

WELLFEST21 ROUND-UP

Last week, June 17th, we held our 2nd WellFest event for practitioners and support staff across the FE sector. For this year's event we wanted it to be bigger and better than ever, so we joined forces with our friends and colleagues at Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network to have a greater audience. We also had some fantastic sponsors and supported again this year, with special thanks to Cache Alumni, NCFE, BDL, Skills Forward, LearnBox & Cognassist. This blog provides a summary of our fantastic speakers & experts covering important and insightful themes. All resources discussed will be made available from the WYLP website.

THOMAS MINNS - MINNSMIND

The morning opened with professional rugby player Tom Minns sharing his story & experiences with mental health and importantly how he manages his struggles and well-being. Tom discussed the importance of exercise on the mind and body & how HIIT workouts are a fantastic way to work out and can be adapted to any one at any ability.

Tom shared that 20 minutes of moderate cardio exercise improves your mood for up to 12 hours afterwards and how we should all find 20 mins a day to support our wellbeing. Part of Tom's journey is to find ways to keep him motivated with his mental health and he used a "Curry therapy" and having an "emotional water bottle" – Curry Therapy is a way Tom looking forward to enjoying a curry if & when he starts to feel his well-being reducing and his water bottle to remind him to drink water.

Tom found running helped him during the pandemic! He started off running 1Km and worked his way up to running a half marathon. Using Apps such as strava & couch to 5km are a great way to motivate yourself to start a running journey. Tom's commitment to supporting mental health doesn't stop with just looking after himself, he also runs 'Minns Mind' which is a website & organisations that supports mental health to everyone who needs it and Tom spends a lot of time supporting schools & community groups by giving talks and sharing his journey. Visit - Home - Minns Mind – for more information.



LOUISE MERCECA - THE HEALTHKICK

Our 2nd speaker was Louise Mercica discussing how stress and food are interlinked to emotional behaviour and lapse of control.

Louise described how foods and what we eat triggers a guilt factor which escalates and spirals and leads people to eat unhealthy snack as sugar is racing round the system which leads to vicious cycles of food & stress guilt. These foods end up making you feel so uncomfortable & ashamed and insecure about appearance which leads to effects on self-esteem & performance at work. Louise explained that people will be dealing with this subconsciously, without knowing this cycle and how this is linked to childhood comfort food transitioning to adulthood – if you had sweets when hurt self this will carry into adulthood. This was a particular concern and issue for people during lockdown.

Louise expressed her frustrations with the Food industry & how they play on this, so we consume more high sugar and poor foods.

Convenient healthy food is significantly more expensive than unhealthy convenient so it is important to plan and chop up fruit and vegetable etc so you have healthy snacks in the fridge to grab on the go. Many people have a misconception that Artificial sweeteners are a healthier response to sugar but in reality it can be more damaging than sugar. As your body seeks more calories as you don't have it from the sweetener just the sweet taste. To find out more about Louise and her award winning book The Health Kick please visit - Louise's Video Blog | Mysite (thehealthkick.co.uk)



BOB KITCHEN - BDL & RICHARD POWELL - NCFE

Next up we had a very detailed presentation from the co-founder of BDL and the self-proclaimed little dog of the partnership, Bob Kitchen, on the importance of recognising and quickly addressing when you are stressed and anxious. Physical exercise is a way of addressing life's stresses as it teaches our brain that behaviour matters.

Bob discussed that it takes 21 days to break a bad habit and to develop a good habit – helps to rewire the brain for positive mental health. To help with this journey and bad habit breaking Bob recommends Journaling as it helps relive the positives of the day/week etc and cements this in the brain making you feel more positive.

Bob shared the need to understand Stress.

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What it is, why it is and why it matters and how Meditation is an effective way to get rid of the cultural ADHD – expectation for multitasking has a negative effect on mental health and wellbeing.

Bob finished by discussing the STEPS to preventing suicide and how BDL and CACHE have worked together to develop qualifications in suicide awareness and reduction, at a time when there's only a limited number of training solely targeted at this sensitive and life-saving subject. The qualifications developed by CACHE and BDL are the first regulated awards in the UK designed to raise awareness of and reduce suicide – to find out more visit Big Dog Little Dog (BDLD) , Mental Health and Employment Training

STEPHEN MORDUE

We were joined for a 2nd year by Stephen Mordue who shared insightful and interesting information on how to achieve a balanced lifestyle. Stephen discussed the benefits of being outdoors & how it aids rest and recovery mode.

Stephen shared that although it is important to spend time with friends and family; it is also critical that connections at work are essential to healthy mindset as is being our true self at work – the closer we are to our authentic self the better the impact on work and our mindfulness.

Stephen shared the '5 gear' methodology & how this approach recognises that some people are working at different rates & at different times and as such some people may be more productive working from home or at different times of the day where distractions could be minimal.

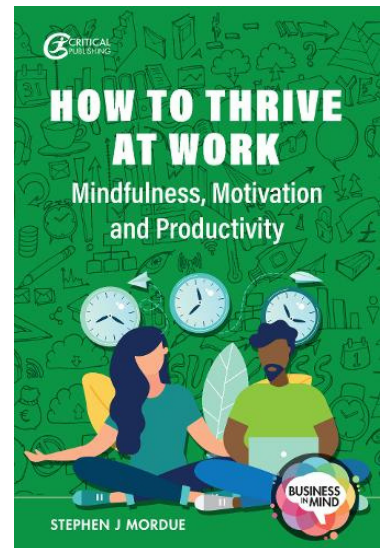
Stephen shared his thoughts on multi-tasking and how it leads to time lost and substandard work as concentration is poor and leads to procrastination. Having a small task mode setting is far more effective and productive than a multiple or large task orientated response.

Stephen finished by providing everyone with 3 approaches to dealing with every day tasks; 'Eat your frogs' – meaning start with your worst tasks first in a morning to avoid it sapping your energy for the other significant tasks later in the day.

The '2-minute rule' – if it can be done in 2 mins do it immediately – just get on with it and a favourite saying of the day was "Procrastination is the art of ruining your life for no reason"

Don't have Buckaroo moments – dragged back to the office as you leave unfinished and unmanaged. This drains psychological energy. Unfinished managed tasks you can leave behind and gear down.

For more information about how to thrive at work, ready Stephens book available on Amazon - How to Thrive at Work: Mindfulness, Motivation and Productivity (Business in Mind); Amazon.co.uk: Mordue, Stephen J: 9781913453695: Books

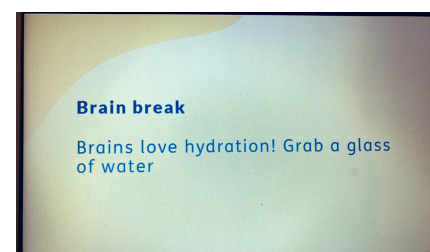


HELEN WILSON - COGNASSIST

The final session of the morning and before the lunch break was from Helen Wilson, Cognassist. Helen shared great insight into how to better support our cognitive activity to lead to a more positive and mentally strong life. Helen covered how to frame our mental health, the impact of cognition and provided solutions for how we can cope.

Helen shared the concept of allowing yourself to have 'Brain breaks' which allows you to step away and have breathing space. Helen then asked all delegates to do exactly that, and the event fell into silence as everyone participated in 3 lots of 30second of brain break.

Helen also discussed the importance of staying Hydrated and its essentiality for effective brain activity. There is not a lot of research into the link between water and mental health, but it is an area that is getting a lot more attention and results are showing positive links.



Thank you to everyone who joined us for the morning session!

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