



**Sharing original
stories about mental
health within the
creative industries.**

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Mental Health

It's just as important as any other kind of health, so why are we so reluctant to open up and talk about our own personal experiences?

With all the things we share and talk about in this day and age, on social media, with our friends and families, there's something not quite right about the way we approach this complex subject – even in areas that are often deemed to be liberal safe spots, such as the creative industries.

For example, think about those working in your agency, studio or department. How many people had days off because of a common cold or sickness bug in the past year? Now count the number of people who have had time off due to stress, anxiety or work related pressures – has that number now halved, or even quartered?

Working in the creative industry can encourage us all to collaborate, share and find comfort in one another's personal narratives, which is exactly what we set out to replicate with **Pressures & Perspectives**.

We want to shine a light on a topic that really shouldn't go unnoticed and create a digital (and in the case of this magazine, physical) platform that encourages people to step forward and talk about some of the issues they've faced in

the past and in the present. We want to create a forum for talking, to facilitate the sharing of stories and experiences, hoping that simply by reading another person's insight into mental health, another might feel comforted, supported, or even inspired to share their own.

After all, they say a problem shared is a problem halved – and when it comes to talking about issues such as anxiety, depression, anorexia and OCD (to name but a few), we strongly believe that this truly is the case.

The P&P website will be launching soon and we'll be looking to feature unique stories, experiences and narratives every week – similar to those submitted by Colin, Eleanor, Laura and PILLARS within this magazine.

So if you're interested, or know someone who you'd love to see featured, don't hesitate to get in touch.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy Volume 1 of **Pressures & Perspectives**.

Meet the team

Having created everything from infographics to interactive videos during our time working together in Leeds, the idea for **Pressures & Perspectives** was born out of a universal desire to create a meaningful project outside of our regular working hours.

Inspired by Colin's personal experience with depression, the team first put its brains together in 2016, however, it wasn't until earlier this year that we decided to produce the magazine you hold in your hands today.

To the right you'll find out a little more about each of us – who we are, what we bring to the table and what we hope to achieve by building P&P. We've also included our Twitter and Instagram handles, so don't be afraid to get in touch if you'd like to get involved or feedback on the project.



Alex Lester @TUSKalexander

My role at P&P is to write the words, plan the content and manage our social accounts. In the past I've written for several independent magazines and once tried to start my own (RIP Tusk Journal).



Helen Mosley @helenmosley

Other than writing the majority of the content you're about to read, my role at P&P is to liaise with anyone that's looking to work with us. I also manage the Instagram account – which is all kinds of fun.



Colin Grist @colingrist

I'm the chap who came up with the branding, design and website for P&P. My personal experience with depression is what brought this group of super cool kids together in the first place – I'm really proud of this thing.



Danielle Harrison @danjayharrison

Graphic designer and girl boss extraordinaire, I'm a designer who contributes to both the magazine and illustrations. I also form part of She Does Digital – a group celebrating the amazing careers digital has to offer.

Stories & Experiences

M eet Eleanor, Colin, Laura and PILLARS: four people with four very different stories. In each narrative, a different mental health issue is discussed in an open, candid manner. We hope you enjoy each one as much as we've enjoyed writing them.

Starting up and shutting down

A story with Eleanor Nicholson

Eleanor Nicholson is the co-founder of Leeds based creative studio, Oslo – and like all great creatives, she has a kickass Instagram account.

As those who follow her will tell you, her feed tells a story of success, pride and lightly brushed filters. Her bio tells the reader that she's a design and colour enthusiast, landscape lover and of course, co-founder of her beloved start-up agency.

However, for those looking to venture beyond the bright filters and washed-out photos on social media, a different Eleanor can be found.



In my personal life, I'm lucky enough to have a huge range of hobbies and interests; photography, snowboarding, playing guitar, travelling, tennis, interior design", she tell us, typing furiously on one of her studio's ultra-sleek iMacs. "Anyone from the outside and especially looking at my Instagram and social media would guess that I have no problem with anxiety at all."

Ah anxiety, that simple word that affects so many – and yet, despite the illness being described by one newspaper as a 'silent epidemic' due to the staggering statistic that up to a third of the population will suffer from the disorder or related attacks in their lifetime, it is the same word that receives less than 1% of the total amount of money spent on mental health every year.

In plain English, that's around £170m, or a measly £8 per sufferer per year, depending on how you look at it.

In Eleanor's case, what started as a mild case at a young age soon began to spiral as the years rolled by. In fact, like thousands of other sufferers across the UK, Eleanor's anxiety worsened throughout her teenage years.

"When I passed my driving test, I suddenly had the choice to go out or not, there was a freedom; no one taking me anywhere, it was down to me to force myself to go out. I got into bad habits of choosing not to go out into town, not seeing friends, not going to college which ultimately resulted in the first wave of anxiety; the less I went out, the harder it was to.

"This same concept also flooded my uni life; not settling into halls well enough to create strong friendships bar a few, being too anxious to even go to my own uni ball and the more I missed, the more anxious I became again."

After a brief stint of living in Wakefield, away from friends and the world outside, Eleanor hit rock bottom. "Winter 2015 is a blur to me now", she explains. "I missed Christmas, I spent New Year – which also happens to be my birthday – alone."

Thankfully, during this time Eleanor's family did something so many fail to do – they recognised the illness and advised her to seek professional help. However, after leaving with nothing more than a solitary leaflet and a prescription of Buscopan (1% total spend, anyone?), she knew she'd have to find a way of dealing with her anxiety alone.

Enter Oslo.

While still struggling to find balance in her day to day, Eleanor's start-up provided something that no leaflet could ever hope to do. "Oslo gave me focus and structure", reveals a reflective Ellie, "it made me feel like I was building something worthwhile when everything else seemed so unsure and unreliable around me. It gave me a list of jobs to do and things that I could tick off daily whilst I was struggling to deal with [it].

"I worked so hard to build the business well enough to rent an office which I moved into in October of 2016. Oslo resides in the stunning Castleton Mill in Leeds which has, in turn, created a lifestyle for me that is the complete opposite to what it was in the beginning. I leave the house without blinking

“ a third of the population will suffer from the disorder or related attacks in their lifetime

an eye, I see other human beings every single day and, although I still find new places - especially places with lots of people in - very difficult to overcome, I can safely say that I feel like a very different person to a year ago and that I feel I am headed in the right direction."

Reading this, it'd be easy to presume that Eleanor's story has come full circle and that through Oslo, she has found a way of dealing with the fears that made life so miserable just over a year ago. Such presumptions may be fair to assume, but that's not to say that they paint an accurate perception on how things actually are.

"Personally, I want to be present, be happy and stay healthy. I know that anxiety will always exist and some days will be good, some days bad, but I want my coping mechanism to be strong and to be able to remember that I can't control the world, but I can control my responses."

Anxiety isn't necessarily curable, that much we know. But that's not to say it isn't manageable. In fact, for many sufferers, each day presents a fresh opportunity to rebuild, develop and grow. And if ever there was a person who could add testament to such a claim, it's @EleanorFayNicholson.

*Are
you*

OK?

— It's good to talk. Sometimes it's fine to not be ok, the important thing is to look after yourself. Charities such as **Mind** have lots of great online resources, whether you're in need of a little support, or whether you need help in supporting someone else.

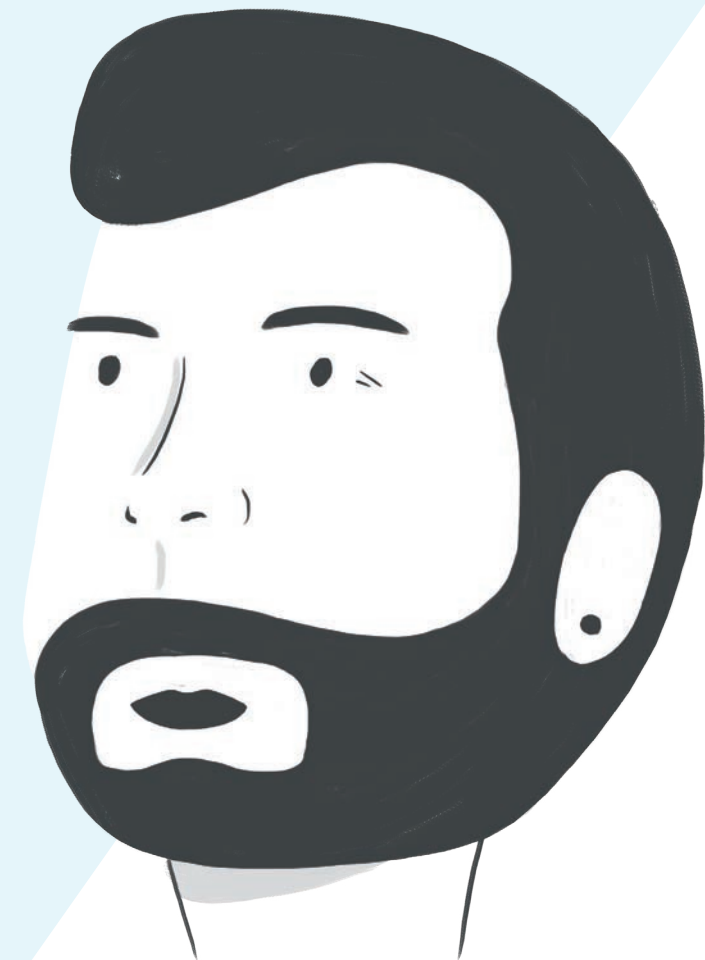
Looking after yourself (and others) in the workplace

A story with Colin Grist

Colin Grist (or 'Col', to those that have had the pleasure of meeting him) is a designer for a digital agency in the north of England. His eyes are kind and his smile is genuine.

Now in his twelfth year of sitting in front of a Mac, his craft has been mastered, and it isn't uncommon to see him mentoring the juniors that work alongside him.

He is successful, talented and professional. He is also no stranger to depression.



Speaking about his condition, Colin reflects on the time he was first diagnosed in 2014. “I’d felt funny for a while. I’d been upset at home for no reason, telling my wife I was ‘tired’. I’d woken up in the night feeling breathless, I’d not been sleeping much, my body ached. But depression? That didn’t sound like me.”

During this time Colin had been working on a series of projects and, like so many who share his desire to deliver only the highest of standards, it didn’t take long for the balance to tip.

“It seemed that emotion was starting to rear its head in my day job. Design jobs seemed to be taking me an age to do. Client amends were becoming more than just that. I was getting stressed. Timings were getting tight on a few projects, and the pressure to deliver never seemed so great.

“I’d notice at home that my arm had been aching for a few days, and then it was my leg – why was I aching? I started getting headaches and then struggled to sleep. One evening I didn’t sleep at all, as I couldn’t get my breathing under control. I’d been worrying that my aching arm was linked to the chest pain I’d recently started getting, and I started to panic. Unable to breathe, I woke my wife up and she calmed me down.

“I was told I was depressed. It was hard to listen to, but it was also nice to know what was wrong with me

“I needed to see a doctor about my chest straight away. There was nothing wrong with my chest as the doctor found out, but other things we discussed read like a checklist of how I’d been feeling for the past 3 months.

“Sleeplessness, check. Aches and pains, check. Breathlessness, check. Emotional, check. I was told I was depressed. It was hard to listen to, but it was also nice to know what was wrong with me (and that I wasn’t having a heart attack).”

Following the diagnosis, Colin was immediately signed off work for two weeks. “I took time away from my day job and didn’t touch a keyboard the whole time” he explains. “I went to the park, ate out, went away for the weekend, and caught up on some of my favourite TV shows.

It might sound like a holiday, but it was probably the most important two weeks I’ve ever taken in my career. When I arrived back at work, I felt like a different person – that time off and the sessions I had with my counsellor made all the difference. I felt like the old me again.”

Upon his return, Col was welcomed with open arms and soon slotted back into his role as a senior designer. However, when feedback from the wider team landed in his inbox, questions started to arise.

“We did 360 reviews in this studio, where the rest of the team offered feedback on my performance as well as others working within the agency.

“It rang true for how I’d been feeling for months: ‘Col hasn’t quite been the same recently’ it began. ‘Been unhelpful at times’ another stated. ‘Annoyed all the time, seems quite negative, worried about him’ and ‘seems quite stressed’ were all mentioned, too. The feedback showed my colleagues clearly cared about me - so why had nobody asked what was wrong?

“I realised from the feedback that I’d probably not been the most approachable person at the time, and I hadn’t asked to speak to anyone about my problems either – but someone taking me to one side could have made a difference.”

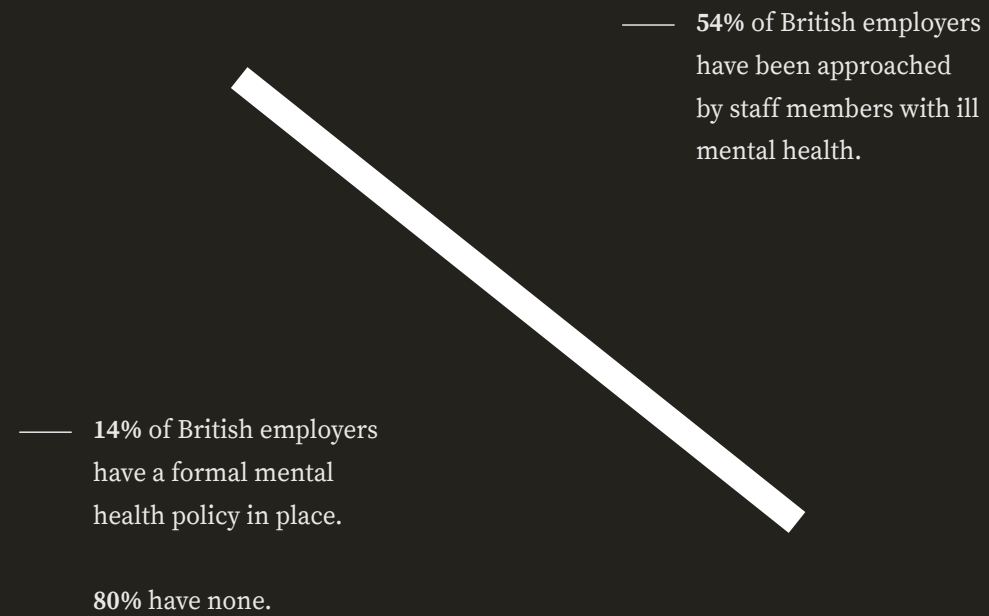
Here we find the crux of the issue - the part of everyday working life that many mental health publications, charities and speakers have aptly named ‘the elephant in the room’ - that moment where we all see the ship steering towards the iceberg, but choose to stay silent instead of raising the alarm.

How exactly do we fix this? The answer: collaboration.

“The pressures in this industry, from pitches, to delivery dates, to clients and the pressures that you put on yourself can be great at times, but that’s not to say that burden is yours to take on alone” explains Col.

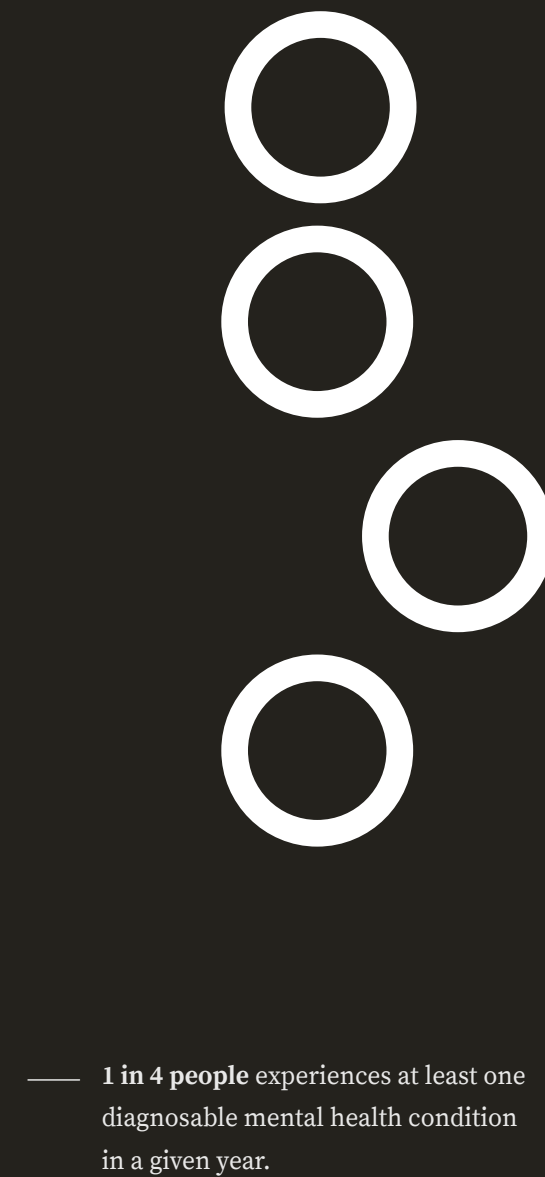
“That’s what the team around you is for, that’s what project managers are for, your line manager, colleagues, everybody. You need good people around you in the creative industries and working in silos gets you nowhere. That’s why I feel so passionately about how a team works together.

“Just remember, if it’s affecting you, it might be affecting someone else too. So look after yourself and look after your colleagues - your bodies might be telling you to take a break more than you realise.”



£105bn

— The cost of mental health to the economy is estimated at £105 billion a year.

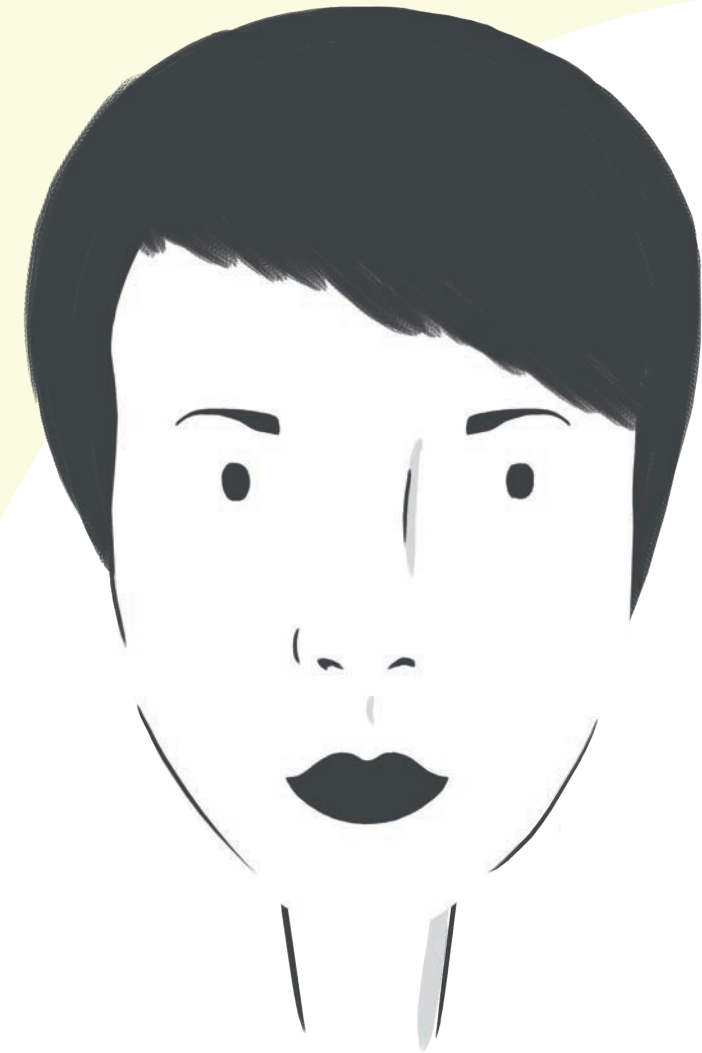


Invisible walls in a familiar setting

A story with Laura Evans-Fisk

Whenever Laura Evans-Fisk walks through a room, an air of self-confidence, positivity and belief often follows. Balancing professionalism with a radiant, warm personality, she is the perfect account manager - a role she was recruited to fill at one of the north's leading digital agencies less than 18 months ago.

But just because today Laura happens to be the happiest girl in the office, that's not to say she hasn't had her fair share of experiences in regards to her mental health and emotional wellbeing. Far from it.



During my postgraduate study at Leeds University I felt tremendously isolated and under a lot of pressure” Laura tells us. “The course was insanely difficult, my mum had just split up with an abusive partner and was living hand to mouth, my dad had had both his legs amputated, and things weren’t great with my partner.

“I ended up moving into student housing for space and freedom. This worked for a while, but a growing spot of mould on the windowsill bought everything into the forefront of my mind.

“I couldn’t stop thinking about the mould, and it would pop into my head at random times and make me feel physically ill. I couldn’t focus in seminars without the mould making an appearance, and suddenly this small spot of mould was the most horrific thing in my life, and out shadowed everything else that was difficult for me to deal with.”

“ *I was allowed to be who I needed to be — to cry to scream, to say nothing, and to say everything* ”

From then until now, Laura has come an awful long way in a relatively short amount of time, and while she’ll probably be the first to admit each day comes with its own unique set of challenges, she’s now better equipped to deal with life’s obstacles thanks to a simple service offered by her university.

“After one particularly bad evening I knew I had to do something and I could no longer suffer in silence. I felt like I was being crushed by invisible walls.

“I’d heard about the services that the uni offered during my induction sessions, and after finding out the NHS waiting list was 13 weeks, I decided to contact them.

“As soon as the lady answered the phone I just cried at her. She calmly took my details, and booked me in for an hour crisis session, which would be an in-depth session to ascertain what, if any, help I needed.”

In the weeks that followed, Laura retreated to a small building, discreetly signposted off the main campus. Here, she attended six sessions - one hour per week - to discuss the things she’d previously tried tackling under her own exhausted steam.

“I was allowed to be who I needed to be - to cry to scream, to say nothing, and to say everything. Every week I healed a little bit more, and the university didn’t seem quite so lonely, and the workload became manageable. The mould was still there physically, but every week it mattered just a little less.

“I was asked to self-analyse my mental health on the first session, and then again at the end of my sessions – the difference was unbelievable. The service provided was exactly what I needed, when I needed it, with a waiting time of less than a week.”

Today, plenty of universities offer a service similar to the one Laura managed to take advantage of. However, where once they used to offer services hidden away from the beaten track of campus life, thanks in part to mainstream social media these services can now be seen advertising their practice across the web.

A great example of this is @ImNotFineKU - a service operated by Kingston University for students who feel like uni is squashing them and need some tips on how to chill (their words, not ours).

Offering students a safe space to talk openly about issues such as stress, anxiety, depression and other forms of mental health problems, the open and almost ‘in your face’ approach presented by I’m Not Fine is something that signifies a new, open attitude to what has often been considered to be a taboo, ‘keep that to yourself’ kind of subject. Needless to say, it’s something we’re more than happy to applaud.

For Laura, looking back at her time at university will always ignite mixed feelings. On the one hand, it was a time of great stress, pressure and damaged mental wellbeing. Whereas on the other, it was a time where help was at hand when she needed it most - something that’s often overlooked by companies operating outside of the public sector.

“Without the services of the university I don’t know how I would have made it through that part of my life. It was my own private retreat, and the staff there built me back up to be the strong, resilient person I needed to be.

“Looking back, the hardest part of it all was just picking the phone up and making the call.”

*Don't let
things*

— Sometimes recognising the
struggle is the hardest part.

*spiral out
of control*

Finding solace in the arts

A story with PILLARS

For some, working in the creative industry can be a contributing factor in their struggles with mental health, but for others, it can present itself as a welcome remedy. This is something that rings true with the face of artist PILLARS, who tells us her story of how working and creating in the music industry has become her own personal form of therapy.

She describes herself as a dark electronic artist whose music tells of her personal experiences with mental health, notably her journey through anorexia.



Having always suffered with varying degrees of anxiety, I was diagnosed with anorexia in 2015. Anorexia was something I had been secretly struggling with since 2013.

“Since opening up about my personal struggles I have received huge amounts of support from friends, families and professionals - something I would never have thought possible during my internal battle.”

“ *I believe the creative process my music requires is a form of personal therapy; but the existence I have within the creative industries can sometimes be challenging* ”

For PILLARS, her work has had a huge influence on her recovery, but she's not afraid to admit that working in such a fast-paced industry doesn't have its flaws.

“I believe the creative process my music requires is a form of personal therapy; but the existence I have within the creative industries can sometimes be challenging.

“The music industry in particular is a difficult industry to work within - this applies to administrators, managers, songwriters; corporate and independent - it's a competitive and fast paced industry. It's not always easy but with the core of my work helping me through my mental health issues, it feels almost necessary to be a part of.”

As well as her work, she tells us of the professional help she's sought in her experience with anorexia. Despite the somewhat unnerving thought of having been ignored in the first instance, she praises the help she eventually received.

“I have had professional help from the NHS. At first, I was very apprehensive approaching medical professionals. Having been misdiagnosed and ignored previously by the NHS, addressing my anorexia was a scary concept. I thought I'd be disheartened in being turned away but when they realised my condition was critical they were, and still are, thoroughly supportive. I've gained so much more respect for the NHS since having used the service as much as I have in the past three years.”

So it seems the combination of professional help (once her condition was acknowledged), and her own personal form of therapy, the future looks that bit brighter for PILLARS.

“I plan to continue creating my music as it's the main thing that helps me cope. I still struggle with my mental health but I truly believe art can overcome stigma and allow others to feel comfortable speaking out about such matters. Using my music in this way feels right and so I try to focus my attention on this rather than the demands of the music industry.”

Due to release her debut EP later this year, it's a personal piece of work that tells the story of her recovery, with each song having been written at a different stage of her journey.

“ *Speak out and speak up honestly. Express what you feel without haste. And most importantly - don't be ashamed* ”

Speaking of her record, and her advice for anyone going through a similar experience, she adds, “I can't wait for people to hear it and I am even more eager to reach out to those who may feel they can relate. If I reach out to only one person, all this hard work will have paid off.

“Speak out and speak up honestly. Express what you feel without haste. And most importantly - don't be ashamed.”



*Sometimes a
little perspective
really can work
wonders.*

— Don't be afraid to put yourself first.
If you need a little time out, take it.

Embracing the best and worst of times

A photo essay by Alex Lester



After graduating in 2012, a close friend (Jimi - the boy), and I decided to start our own independent magazine – a decision that the more I think about, the more I appreciate.

Titled Tusk Journal, our aim was to celebrate the creative landscape of both Manchester and Liverpool; two cities that, at the time, felt as though they were breaking away from an industrial past and surging towards a bright, exciting future.

As the cities evolved, so did we. Together we worked with Everything Everything, we sat in with Mary Anne Hobbs and attended more exhibitions than you could shake a paintbrush at. It was the best of times, but it came at a cost.

For every stride the magazine took forward my life took a step back, and even as our reputation grew, the nights, debt and stress grew that little bit more.

Living in a one bed flat, with rent, tax and bills never far away from the door didn't help, and soon enough life as Alex Lester, Editor-in-Chief, soon became more of a romantic notion as opposed to a sustainable, healthy lifestyle.

Of course, the money soon ran dry and in 2014 I left my flat and spent the next few months surfing the sofas of friends, drinking too much at one side of a bar and working through the night on the other.

My temper ran short, my outlook blackened and my actions became selfish and cruel. On the outside I was grey, washed out and thin.

God only knows what things looked like on the inside.

But that was then, and this is now – and when it actually boils down to what matters, the latter trumps the former every single time.

This narrative is by no means original, and life in your mid twenties rarely lives up to the expectation set during those dreamy teenage years. For me, like millions of others, those years were troublesome, heavy and fraught with stress, anxiety and sporadic bouts of depression, but that's not to say I'm not thankful for them.

So if, at the time of reading this, you find yourself in the midst of a crisis, conflict or ill-fated master plan, do not worry. Life is full of hurdles and circumstance can and will, at some point or another, make you its bitch. Just make sure that none of what you tackle is wasted. Make every experience count.

No man is perfect, and if anxiety, stress, depression or any other form of mental battering forms part of your story, don't shy away from it, embrace it. It'll make you into the person you were always meant to be. And that's a beautiful thing.

In the next few pages you'll see a selection of photos from that special era, each telling their own unique story. I hope you enjoy them as much I enjoy looking back on them.



—— Shot within the bedroom of Manchester girl/boy duo, Bernard and Edith. The band played my favourite track 'Heartache' for Jimi and I — it was a special moment.

—— Tusk Journal's first cover artist, Rob Bailey. I still haven't apologised for kissing his fiancé at our launch party.



—— One of the calmer days in Didsbury. No matter how stressful things got, having this on my doorstep always helped.



—— Taken at Liverpool Craft Beer Expo. I remember drinking Red Stripe on the train back to Manchester.

Thank you for the support

Although it may fall short when compared to the amazing work done by major charities, foundations, individuals and publications that dedicate their very existence to battling the stigma associated with mental health problems, we feel that at the very least the team here at **Pressures & Perspectives** will have created something that's made you think.

Challenging an issue as complex as this isn't something that can be done alone, and we owe a huge thank you to those who have contributed since starting this project.

Without you guys, the distance we've been able to travel would've taken ten times longer. Who knows, we may have even lost faith along the way.

There's no need to name individuals, you all know who you are. You are the partners, listeners and contributors. You are the friends, relatives and co-workers who go out of your way to support those around you. You are the people brave enough to reach out, speak and share.

To all of you, five stars.



Get in touch

Creative career paths can be stressful, a fact that's undoubtedly exacerbated by low wages, high levels of competition and tight deadlines. It's tough out there, but there's no need to be lonely. Reach out, talk openly and lean on one another. We're a community, after all.

If you'd like to be featured on our website or have a story to share, don't hesitate to get in touch. We're always happy to hear from you.

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