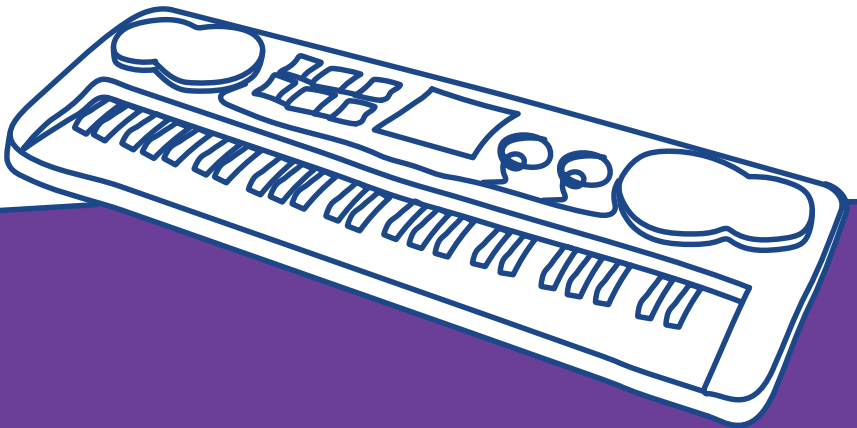


A guide to mental health in the electronic music industry

For artist managers



In partnership with

NINJA TUNE

PARADIGM



TALENT AGENCY

PERCOLATE

POLY.

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Foreword from the partners

Since we first started collaborating with Mind to raise mental health awareness in electronic music five years ago the landscape has changed for the better. In general the stigma around mental health has decreased, awareness has risen and people are talking more. However, there is still a great need to empower people across the industry to support the mental health and wellbeing of all involved – whether that is helping themselves or each other. There are many specific challenges related to the music industry that need to be understood and navigated to improve mental health. So we decided to create tailored guides for anyone working in the industry, offering advice and information to build their knowledge and skills.

In March 2020, as the project was nearing completion, the global pandemic of COVID-19 started. Plus a few months later via the

Black Lives Matter movement, greater awareness was brought to the ongoing racism crisis which has been especially important in the music community.

It became more vital than ever to improve people's wellbeing and empower them to support others around them. In response to these additional concerns we revisited the guides in full in order to ensure that the advice was directly providing mental health support relating to these events.

We hope you will find this guide helpful and that it goes some way to helping you gain the tools you need to look after yourselves, each other and your clients.

We thank all our amazing colleagues from every corner of the business who contributed their time and experiences, and Mind for their dedication in helping to make sure no one faces a mental health problem alone.

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Introduction

We are Mind, the mental health charity. In partnership with Ninja Tune, Paradigm, Percolate and POLY, we have developed a range of tools to support the mental health of people working in the electronic music industry.

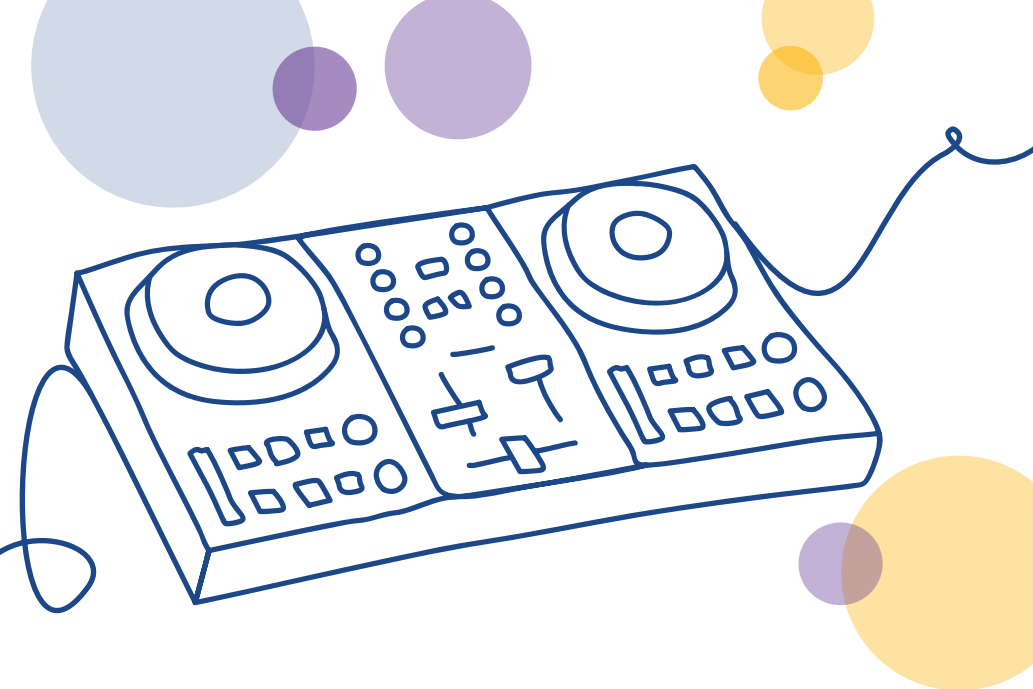
We all have mental health just as we all have physical health – it can shift up and down from good to poor for any number of reasons. Experiencing poor mental health is not an issue specific to the electronic music industry. In fact in four adults in the UK will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year.

We know that working in the electronic music industry can be very rewarding and offers many opportunities. However, it can come with a set of unique pressures. These include long hours, high stress, a higher incidence of drugs and alcohol abuse, isolation and insecure work. Industry professionals are often passionate about what they do. This means they're vulnerable to exploitation and can feel guilty if their "dream job" affects their mental health.

There needs to be a greater focus on raising awareness of mental health across the electronic music industry. There's a lot of stigma around mental health, and people may feel ashamed of their difficulties or worry about how others will judge them. Therefore, bringing together people with different perspectives and experiences is important to challenge this harmful culture.

1 in 4

adults in the UK will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year



Artist managers are responsible for shaping an artist's career through the choices they make. In a fast-moving industry, this might include managing their social media, getting them to gigs on time and keeping them safe and well. They are at the heart of the industry, negotiating a heavy workload and managing key relationships.

The role of artist manager has evolved in recent years and is now more varied than ever before. Artist managers have to be the first to adapt to an ever-changing music industry. They have to tackle any issues arising and support every aspect of their artist's life including their mental health and wellbeing.

In the past maybe mental health wasn't spoken about. If I've taken on a new artist I want to ask them what they're willing to do in terms of touring and have an open and honest chat about how they're getting on and how they're coping. It's something that needs to be spoken about.

Artist manager

Spotlight: coronavirus and race equality

Coronavirus is having a significant impact on people and working life globally. During the pandemic, we have all had to adjust to large and very sudden changes in the way we work. The music industry has been particularly hard-hit by coronavirus and has effectively been put on pause.

Throughout this period, we have also witnessed the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement has brought to the forefront inequalities faced by many across our society. This has been very difficult for individuals. We understand that the mental health of many artists, DJs, organisers, promoters, people managers, artist managers, as well as various other people across the industry, is being affected by what is going on.

Although lockdown restrictions have started to ease, we are still unsure what this means for the industry. Many of us may be feeling anxious about the future and facing new challenges ahead.

Therefore, we have developed this guide to support you, both in these challenging times and in the longer term.

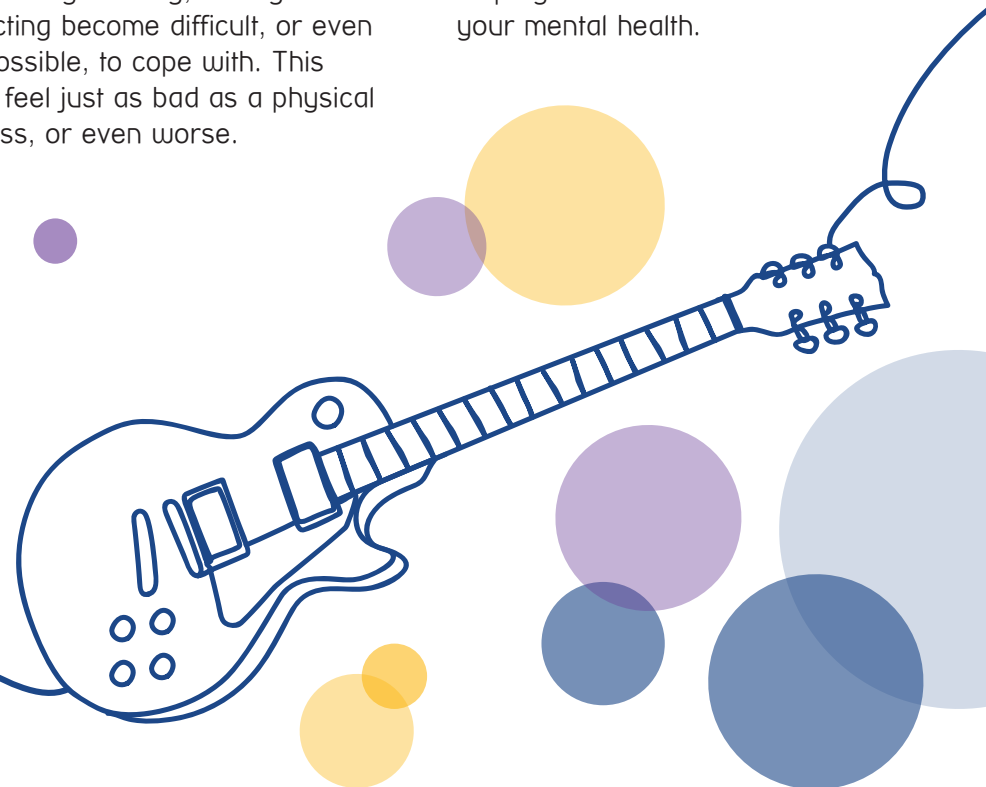


What is mental health?

We all have mental health. Our mental health is just like our physical health – we need to take care of it.

Good mental health means being able to think, feel and react in ways that help you live the life you want. But if you go through a period of poor mental health you might find the ways you're frequently thinking, feeling or reacting become difficult, or even impossible, to cope with. This can feel just as bad as a physical illness, or even worse.

Most people know someone who has experienced a mental health problem. It can happen to all kinds of people from all walks of life. The good news is that there's support out there, and there are steps you can take to look after your mental health.



Equality and diversity in electronic music

We want to reach a point where all workplaces, including those within the electronic music industry, recognise the value of recruiting and nurturing a diverse workforce of talented employees. This includes those whose mental health may have prevented them working previously.

Organisations and artist managers have a responsibility to be aware of the intersectionality between wellbeing, mental health and equality issues. People from minority groups can be at a higher risk of experiencing a mental health problem than the wider population. The reasons for this are complex and not yet fully understood. However, mental health problems experienced by diverse groups have been linked to discrimination, bullying and racism.

Some people have also experienced rejection, negative reactions or hostility from family, friends, strangers and their employers. This can have a significant impact on an individual's self-esteem and may mean they feel unable to be their true self at work, home or in the wider world. People's experiences can be very different so it is important that there are forums and ways that people can share their experiences and concerns.

Working in the electronic music industry

For many people working in electronic music, what they do isn't just a job – it's their passion. But like any other job, it's got its own pressures to deal with. Below are some common pressures and how you can support your people to manage them.

Working late

Dance culture revolves around late nights. Club nights, events and festivals tend to kick off late and finish late, while hectic schedules may mean you have to work long hours to meet tight deadlines. But working too many can leave people feeling completely exhausted and out of touch with friends, family and the wider world.

How to support your artists

It can be easy for artists to get into the habit of late-night gigs and recording sessions. Encourage them to catch up on sleep during daylight hours or have nights off. If they're working late, setting aside some time to rest during the day can help them feel in balance. This also includes having a break or a holiday after busy times, like a tour or a new release.

Spotlight: coronavirus

Coronavirus has changed people's working patterns. While venues and clubs have closed for some it's been a very busy time. So it's important that artist managers encourage their people to take some time off to reflect on what has been going on globally both with coronavirus and the Black Lives Matter movement.



Frequent travel

Despite the coronavirus, electronic music is a global industry. After the pandemic it may again involve attending events across the world. Travelling a lot can take people away from their usual support networks, which can have an impact on their mental health.

How to support your artists:

Frequent travellers often have their own tips – so ask others for their tips and share them with your artists. To help cope with loneliness, encourage them to arrange a time they could Skype, text, email or call friends and family while they're away. Keeping a journal can help get troubling thoughts out of their head. Podcasts, computer games or a book can provide some company, and a distraction.

Drug and alcohol abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse can be a problem for anyone in any kind of workplace, but music industry culture often happens in party spaces where they're consumed, which makes them more available. Some people may not use drugs and alcohol to excess, or at all. However, others might feel they have to live up to the industry's 'hard-partying' stereotype or keep up with crowds or their industry peers. Over time, this can lead to reliance, addiction and other problems.

How to support your artists:

People abusing alcohol or drugs might be putting themselves or others at risk. You might have to help manage this – while also letting people know that help is available. Encourage them to get help from their GP, or a specialist addiction organisation, as well as referring them to your organisation's occupational health service (if you have one). Also consider allowing people time off to get expert support.

For artists this might mean cancelling gigs, or taking time away from the spotlight. With the right support artists should feel they're able to get help without their career suffering.

It's important to understand that drug and alcohol abuse can affect anybody, regardless of the industry they work in or circles they move in. However, artist managers play a key role across the industry in raising awareness and signposting to support for people who are struggling with drug or alcohol abuse issues. It's also key to understand that if people use drugs or alcohol regularly they may not necessarily be addicts. So, artist managers need to be able to [recognise the signs and symptoms](#) when drug and alcohol use turns into abuse or addiction.

How managers can fight stereotypes

The electronic music industry has a reputation for excess, and the use of drugs and alcohol is often seen as part of the business. However, artist managers have a key role in showing artists that alcohol and drugs aren't compulsory. This is becoming easier as more artists go sober and reconsider the industry's relationship with hedonism.

Insecure work

Many people who work in the electronic music industry don't have stability or security in their careers, so they may struggle to plan for the future. Shifts in trends can happen fast meaning that club nights, musical genres and artists can sometimes be left behind. Artist managers can and must take action to support the mental health of their people throughout their careers.

How to support your artists:

It's worth encouraging them to focus on the things they can control rather than the things they can't. Encourage them to look for activities that make them feel good outside their career, whether that's a hobby or spending time

with friends and family. Managers should help artists be financially aware, and build a safety net against any future problems.

Competition

Artists can feel in competition with their peers which can make people feel like they have to excel at everything they do, or risk losing out to someone else.

How to support your artists:

From artist top 100s to track reviews, the wider industry can seem intent on ranking people's success. Try to help them remember that the only person who can truly judge their work is themselves. Encourage them to be kind about their own work too.

Toxic criticism

Feedback is part of any career. But today anyone can say what they think about a performance, a poster, a record – or any other element of dance culture – on social media. This can feel great when people are supportive. But toxic online abuse can seriously affect people's mental health. It can leave you feeling exposed and under incredible scrutiny over what you do and say both online and off.

How to support your artists:

Encouraging artists to not comment on, or even read online criticism, could be best. But that's not always realistic. It's worth reminding artists that toxic comments often have nothing to do with them personally.

Social media can be a difficult thing for artists to manage. We had one artist who was getting sent loads of demos by this one person over social media. The artist was flying to Japan so wasn't online for 48 hours. Then they got all these messages: "You're ignoring me - I'm not supporting you anymore." Today you're so connected with people - so how often are you meant to reply to them? It's hard to know.

Label Co-owner

Spotlight: coronavirus

The coronavirus outbreak is putting huge financial pressures on the music industry and many artists are struggling to get paid work. Coping with this uncertainty can lead to worries about the future, especially as things feel very unpredictable right now. As an artist manager you need to support artists and encourage them to try to focus on the things they can control. By accepting the things we can't control, we can start to focus our energy on the things we can.



Feedback from people you trust

It's easy to be consumed by outside feedback from people you've never met. Yet the most valuable is normally from peers we respect. Try to offer 'safe spaces' where your artists can get constructive feedback from other artists.

Pressure to be positive

People working in the industry may feel they're expected to have a can-do positive attitude most of the time – especially if they're performers. Younger people just starting in the industry can feel even more pressure to say 'yes' – whether it's to poorly paid starter roles, excessive hours or other questionable requests. But it's just not possible to be positive all the time nor is it healthy to agree to some of these requests.

How to support your artists:

In electronic music, artists are often expected to look like they're having fun 24/7. But it can be difficult to respond to a selfie request, speak to journalists or play upbeat music after you've had an argument with your partner, or are feeling down. Some artists cope with this by becoming 'someone else' while playing – and it's worth talking with them about how this feels. Ultimately, artists need a safe place to express bad feelings. This can simply be talking to you about the stresses of their job that people outside the industry might not understand. If that's not possible encourage them to write down how they feel – or even use their emotions creatively.

Imposter syndrome

Ever felt you don't deserve your success? That you're an unqualified fraud and everyone else is set to call you out on it? This is what imposter syndrome feels like. It can knock your confidence, leaving you doubting your professional abilities. It can often strike in moments that other people associate with success. For example, artists might have sold out a tour date, but feel sure they'll let people down.

How to support your artists:

If your artist is experiencing imposter syndrome, encourage them to take a break from any reviews or social media and focus on the good work they have created. You could also try providing them with an opportunity which would be valuable for them. This could be something like performing at a charity gig for a cause that they are passionate about.

Loneliness and isolation

People who work remotely, or are often on the road, can sometimes find the industry isolating. Often the lack of social contact may lead to poor mental health.

How to support your artists:

Artists on tour can feel especially isolated. See page 19 for some tips on helping them stay connect with others.

As a label, we try not to put pressure on artists. We want to work with them long-term, so it's not about short-term aims. I know what it's like. When we started the label we were working 24/7 and it's easy to get burnt out. But we want to be working with people for their third, fourth and fifth album.

Label Co-owner

Spotlight: coronavirus

Coronavirus has changed the way we work. Many people now work from home – and this might be a permanent move. Working from home can have some advantages for your artist, but there are potential downsides for mental health.

Swapping positive social connections for staring at a screen all day (and taking constant Zoom calls) can be hard. So it's important to make sure everyone stays well. Below is some useful guidance on how you can make working from home more positive for everyone:

- [Top tips for working from home](#)
- [Working from home Wellness Action Plan](#)
- [Tips for supporting yourself and your team](#)



Unique role of artist managers

Looking after things like artists' financial security and the management of busy touring schedules and budgets can cause stress and anxiety. It can also feel like a lonely role when you're a manager looking after several artists and having to deal with a wide range of requests.

Co-dependency

As a manager you might feel incredibly close to your artists. If you have clear professional boundaries in place, this can feel very positive. It's when these boundaries start to blur that you may have a problem.

Co-dependency is a relationship where one person relies on the other for meeting nearly all of their emotional and self-esteem needs. This can feel dysfunctional for everyone involved and affect their mental health. Symptoms of a dysfunctional relationship can include:

1. Obsession

Spending a lot of time wondering what someone is thinking, or replaying times you were last with them to work out why they acted like they did.

2. Control

Feeling controlled by someone or wanting to control how they act.

3. Dependence

Needing someone to like you to feel OK about yourself.

4. People-pleasing

Sacrificing your own needs to make someone else happy.

5. Poor boundaries

Feeling that you have a claim on someone else's money, time, space or emotions.

How to deal with it

- Ask someone you trust outside of the relationship for their opinion.
- Set boundaries. Make sure there are clear times when you're not available to that person.
- Ask for professional advice. Co-dependent relationships can feel difficult and complicated. A professional counsellor can help you understand them in a safe space.

I'm upfront about trying to keep a Monday to Friday structure and then turning my phone off when I'm not at work. It's like 'Don't send me a business question on Twitter on Sunday morning!' This goes both ways – artists have to do that [set boundaries] too. So if someone's on holiday, or in the studio, we know not to ask them anything. Ultimately, everything can wait.

We try to do flexi-time and not put pressure on people to go to gigs. I also take mental health breaks – a day off when I need one – and other people can too.

Label Co-owner

Supporting artists on tour

Touring is a unique experience. It's a chance to see new places and perform to fresh audiences. But it isn't always easy. For artists it can be a strange mix of the high of performing, followed by returning to an empty hotel room, or travelling through the night to the next gig. Meanwhile, as a manager, it's your job to keep them fit, well and at the right place at the right time.

Here's some ideas to help support your mental health when you are on tour.

Try to eat healthy

Getting healthy food when most places are shut is tough. But eating a balanced diet, with lots of fruit and vegetables, can help support your mental health. Breakfast buffets can be great for picking up fruit, and nuts are a nutritious snack.

Take a break from the tour bubble

Try to take some time for yourself when on tour. For example, take time to go for a walk in a new place and see some of the sights.

Stay in contact with friends, family and peers

Mobile technology makes it easier to connect with friends and family. So take advantage of these tools to stay in contact and support your wellbeing. If they're not in the industry they might find it difficult to understand what life on tour is like. So also talk to industry peers who appreciate the experience and can share any frustrations.

Think beyond music

Interests outside electronic music can provide a distraction from stress, and help you relax.

We've had an artist worried about their mental health in the middle of an album campaign. And I've said "Well, we could just pull the tour." We need a culture where artists can say "It's all too much for me at the moment." If you don't artists lose it.

Label Co-owner

Be drink and drug aware

Traditionally, tours have been seen as a time to let loose. The reality is that drugs and alcohol can make it harder for artists to perform well. Plus, hangovers and travelling can be a stressful mix for anyone. Be available to speak to your artist about their drug or alcohol use, and look for signs of dependency.

Beat boredom

After the excitement of a gig it can feel lonely returning to a quiet hotel room. Have strategies to help – whether that's distracting yourself with a podcast, a computer game or learning mindfulness techniques.

Sleep

There's a close relationship between sleep and mental health. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep, and poor sleep can have a negative impact on your mental health. Both artists and managers feel the impact of touring, so it is really important that after breaking your usual routine you try to get back to a regular sleeping pattern.

It's well documented that record sales have gone down [though revenue is starting to come back]. That puts pressure on artists to tour because that's where they can make money. People still want the live experience. But not every artist likes travelling. What I tend to do is be clear on the dialogue – you have to respect people's limits for their mental health. We would never push an artist. We'd rather people had a bit more headspace and maybe earned a bit less than be miserable.

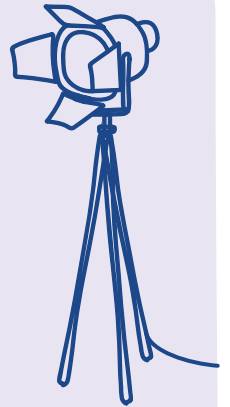
Label Co-owner

Spotlight: coronavirus

Coming out of lockdown will not be a simple adjustment – it is going to be different for every artist you support, as people's experiences of the pandemic will be varied. For example, some artists may have suffered financially, some may have contracted the virus, or lost a friend or family member to it.

As such, some artists may have significant concerns about returning to performing in front of crowds and travelling for work. Equally, an artist may need to travel abroad, so you also need to be aware of their specific concerns.

It is important that as an artist manager you support their anxiety and potential reluctance to returning fully to performing. Make sure you have a meaningful two-way conversation, explore different forms of support and adapt to their individual way of preferred working.



Supporting artists to have good mental health

I think it has to be a team effort with artists and managers. I'm personally responsible for my artists as much as I can be. So if an artist is having a bad time personally, we have to be there as much as we can. For managers there can be a pressure to help people even though you're not qualified. Most of us aren't doctors or psychologists! That's definitely not the artist's fault. I like to know my artists personally, and it can be hard to see them suffer mentally.

Label Co-owner

Talking about mental health

It's important people feel like they can be themselves in their professional role. And that includes talking about their mental health, as well as other things affecting them both in and outside work. To create a more open culture, artist managers need to regularly check-in with their artists about their mental health.

Sometimes this is as simple as asking 'how are you doing?'. But there are times, like when you think someone might be experiencing a mental health problem, when it's good to have a structured approach. These tips can help.

1. Choose the right setting

Ideally somewhere private and quiet where they feel comfortable. Somewhere different to where you usually meet could be good to create a more neutral and supportive environment. It would be helpful to switch your phone off so that they know they have your undivided attention. In a working from home environment this might mean speaking in a private space where you won't be interrupted by others.

2. Get people talking (if they want to)

Ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions and let people explain in their own words about their mental health.

3. Don't assume

Mental health affects us all in different ways. When talking about mental health it's important to listen, be respectful and not make assumptions. Many people know what to do to support themselves, therefore they might just need support during challenging times.

4. Listen to people and be flexible

Ask them what support would help them. Is there anything you could offer?

5. Be honest and clear

If you have specific concerns, like cancelling gigs or not turning up to meetings, it's important to talk about them.

6. Respect confidentiality

Sensitive information should be shared with as few people as possible. Discuss what information they would like shared and with whom.

Coping with stress

Working in electronic music can be stressful. Artist managers might have to juggle an artist's finances, schedule and personal needs – often on their own and for more than one artist.

Managing stress

A little bit of pressure can actually help you through challenging times. But when the pressure feels overwhelming, it causes stress. Too much stress can lead to mental health problems, or make existing ones worse. Stress may be problematic for you if you find yourself:

- smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs more than usual or to excess
- feeling overburdened
- having difficulty sleeping, oversleeping or waking up early
- clenching your jaw or grinding your teeth
- finding it tough to make decisions.

You can find some useful advice on how to manage stress here, and share it with your people.

Looking after your own mental health

Understand your triggers

Everyone finds different things stressful. By understanding what has a negative impact on your mental health, you can start to manage these triggers better.

Balance your time

Occasionally you may need to work longer hours to get something done, but try to claim this time back later if you can.

Reward yourself for achievements

Celebrating artists' successes is a great part of the job, however it is also important to remember your own achievements. So collect evidence of your abilities. This could include emails praising your work, testimonials from people you respect, or a diary that proves you're in demand.

Be realistic

Remember you don't have to be 'perfect' all the time – nobody is! Try not to compare yourselves with others – you can't know what's really going on inside their heads. They might even feel similar to you. Be kind to yourself and practise self-care.

Learn to say no

It can be tempting to take on more work than you can manage. Over time this can lead to stress and burnout. Try to protect your mental health by politely saying no to extra demands when you've got your plate full.

Budget for self-care

Self-care is vital for protecting your mental health – so make it part of your schedule. Often the times when you feel you don't 'deserve' it are when you need it most. It doesn't have to be expensive, plan something simple like an early night after a long day or a swim after work. Whatever it is, try to put time and money aside for things that make you feel good outside work.

Take time off

You might be tempted to work 24/7. This can lead to stress and burnout. Working in electronic music may mean that you don't get weekends off. But having time off (from week-long holidays to brief downtime) will help you stay resilient and perform at your best.

Build a support network

Working as an artist manager can often feel quite isolating so try to build a trusted network of industry peers you can connect with in-person or through your devices.

Get regular exercise

If your job involves working at a computer, it can be tempting to sit down at it until your work is done. Try and get out for short walks outside (or book in a gym or swim session if that's more your thing). It can boost your mood and help you feel connected with the outside world.

Useful organisations

Details to share with your artists

Mind Infoline

The Mind Infoline can help you to find out what services are available in your area.

You can call us on **0300 123 3393**, email info@mind.org.uk or text **86463**. We're open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Or find out if there is a local Mind near you here: mind.org.uk/information-support/local-minds

Side by Side

Side by Side is a supportive online community where you can be yourself. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard. Whether you're feeling good right now, or really low, it's a safe place to share experiences and listen to others.

Sign up at: sidebyside.org.uk

Samaritans

Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal. Call Samaritans free any time, from any phone on **116 123**. They are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Find out more at: samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you

Rethink Mental Illness

Founded 40 years ago through voluntary groups for people affected by mental illness, Rethink Mental Illness have over 100 groups in England. Call them on 0300 5000 927. They are open 9.30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Find out more at: rethink.org/about-us/our-mental-health-advice

Be proud of your approach

Help change minds about mental health

Thanks for reading. You should now have some good ideas on supporting and protecting your people's mental health.

Need more help or advice?

You can find us here at mind.org.uk/workplace

But it doesn't stop there. You can help spark a culture shift in wider society to remove the stigma around mental health.

We're Mind, the mental health charity. We want to support a million people each year to stay well and have good mental health at work.

Be part of our movement for change in workplace mental health.

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