

'Time To Talk Day' Thursday 4 February 2021

## How are you Feeling?



Yesterday I went out at lunch time for food shopping and waited in a queue at the cash machine.

It wasn't busy with just one other person in front of me. The middle- aged man seemed flustered and in a hurry, and then moved away to enter the store.

I looked down and the money he was trying to collect was still in the dispenser tray. I shouted at him "Hey Mate. you've left your money in the machine". He didn't hear me... I shouted louder and he came back over and thanked me. He said to me "Thank God that was you and not somebody else".

I started to think about my experience and how I helped someone who was having a difficult day.

Sometimes you just don't know what people are thinking or feeling as we more often answer 'Fine' when asked 'How are you today'. 'Fine', 'Ok', 'Great' are common responses when in fact we are not fine.

I have created my own quiz called **Have you Ever?**

Please spend a minute reflecting on the Yes or No answer

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### Have You Ever?

- 1 – Covered up your feelings when you have not been feeling very well?
- 2 – Had difficulty concentrating?
- 3 – Said “I’m fine” when inside you don’t feel fine?
- 4 – Worried about what people think of you?
- 5 – Experienced loss of sleep?
- 6 - Experienced periods when you feel a ‘cloud is hanging over you’
- 7 – Felt inferior compared to your colleagues?
- 8 – Avoided speaking to your manager about how you feel?
- 9 – Become withdrawn and lost your humour?
- 10 – Used alcohol or smoking as a ‘prop’

### Did you Answer Yes to any of the Questions?

If you answered yes to any of the questions the good news is you are normal as I have experienced all ten at some point in my career.

The secret is to recognise how you feel and do something about it. Quite often speaking about how you feel is perceived as a weakness, when in reality it can be very positive to share thoughts and talk through with another trusted friend or partner.

Time To Talk Day is about having honest conversations to remove the stigma around mental health.

### Ten Tips to Maintain good Mental Health

- Be Honest with yourself and recognise how you feel at times. Mood swings are normal and its okay to feel a bit flat at times. Tell your partner how you feel and think of positive thoughts to improve your mood.
- The old analogy of ‘glass half full’ or ‘glass half empty’ is still valid today. When you feel fed up about the current situation think about all the positives you have in life, family, friends and loved ones who all need you.
- When you experience a significant life event like the loss of a parent, or a family member don’t hesitate to contact Workplace Options as I have been on that journey and I talk with personal experience.
- If you are having a low day a good tip is to try and write out some structure at the start of the day. Write some targets you want to complete and get a big coloured highlighter pen and score it off as you work through your plan.
- Keep in regular touch with your work colleagues as we can all feel isolated at times. I struggled at the start of homeworking and settled into a work routine that works for

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me. Teams calls are not always about work but sharing thoughts and feelings. How are you getting on?... don't say "fine" if you are not.

- Don't shy away from approaching your manager if you are struggling. I have been supported throughout my career at various stages. Sometimes you need to make the first move. Speak to your manager in confidence
- Often we concern ourselves with running around after family members and don't find time for ourselves. On top of work pressures and daily stress you need to find 'ME' time. Relax with a good book or listen to music. Quiet silence can be just as good as listening to music. The point is you need to find time something that YOU want to do.
- Talk to your partner about how you feel and you will start to feel a lot better having shared honestly how you really feel. Keep in touch with friends and don't isolate yourself.
- It's very easy to start drinking more and smoking when you are working from home, reaching for that extra glass of wine with your dinner can easily escalate. Last year I noticed I was drinking more wine than usual. In October I decided to try the dry October month and after the month felt so much better in myself that I have stopped completely. Four months on I have lost a stone in weight.
- Set up a family Whats App group and set a time every week to catch up with your family you are unable to visit. I have a group video call on a Sunday with my three brothers who live quite a distance. It's good to chat. Andrew my twin brother has a learning disability and lives on his own in supported accommodation. I feel it's important to catch up every Sunday and make sure he is ok.

I have shared my top ten tips from my own personal experience and not lifted from the latest guru book on the subject.

Doing a kind act by helping another person can give you a nice boost and make you feel good. I felt really good when I shouted back to the man who left his money in the cash dispenser.

Take care and please remember to talk!

Peter Innes

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