drinks. He's a good man.

That name drop is the first link to the games industry. Let's move onto another. The Develop Conference in Brighton.

I attend Develop every year as part of my day job helping to run the Games course at the National Film and Television School (apply via our website!) but for some reason I've have never had a nice time at any of them which is a shame because I genuinely love the event and Brighton.

In the previous five years I've received news of a family bereavement, a serious illness to a close family member, saw rented PC's fail to run VR projects (thanks Dan and Jess from The Chinese Room for helping me out with a replacement!) and this year's conference took place just as all this new anxiety and low mood revelations started to really show itself on the surface.

The social interaction is one thing but a major 'trigger' is the feeling of letting people down. This brings me back to Develop 2017 where I had a situation trigger both really badly.

Sitting comfortably? I'm not. Regardless, Story time!

I was asked by Paul, one of the creative directors at Cupboard Games (a small Games studio that I'm part of), to pop along to meet one of the publishers we'd been talking to about our game (ask me about 'UMWELT'!) if I wasn't too busy with my School duties. I was told it was a simple two minute "hello" so they could put a face to the email address that they would be dealing with for future correspondence. No problem. I can wave and say "hello".

When I get there and sat down I become immediately uneasy. This was a meeting. A proper meeting! More than a simple two minute "hello".

But... it can't be a meeting. I'm wearing shorts. And a Charlie Brown t-shirt I don't go to meeting in shorts and a Charlie Brown t-shirt! Not even laidback Games industry meetings!

They asked to see a build of a game. I felt physically sick immediately. I don't have a build with me. From my understanding they already have the most recent build, they've even played it, I wasn't told they needed a build! Arghh!

Panic attack time. I ask if they actually need to see a build. They tell me they do. Double arghh! I ask them to give me a few minutes. They agree to.

I bolt, running to the no-other-option-because-I-left-it-too-late Travelodge hotel, chosen as my temporary habitat. Not a jog, I'm sprinting! In my youth I used to run the 100m in 11 seconds. I feel that I'm beating that.

At the hotel, I have no time to regret my booking of the room as I grab my way too heavy laptop, check that there is a build on it and run back, albeit a tad slower. This has taken me at least ten minutes, perhaps even fifteen and I'm aware of every damn second of it because I'm spending each one cursing myself. Really hurling violent mental abuse at myself over this. Every name under the sun each one preceded with a F word. Mental bullying.

When I return to them I'm a sweaty mess. Literally a hot mess. They just stare at me dumbfounded until they have no choice but to call me out on all of this. Rightly so too.

My heart is pounding, my head is pulsing as I feebly apologise. I don't remember exactly what I said but I know that I fell on my sword and took full responsibility for all of it, trying to get across that what they are seeing does not represent me and, much more importantly to me, certainly not Cupboard Games. I offered no excuses but I stated that a miscommunication has occurred and I assured them that if I thought this was a proper meeting I would not show up in this damn Charlie Brown shirt.

You know what? They were bloody great about the situation and gave me the benefit of the doubt. They simply said that they'd forget this ever happened and we'll meet again at Gamescom (which we did - I wore a button down shirt!). I thanked them and left, walking straight back to the hotel with a clenched jaw and self destructive thoughts.

Back at the Travelodge, where the staff were less lively than those at DisneyWorld's Haunted Mansion, I screamed into a pillow and beat the hell out the bed mattress until my arms hurt. Granted, this is something I normally do when I have to stay at a Travelodge but this was different. I stayed in that room despondent, all kinds of things running through my head, for hours.

Eventually, I called Paul to tell him about the meeting. Bless him, he was all apologies and said he had no idea that they wanted to do anything other than say hello let alone see a build. Regardless I offered to drop out of the project there and then as I figured my involvement may well scupper any future dealings with this publisher.

Paul simply told me: "should we get funding, you're the producer of the project. If they want the project, they have to work with us. All of us!" It took a while for Paul's words to reach me. At the time all I wanted to do was figure out how to open the Travelodge window wider than two inches so I could throw myself out of it. When that subsided, the message got through. I was a part of something. We are a team.

I'm not alone in this.

I bumped into the publisher the next day as it happened. I was in a much better mood thanks to Paul and once again, the publisher was great and made sure I knew that he was happy to forget about it. I told him that one day this will make a funny story. Something you can put in a talk about how not to meet publishers and I'd tell him the reasons behind this whole car crash one day. Well, there you go, pal! It's hardly a funny ha ha anecdote as it still makes my heart pound when I think about it. It still ranks as one of the most cringe inducing, embarrassing events of my life.

Yeah, I know. Always have a laptop. Always have a build. Expect the unexpected. I have learned from the event. It hasn't and never will, happen again. And yes, I should have just not gone to the hotel. Panic is a weird thing. Lessons learned.

Dealing with my anxiety and depression is just the beginning of a long road for me. It's still new, it's still not making a helluva lotta sense in some ways but the CBT sessions are helping and as someone who enjoys writing I find jotting things down about it helps me get a handle on it.

I even 'went public' on Facebook about it. Since talking about it, the responses to my posts follow a trend. Of course I get support and well wishes, they are friends and family after all. I also get a lot of 'I would never have guessed you were suffering' messages. I've spent decades hiding this. I'm good at it. Finally, the one that has hit home the most is the sheer amount of people that have gone through similar things. It's actually staggering and incredibly sad.

I was reading recently that they reckon 1 in every 4 visits to the GP are now mental health related. 1 in 4. That's a high already but these are the ones actively seeking a GP's help. There are many more that are not. It took me years to do it. Maybe as long as twenty. If you are suffering please don't take as long as I did to seek help.

You are not alone in this.

Tony Evans
NFTS Games coordinator / Cupboard Games

@TonyEvs

Wishing I could speak.

by Jupiter Hadley

Water. An ocean's worth of water, as far as the eye can see. Me, swimming up to the surface, trying so very hard to get my head above the water. Breaking through to the surface, taking in a big breath. Suddenly a wave, making that surface more unbearable, forcing me back under.

That's how I feel sometimes. I feel like I am always fighting against the water. I am always fighting against those waves.

"You're burning out." "You do too much." "You can say no."

But can I? Can I say no to opportunities that might further my career? Ones that will pay the bills required for me to live and save and survive? Am I burning out when this feeling fades, it's only here for a little while. Am I doing too much? I don't know how to fill my freetime, I just stress about what I could be doing.

But here I am, writing an article for a zine I want to be included in, about to go off to a meet-up that I help run, a game jam happening over the weekend, a day off at home work before flying out for a week to be at a games conference in another country. Here I am, writing this article and wondering if I am okay. If I am burnt out.

I am meant to be recording games, this here is me productively procrastinating, I tell myself as I look out the window, waiting for dinner to arrive. I keep waking up at 8 am, I need to get an earlier start at work. I have deadlines to meet, sites to provide content to, invoices to chase, real work to do. So much, so much each day. I feel exhausted around midday. I have to go into my bed and finish emails there. Can't bare to look at my desk any longer. I take a break midday, normally, where I can't do anymore. I sit in bed looking at the wall for 10 or 20 minutes before returning to my desk.

And some days, I feel sad. I want to say that. I want to say 'I feel sad. I feel like I am drowning. I feel like I have been on the edge of drowning for a while now' but I don't want all of the questions and attention around it. I don't want people to feel sorry for me or take away opportunities I might very much need. I don't want the check ins, the declarations that I am burning out, I don't want people to feel like they can't approach me, that they need to decide what's good for me. I just want people to look at what I am saying and go 'okay. This is why she might be slower at making content. This is why she might take longer to reply. This is why she might be a bit distant right now.'

Maybe I am burning out. Maybe I have been burnt out this entire time. I have been doing this for years, more and more and more. I have always been like this - overloading my time.

The thing is, I am afraid. I am afraid of time. Our most valuable resource - we don't even know how much of it we have. And I don't want to spend this resource in ways that I am not happy with. I want it to go towards creating content and making deadlines and making things grow. I want it to go towards stuff that I want to be apart of and opportunities that are amazing and help me as well. But maybe that's not how time is meant to be spent and maybe I am spending my resource wrong.

But, if I don't do anything for a day, I am riddled with guilt and fear. So I need to keep going, keep working forward, making lists, impossible targets that I struggle to maintain. And I just wish I could tell people that today, today I feel sad. And I wish people would listen and say 'Okay. Thank you for sharing. I hope you feel less sad and overwhelmed soon.' without telling me I have burnt out. Without telling me I need to stop and I need to quit. Without telling me to give up the things that I have spent so much time building.

Telling me to quit, to stop, to give up - it's never helped. It makes me feel like I can't talk about being sad and overwhelmed. And I really wish I could talk about it.

Video games are an amazing artform. In gaming worlds, people can interact with others, become the heroes or villains, business masterminds, fierce warriors, or the leader at online sports or word games. The experience of gaming opens a whole world for people to explore and lose themselves. But what happens when that world becomes unsettling because of online bullies or trolls. Or what happens when someone tries to ignore their real-life problems and tries to escape into an online alternate reality?

@Jupiter_Hadley

Take This – Reducing Mental Health Stigma in the Video Games Community

by the Take This team

These days everyone is a gamer -- from the young kids playing Minecraft to the older adults playing Call of Duty to the millions around the globe playing games on their phone to pass the time. Though backgrounds and ages may be different, all of them share the challenges of daily life that can sometimes become too much to handle. While some handle their challenges well, for others it may be overwhelming, or they are not sure where to turn to in order to get help.

One of the first steps to getting help is finding a resource or professional that understands your concerns, your issues, and can tailor help to your unique needs. In the game community, this resource is Take This, a mental health non-profit that provides resources, guidelines, training and support tailored for the unique needs and diverse cultures of the game and game development community.

This 501 (c) (3) charity was founded in 2013 by veteran game journalists Russ Pitts and Susan Arendt, and clinical psychologist Dr. Mark Kline, Psy.D. in response to the tragic suicide of a colleague. The organization is the expert authority on mental illness and how it interacts with game culture; on how game development cycles can impact mental wellness; and on how exclusionary behavior and dynamics impact mental health (especially online).

"Take This is beneficial to any person experiencing mental health challenges in the board game community, and to game companies seeking to support their employees, fans, and community members by addressing mental health challenges in safe, supportive ways," said Eve Crevoshay, Take This's executive director. "We provide a vital service to the game industry and community, because we combine clinical best practice with a love of all things gamer, providing a safe, accepting space for gamers and game developers."

Take This has a number of programs for gamers and game developers. One of its most well-known programs is its AFK (Away From Keyboard) rooms. AFK rooms offer a safe, calm and quiet space at noisy, crowded game conventions. These rooms let gamers get away from convention/expo craziness and, if needed, speak with professionals about mental health concerns and learn about mental health resources. Since the spring of 2014, Take This has hosted AFK rooms at every North American PAX Event, seeing hundreds of visitors each day. As of 2015, the AFK room has been at most of the PAX events worldwide, and since that time have expanded to include other game events, such as E3.

Recognizing that streamers are such an influential part of gaming, Take This recently started a program, Take This Streaming Ambassadors, that works with popular streamers to get the word out about mental health. These Ambassadors serve as frontline, grassroots innovators and motivators in Take This' campaign against the stigma, hopelessness, and isolation commonly found when dealing with or discussing mental health issues in the game community.

"Streamers have such a strong relationship with their audiences, making them the perfect group to say to gamers that its ok to not be okay," said Crevoshay. "Our first group of Ambassadors are so passionate about making mental health issues acceptable, and we know they will have a great impact on gamers who may be struggling with mental health concerns or challenges."

Take This Streaming Ambassadors were selectively chosen as official representatives for Take This in the streaming community. These ambassadors were selected through a rigorous selection process and received training how to discuss mental health and its challenges with their audience, and properly support individuals in crisis. Streaming Ambassadors actively fight stigma against mental health challenges and promote mental health inclusivity in their streams. They create an environment of acceptance and kindness for those suffering from emotional or mental health challenges, whether or not they rise to the level of psychiatric diagnosis. They partner with Take This to actively create positive, supportive communities, and will work to support the efforts and mission of Take This through fundraising efforts.

Take This Streaming Ambassadors exemplify five aspirational principles:

- **Hope** – Hope is healing! Take This Streaming Ambassadors let others know that things can improve, and that there are resources available. They help others celebrate their successes – even if the successes seem small.
- **Acceptance** – It's okay to not be okay, and Take This Streaming Ambassadors accept people's emotions and physical health as they are. They do not shame others for the pain they feel.
- **Kindness** – Reaching out to others is hard. It risks rejection. Take This Streaming Ambassadors treat those they encounter with compassion and kindness, even if they cannot directly intervene in the other person's life.
- **Self-care** – Physically and emotionally, we can only give what we have. Giving to others at the expense of one's self can be just as personally harmful as never helping others. Take This Streaming Ambassadors exemplify the balance between appropriate selflessness and selfishness. They seek out their own help when needed and give help when they can, within the bounds of what's reasonably appropriate to the situation and their own expertise.
- **Effort** – Streaming ambassadors show an active interest in promoting and advancing evidence- based understanding of mental health, as well as the mission of Take This. They actively attempt to promote all the above principles in their streams and in their communities

The Take This website, Takethis.org, offers a great resource for all things mental health in the game and game development community. From stories on self-care and streaming, effective ways that deal with depression, how to find a therapist or help a friend with mental health challenges and more, the Take This site provides /thousands of visitors with valuable news and information.

Take This also works with leading clinicians to better understand how mental health and games interact. In addition to offering resources online, Take This reaches audiences directly by actively participating in speaking engagements and panels on topics such as self-doubt, therapeutic gaming and gaming addiction.

In addition to serving the game community at large, Take This is the expert in providing mental health best practices tailored for the unique needs and challenges in the game development industry. They offer consulting for workplace dynamics and help businesses address the issues of dealing with “crunch,” 24/7 work days often needed near game launches, and the challenges of creative work. In addition, Take This advises on the portrayal of mental illness in games and best-practices in community management to ensure companies are being responsible with their content. By working with Take This on effective methods of helping employees who suffer from emotional issues, companies are able to provide their staff with a healthier and more productive work environment.

Best mental health practices in the game community are developed alongside Take This clinical director Raffael Boccamazzo, PsyD, L.M.H.C.A. who is a self-described avid gamer who specializes in working with game developers.

“Game developers are in such a unique position with their ‘crunch’ cycles and creative-driven careers that it’s important to understand their industry when advising on mental health issues,” said Boccamazzo. “In addition, by partnering with developers and publishers on mental health best practices, we are able to start to turn the tide of how characters with mental issues are portrayed in games, thus further reducing the stigma with gamers and the overall population. It’s a win win.”

To support this effort of showcasing mental health in games, Take This established the Dr. Mark Award in 2017, which honors the organization’s founding clinician, Dr. Mark Kline, Psy.D. The award recognizes games of exceptional quality that have accurate, compassionate portrayals of mental illness. This award serves as a high-profile mechanism to promote Take This’ gameplay standards, to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness throughout the industry, and also recognizes and promotes good games for everyone to enjoy. The winner of the inaugural Dr. Mark Award was *Stardew Valley*, a game that both portrays mental health issues with empathy.

More information on Take This and its resources can be found [here](http://www.takethis.org). To join the fight against mental health stigma in the game community, consider donating to Take This efforts at

www.takethis.org/donate

Be My Therapist and Be Your Therapist

by Will Luton

My heart is pounding, my brow is prickling with sweat and I'm red. I can't find the words even though I know them. I hear a heckle: "Someone shut this guy up". I seize and can't move. This, although I don't know it, is a panic attack. And it's happening in front of hundred of industry C-suiters. In this moment I should be strong and confident, but instead I'm weak and terrified.

The days after I oscillate wildly between anguish, self loathing and resolve. I can't break my thought patterns; I'm not sleeping and I can't eat or relax. I pace, sweat, talk constantly. Somewhere amongst this I find a diagnosis: Anxiety.

Anxiety has always been a part of me, somewhere in my mind, but I pushed it down by self affirmation of an imagined image: I have no weakness. Just like a beach ball, the more I pushed these feelings down the stronger they became. On that day inside a nondescript hotel function room the beach ball shot violently and unexpectedly to the surface.

I was, and still am, deeply embarrassed about what some on Twitter described as "Will Luton's live meltdown". I felt I deserved derision: Why couldn't I just get on stage and speak some words for 15 minutes? If I couldn't do that, how could I achieve all the things I want in my career?

Over the coming years as my jobs became more senior I found increasingly creative ways to get out of public speaking. I lived weeks and months in the future, running scenarios, worrying and planning. What if my CEO asks me a question at the all-hands meeting? What if he wants me to present the game to the company?

One day, with all of this on top of me, I decided to tell my CEO about my anxiety: "Okay, cool. You don't need to give presentations and if you ever feel you do want to we'll support you to make that happen." All of a sudden my worry was gone and a sense of deep joy pulled into its vacuum: I felt free. I told more people over my career about my anxiety and all I have ever gotten back is support, help and frequently "me too".

Today, I'm telling you about my anxiety as an act of stealth therapy. Embracing and discussing my experiences with the condition undermines a lot of what empowers it: The fear and embarrassment of a panic attack. It has been the single biggest step in helping me overcome anxiety.

But in speaking about my mental health I also hope to help breakdown the stigmas around the issue that are preventing many, especially men, from talking about and getting help with their mind. Poor mental health does not make you weak, instead I believe a lot of what makes me a good game designer is because of anxiety. And hands down the best leader I've worked with in our industry suffers with depression. Mental health is a fundamental facet of who we are.

By discussing and sharing around our mental health not only will people be able to understand and empathise with our behaviour, but others will feel more safe and less alone in their own struggles. A dialogue helps us as much as those around us, so take this as permission to talk about your mental health today. For the sake of yourself and your colleagues.

Inspired by my experience I am currently working on a new kind of conference. The Videogames Nonference redesigns the traditional conference as a healthier more inclusive event. Key to the changes is that speakers will create videos in whichever creative ways they feel fit rather than giving talks. If you'd like to find out more or sponsor Nonference then email me on contact@will-luton.co.uk

@will_luton

SURVIVING SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE GAME DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

by Logan Harrington

We are more connected now than we have ever been. According to a survey, the average Brit checks their phone 28 times a day. That's at least once an hour and more than 10,000 times a year! If you're in game development, chances are that you're stuck with your head in a screen of some sort for the majority of your day.

When it comes to making an indie game, you wear many hats across the spectrum of game development, including marketing. Although, social media has proven remarkable at connecting communities and inspired global social action, it also has been widely criticised as negatively impacting mental health. Studies have proven that social media causes unhappiness and feelings of anxiety and depression, especially in Millennials and those belonging to Generation Z.

But, how do you balance social media within your already taxing game development cycle whilst maintaining your best self?

Social media marketing can be quite overwhelming. There's Facebook, Twitter, oh, and what about Instagram? Should you be on Snapchat, too? It's no surprise that we spend at least two hours a day social networking and messaging – there's so many platforms to do it on!

A common mistake when starting your social presence is to go and sign up for 'em all without any specific target or planning. Not only does this create a scattered approach to marketing and branding your video game, but it'll also burn you out. Fast.

MAKE A PLAN, STAN.

Creating a plan will help you not lose your mind and keep your head in your game.

The three major social media platforms all offer something different, do your research on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and whilst thinking about the content you want to share, decide which is a better fit for your game. There's no harm in choosing one to begin with, absolutely smashing it and then taking on more later if you feel the need. It's much better to have one well-maintained channel than 5 messy, out-dated ones!

Think about how you work. What's going to be easiest to consistently update? Social media for your video game shouldn't be another headache. I've heard businesses say, "Social media? Oh, we don't have time for that!" - how can you incorporate it into your day where it's not another 'thing' to worry about, but something that you can enjoy? Enjoy speaking to your growing community and enjoy sharing your work. Find a way that fits you.

STICK TO A SCHEDULE

To deter the feelings of "another thing you have to do" in your working day, make a social schedule. Create a simple calendar in Excel and fill it in with weekly content that you want to share, perhaps on Saturday you want to take part in #ScreenshotSaturday so you know you'll need to put aside a screenshot from your game for that post.

It helps maintain a consistent workflow and naturally incorporates it into your day.

YOUR COMMUNITY DOESN'T OWN YOU

You owe a lot to your community, but they don't own you. It's important to put your mental health first, and although social media is 24/7, you don't have to post that awesome photo from behind-the-scenes in your game development journey right now.

Snap it and bank it for later when you feel inspired to share it with a captivating caption.

Social media allows you a unique opportunity to give your game studio a personality and to engage with a bunch of passionate people from across the world! Not every post needs to be, or should be, a sales pitch. Take the chance to reflect the ideas behind your indie game and to craft the story of your development journey that's unique to you, but not at the expense of you.

@theFeuerfliege

A PURSUIT OF PEACE

by Laura Fagan

Some things in life stay with you forever. For me, it's the memories of my Dad and I playing video games every Friday Night with me from when I was about 2 or 3 years old, easily until I was about 16 - 17 years old. We played everything, lots of Doom, Age of Empires. Sitting around strategising, going through campaign after campaign. They were foundational times, both regarding my actual growing up but how I was turning out as a gamer too.

So much so that when I moved out to be with my now husband, he was adamant that I wasn't taking the Xbox with him. Because Doom 3 was something he wanted to play, and all the old Doom games were on it. I thought he was joking!

He wasn't joking.

My tastes evolved over time as a result of those Friday night sessions. I found a lifelong love in Pokemon and Kingdom Hearts. They became tools for me to deal with grief and to deal with a personal crisis. Games reminded me of love and loss, and I knew that they could be used as tools to elicit emotions and be used as tools to guide and teach. That games could be used for good. I believed this so inherently that when the opportunity came to cover it as my undergrad thesis, I took the chance on it. I did my undergraduate in Psychology and Psychoanalysis, and my thesis would be on Video Gaming and Language Learning. It's foundation being on the job I was working on the side, as CEA of Leaguepedia (a wiki for League of Legends).

That thesis took me to places I didn't think possible. It became its own book, and I took speaking opportunities that lead to jobs. I pursued PhD in Gaming. Determined that my path would lead me to a Doctorate in Gaming in Emotion and Immersion. I followed that to research opportunities. Both in my home in Ireland and abroad. I'd been rejected from IGGI (The Centre for Intelligent Games and Game Intelligence) once, in the first round. But, I was not deterred.

I found out I'd missed out on another scholarship in DIT (Dublin Institute of Technology) the night my Dad died. It was the last thing we spoke about. I'd asked him while crying on the phone if I should come over to see him to talk about it. He told me to take the night to decompress. As I was going to be seeing him on Tuesday anyway as I was going to go shopping with my Mam.

He died that night of a heart attack. No warning. He was stolen in the night from me.

And very suddenly I was without my My Tank. My Support. My White Mage.

Who knows how to plan a funeral at 24? When all the NPC's around me are non-communicative. But I endured. I levelled up, I stepped up.

The next year was focused on tending to my mother and salvaging myself and my fiances' relationship in the wake of our uprooting from our home to my family home. It required me taking up another job to pay bills, sort out loans, go through wills. It never occurred to me that I should grieve or stop. There was too much to do.

With that endurance ultimately came the burnout. I found myself adrift. I didn't want to game anymore. I got no joy out of it. My controllers didn't feel comfortable in my hand, the jingles of the consoles bootup became harsh and melancholic. I didn't want to write about what I was passionate about - gaming. I stopped talking about it. In nearly all ways I ceased.

I figured it was grief. I just thought it was exhaustion. I just thought it would come back in a few weeks. That I'd feel better, I'd feel more like myself. That Kingdom Heart's Dearly Beloved would pull me back. But it didn't.

I've never wanted to be anywhere else than in the industry. I'd had every position from Sales to CEA. Mostly due, passion projects. But always make a way, creating a path for myself.

I started to play slowly again, going back to old loves, and feeling things again. But where I found the most solace was in the places where there was the most pain. I found myself in walking through the endless Mojave Wastelands while listening to Mr New Vegas in Fallout New Vegas. The whisperings of loves lost, of a time gone by, of enduring against it all resonated with me. Kingdom Hearts, a series all about battling your darkness has not had an appeal to me. In all my darkest times - Sora's hope and Riku's battle with his own darkness always played with or reflected my own. This all pulled me back, and I began to remember through these movements and beats what I loved all along.

It felt like I was tempered by fire. I became more resilient. I made it as a finalist to the IGGI scholarships the second time around (One of the only game based scholarships in Europe, it is for the best of the best in research and gaming) and I 100% flubbed it. I forgot my own PhD proposal. Getting so close and losing it at the end is so crushing. It was my behemoth...and it had bested me. I felt I had been hardened, I felt like I had endured and worked for it and when my time came, it evaded me. I fell on my own sharpened sword.

It wasn't the only boss that was beating me. I've had issues with my menstruating since I was 10. It had been a destructive force in my life. It took me a long time to find a team that wanted to help me. However, it was one of the last serious conversations that I had with my Dad before he died. Which was to go back and keep fighting to find a solution to what was going on with my periods because something was wrong.

In January of 2018, was when I got my diagnosis of Endometriosis. By March 2018, I had to drop out of my Masters in Creative Digital Media, cancel any of my work commitments, had a lump removed from my breast, spent most weeks bleeding. By September 2018, it was decided radical surgery was in order. The end of September I had my first appointment with a psychiatrist. I began seeing things; my dad, pets that have long since passed. I began hearing voices telling me that things weren't going to change. Stressed based obsessional thoughts, bordering on episodic schizophrenia. My life was spiralling.

It's taken me to darker places than I ever thought possible. I would have previously considered myself to be a strong person but recent events over the last year have tested and tried me in ways I wouldn't have thought possible. When all around you is crumbling; your body and mind are giving way. How do you go on when you know in your heart there is no going back?

So, I went and looked to the only other place I could. My Games.

I'm not much of a mobile gamer (bar Kingdom Hearts Union Cross), but upon My 49 Days with a Cells on the Apple Store, I figured I'd give it a go. A simple, cutesy art style with a straightforward premise. All you have to do is take care of a cell.

Sounds easy right? You schedule out your cells weeks for events and things to do, and it just plays out before you.

Well, it didn't turn out that way. It turns out that taking care of these little cells was about as difficult as it is for myself.

So began my first week. There was always a trade-off from doing so much without thinking about the cell's other needs like eating or sleeping. By the time I was halfway through my first cells life-cycle, I had found that I was repeating the same mistakes I was making with myself.

I wasn't taking care of it. The little cell wasn't eating correctly, wasn't able to rest, and barely had time scheduled to take a bath! I was so focused on cramming everything into its existence that I'd forgotten to take into consideration what it wanted or needed. I wasn't listening to it. I was so focused on doing what I wanted this cell to be that I forgot to what it needed.

Ultimately, by the time I'd realised that it became too late to rectify that mistake. Thankfully it didn't die but it made it to its 49th day, and it decided to turn into stone.

Disappointed, and equally a little mystified, I started my second round. It startled me when I realised that the cells respond to you when they're in an event — If they don't like an activity, they tell you.

This one wanted to be strong, it wanted to be in the gym all the time. I tried to cater to its desires and what it wanted to be as well as trying to balance its sleeping, eating and resting. It went a bit better than the last time, but I was still pushing my cell too hard, I was still trying to get it to do everything.

To listen, respect and care for it.

Much like how I'd forgotten how to listen, respect and care for myself.

Focusing on those three words; listen, respect and care, can mean very different things to different people. For me, that means a disconnect from things that stress me out like Twitter, and spending more time doing what I love. Which is reading and playing video games. Creating little rituals for myself about making sure I eat and being gentle and kind to myself as I would be with one of my small cells.

It wasn't the only app that made it into my life at this point. The next app that taught me a lot was the game #SelfCare. Which is as its namesake suggests is all about self-care. You start in a room where you are buried under a duvet. And text appears saying that you're not moving. That this is your safe space.

I found myself being drawn to this-this sacred space. This place where there is no other objective other than to centre yourself and take a few minutes to yourself. A place where there are no fail states, no high scores. The only objective, while you're there, is to get your sun into the light. From sunrise to midday.

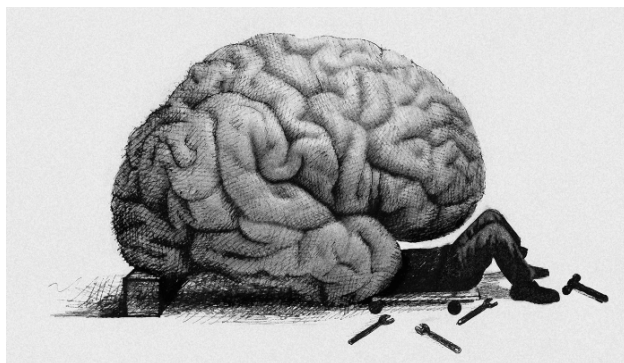
You have a few ways to do this, that open up to you the longer you stick with the app. Some of these appeals to me, coming from a more spiritual place. There is a tarot deck on the floor that when you pull a card, it can be intention setting for the day. But it's not from the typical literature on Tarot's, but the apps own self-care focused interpretations.

There are other mini-games too; one is about sorting your laundry. Where you're clearing out the trash from the things, you need to clean. It sounds monotonous. Like doing laundry is, but it weirdly becomes therapeutic after a while. All the while the game is aware that its tedious but asks you to find the peace in these little actions. To find expressions of peace.

I play it on a daily basis. It's a part of a little routine I've put together to help me claim back a little bit of peace in my daily routine. While I haven't found a solution to all of my pain, I am at least at a stage where things have helped me continue on for another day.

Ultimately, that is all life ever is. Steps that take us forward each and every day to help us build a future that we want to see. For me, its games that have brought me my refuge and my peace. For as long as there are still passionate people creating projects like this to put out into the world the more sparks of light there are in the dark. To guide like starlight in the darkness, as we all walk our roads to dawn.

@mslaurafagan



Is Workplace Mental Health at a Tipping Point?

by Lorna Evans

Definition of Tipping Point: Magic moment when an idea, trend or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire

Just as Ben & Jerry and Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, were the hippy pioneers of Corporate Social Responsibility in the early 90s, we are now standing on a new tipping point for mental health in the workplace. Today's pioneers are Prince William and Prince Harry, with their Heads Together campaign, and multiple celebrities who are sharing their stories in the media.

While all of this may sound rosy, it may be some time before it is truly safe for employees to discuss their mental health in the workplace. There is a misconception that HR is full of people who support employees. In reality, HR is about managing the resources of the business. Today, there is a huge risk when talking to people in the workplace, so be careful. It may make more sense to talk to a therapist or a friend outside of the business, as they will be objective and can contain you safely whilst you work through your options.

First, we need CEOs and HR teams to become educated about stress, anxiety and depression in the workplace, so they understand how they can create strategy and cultural change that is preventative and healthy for a largely millennial workforce. The strategy is not about a 1 in 4 statistic. It's about knowing that all employees have mental health, just as they have physical health. This cultural change will take time, especially in an industry famous for crunch, burnout and poor planning. A top down, strategic commitment to educate managers and teams about staying well is the only way this can happen safely. The number one reason for this strategy is the cost of poor mental health to UK employers, which was £33 billion in FY17/18.

Without this strategic planning from the top, we are left in a dangerous grey area of workplace Instagram-friendly yoga classes, bring your dog to work initiatives and lots of cake, all of which make no sustained difference to workplace mental health in UK studios. They are merely quick fix reactions by studios wanting to tick a diversity, inclusion and wellbeing box to win "Best Workplace" awards.

Stress, anxiety and depression account for 45% of all workplace sickness, yet 95% of employees would not disclose this reason. Studios need to set their own healthy boundaries for themselves and their people. Nothing in the workplace is truly confidential and, with knowledge of unconscious bias, such disclosure may impact people's careers.

The good news is there are positives – big ones – and we are at the start of something very important. We will inevitably make mistakes, but we will learn from them. Studios are starting to understand the need to invest in their people by educating and equipping Directors, HR teams and Managers. Some studios offer free confidential therapy via an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and are beginning to understand the impact of stress, anxiety and depression on their majority millennial workforce.

If you suspect you or a colleague is feeling the impact of work related stress, there will be lots of power feelings going around and it is really difficult for people, we can feel quite debilitated.

Get professional support

Talks with your GP

- Ask for a pro mental health GP when you ring up
- Ask for a 20-minute double appointment. You don't need to say it's for mental health
- Discuss adjustments at work with your GP
- Discuss options with the GP

Your options with the GP

- Check out any health concerns, i.e. chronic pain impacts on mental health very quickly
- Ask for a "Fit Note" from your GP (was a sick note) if you would like to take some time off work
- Discuss lifestyle adjustments that will have a positive impact on your mental health, i.e. increasing awareness of the impact of alcohol (a depressant), caffeine (fuels anxiety), screen time or increasing physical exercise to reduce stress, improve sleep and increase natural serotonin in the brain
- Google ways to raise your natural serotonin levels
- Explore techniques to improve your sleep – Top tips include a cold, dark room, no caffeine after 2pm, no tech in the bedroom and exercise to make your body tired
- Adjust diet to balance blood sugar, fuel your body and improve sleep
- Discuss work adjustments with your GP
- Discuss medication options

Look at your Counselling options

- Request face to face counselling rather than less effective telephone or email counselling
- Find out waiting times from your GP – If too long, know you have options
- Does your employer offer an EAP scheme? Confidential face to face sessions? Request face-to-face sessions only, as telephone/email sessions are less effective
- Look for a private therapist who is BACP registered. Generally cost £40 - £50 per session. You will be seen within 1 week. Just type your post code in this website and pick a person who seems right for you <https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists>

If in Crisis

Samaritans 24 hours: Call 116 123

NHS Crisis Team: Google the number for your local service

If you are concerned about a colleague, ask them to pop these numbers in their phone when they are with you.

Self Care and Mental Wellness

Self-care and mental wellness looks different for everybody, whether you like playing games, walking, listening to music, baking, running, meeting friends or meditating. Experiment with what feels good for you.

It is really important to remember that even when suffering from burnout, most people will still show up for work. To reduce stress and risk of burnout, take a break every 8/9 weeks, particularly if you are in a stressful role. Get those holidays booked in!

Although it is still early days, we are moving forward and studios are beginning to seek the correct education to create healthy, human strategy.

If you have any questions about the above, do not hesitate to contact me.

Lorna Evans Msc PGDip
The Mind Movement
Psychotherapist & Games Industry Workplace Mental Health Consultant



Cut Out And Keep:

- 1: I am grateful for...**
- 2: What would make today great?**
- 3: Daily affirmations. I am...**
- 4: Amazing things that happened today...**
- 5: How could I have made today even better?**

The impact of unemployment that we don't talk enough about and finding your place in the games industry

by Nida Ahmad

I've tried to write this multiple times, it's now the day of the deadline and I'm staring at this page unsure of what to say. How do I compartmentalise my experiences and can help others going through the same thing?

What I do know is that living with depression and anxiety is hard enough, doing that whilst unemployed doesn't make it any easier. I graduated in 2017 with ideas of what I wanted to achieve, passions I wanted to feed and people I wanted to help. Yet here I am, a year and a half later unsure of my path, feeling detached from the world in a state of limbo.

It's important to preface this with the fact that everyone's experience of unemployment will be different. For instance I'm privileged enough to live at home in London and had great opportunities, but I'm also a brown working class woman who deals with a myriad of physical and mental health issues on a daily basis, so there are multiple things at play here.

Growing up I learnt that because of my life circumstances, I had to work twice, maybe three times as hard to be successful. I wasn't the smartest, struggled during my studies but it was my solid work ethic that had gotten me through it all. I was studying when I got my first job in games, it came about due to being in the right place at the right time, at a point where I had no idea what I wanted to do. It was through this role I had finally learnt what 'do what you love' actually meant. I enjoyed what I did, I excelled and I finally felt like I fit in somewhere. I had built a nice CV, taken all the right career advice and had been told I would do great in the future, something I naively latched onto.

Going from being on top of the world to being riddled with self doubt and imposter syndrome because you cannot find work really does change you. No one tells you that you can go from hopefulness to being slowly worn down over time, your confidence and sense of self chipping away which has been one of the scariest parts for me. I have previously taken the unhealthy approach that my value is centred around my achievements and being productive, so the lack of direction feels alien and quite frankly embarrassing most of the time. The recent industry stories around passion being used as an indicator of your ability to work long hours without question, doesn't exactly help this. Especially when I see people my age or younger doing awesome things, does that mean it's no longer worth trying as no one has yet felt like I was good enough to contribute? Some days I wonder, what's the point? If I haven't found something already, then maybe my place isn't here?

This type of toxic thinking can erode the person within you that is capable of so much. Turning it off isn't so easy when experiences positively reinforce that. Spending hours on end applying for work, relentlessly interviewing and being ghosted by companies becomes your new normal. Your new friends are hopelessness, humiliation (when you're unable to answer what job you have) and frustration. You may not sleep as much or be sleeping for most of the day but still be lethargic because your sense of time changes. The mental exhaustion feeds into you physically where sometimes, just looking at my screen makes me cry or even writing this requires me to take breaks because of the cognitive fog. It can take its toll but you owe it to yourself to not let it consume you, because you are more than the difficulties you endure.

So there's the struggle of ensuring self care whilst working hard to build a life for yourself that you're content with. Learning how to balance your expectations and goals, your dreams and your health is what will help you secure work and find your place in this volatile creative industry. I say it's volatile because it's no secret that finding work in games post-graduation is competitive. As of 2016, there are 20,430 FTE's directly employed in this industry, so making your way can be tough.

I'm a firm believer that you cannot control everything, there are many outside forces that influence your starting points and the options available. However, you still have agency on how to respond, deal and fix the hurdles you face. Change isn't going to happen overnight, your dream job won't just fall in your lap, so here are some actions you can take to help you navigate the job market:

1) Re-evaluate your opportunities

Work out what jobs are available based on your current skill set and see if there's support on how to broaden your talents. I've decided to take the D-I-Y approach, I don't work in one area but multiple, if I cannot see a clear opportunity available to me, I'll do my best to make it. Your unique blend of determination and talents is what will make you stand out not the number of things you've worked on. This also helps you not put all your eggs in one basket where getting your hopes up sets you up for disappointment later if you don't get that one job. You are capable of doing more than just one role at one studio, you still have other opportunities open to you so don't beat yourself up.

2) Use your boundaries to your advantage.

Reframe the negatives into a positive! For instance, I now have more time on my hands so I co-host a game design and game industry podcast to keep me busy called 'Level Edit'. Funnily enough one of the recent episodes was on building self confidence. There is also no shame if you cannot afford to wait, finding a job elsewhere in the meantime doesn't mean you're any less passionate. Not being able to attend all events doesn't either, there are many Slack/Discord channels you can join and meet new people.

4) Find your people

It's important for you to see if a company's values and interests align with yours. Are you going to be working with people who actually want to support you? That's more important than joining a studio just because they're a big name, it won't end well. You need to find people that understand you and you won't need to code – switch around, something I have way too much experience of. You want to stay away from environments that result in you trying to figure out how much of yourself you need to give in order to be deemed worthy. I have felt way more comfortable and feeling like I can give my all when I'm around people who are genuinely interested in what I'm doing. For instance, joining women and BAME in games circles has enabled me to be confident in who I am rather than feeling the need to change to be considered 'acceptable'.

5) Work on yourself.

There will be days where you cannot get out of bed, days where you won't feel motivated (rely on self – discipline instead), even weeks where you don't apply to any roles because it's all just too much. I'll tell you now, that is okay. Create a support system and figure out what your triggers are that can negatively impact your journey. Do not spend energy on figuring out if you're 'hustling' hard enough or comparing yourself to others as you will be doing yourself a disservice. Instead, test out different activities and resources to help you become your best self. Maybe give yourself a task to do each day to help build momentum and a plan of your next steps. I don't know the best answers for improving your mental health but what I do know is that it's a lot of trial and error and taking it day by day.

I've decided that I want to make my mark here and create awesome experiences but I won't lie and say I don't sometimes think about if I'm making the right choice to pursue a career in this industry. On a creative level, I'm determined and adore working on games with incredibly talented people. But the reality of potential lay-offs or certain working conditions can fight against this. This puts the whole 'follow your dreams' into perspective, but that doesn't mean I'll stop trying!

@NidaAhmad_



Mental Health and the Video Game Development Professional: How The Volunteer Experience™ Advocates for Caring for the Whole Self

*by By Jennifer E. Killham, Ahmed
Hisham Emam, and Christopher Pioli¹*

Dear Reader,

We write on behalf of The Volunteer Experience™(TVE™)², an international organization devoted to excellence in volunteer management at video game development events. TVE™ community is comprised of caring individuals dedicated to enabling exceptional conference experiences for attendees and to making our industry an inclusive, helpful, open, and diverse place. Our mission is to foster and advance our Culture of Inclusion and High Performance, because we believe inclusion is a catalyst for engagement and innovation. We strive to cultivate environments that invite team members to bring their whole, healthy selves to their tasks at hand.

Our volunteers are highly regarded for their exceptional hospitality, follow through, and problem-solving skills; yet, we are aware their admirable work ethic often exposes them to inherent vulnerabilities, such as stressors related to mental health. As a community invested in positively shaping the health and well-being of video game developers, we intentionally protect our team from these vulnerabilities and hope to offer a unique perspective to the conversation about mental health in game development.

Below, we acknowledge and build on the respected and steadfast work of International Game Developers Association³ (IGDA) and Take This⁴ as an avenue for future game developers to position themselves as healthy, conscientious leaders of our industry.

Over the last two decades, our community members have been assisting at the largest game development conferences in the industry. Through these vast conference volunteer experiences, we have developed procedures that proactively preserve volunteers' mental health, making it easier to maintain professional environments for game developers to further enhance their specialties, engage in business deals, network with their peers, and enjoy themselves. We hope these practices and guidelines are by nature applicable to all game development environments, but we recognize that each studio has its own unique demands and may not be able to adopt these procedures as we present them below. Nonetheless, we believe, as long as the spirit of these ideas are upheld, studios and event management teams can potentially improve the well-being of their developers—physically and mentally. If you already maintain some of these procedures, consider this article an affirmation to reinforce their presence in your studio and company culture. Further, we do not recommend these as catch-alls, and serious issues must be addressed by medical and/or mental health professionals.

We illuminate two priorities organizations can implement: 1) caring for the physical self and 2) creating safe spaces.

1) Caring for the Physical Self

We can attest firsthand to the power of proper sleep⁵, exercise, nourishment, and breaks. We know how exhausted individuals subconsciously prioritize their own well-being as opposed to the guests. This is particularly noteworthy, as this dilemma presents a tension between the volunteers' goal to offer the best experience possible for conference attendees.

As one part of the solution, we advocate for careful attention to the physical self, akin to what neuroscientist Wendy Suzuki shared in her TEDWomen talk titled, "The brain-changing benefits of exercise,"⁶. To provide context, TVE™ employs health-oriented scheduling. We invest time in crafting an intentional shift schedule that considers sleeping needs, as well as our volunteers' personal preferences on start and end times. Health-oriented scheduling requires forethought and a time investment from volunteer managers prior to an event, but we believe it to be a worthwhile investment. This is why some veteran members of our community⁷ went to great length to program a scheduling system that focuses on the individual needs and preferences of our volunteers.

Another way we champion the physical well-being of our volunteers is through exercise - physical and mental. During our management of the Devcom volunteer team in August 2018, two of our veteran volunteers (Katherine and Berti) understood the importance of taking care of one's body while away at conferences. Therefore, they enabled us to offer our team and conference attendees a morning run club option. For those seeking to implement a run/jog club at their next event, press play on the Mortal Kombat soundtrack, select a reasonable route through nature, and accommodate various running paces by adopting Katherine and Berti's motto "Leave no runner behind." From a scheduling perspective, we strongly urge that staffing the run club be deemed as on-duty, and adjust the hours of your leaders to account for the time they will need to take care of themselves before, and after, serving on such a shift. Further, avoid regarding this club as an activity outside the volunteering schedule. It must be accounted into the time budget, like any other break. This practice helps avoid burnout, as well as upholding health at the core of the organization.

2) Create Safe Spaces

TVE™ community advocates for the increased allocation of safe spaces as a necessary asset to foster meaningful learning and networking opportunities professional engagements intend to promote. Our recommendations include meditation and interfaith prayer rooms. For example, quiet spaces help meet a variety of interpersonal needs, whether it serves as a space for an attendee to complete work remotely, collect their thoughts, rejuvenate, pray, or feel welcomed while away from home. Further, partnerships with the agency Take This, and their associated AFK Room Program⁸, allow events to expand their safe space room offerings in a responsible manner.

We can confirm that conferences can be mentally and physically exhausting conferences, even for the most extraverted of us all; however, mentally taxing does not have to be our industry norm. We, as TVE™, are active agents in this paradigm shift. Organizationally, we are eager to question preconceived notions of this prevailing hyperstimulated climate, preferably in ways that place game developers' health at the center for positive change.

*From a managerial perspective, one way TVE™ has approached this is to have everyone on our team paired with a member of our leadership team, so our volunteers have a range of peer leaders who they can reach out to in the event they feel anything less than stellar. Our aim is embolden courage and belonging, combatting feelings of isolation. Our aspiration is that this approach encourages more seemingly difficult conversations to occur more naturally, developing habits of emotional wellness, and combats feeling of isolation and loneliness. We also encourage allotting time for introspection through journaling (a powerful self-reflective practice our volunteer veteran Irina reminds us to partake in) and we like to tune out the conference noise with soothing sounds from the video games *Zelda: Breath of the Wild* and *Journey*.*

**Because our list is not exhaustive of the ways one can build emotional resilience, we invite you to continue the conversation with us on Twitter (@thevolunteexp).*

Footnotes

Special acknowledgements to our veteran volunteers who assisted with the writing of this essay: Diego Saldivar, Tristin Hightower, Jens Bahr, and other veteran volunteers who wished to remain anonymous.

For more information on The Volunteer Experience™, visit the website at <https://thevolunteerexperience.com>. We also acknowledge, with sincere gratitude, one of our biggest advocates: Astrid Gooding. Her event management experience, combined with her genuine care for the members of our community, enabled our program to be fully committed to the health and well-being of our volunteers.

The IGDA is a non-profit advocacy network that supports initiatives aimed at the betterment of the lives of game developers around the world. For information about how to become a member of the IGDA or the results of their annual Developer Satisfaction Survey, visit their website at www.igda.org

Take This, is a non-profit charity foundation aimed to help the videogame community to overcome their mental health issues through education, suggested guidelines, and stigma reduction. For information about Take This, visit their website at www.takethis.org.

For an informative TedMed Talk on the brain-based benefits of sleep, we recommend the following talk from neuroscientist Jeff Iliff: Iliff, J. (2014, September). One more reason to get a good night's sleep [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/jeff_iliff_one_more_reason_to_get_a_good_night_s_sleep/transcript

Suzuki, W. (2017, November). The brain-changing benefits of exercise [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/wendy_suzuki_the_brain_changing_benefits_of_exercise

Scheduling for a team of 150 volunteers is no easy feat; therefore, a special thank you goes out to veteran volunteers Roy, Dave, Carlos, Jens, Diego, Irina, Paul, Justin, and Tessa.

AFK Rooms allow conference attendees to center themselves in the company of trained professionals for mental health consulting. The AFK Rooms provide valuable breaks from the conference hustle and bustle, a setting which can trigger all sorts of emotional reactions. We have had volunteers propose to extend similar programs on a goodwill basis, but we encourage event management to work directly with Take This because untrained responders may cause more harm than good.

#disABILITIES in the workplace

by Imogen Wilkinson

People need to be more aware about how discrimination is not just illegal, it adversely affects the mental well-being of individuals.

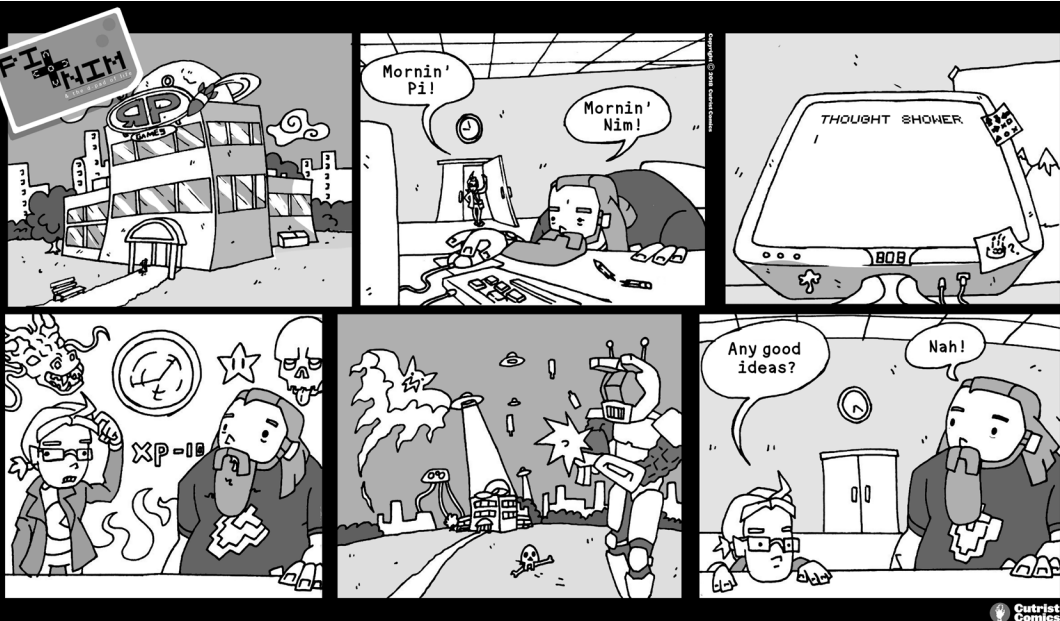
Discrimination is not always a conscious action, people can make judgements or decisions based on subconscious prejudice. Take the Metropolitan Opera for example. Once blind auditions were introduced for the Metropolitan Opera in New York, 5 the amount of women were offered roles when their gender was not known in advance to the decision makers. Therefore they clearly didn't think women were less capable by any means, merely their sight overclouded their judgement. I think that the application of the equality act needs to be administered more closely. Whilst interviewers cannot ask if someone has any disabilities, they can question why there are gaps in someones employment history. What is there that we with disabilities can do then? Lie or be honest - then we're faced with discrimination, conscious or otherwise. I don't know how to fix this issue as yet, however I am more than happy to get a debate going to try and find a constructive and humane way forward.*

Employers and those in management positions need to be made aware of places they can go for advice on how to best integrate any reasonable adjustments that need to be made, if required. Mental health is now being spoken about more openly and honestly than ever before, it should be something that employees are comfortable to speak about with their employers. However, this is in general not the case right now. As a society we need to be more accepting and knowledgeable about all disabilities; remove the stigma associated with such conditions.

Stylist Magazine published a gender pay gap video on their Youtube channel in January of this year. It saw men paying 18% more than women for their food/drink at a pub. Many were happy to pay and thought it was a great idea. Others were not so happy to pay this 'man tax'. Those unwilling to pay said tax had approx. 18% of their food/drink taken away to make up for the pay gap. As I'm sure you can imagine, this left a few very disgruntled customers, with some leaving straight away.

This kind of creative thinking is exactly what is needed, taking an intangible subject and managing to make it tangible so that it can really resonate with people. It also highlights the fact that when gender discrimination becomes a conscious decision, many do not agree with it, and work towards eliminating it. Can we not come up with something similar for disability discrimination?

There needs to be some sort of benchmark within the industry to confirm that businesses are actually an equal rights employer, instead of them just being able to say they are. A disabled rights institute would be the best way of doing this, then people with mental or physical disabilities wouldn't have to worry about being rejected or dismissed because of their disabilities, but given a fair opportunity because of their capabilities. It need not be limited to those with disabilities to use though, everyone who wants to work for an ethically minded company with strong moral fibre should be able to use the list of companies approved by said institute as a referral list. I think this would produce a far more cohesive working environment for businesses were people could voice their concerns and ideas openly and not have to worry about hiding anything or their difficulties being discovered. For this to work it would need to be adopted on a wide scale to best utilise it's resources; essentially lots of companies would need to want to get approved and then post their jobs on the institute website.



Steven H - Co-Editor note

As Alex mentions, this edition is all about mental health, so It's with even bigger thanks than usual to those who have contributed!

It can be a bloody tough industry sometimes, with more than its fair share of ups and downs, hopefully some of the articles will be of more than just an interest to those reading.

And if any of you are finding it tough there's a fantastic world of help and support out there, you are not alone.

www.analogzine.co.uk

Send your submissions to info@analogzine.co.uk

Analog also now has a Patreon, where we would love your support!
<https://www.patreon.com/analogfanzine>

@SharkCustard

**If you or someone you know needs help, support or advice,
use the details below.**

**Talk to your GP
www.nhs.uk**

Search: NHS Crisis Team

**NHS: Call 111
www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/**

**Samaritans: Call 116 123
www.samaritans.org**

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