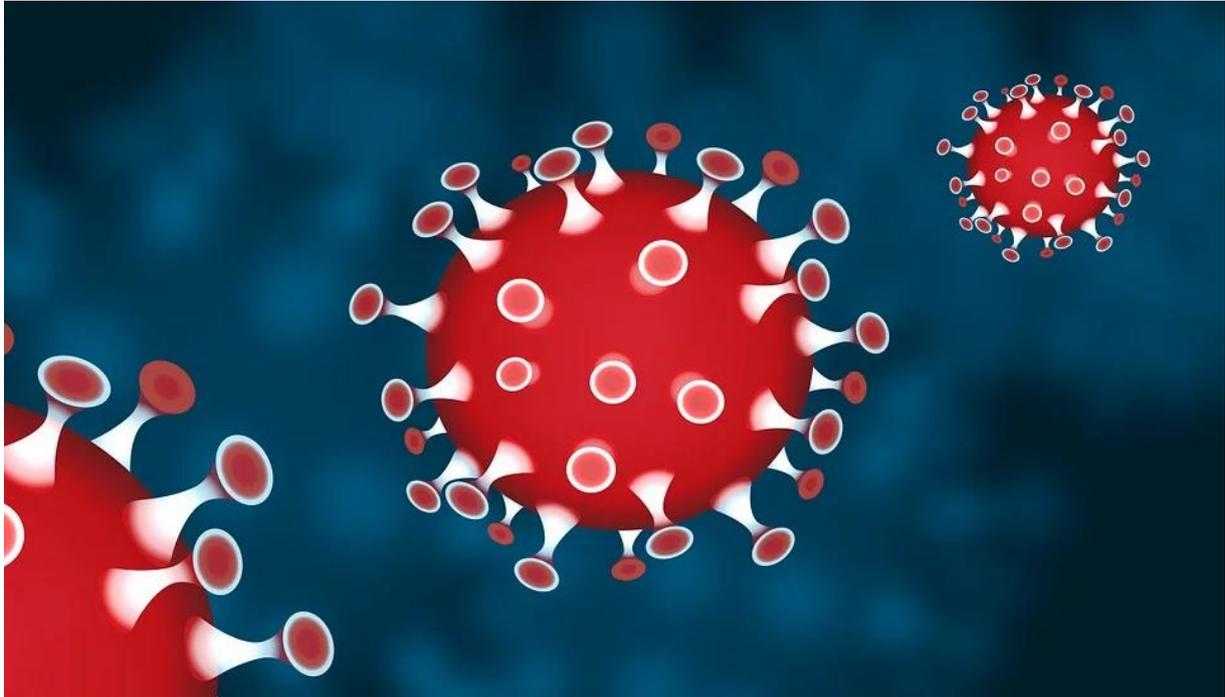


PARLIAMENT STREET

partnership in policy



MINDING THE PANDEMIC – WEEK 2

*Reflection of living in the face of a pandemic and the effects on a regular
citizens mental health*

By Danny Bowman, Head of Campaigns at Parliament Street

Take away from last week

- Not enough of a routine in place, not enough physical or other focused activity, and not an adequate amount of relaxation factored in. All these things can be useful to maintain good mental health. I hope this week I can implement some of these approaches to maintain good mental health.

Key and Mood Scoring

<p style="text-align: center;">MOOD SCALE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8 – Ecstatic</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7- Very Happy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6- Moderately Happy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5 – Mild Happiness</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 – OK</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3- Mild Unhappiness</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2- Moderately Unhappy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1- Very Unhappy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0- Miserable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*Lockdown begins</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* Week 2 begins</p>
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.... WEEK 2 BEGINS

29th March 2020

Today was one of those slow days, doing household tasks such as loading the dishwasher, putting clothes in the washing machine and trying my hand at ironing (I'm getting better I promise). The rest of the day was spent relaxing binge-watching light-hearted shows such as The Middle. Today was about relaxing but feel a bit frustrated and useless when doing it. Would prefer to be rushing between things, getting lots of work done and helping. Looking forward to next week where I have three social care shifts, and a department representative meeting. Hoping I'm going to get my dissertation draft back soon too. A couple of weeks ago days like this would have been welcome, but today was not. I feel like I should be doing more, saddened by what I'm seeing on the tv, driven to get out there. Still waiting to get my confirmation from NHS volunteers and hoping to get some requests to volunteer at the local food bank. All to come hopefully. It's times like this when doing your bit has never felt so important.

Other news, called my girlfriend this morning which was lovely. She seemed a little under the weather but recovered throughout the day. Just wish I could be where she is.

If this is going to be the situation till June.... Then I better keep check of my mental health and continue to help in any way I can (2m distancing obviously).

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 4 (OK)

Afternoon – 4 (OK)

Evening – 5 (Mild Happiness)

30th March 2020

My mood today started flat but improved substantially as the day went on! I have formulated a schedule for myself to follow instead of just freestyling my way through each day. It's a long time housebound to follow no schedule whatsoever.

The morning consisted of finishing off my essay on children and young people's wellbeing, followed by logging into my NHS Volunteering App. Quite slow today, but that could be a good thing with less people needing support. After doing that for a couple of hours I felt determined to improve my own mood by getting into the fresh air. Getting my rugby top, shorts and trainers on felt good as I wondered outside into the fresh air. Simply going outside into the fresh air is something I'm never going to take for granted ever again!

My housemate joined me outside to do some shuttles; people and exercise seemed to be the best cure for my slightly low mood. We jogged around the block, keeping an eye out for anyone coming, but luckily it was quiet. Jogging around the streets of York gave me a sense of freedom, but I was quickly reminded of the distancing as soon as someone came close enough for concern. Even in times like this, exercising still feels amazing, slowly making my way back around to my house through the spring air.

When I got back I had a quick shower before heading to my room to have a quick meeting for guidance on one of my essays. Seems like I am on the right track.

It's been a better day through a mix of exercise, talking to people, reducing the amount of news I watch, and getting my work down. Hopefully tomorrow will be as productive and happy. Feeling more optimistic than ever that I can maintain my mental health during this period. I just need to retain as much normality as possible!

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Afternoon – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Evening – 7 (Very Happy)

31st March 2020

Today my anxiety reduced further, helped by my new scheduled approach to lockdown. I woke up later than usual, but just in time to chair the Student Staff Forum (Meeting with Department Representatives and Staff). It was nice to hear and see people again reminding me that there is still a world outside of the four walls of my house. The afternoon consisted of focusing on my work and another trip to the shops. Great to get out of the house even for a short period of time, bit anxiety provoking in the shop, but people seem to be being very sensible. I feel that my mood has increased substantially over the last couple of days, and I put that down to having a schedule, sticking to it, remaining focused, and finding some downtime to relax. This Coronavirus period is like one big exposure task for my OCD, and one big test for my mental health. I hope and look forward to passing that test daily.

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Afternoon – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Evening – 6 (Moderately Happy)

1st April 2020

Yet again the scheduled approach worked well this morning enabling me to get up at a normal time and get started on my day. I worked all the way through to lunchtime referencing my work (usually painful) which was quite therapeutic and calming. It seems pandemic's do very strange things to what you consider relaxing and not. This time has caused other strange occurrences such as me asking my housemate who has limited hairdressing experience to cut my hair for me. This must be the biggest exposure task yet for my Body Dysmorphic Disorder – hope even in a pandemic.

By the afternoon my mind turned to my social care job, getting all my stuff together and making sure I had my work ID with me just in case I got stopped. The walk to work was really relaxing with clear roads ahead of me. Exercise always has been and remains a constant positive for my mental health so walking to work was extremely beneficial. Yet again, I can't praise the people I work with enough, incredibly professional, hardworking and caring even in this difficult time. They have a fantastic way of reassuring the people we support and keeping them happy.

On the way back from work the same phenomenon of empty streets, no cars and little noise played out. In a weird way it was quite nice and was perfect for a bit of mindfulness.

Once home, quick dinner and off to bed!

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Afternoon – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Evening – 6 (Moderately Happy)

2nd April 2020

I woke up this morning feeling quite sickly driven by some anxiety which I feel was brought on by stupidly deciding to check the headlines. I scanned the news to find that doctors had now been told they may need to prioritise people when deciding on who has access to ventilators and who does not. Not very helpful at all for my mood or I can imagine anyone else's to see stories like this brandished across the internet. Is it helpful or sensible for news outlets to brandish that across its headlines? I would say it's irresponsible and could be counterproductive. I made the decision to mute my apps for today and tried to avoid news outlets on television.

Getting ready to go to my social care job again today, looking forward to getting out of the house and into the fresh air.

Another fantastic day working bank at the social care job, really enjoying helping in any way I can. I continue to get fantastic guidance in the job from all of my colleagues.

Afterwards swiftly heading home for a quick call with my girlfriend. Managed to catch the final bits of virtual pub night with my friends too, but up early tomorrow for another shift. Feeling scheduled, loving the walks to work and thinking positively!

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 4 (OK)

Afternoon – 5 (Mild Happiness)

Evening 6 (Moderate Happiness)

3rd April 2020

Early start this morning to go to the local co-op for the essentials before heading off for another shift. All the staff at the shop are working so hard to make sure the shelves are stacked and ready for the constant bombardment of people coming through the door. My anxiety was slightly reduced going into the supermarket, knowing what I needed and calmly getting it.

Once back, I chose not to watch the news whilst eating my breakfast to reduce any anxiety from arising. Feeling positive this morning as I packed my bag again ready for work. I think an increase in scheduling,

and a reduction in the amount of news I watch can be attributed to this rise in my mood. I keep mentioning scheduling, but it really works, keeping me focused, organised and busy through these difficult times. It continues to be fantastic for my mental health!

Another inspiring day working alongside some incredible people at the social care place! After work I felt really uplifted as I always do when leaving the social care job. I think it has a lot to do with the people I work alongside! They continue to do an amazing job.

Heading home to watch a film with housemates!

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Afternoon – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Evening 7 (Very Happy)

4th April 2020

Today was about having a break from my work and focusing on relaxing as I would on a normal weekend. I guess I'm trying to replicate normality within my pandemic style schedule. I did a little bit of work, but then used the rest of the morning to do some exercise in the garden and watch some amazon prime.

In the afternoon I decided to ask my housemate to cut my hair as it had been weeks since I had been to the hairdressers. Anyone who knows me, and BDD will know that getting my housemate who has very limited experience of cutting hair to cut mine was a big step. I am glad I took that big step because she did an exceptional job!

Being in lockdown has forced me to address some of the underlying worries and concerns of my OCD and BDD. It has been difficult to face up to some of the small remaining symptoms, but I am pleased to say when I have faced up to these symptoms (most of the time) in lockdown I have been 100% successful.

I spent the remainder of the day watching tv (not the news) and chilling out in my room doing some reading! As the days go on I can feel myself becoming less anxious, less agitated and more confident about the current situation we all find ourselves in, and our ability to get through it!

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 7 (Very Happy)

Afternoon 6 (Moderately Happy)

Evening – 6 (Moderately Happy)

5th April 2020

It was nice to head outside into the garden this morning with a coffee to continue working on my dissertation. Being out in the garden lifted my spirits, taking in the fresh air and practicing a little bit of mindfulness. Throughout this time, it seems I've become much better at being able to pause more and look at what's around me, helping me remain more focused when I actually start my work.

In the afternoon I decided to call my family, really missing not being able to get a train to go and see them, but I know to keep them safe, I must stay away. It was lovely hearing their voices and listening to all that they had been up to. They were keeping themselves busy with my Mum and Dad spending a lot of time in their garden in between work. I think that's what was keeping them so mentally and physically well which made me happy. By the time I ended the call it was almost time to watch the Queen make a statement on the TV.

Sitting down with housemates I listened closely to the words being spoken by the Queen, filling me with a sense of optimism and belief that we will overcome this. Watching the Queen, I, and I can imagine most of the country was reminded of the importance of remaining united and resolute.

Reminding us that we all have a responsibility to look after each other and through kindness, courage and optimism we can, and we will get through this period together.

This week has been much better, helped by implementing a schedule, doing exercise and making sure that I spent time with my housemates. It's important within these complicated and difficult times that we all hold onto some sense of normality. I would recommend to anyone struggling with their mental health during this difficult time to implement even one of these things to improve their mental health.

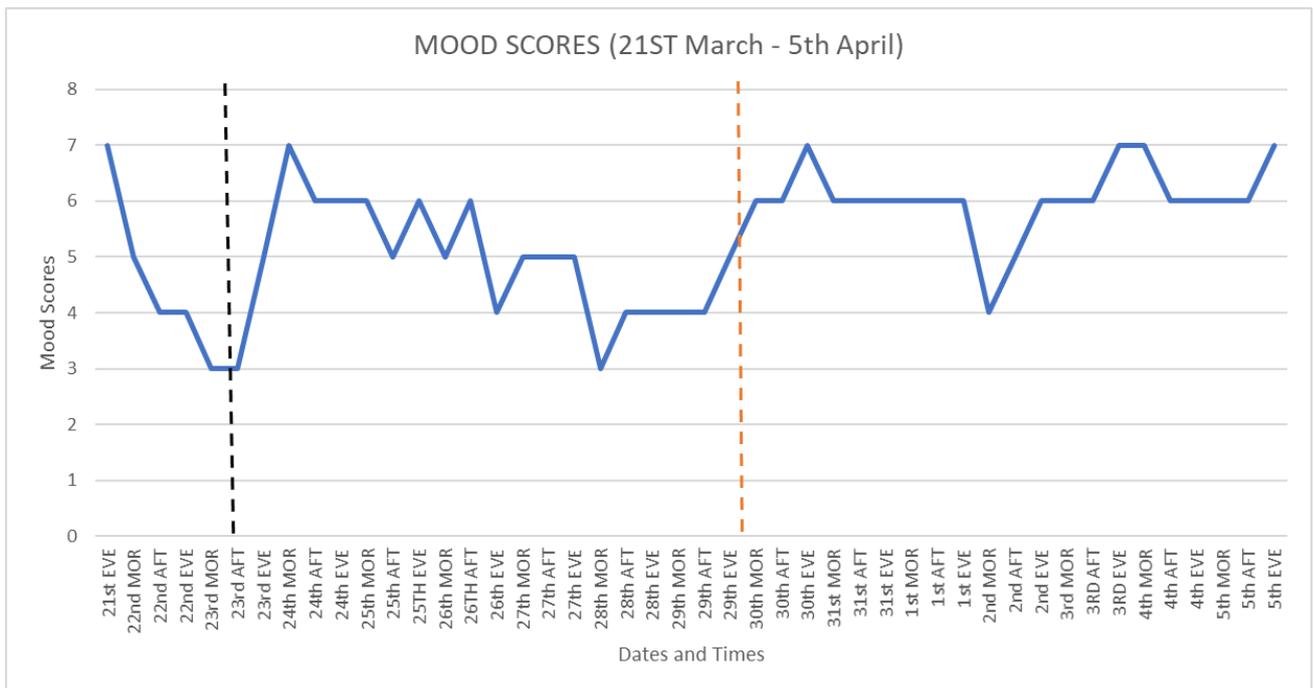
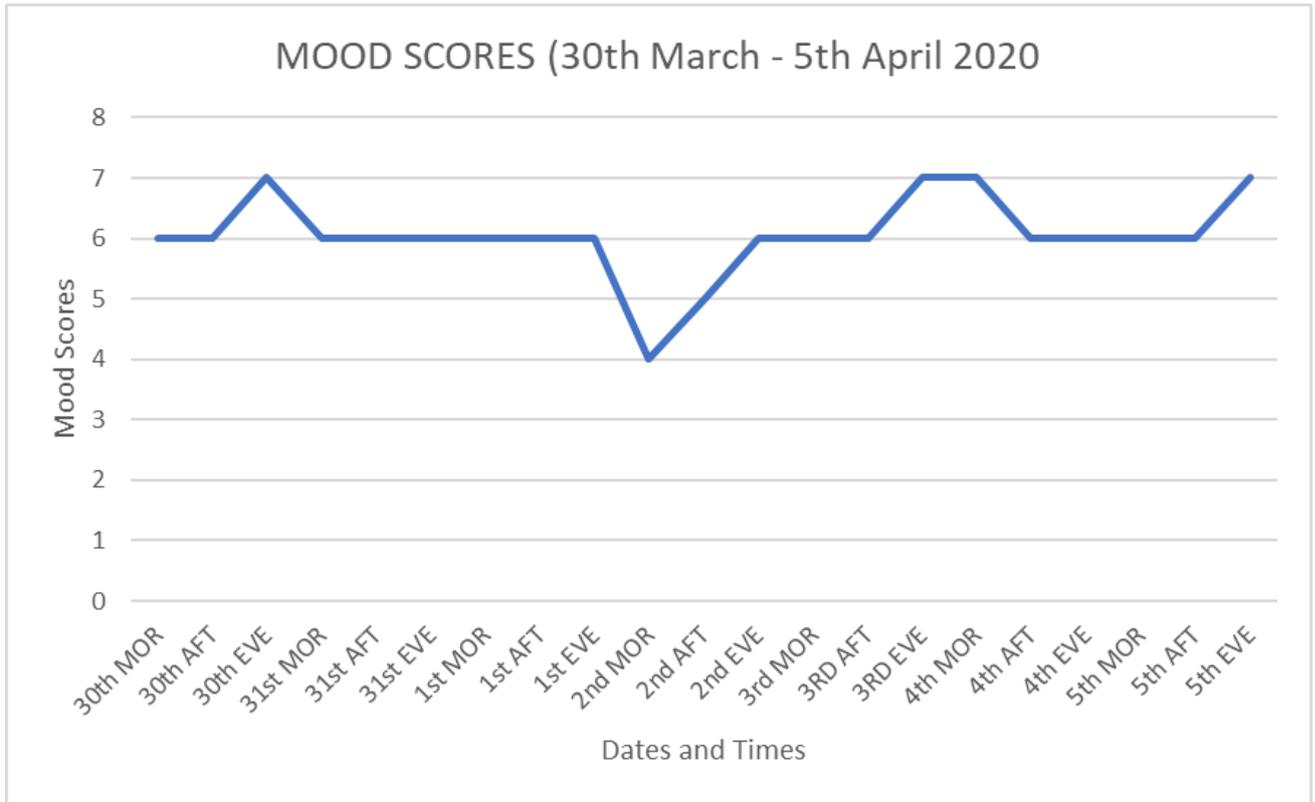
What's been the most helpful move this week is staying connected with others either through talking to people in my house or facetimeing friends and family. It's by staying connected in a sensible way that will help us maintain good mental health and enable us to get through this period one day at a time.

Daily scores on mental wellbeing

Morning – 6 (Moderately Happy)

Afternoon 6 (Moderately Happy)

Evening – 7 (Very Happy)



WEEK 1 AVERAGE MOOD SCORE – 4.9 (Rounded Up – Mild Happiness)

WEEK 2 AVERAGE MOOD SCORE – 6.6 (Rounded Up – Very Happy)

OVERALL AVERAGE MOOD SCORE (SO FAR) – 5.9 (Rounded Up – Moderately Happy)

