

COMMUNITY MANAGERS MENTAL HEALTH INTRODUCTION



Foreword



This document provides an overview of some of the self-care practices covered in the Safe In Our World Mental Health First Aid for Community Managers course. For information about the full course, visit safeinourworld.org/training-events

Evidence of the stigma and discrimination around mental health is everywhere: the language used in popular culture, the lack of access to clinical support, the code of silence among many people suffering crisis and the denial of friends and colleagues that someone might be unwell. Even today, 95% of employees surveyed say they would avoid telling the truth about absence from work if it were mental health related, for fear of negative consequences (Deloitte Wellbeing at Work, 2019). As Community Managers that have completed MHFA training, you can support this agenda for change. This guide should help you to embed the key insights from the course.

Pursuing our mission means we look to create and foster mental health awareness within the video games industry and to support the conversation around mental health, by making it okay to not be okay. People should not be afraid to speak up and reach out for help if and when they need it.

There are so many important roles within the industry, however, there is one role that seems to have the most endless remit of all: community management. The genuine threat of work-related burnout is real and needs preventive action. In the opening section of this guide, we will share some practical advice for effectively supporting the mental health of community members generally, and also what you can do to develop your own mental wellbeing skills.

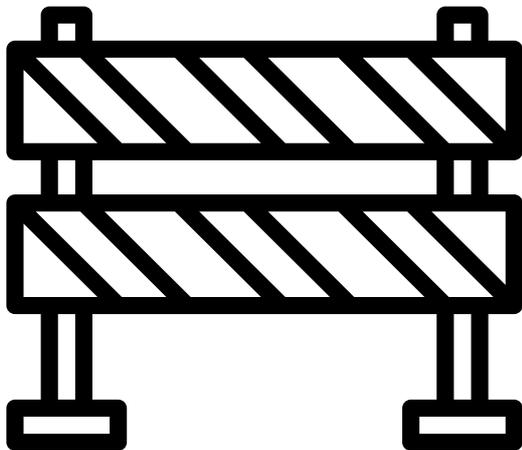


Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



01

Setting effective boundaries



As an organization you need to support your Community Managers by clearly defining what their role is and what is expected of them. Having this formalized is a good thing as it will protect everyone and also make it clear when the remit is expanding and evolving. Defining internal expectations means you will be helping your Community Managers to model the same in their role with their communities.

As a Community Manager you need to get good at knowing when to use the word 'no' and practice using it. The better you become at knowing what is possible and not possible related to healthy, sustainable work the more you will be serving yourself, your organization and your community. Putting your mental wellbeing first means you will be able to show up for others in a way that is inspiring, realistic and sustainable.

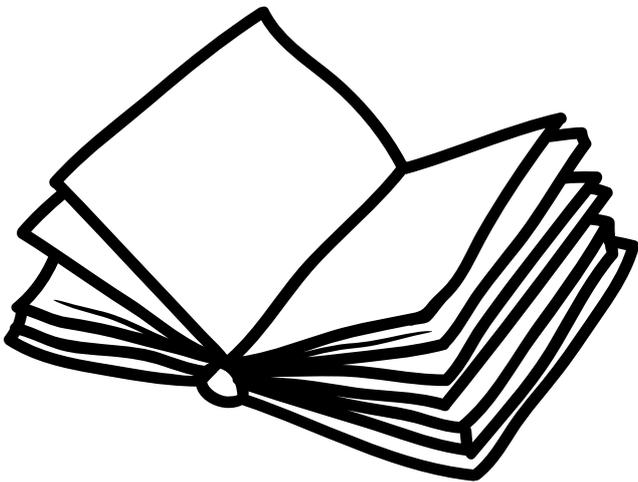


Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



02

Seek training opportunities



The complex demands of the games industry mean that making time for developing individual competencies can easily slide down your priority list. Be specific about where you have training needs and seek out courses and training partners that will help to support your learning ambitions. If you are freelance, get connected with other freelancers and develop your radar for training and development initiatives that you can access. Many of us suffer in silence with aspects of imposter syndrome and Community Managers in particular are vulnerable: it is time to stop trying to be superhumans in these roles. Everyone has training needs and areas where it is valuable to work with others to reflect on how we think, feel and behave. This is the way to improve and get better at collaborating and developing as colleagues. It is also uplifting and fun to learn and grow and helps us to appreciate the value that other perspectives offer.





Mental Wellbeing Key Insights

03

Creating psychologically safe work cultures



Most of us want to work in environments where we feel able to show up as our whole self and share our views and ideas in an open and honest way. The evidence is that many organizations struggle to create and sustain a culture where people feel okay speaking truth to power - disagreeing with the boss can still carry negative consequences. Senior leaders need to step up and take genuine responsibility for creating cultures that empower diversity of opinion and ideas. Creating diverse teams is not enough; we have to commit to supporting these teams through work practices that encourage constructive disagreement. This needs ongoing attention and organizational commitment to achieve. It also requires individuals to support the internal initiatives. Community Managers, with their incredible experience of the diversity of perspectives present in their communities, are well placed to be pioneers in this area.



Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



04

Finding balance



The burnout epidemic is real and too many people have found their work habits are self-harming and unsustainable. Knowing when to stop, switch off and disengage is critical for everyone and especially important for Community Managers. There will always be someone online, needing attention, and many Community Managers feel that doing a good job means being 24/7 available. Your organization needs to be overt in promoting healthy work practices by developing skills throughout the company to help people to recognise when the workload is too much. Community Managers who develop habits that support their mental wellbeing generally have hobbies, interests and friendships outside of the games industry. So, make this a part of your strategy. This range of people and things you do and have in your life, will meaningfully support your mental wellbeing, especially in times of adversity.



Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



05

Developing self awareness



How are you feeling generally? What is going on for you with your closest friendships? How does your body feel today? What is causing you the most stress and anxiety? What is it you do, that you find really helpful? Are you making healthy choices? Where are your thoughts causing you the most concern? Do you notice any patterns in your thoughts, feelings and behaviours? By regularly checking in with yourself and honestly answering some of the above questions, you will significantly develop your self-awareness. Once you know what is going on for you at any given moment, it's much more likely that you will figure out what you need to do to support your mental wellbeing. If it's helpful, keep a self-awareness journal so that you have evidence to look back on - this helps to encourage your reflection. Try to build in some regular time just to sit and allow yourself to become fully aware of what is going on at a deeper level with your life.

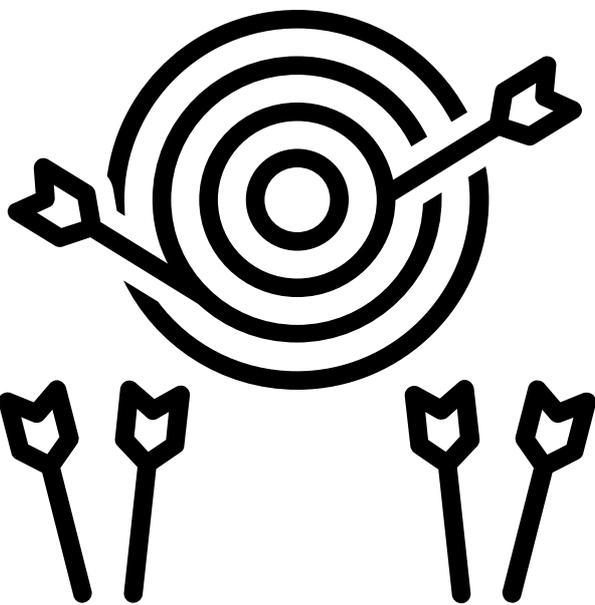


Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



06

Welcoming imperfection



Making mistakes is a part of healthy living and it's a natural way for us to get better at stuff and learn what works and what doesn't work. Most of us have been through education systems that reward 'success' and discourage 'failure'; it's no surprise then, that most of us are averse to taking risks and do our best to avoid making mistakes. This creates a perfectionist mindset that ultimately robs us of the joy of appreciating what we have done that is really great. We look for 'what's wrong?' before recognising 'what's right?'. Flip this and welcome 'what's wrong?' as the gateway to improvement. Learn to love failure because of the opportunities it suggests. Today, more than ever, we are surrounded by images and stories of successful outcomes without any access to the myriad failures and setbacks that contributed to the process of getting there. Failure is necessary & important. Make failure your friend and change any perfectionist tendencies into recognising what is great before assessing what's wrong.



Mental Wellbeing Key Insights

07

Connecting with others



Spending time with people that we love, like and enjoy being with is uplifting and rejuvenating. Being able to accept their support and talk about things that we find challenging or difficult makes the load seem lighter. One of the five things people at the end of life frequently say, is that they wish they had spent more time with their friends and loved ones. Take action by making more time for the people who matter in your life. It will also help you to get good at keeping things in perspective as you start to incorporate what really matters into your routines. Developing the habit of meeting new people through shared interests is also a lifelong habit worth acquiring; the scientific evidence tells us it is one of the best things we can do to avoid the consequences of cognitive decline as we age.



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08

Using mindfulness



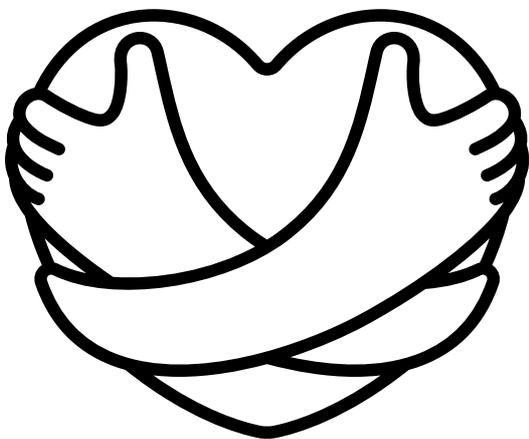
The scientific evidence is also pretty clear about mindfulness: there are significant health benefits from the daily practice of being aware that the present moment is all we have, and by using your senses, you can develop your ability to calm your mind and be more peaceful. Stress reduction and increased happiness? - sign me up! Many of us are practicing mindfulness without even being aware of it - anything that requires us to be fully present with an awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, surrounding environments through a gentle and nurturing lens would qualify. Once you start to explore mindfulness further there are even more helpful aspects: being non-judgmental, developing patience, practicing acceptance, letting go of all that is unhelpful, welcoming trust and knowing how to let go of anything that is inconsequential. Developing a beginner's mind means we stay open to things and do not close down the potential to learn and be influenced by others.

Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



09

Practicing self care



It is now proven that the trinity of healthy diet, regular exercise and good sleep are the foundations of good self-care. Like everything, developing helpful habits makes things easier to achieve and our brains like not having to think too much about stuff. Once you have decided that you want to incorporate something into your schedule, you will need to be disciplined to make sure it becomes ingrained and habitual. Usually, two months is enough time for the new habit to become consistent. During 'lockdown' the on and off two years that most of us experienced meant we lost some of our healthy habits as a result of the enforced change to our routines. By being deliberate about what you want for yourself, you can start to include new routines that get you the outcomes you value. As Community Managers it can be really powerful for your communities to see you modelling healthy and constructive patterns of behaviour. This includes how you set ground rules and boundaries for yourself and the wider community. And importantly, how you are seen to adhere to them.



Mental Wellbeing Key Insights



10

Become attuned to your warning signs



Each one of us has a unique stress signature that we should become familiar with. Knowing when we are hungry, angry, lonely or tired will act as cues for us to take action to remedy the situation for ourselves. Talking about how we cope with stress and anxiety can be really helpful as it helps us realize we are not alone. Many of us suffer in isolation and even try to deny how we are feeling. This is part of the challenge of sustaining positive mental health: facing our feelings both good and bad and then taking positive action to improve things. It is important to recognise that how we treat ourselves is also deeply connected to how we show up and support others. Self-compassion is not a behaviour that many of us have been exposed to consistently. It is important to develop the ability to be kind and non-judgmental with yourself. It will also increase your capacity for giving and receiving the right kind of support in your life. No act of human kindness is ever wasted, and it is part of what makes us so unique as a species - our capacity for improvement and connection.



To participate in the full Mental Health First Aid for Community Managers course, please contact Safe In Our World.



The full course covers a range of ways to support yourself and your community members using a framework called 'RESPOND.'



The course is delivered by Mind Fitness.

