

Southborough and District Wheelers

Mental Health Awareness Week 2021

During Mental Health Awareness Week 2021, the club shared the following posts by social and email to help raise mental health awareness, help continue to break any remaining stigma in cycling and start a few conversations of support.



Monday Post 1: Mental Health Awareness Week Launch

This week marks Mental Health Awareness Week which perhaps holds more significance than ever given some of the challenges we have all faced over the last year.

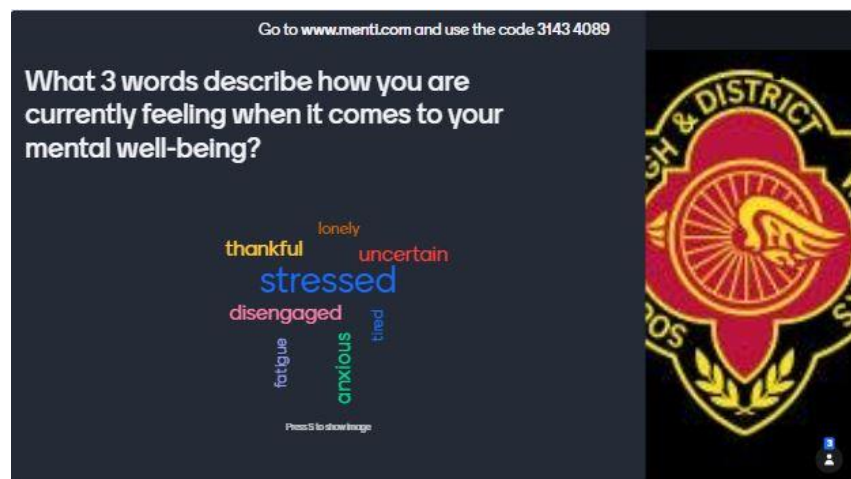
We will be sharing a series of emails and posts this week to raise awareness and discuss the issues as they may be relevant to us – particularly as cyclists.

To kick things off we are inviting you to confidentially and anonymously share three words that might describe how you are currently feeling when it comes to your mental well-being - whether that be positive and thriving to perhaps surviving but struggling. From thankful and grateful to stressed or depressed.

Simply click on [this link](#) or scan the QR code below with your phone or tablet camera. Alternatively visit [menti.com](#) and enter the code **3143 4089**

Here you can confidentially share three words and this will produce an anonymous word-cloud that we will refer back to later in the week. Thank-you

Note: If you would prefer not to receive these Mental health Awareness club welfare emails this week, please contact simontcmiller@gmail.com and we will attempt to unsubscribe you from these club emails only.



(Example WordCloud image that will be shared back in Sunday post but also used within Rob's 24th May session)

Tuesday Post 2: Cycling and Mental Health

There are numerous studies that link physical well-being to mental well-being including this significant US study published in the [Lancet](#) showing the positive benefits of exercise on mental health, particularly team sports and cycling and particularly for those who had suffered depression previously.

Below are some articles and videos that bring this to life. Each serves as a good reminder as to the positive mental well-being benefits we get from cycling but also some of the watch-outs from over-training, addiction/dependency and competition.

1. [Richard Curtis](#): A member's story of a fight to return to normal
2. [British Cycling](#): A rider's battle with depression with some practical advice
3. [Cycling Tips](#): Can cycling help defeat depression
4. [GCN](#): The scientific link between cycling and mental health
5. [Rouleur](#): BMX and Track World Champion Shanaze Reade's story of injury and addiction
6. [Cycling Weekly](#): The mental health perils for elite cyclists
7. [YouTube](#): Leon Cerrone – Living with Depression

British Cycling are also encouraging clubs to share this great guide from MIND on returning to sport and physical activity [return-to-play-mental-health-guidance.pdf \(mind.org.uk\)](#)

Do share in the comments below any other good features you've seen from cyclists opening up and sharing their mental well-being stories.

Wednesday Post 3: Taking a Moment

We all have mental health and we can all take steps to develop our mental wellbeing on a day to day basis to maintain, prevent and overcome.

The following are some practical guides from [aetna International](#) to support you in a day-to-day proactive routine.

Take a moment [to check in with yourself](#)

Take a moment [to breathe](#)

Take a moment [to learn about depression and anxiety](#)

Take a moment [to change how you feel by changing what you do](#)

Take a moment [to keep trying to heal](#)

What do you find helpful to achieve your zen and to cope with life's everyday stressors?

Thursday Post 4: Accessing Mental Health Support

There is no one size fits all for mental health support and what works for one person may not work for another. So even when in the best of health, it's important to be aware of the resources that might be useful to you or a loved one in a moment of need.

Here's a few places to start:

1. **Your GP:** Above all else, speaking to your GP if you feel ready to do so – they are trained to look at your health holistically, to undertake assessments and to refer into a wide range of specialised medical pathways appropriate to you, your history and your symptoms.
2. **The NHS:** The NHS provide a wide range of services many of which you don't need a GP referral for. [This page](#) provides a good starting point including a local search to understand services in your region. In West Kent for example, you can access free online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) via an initiative with ieso. Find out more [here](#).

The [NHS Apps Library](#) also points to vetted clinically evidence based digital support tools in this space – most of which are free. For example, [Togetherall](#) (formerly Big White Wall) is a great online community tool to share thoughts and feelings in a safe place.

3. **Employer and Insurances:** Check-out the resources available to you via your employer and if you have it, your personal or company health, life and protection insurances. Most will offer free confidential access to counsellors via their Employee Assistance Programme plus a range of other free or subsidised resources and tools.
4. **Charities and Local Community:** Any one of the many fantastic mental health charities will either provide resources or signpost to recommended resources. This includes national charities such as [MIND](#), [Mental Health UK](#) and [Heads Together](#), local charities such as [WestKent Mind](#), [MHR](#) and [LiveWell Kent](#) and not forgetting of course the invaluable role the [Samaritans](#) play in helping those at the edge. Visit their homepages to learn more and perhaps donate to support.

Also, most local council and social services websites will point to local resources and groups for community support.

5. **Friends and Family:** It's hard to take that first step towards care and even harder doing it alone. Fortunately, we have done a great job towards breaking the stigma around mental health and being more comfortable in sharing our thoughts, feelings and struggles with colleagues, friends and loved ones. And often this is where the most valuable day to day support can come from. "It's OK to not be OK", "don't suffer in silence" and "it's good to talk" are well used slogans and for very good reason.

Friday Post 5: Caring for your Mental Health through Challenging Times

As some of you may know, one of our very own members Rob Stephenson (and an SDW Time Trial champ) is also an active mental health campaigner and speaker who suffers himself from bipolar.

Rob has kindly offered to run a special online session for SDW on Monday 24th at 8pm where he will share his own story and the battles he has faced including the benefits of and impact on his cycling.

He will also recount issues faced by some elite cyclists he is working with in this field going through similar challenges.

Attendees will also get the chance to test Rob's new app FORM which supports people in reaching out to each other to check in and answer that all important question "how are you".

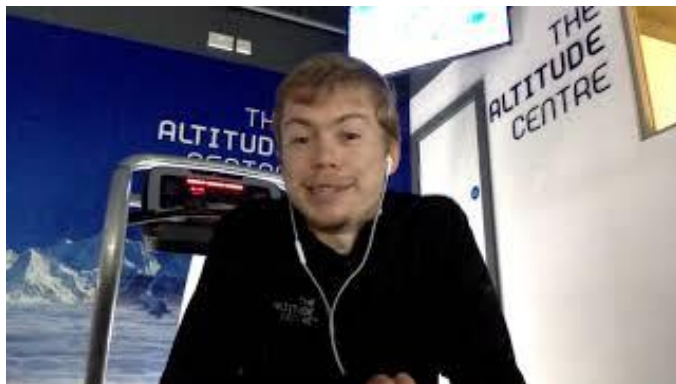
You can join the webinar on Zoom using the following link: xxxxx

In the meantime, check out some of the great reading and content from Rob and sign-up to his newsletter at <http://www.formscore.today> and a flavour of his MindCycle activities at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmPet-Tqz5Y>

Saturday Post 6: The Mental Edge

So the weekend is here and for many that will involve a group ride, some training or racing. Now I don't know about you, but when I go out for a solo ride to attack a planned Strava segment, I often find I have talked myself out of it before it has begun. I even do the same on the start line for an online race against a bunch of avatars. And some nights before a club ride I find myself wishing I'd clicked a lower group and start getting my excuses ready for sitting at the back.

In the video below, one of our elite club riders Nick Hart of The Altitude Centre shares some of his tips on preparing mentally for your riding by compartmentalising those fears and harnessing those nerves.



<https://youtu.be/valqnF-OANk>

But unfortunately, we are not all Nick's level and we aren't all competing for glory. So what are your challenges when it comes to getting mentally ready for your riding? What are your tactics for overcoming them? How do you stay mentally strong on the start line to gain that edge?

Share your stories in the comments below.

