

Resource Pack

SUPPORTING MUSICIANS

How to support musicians in the
workplace

**A guide to prevention and
support of mental health
issues among classical
musicians.**

musiciansmindstogether.org




Draft-for-Review



MUSICIANS'
MINDS
TOGETHER

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ABOUT US



MUSICIANS' MINDS TOGETHER IS A NON-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION FOR THE SUPPORT AND AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WITHIN THE CLASSICAL MUSIC INDUSTRY.

ALONGSIDE PROVIDING SUPPORT DIRECTLY TO USERS, MUSICIANS' MINDS TOGETHER OFFERS WORKSOPS AND TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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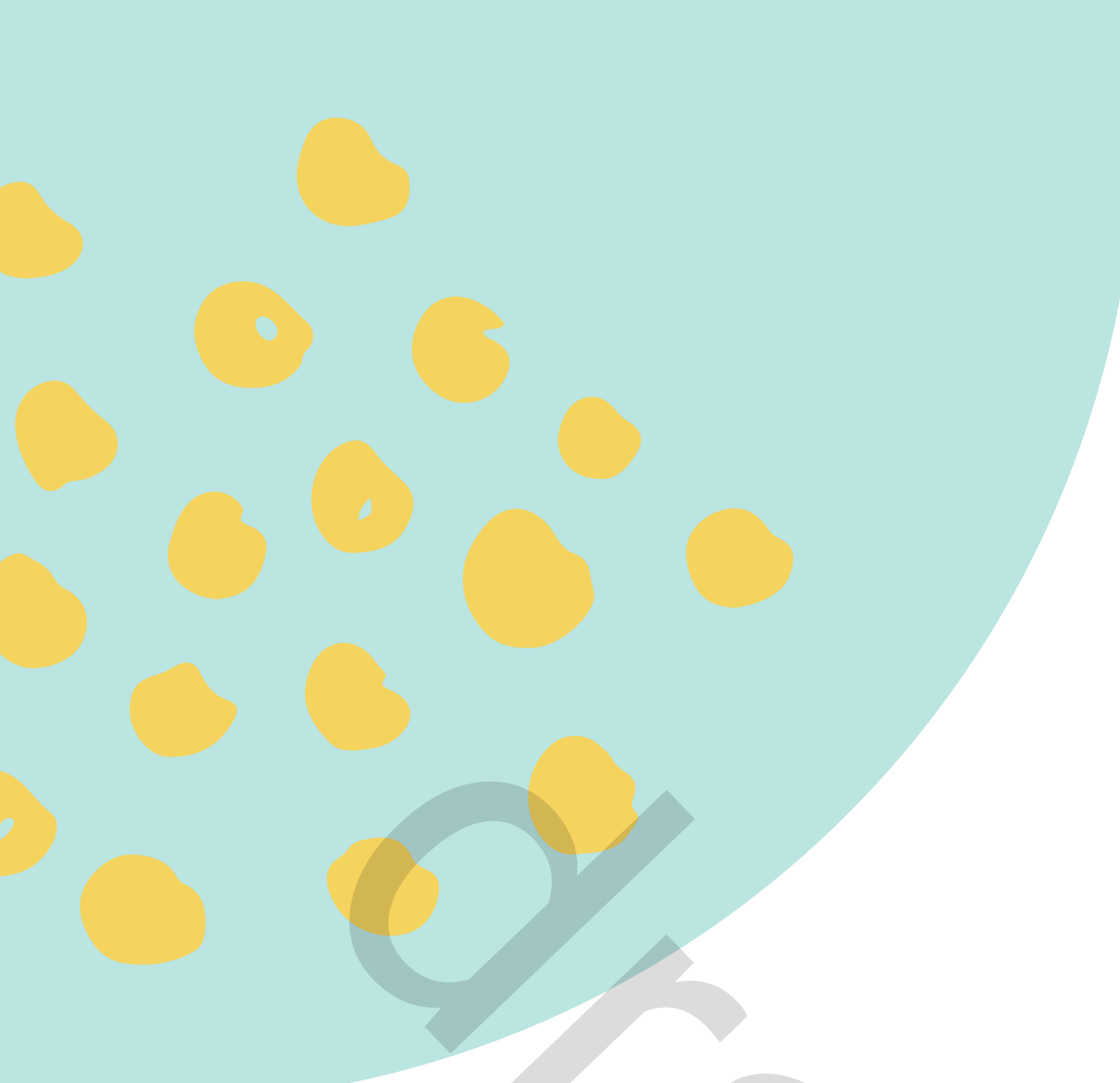
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SECTION

ONE



What is mental health? Mental health is a term used to describe our mental well-being. This is our psychological thoughts, feelings and emotions. A person can have good mental health as well as ill mental health and mental illness.

"Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community." -World Health Organisation (2014).

What is mental health?

Mental illness, mental health problems and ill mental health is very common both in the classical music industry and in the wider world. Mental health problems sit on a spectrum and as individuals every person will experience poor mental health in different ways. For some people, this may affect them in a severe way and may be classed as a disability.

There are lots of different mental health illnesses some which you may have heard of, such as anxiety and depression, and others that may be less known to you such as personality disorders or eating disorders.

Unfortunately, ill mental health is prevalent in the classical music industry. Although we are not entirely sure why this is the case, it could be down to a number of factors, such as commonly seen high stress environments, high standards, scrutiny, the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the industry and self driven work.

Risk of suicide is elevated in the performing arts: 69% higher for women than the average, and 20% higher for men.
-(inspire wellbeing performing arts report)

Although mental health is commonly seen in the classical music industry- it is not largely talked about or addressed. Many will go without speaking to their peers or employers which can ultimately lead to worsening their mental health problems. This is where you can help! By taking part in these sessions you will be equipped with the right tools needed to support your peers or employees and to create an environment where mental health is understood and dealt in the best way possible.

STIGMA

Unfortunately, struggles with mental health have always come with a stigma. The world has only really begun to understand mental illness and treatment options relatively recently. In fact, the first piece of legislation in the UK to view mental health problems as an illness was in the *1974 Health and Safety at Work Act*, and the first to protect those with mental health illness was the *1983 Mental Health Act*.

Mental illness can be hard for those who have never experienced it to understand. Coupled together with the perception of mental illness in the media, film and TV, you can see how easy it can be for someone with no experience to have the wrong assumptions about ill mental health.

The use of mental health illness in day to day slang can also lead to misconceptions about mental illness, such as saying someone looks anorexic because they are slim, someone has OCD because they like things neat or saying someone is a psycho because they have done something untoward. In fact these illnesses are very complex and severe cases require extensive treatment.

Stigma may come from other areas of society too, such as from health professionals, religion, social groups or ethnicity. As musicians, many may feel stigma from the industry about their mental health issues. Often as freelancers it is common for musicians to feel as if they are their own business themselves and so being honest about their own mental health may affect how others view their playing.

Whilst conducting our research on stigma here is what some of our users said...

"I feel concerned talking to my employers about my mental health because I'm so aware that as a freelancer my work is only as valid as my last gig for them, especially being in an oversaturated industry."

"I personally find in the classical industry there's a lot of pressure to look & perform a certain way"

"I never saw stigma within mental health as an issue until I experienced it for myself."

"I was told that because I didn't have performance anxiety that I couldn't possibly be struggling with my mental health outside of performance"

"I had to suppress it because I felt like there wasn't time for me to dwell or be sad in it."

STIGMA: THE CLASSICAL MUSIC INDUSTRY



FREELANCING

As a freelancer many musicians struggle to separate life and work. Some musicians heavily identify with their instrument/ voice and it can be hard sometimes to separate critiques about their playing from about themselves. Having this connecting can be a great thing, but in other times this can cause stress and anxiety.



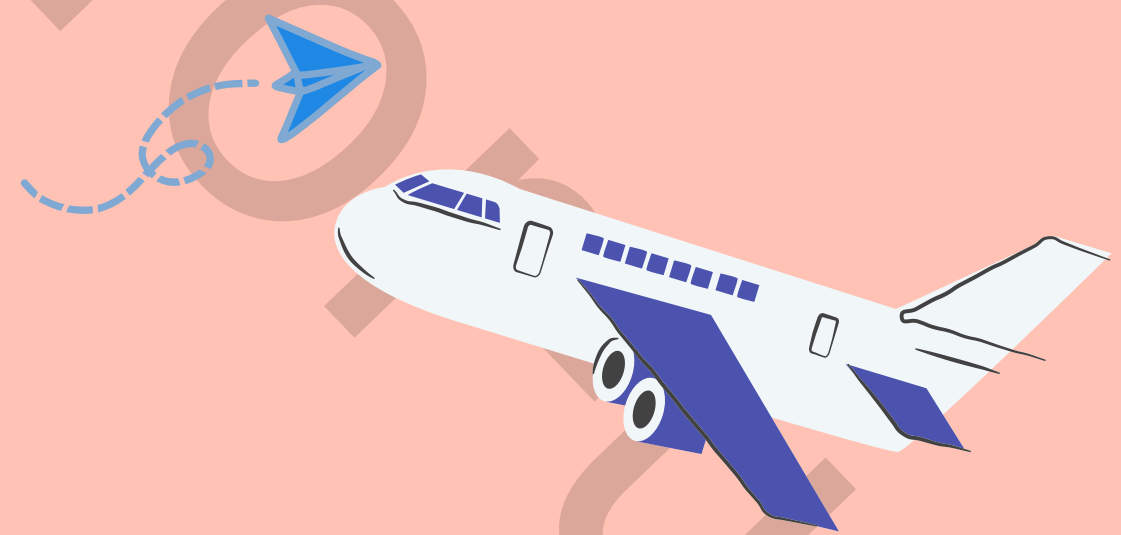
APPEARANCE

Within the performing arts, there is a focus on identity. This can be great but from what our users say, this can put also pressure on musicians to look and perform in a certain way. This is something that is being challenged in recent times but some areas of classical music still uphold these sometimes restricting standards of appearance which is not necessarily representative of the society we live in today.



CASH FLOW

As many musicians are freelancers, it is very common for musicians to have a disrupted cash flow throughout their careers. As wait times for mental health services grow longer and longer (many being over a year), many suffers are looking to private health care. Unfortunately this is something that is increasing in cost with sessions of 30-45mins now commonly looking to cost between £60-£90.



INDUSTRY PRESSURES

Many musicians experience a disrupted lifestyle due to the pressures that the industry demands. This includes working late nights and traveling long distances for multiple times a year. This can mean that sleep is disrupted and many can start to feel worn down, taking a toll on their physical and mental health.

SECTION

TWO

In this section we will learn about the different

TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS.

This section of the guide will take us through the many different types of mental illness that are more commonly seen among those suffering. It can be difficult to pin point a specific diagnosis on a person you are trying to help as there is much overlap. For example, A person with depression can also have severe anxiety. Our job as a point of support isn't to diagnose but to be aware of symptoms and to spot if a person is struggling in order to provide help.



DEPRESSION

Signs and symptoms

Depression is a prolonged period of feeling low or down. It is a serious illness and is projected that 5% of adults have experienced depression*. Low mood becomes depression when it is suffered for a long period of time and has an effect on daily life. Symptoms include**:



Unusually sad mood

This is a low mood that may not always correlate with events that may be happening in the person's life. This may stem off irrational thoughts or thinking patterns although the affected may not realise this. The low mood affects all parts of their life.



Loss of enjoyment and or interest.

A person with depression may start to feel a lack of enjoyment and or interest in activities that would previously be of great pleasure. This is very common in people with depression and can feed back into the cycle of low mood.



Lack of energy and tiredness

Someone with depression may feel extremely tired and lacking in energy. This can be due to a number of reasons caused by their depression such as lack of appetite, disrupted sleep patterns and racing thoughts.



Intrusive thoughts

Intrusive thoughts can be very dangerous to those who suffer from depression, these can be bad thoughts about their self or even thoughts about harming themselves or others and suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15-29 year olds*** and should be taken very seriously.

*estimate from World Health Organisation (WHO)

**symptoms taken from the ICD-10

***Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)

Supporting someone with depression

Depression can feel isolating for the sufferer. It is so important that as employers, peers or colleagues we can spot the warning signs and apply mental health first aid to best support the affected. After all, to produce the best standard of music we need to create a safe and understanding space to perform in.

It can be difficult to spot the signs of depression as those affected may internalise their struggles or retreat and become more isolated. Here are some physical symptoms that you may be able to spot in order to help.

Looking sad

Becoming more
anxious

Becoming slow in
movement

Slow or slurred
speech

Lack of personal
hygiene

Crying spells

Withdrawing from
social contact

Negative attitude or
thoughts



It can be nerve-wracking talking to someone who you may believe to be suffering from depression, however it is vital that you can begin to start to provide support as soon as possible. Please refer to section 4 for information on how to provide mental health first aid.

SUICIDE AND RISK



People with depression and other mental illness are prone to be of harm to themselves or others. Dealing with suicide or other harm is a high priority and we need to know how to deal with this in a calm and effective way.

There isn't one overarching sign to know if someone is suicidal or at risk. Some people may reach out for help but others may become more closed off here are a few indicators that someone may be at risk.

- 1 talking about wanting to hurt or kill themselves.
- 2 starts actively engaging in damaging activities.
- 3 increasing alcohol or drug use.
- 4 Dramatic change in mood (starts suddenly appearing happy).
- 5 Saying goodbye or starting to take care of affairs.
- 6 Sudden 'recovery'.
- 8 Seeking out ways to kill themselves such as pills and weapons.
- 9 A feeling of hopelessness or feeling 'trapped'.



If you notice or suspect any of these signs then you **MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY.**

APPROACHING SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL

Step 1- Approach the person and assess.

If you believe the person is suicidal then act fast. Approach with care and assess the situation by asking about their immediate intentions, this way you will be able to assess if this person needs urgent medical help. Be open minded and express your concern. Remember to always ask the person directly and clearly if they are feeling suicidal- this ensures that there is a clear line of communication.

Step 2- Urgent care

If you believe that the person is in immediate danger then call 999 and wait for an ambulance. Tell the call handler about your risk assessment and do not leave the person at risk alone until the paramedics arrive. Please note that the person that you have assessed may be opposed to this but it is vital that you get medical help regardless of what the person who is at risk is saying.

Step 3- Take the time to listen

Once you have assessed if the person requires immediate medical attention or not then the next step is providing a safe space to allow the person to talk about how they are feeling. Remember to be non-judgemental, which means listening and providing a non-reactive reaction to what the person may say.

Step 4- Provide support

Once you have listened and heard their concerns, then make a secondary assessment. This is to determine whether this person is safe to be in society with external support or if this person, although not in immediate physical danger is still in crisis and may need further support from a hospital or crisis team. Treat the person with respect, offer emotional support and encourage their recovery from crisis. Start to talk about a plan going forward.

Step 5- Encourage them to get help

There are many available resources and organisations across the country that can provide help to someone going through a mental health crisis. Make sure that you have a list accessible to you of your local crisis number that you can give out. Some for example, are the Samaritans, Beat, Mind or even 111. Offer to get in touch with these organisations on their behalf as this may be easier for the affected person. Don't forget that family and friends can be a great source of support too and encourage them to reach out.

Performance and self-harm



How to help a performer with self harm feel more comfortable during performance.

Some people with mental ill health self-harm. This can be for a variety of reasons for some, its a outlet, and for others it can be a form of self punishment. Self-harm is complex and many people who use this behaviour are very secretive about or and may feel embarrassed. As employers or colleagues we should be supportive of those who self-harm. Here are somethings that we can do to help.

- 1** Agree on concert wear that is comfortable for the person affected for example long sleeves.
- 2** During costume fittings, don't comment on the self-harm but check in on them after the fitting.
- 3** Ask them what may make them feel more comfortable.

If you notice self-harm that may look dangerous or infected then contact 111 immediately. If you think that the self-harm is life-threatening then call 999.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety is a term that is commonly used and is something that as humans we all experience at some point in our lives. Examples can be that we have anxiety about a test, or before an interview. Anxiety is a normal every day thing. But for some people, anxiety is an everyday occurrence and can range from unrealistic thoughts to intense panic attacks. Anxiety becomes an anxiety disorder when it is persistent and creates a high amount of distress or interference in day to day life.



PHYSICAL EFFECTS

Palpitations, rapid heartbeat, hyperventilation, shortness of breath, nausea, choking, aches and pains, tingling sensations, becoming dizzy.



PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Racing mind, confusion, lack of ability to concentrate, unrealistic thoughts, tiredness, restlessness, dissociation.



BEHAVIOURAL EFFECTS

Distress in day to day situations, situational avoidance, staying at home, urges to run away, repetitive behaviour, child-like behaviour.



GENERAL ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

A person with GAD has anxiety about everyday things in all aspects of their life. GAD can be difficult to control as for a person with GAD the anxiety is all around them.



PANIC DISORDER

Panic disorder gets diagnosed when a person is having repeated panic attacks at a very frequent rate. This can cause great physical distress and is very tiring for the sufferer.



POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

PTSD can develop after an incident of trauma. People with PTSD often experience intense moments of anxiety with thoughts associated to the trauma or have flashbacks.

