

MENTAL HEALTH

THE YOUNG FREELANCER'S
GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH
AND THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

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Musicians' Union for the MU Young Members Network

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was created at the request of the MU's Young Members Network, who felt that a lot of the advice out there did not work for them.

It is intended to provide helpful insight and advice as you navigate the industry as a young freelance musician.

It identifies common challenges facing freelance musicians, and signposts sources of support that you can access.

It also includes tips on identifying and managing anxiety and other issues, and when to seek help or access specialist support.

Remember, mental health at work is a trade union issue. You can contact the MU anytime for advice and support via **theMU.org**.



LIFE AS A MUSICIAN

Being a musician can be exciting, satisfying and deeply rewarding. But it can also be demanding, unpredictable and stressful.

Research by Help Musicians UK in 2016 found that 71.1% of respondents had experienced high levels of anxiety and/or panic attacks whilst 68.5% reported experiencing depression, meaning that musicians are three times as likely to experience depression than the national average.

Participants of the study reported that, though they found the creation of music therapeutic, they found the pressures of working within the music industry detrimental to their psychological well-being.



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WORKING FREELANCE

THE FLEXIBILITY PROVIDED BY FREELANCE WORK CAN OFFER A SENSE OF AGENCY AND FREEDOM, BUT AT TIMES IT CAN ALSO FEEL OVERWHELMING, ISOLATING AND INTIMIDATING.

It's important to be aware that working as a freelancer in the music industry means that you don't get many of the benefits of full time employment, like line managers, annual leave, a regular salary, set hours, or a clear boundary between work and home.

Deciding how and when you want to work, planning ahead, improving your support systems and getting to know how your body and mind respond in times of stress can help support you during times of instability.

With that in mind, this guide explores:

- self care
- burn out
- boundaries
- support networks
- resilience
- identity
- anxiety and panic attacks
- depression



SELF CARE

SELF CARE DESCRIBES ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE OPTIMAL PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

Practicing self care means ringfencing time for you to look after yourself, allowing you to decompress and supporting you through the ups and downs of your career and personal life.

Self care is important to build in if you are to enjoy a sustainable career.

Incorporating short, manageable bursts of exercise and paying attention to healthy eating and sleep hygiene will help you to recharge your batteries whilst working in a stressful and often unpredictable industry.

Some self care practices are fun, some give you energy, some will help you decompress but crucially, they are all experiences that help to reduce stress and attend to your bodily and emotional needs.

There are many self care practices and what's right for you will depend on your personal taste.

TIPS FOR SELF CARE

There are many self care practices and what's right for you will depend on your personal taste, including:

- > Regular exercise (such as climbing, running, martial arts, cycling, swimming)
- > Healthy eating (balanced, wholesome, nutritious for optimal energy levels, reduced swelling and inflammation)
- > Comedy or some other form of light, humorous activity
- > A way to slow your mind and body down, whether it is regular mindfulness, meditation, tai chi, yoga or breathing exercises.
- > Good quality restorative sleep
- > Time outdoors, ideally somewhere with sunlight and greenery
- > Keeping a gratitude journal (naming three things you are grateful for, of any scale, and avoiding the word 'should')
- > Massage, acupuncture or other body-based therapies
- > Keeping in touch with friends and loved ones

THE WELLNESS WHEEL



One way of improving your self care practices is to look at a wellness wheel. A wellness wheel is a concept that illustrates the sectors of life that contribute to a sense of personal fulfilment and wellness. It can help to give perspective on the areas of your life in which you thrive and those which need some attention.

Look at the diagram above and consider how healthy each of these sectors is. You may find that some areas are stronger than others. What can you do to improve the neglected sectors and gain a greater sense of balance?



BURN OUT

BURN OUT IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN EXHAUSTED AND STRESSED BODY SAYS 'NO, ENOUGH! YOU HAVE TO STOP!'

It is the result of an unmanageable workload and a strong signal that something needs to change. It means that your mind is out of synchronisation with your body - you've taken too much on and your body is putting on the brakes.

Burn out is not just an emotional experience, it impacts your brain and body too, decreasing productivity, creative capacity and impacting memory.

It increases anxiety and can leave you feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, cynical and with low self-esteem.

It's important to remember that we are all susceptible to burn out and we all have our limits. It is not a failure on your part, nor is it a badge of honour.

COPING WITH BURN OUT

Take your recovery seriously and give yourself a break to recuperate.

When you are starting to feel better, take a step back, prioritise your workload and consider how much you are taking on. What can wait?

Be honest with yourself. If you are self-medicating with drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, sex, porn or self-harm, it's important for you to reach for support. Visit your GP and tell a trusted friend, family member or colleague about your situation. Unhealthy coping mechanisms may seem like they're helping you manage but it is momentary and they're increasing the stress that your body and brain is under. Furthermore they will likely lead to many more complex issues. You can find a list of resources and help available at the end of this guide.

Burn out indicates that you have been misreading, ignoring or dismissing the signals your body is sending you about how you are coping and what it needs. Think of your body as a barometer for how you are doing inside. Learn to identify how your body responds to stress. Where do you feel it? Where does your body store tension? (e.g. across shoulders, stomach issues, headaches, tension in your jaw). Consider how you can support your body better by helping it to release tension and stress.



BOUNDARIES

ONE WAY OF REDUCING THE LIKELIHOOD OF BURN OUT IS BY IMPROVING YOUR USE OF BOUNDARIES.

Boundaries help us to differentiate where we stop and where another person, or role, begins. They help us to know what is our responsibility and what is within the remit of someone else - helping us to differentiate between work and play and job role and self.

Boundaries help us to manage stress by allowing us time to stop, recover and re-centre before our resources become depleted. They help us to feel more balanced, which in turn helps us to work more efficiently.

Boundaries can feel difficult to put in place in a 24/7 industry that is competitive, social, and where people work irregular hours across different time-zones.

Try and build a routine, particularly when you are not on tour. When practising or working at home hone your time management and find out what works best for you. Simple things like getting dressed and working from another room, coffee shop or hot desk work environment can make a difference to how you feel and reminds you that you are in 'work' mode.

IDENTIFYING BOUNDARIES

Use these ten questions to help figure out where you need to put in boundaries, and what might be getting in the way of you doing so.

1. How healthy is your work-life balance?
2. When do you start and when do you stop working?
3. How regularly do you take breaks? (think about this on a daily basis, i.e. lunch breaks and also in terms of holidays).
4. Do you work during your breaks?
5. How hard is it for you to 'switch off'?
6. How available do you really need to be, and in what way, in order to do your job?
7. Are you able to make some time for yourself without feeling guilty or anxious?
8. How 'connected' are you? (i.e. do you check social media or emails late at night or first thing in the morning?)
9. How comfortable do you feel saying 'no' or turning down work?
10. If saying 'no' is hard for you, what makes it difficult?

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Being unable to say no leads to stress, exhaustion and irritability.

Perhaps you fear that by having a better work-life balance you may lose a client, miss an opportunity or leave room for someone else to swoop in and take your position.

It may be that you fear being disliked or fear that it would prevent further opportunities from coming your way.

Learning when and how to say no is a crucial part of your development as a freelance musician. It is linked to increased self-confidence, self-respect and an increased quality of life.



PUTTING IN BOUNDARIES

- > Practice in areas you feel most comfortable (such as with particular friends)
- > Keep it clear, simple and polite - no need for lengthy explanations or over-the-top apologies, it's ok to say no sometimes.
- > If you are unsure, buy yourself some time to consider your options with 'let me get back to you'
- > Remind yourself that saying no allows you to support yourself and focus on the projects that really matter
- > Try to sit with any anxiety that saying no may provoke, it's uncomfortable but it will pass and get easier with practice
- > If you are unsure where to put in boundaries, seek outside guidance



SUPPORT NETWORKS

WHETHER YOU'RE JUST STARTING OUT IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, OR A SEASONED PRO, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE PRESSURE BUILDS, YOU CAN'T SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES AND YOUR DECISION MAKING IS NOT THE BEST.

It can be hard holding sole responsibility for making career decisions, especially if you are under stress, uncertain of the best route forward or unsure of that aspect of the industry works.

Try not to worry, that is a normal feeling to have - everyone has to start somewhere! Sometimes we can all benefit from a fresh pair of eyes or some outside advice. This is where a good support network comes in.

A support network for freelance musicians might include a manager, a mentor, advisors at trade bodies, music tutors, peers, performance coaches, psychotherapists or 12-step sponsors. Be proactive and seek out appropriate support for yourself.

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Your support network should also include friends and/or family outside of the music business, to help you to feel supported and grounded as your career progresses. Those outside of the industry can offer comfort during times of difficulty, and remind you of the other parts of you and your life aside from your stage persona.

It's important to maintain regular contact with friends and/or family. A lack of personal contact can compound feelings of loneliness, overwhelm, dissatisfaction and boredom.

But engaging with friends and/or family can help you regain perspective after adversity and remind you not to tie your self-worth solely to your career success.



BUILDING YOUR NETWORK

Here are eight tips to building your support network.

1. Identify who really 'sees' you and gets who you are and what you're about
2. Think about who you feel most comfortable talking to and whose opinion you respect
3. Try honestly answering the question 'how are you?' and noticing the response to what you say
4. Consider the sort of advisors you need (careers advisors, performance coaches, emotional support).
5. Ensure that at least one person in your support network has experience of the field in which you want to excel.
6. Respect the time of the people in your support network. Be concise and clear as to what you want - are you looking for in-depth careers advice or help with a particular problem?
7. Learn how to reach for support - it may feel difficult or unusual at first, but it will benefit you hugely in the long-run
8. Remember to invest and give back to the relationships you find most supportive - there will come a day when you need them.



CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

BEING RESILIENT MEANS NOT JUST BEING ABLE TO 'BOUNCE BACK' AND RECOVER AFTER ADVERSITY; IT MEANS BEING ABLE TO LIVE THROUGH IT AND WHERE POSSIBLE TO EVEN THRIVE AND GROW.

Resilience is an ongoing process that you can work on throughout your career. It requires a flexible, adaptive and creative approach.

Take a look at the four step approach outlined over the next few pages.

The steps cover:

1. Managing expectations and forward planning
2. Naming it to tame it
3. Acceptance
4. Moving forward.

STEP 1

The first step is all about managing expectations and forward-planning.

It is realistic and helpful to assume that there will be challenging times in your career. If you can accept that there will be difficult times ahead, you can try to prepare for them in advance – implementing self care routines, planning for quiet financial periods and developing your support network.

Remember that career progression is rarely linear in the music industry and that there will be some people you meet (such as critics, producers, promoters or fans) who just won't get what it is that you're about. And that's ok.

Putting yourself 'out there' and receiving negative criticism can be hard to take. Remember that you can't win them all. Managing the amount of time you spend reading reviews or engaging on social media is important if overexposure to negative comments is impacting your self-confidence.

STEP 2

The second step is about naming it to tame it.

When adversity occurs it can be cathartic to express any feelings that it has stirred up, such as feeling it's unfair, disappointing, frustrating, upsetting or has triggered low self-worth. If what has happened to you was unexpected you may also feel disorientated, confused, shocked or numb.

All of these feelings are normal.

Expressing them in a healthy way (i.e. not acting out of anger to harm another person or yourself) can help you to feel heard, validated and reduces the intensity of the feelings around the event. Find someone you trust, let it out and if you can - let it go.



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STEP 3

The third stage of resilience is accepting what has happened.

This doesn't mean minimising or dismissing it, but accepting that it cannot be changed.

Try to understand what it means to you that this event happened. How can you make sense of it? Is there anything you can learn from it?

In cases where the circumstances are ambiguous it can feel very difficult to move through it and part of the process may mean learning to live with unanswered questions. In this sense, acceptance involves acknowledging that there are some things that will happen that will be outside of your control.

In events where the adverse experience involves mistreatment or abuse, becoming compliant and passively accepting events may hinder rather than help you come to terms with what has happened. If this has happened to you it is important that you seek help from trained professionals who will be able to support you.

If you're not sure where to turn, you can find a list of resources at the end of this guide.

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STEP 4

The fourth and final stage is about looking ahead.

Spend some time identifying the choices and options available to you - this can help you regain a sense of agency (in that you can feel personally effective towards your life).

Remember that there are opportunities out there that you are not aware of yet, so try to be optimistic.

This is a good time to re-engage with things that give you pleasure and offer a sense of competence and mastery (such as activities that bring you joy, which could be playing or writing music).





IDENTITY

WORKING AS A MUSICIAN CAN BE ALL ENCOMPASSING; A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR YOUR WORK LIFE, INCOME, CREATIVE OUTLET AND SOCIAL LIFE.

Whilst it's easy to define yourself by your job role, it can become problematic in the event that the label is taken away, such as being dropped by a band, collective or orchestra, record label or place of work.

Those who have defined themselves by their job roles are then left grappling with both the loss of the job or role (which may include feelings like disappointment, rejection, abandonment, loss or financial anxiety) as well as potential fallout around a sense of who they are and self-worth. This can be confusing, distressing, shameful and may bring up questions around relevance or whether you belong.

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RECOVERING AFTER REJECTION

Give yourself time to express the feelings you have and reflect on what the most prominent features are e.g. shame, rejection, lack of control, fear of the future/uncertainty, loss of status/friends/community/income/way to express yourself and feel connected. That'll help give you a sense of what's hit you hardest and what you have to work on.

Don't kick yourself when you're down; ask yourself how you are talking to yourself on the inside. Be curious rather than judgemental. Are you compassionate towards yourself? Is an inner critic prominent? Reflect on what happens when you listen to that inner critic – does it inspire, nurture, motivate or support you, or does it bring you down and promote shame or low self-worth?

Build your self-esteem back up by reminding yourself of the skills, talent and achievements you have had so far.

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Once you have processed your feelings and accepted where you are, figure out what it is that you need right now.

Get support. This is where a support network outside of the music industry is invaluable - utilise them and reach for comfort, encouragement, understanding and reassurance.

Reframe your circumstance as an opportunity to learn about, explore or engage with other parts of yourself. Perhaps there were things that job role prevented you from doing that you'd now like to try? There may be new avenues to consider or skills you'd like to build.

Crucially - do not let this rejection or ending overshadow what you have achieved so far! Careers in the music industry often involve a lot of challenge and change (you just might not hear about it very often).

Remember that although that role may have been a big part of your life, you are much more than your job! This particular instance does not mean that you no longer have a place in the industry and no longer belong.

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Reconnect with music. As you know, music can be a powerful and cathartic tonic – transforming your personal experience, resonating deeply with your emotions and lifting your mood. That's one of the reasons you're in the industry, right? If you find yourself low and your relationship with music has changed, try to reconnect with it. What is it that you love about music as a creator, performer or an audience member?





ANXIETY

FEELING NERVOUS FROM TIME TO TIME IN IS AN ORDINARY HUMAN RESPONSE TO SITUATIONS SUCH AS A JOB INTERVIEW OR AN UPCOMING DEADLINE.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is a persistent or ongoing experience where symptoms disrupt day-to-day living and quality of life.

Anxiety is a distressing experience of excessive and persistent apprehension, worry or nervousness.

It can cause you to feel trapped, scared, out of control, overwhelmed, irritable or full of dread.

It can lead people to withdraw and avoid situations they might otherwise like to engage in.

The experience of anxiety varies widely and not everyone will experience the same symptoms.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Physical symptoms include:

- Raised heart rate
- Sweating
- Fidgeting
- Itching or scratching
- Upset tummy or increased need to use the toilet
- High temperatures
- Changes to appetite
- Breathlessness
- Dizziness or light-headedness

COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

Cognitive symptoms include:

- Racing, jumbled or intrusive thoughts
- Catastrophising
- 'Black and white thinking' (where things feel all good or all bad)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty with recall or remembering.

WHAT TO DO

If you experience symptoms of anxiety, there are several things you can do.

If you are experiencing anxiety regularly and it is impacting your quality of life and ability to do your job visit your G.P. They may refer you to talking therapies where you can work with a therapist to figure out the context (i.e. the previous experiences, environmental factors and triggers of your anxiety), or address the unhealthy thought patterns that arise. Your G.P. may also recommend you try a short or long-term anti-anxiety medication to reduce your symptoms.

You can also:

- > Limit the intake of stimulants such as caffeine (in coffee, tea, matcha, sports drinks or fizzy pop)
- > Lower your heart rate through elongating your out breath. Try the 4-7-8 method in the diagram on page 34 of this guide.
- > Learn to quieten your mind and detach from your thoughts, through a regular mindfulness or meditation practice
- > Help rid your body of the nervous energy through exercise and stretch out any tension.

MUSIC PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Music performance anxiety, or MPA, is a situational form of anxiety that affects performers such as musicians and DJs.

Often it is more frequent in musician's who experience other forms of anxiety or have vulnerabilities in other areas.

When our brain registers a threat, it sometimes responds by mobilising the body by either getting it ready to move towards or away from the threat (fight or flight) by triggering hyper-vigilance of the senses to be on the look-out for signs of danger and tensing the muscles, or by staying very still (freeze) or shutting down (flop - or 'playing dead') until the danger has passed.



COPING WITH MPA

Slow things down and reduce your heart-rate with the breathing exercise above/below. Stretch out any tension in your muscles. Warm up your body or your vocals (if you are a singer). Altering your physical symptoms can help you feel more in control and reduce the hyperventilation.

Once your body is calmer try 'reality testing' and challenging the negative thoughts. Be curious as to what's going on for you - is your fear proportionate to the perceived threat? Is this a feeling you have felt before? If the answer is 'yes', you have been 'triggered' and these feelings relate to a prior experience? Have you practised and are you a competent musician?

Normalise it. All musicians (yes, even your favourites!) have 'off' days, and that's ok. It's just part and parcel of the job.

Visualise success and focus on that image (it can be a past experience or an imagined one). Bring your thoughts back to this image when they start to wander to negative patterns

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If you have a very active inner critic, try to get it onside, by noticing that it is overactive and trying to keep you safe in a situation in which there is no real threat. There may be a part of you that suddenly feels very young and overwhelmed - picture an inner carer (someone you have met, or would like to meet) who can offer some compassionate support, rather than criticism.

Bear in mind that all musicians (yes, even your favourites!) have 'off' days, and that's ok. It's just part and parcel of the job.

Remember, that the fear is not a prophecy of what is to come. It is perfectly possible to go on to have a successful show even if you've experienced MPA beforehand.

MPA often relates to low serotonin levels, find yourself an upbeat playlist or funny video and see if you can laugh it off.

PANIC ATTACKS

Some artists experience panic attacks due to the pressure to perform under stress.

A panic attack is a short and sudden anxious experience that manifests in symptoms including feeling frightened and fearful, shallow or rapid breathless, sweating, dry mouth, dizziness, disorientation, shaking, nausea and elevated heart rate. Panic attacks distort your thinking as well as giving you physical symptoms.

COPING STRATEGIES

The first thing to remember is that you are not in any danger and nothing bad will happen to you.

You may think that you're going to have a heart attack or that you can't breathe or are going 'crazy', but you are safe. This is distorted thinking. The panic will pass - you've just got to ride it out.

Use this simple technique called EGO to reduce the symptoms.

33**E IS FOR EXHALE.**

We're going to bring your heart rate down and calm the body by altering your breathing. This will help to remind your body that it's safe.

Sit up straight and open out your shoulders. Aim to take slower (not deeper) breaths. Breathe in and then elongate your out-breath. Repeat this for 3-5 minutes. You can listen to calming music or follow a breathing app like iBreathe. Try the 4-7-8 breathing exercise on the next page, which will help to bring your heart rate down and manage anxious feelings - it is also effective for sleep difficulties. Some people like to visualise breathing out chaos and breathing in courage.

G IS FOR GROUNDING.

Bring your attention to your body. How do the points of contact with the floor or chair feel?

Start with your toes and gradually move your attention up through your body to the top of your head. What sensations can you feel in each area of your body? Soften any areas holding tension.

Guided body scans can also be effective for active minds that need something to do.

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O IS FOR ORIENTATE.

Move your focus to where you are.

Notice any sounds around you as you sit and re-centre. What can you see? Focus on an object and explore it; try to describe it as best you can. How might it feel, what texture does it have? How heavy is it? After that, stretch out any tension.

When you are feeling more yourself again you can reflect on what might have triggered the panic attack. The trigger may be a situation, a feeling, an object or a person.

How to fall asleep faster using 4-7-8 breathing

- 1) Exhale through the mouth
- 2) Inhale through the nose for 4 counts
- 3) Hold your breath for 7 counts
- 4) Exhale through the mouth for 8 counts
- 5) Repeat
- 6) Sleep

FINANCIAL ANXIETY

One common challenge facing freelance musicians is having an inconsistent income stream.

Often there is uncertainty around when the next job will come in, how much to charge, whether to work for free and stress around having to continually put yourself out there and pitch for work.

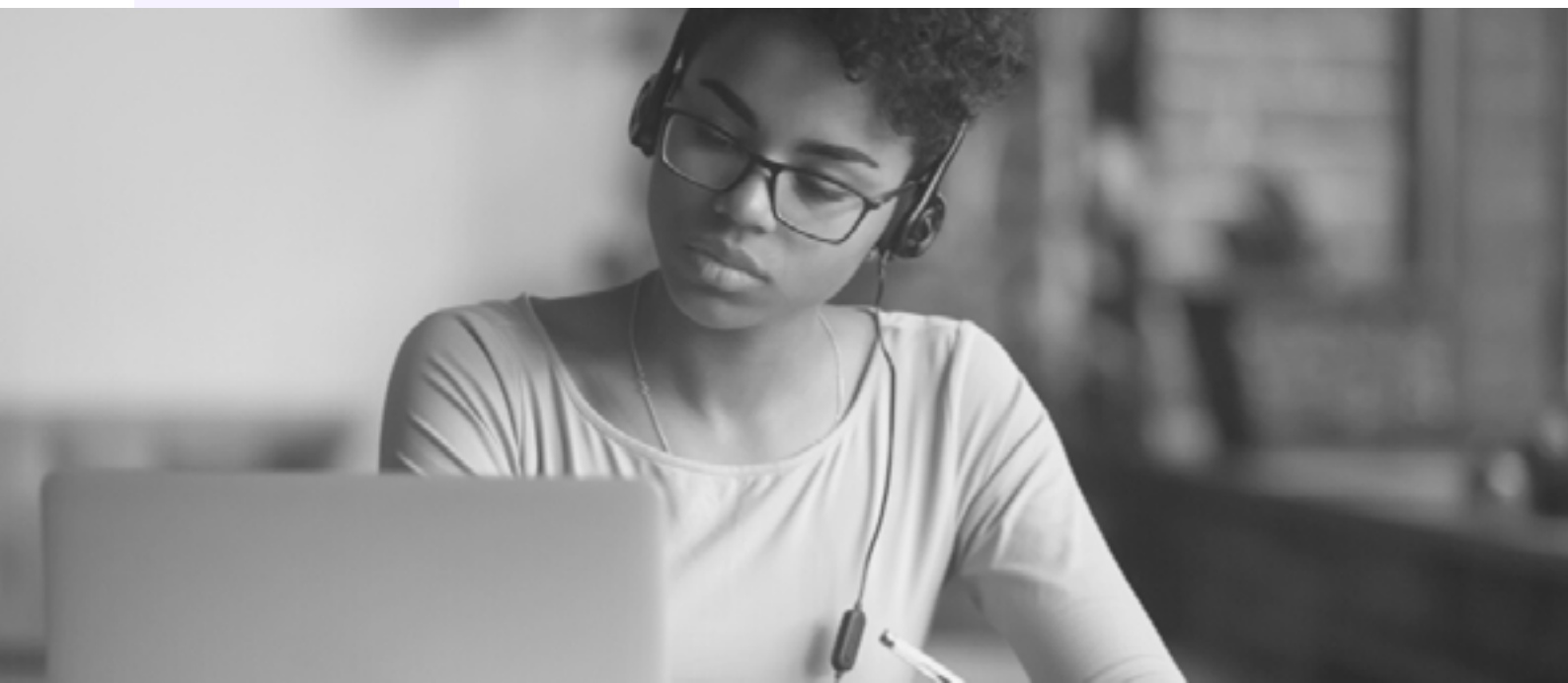
Not only are you are creating and performing but you are also running your own business, too - that's a lot of responsibility and a lot to keep track of.

It can lead you to feel as if you're unable to take a break - both through loss of earnings and the fear of missing out on work.

When financial difficulties increase, so do stress and anxiety, and financial difficulties and psychological illness can go hand in hand.

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- > Expect that there will be quiet times ahead and plan. Put some money away in advance for when this happens and consider other revenue streams.
- > Contribute to a pension (it may seem boring, but it pays off - quite literally - in the end)
- > Stay informed of the going rates for musicians, tax and other advice and training at **theMU.org**.
- > Look in to the various funds available which you may be eligible for. Some funds, such as from PRS for Music Foundation, the PRS for Music Members' Fund and Help Musicians UK may be able to help support you with touring costs, medical bills or short term mental health crisis support.





DEPRESSION

FEELING DOWN OR MISERABLE ARE SOME OF THE MANY FEELINGS IN THE 'NORMAL' RANGE OF HUMAN EMOTIONS. CLINICAL DEPRESSION, ON THE OTHER HAND, PERSISTS OVER MONTHS (OR SOMETIMES LONGER).

Often people who experience depression also often suffer from anxiety.

Depression can impact your outlook, perspective, relationships, physical health and how you feel about yourself.

Depression is more common in those who have a family history of depression or other psychiatric disorders and for those who have experienced past traumas.

Sometimes depression is related to a loss - such as the loss of a relationship or person, job role, sense of self or opportunity.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

There are many physical and psychological symptoms of depression, including the following:

- Feelings of worthlessness, isolation, hopelessness or despair
- Feeling angry, irritable or frustrated
- Low energy or motivation
- Difficulty taking care of yourself or doing ordinary everyday tasks
- Difficulty relating to people or feeling understood
- Having low self-esteem and low confidence
- Guilt and shame
- Low sex drive
- Lowered or increased appetite
- Physical aches and pains with no obvious cause
- Impaired thinking, decision making, memory or speech function
- Withdrawal or avoidance of social situations
- Difficulty sleeping, eating and moving
- Suicidal thoughts or plans
- Increased smoking or use of drugs and alcohol
- Self-harm or self-destructive behaviour

If you are unsure whether you are experiencing depression, you can use the NHS's self-assessment survey to find out more. Visit [nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression).

TREATING DEPRESSION

The causes of depression aren't always easy to identify on your own.

If you feel this way, it's important to seek treatment and support as soon as possible from a trained professional who can help you make sense of things (see the resources section).

Keep in mind that your feelings can change, even if you have been suffering for a long time.

There are people out there who can help you get the support that you need. Helplines can be found at the end of this guide.

Treatment can be a combination of one-to-one or group therapy, medication (from a G.P. or psychiatrist) and lifestyle changes.





SELF HARM

SELF-HARM IS WHEN YOU PURPOSEFULLY INJURE YOURSELF AS A WAY OF COPING WITH, AVOIDING OR NUMBING PAINFUL MEMORIES AND DIFFICULT OR OVERWHELMING FEELINGS.

Some people describe self-harm as a way to:

- Express something that is hard to put into words
- Turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- Change emotional pain into physical pain
- Reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- Have a sense of being in control
- Escape traumatic memories
- Have something in life that they can rely on
- Punish yourself for your feelings and experiences
- Stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated
- Create a reason to physically care for themselves
- Express suicidal and thoughts without taking their own life.

After self-harming you may feel a temporary sense of release, but the underlying cause of your distress is unlikely to have gone away.

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Self-harm can also bring up very difficult emotions and could make you feel worse. It is important to remember that self-harm does carry risks.

Once you have started to depend on self-harm, it can take a long time to stop. If you are self-harming it's important to seek help as soon as possible.

COPING WITH SELF HARM

The first thing to do is to reduce the risk by removing anything around you that you could use to self-harm. Then call someone.

If you have written a crisis plan, follow the steps in your crisis plan. Take a look at mental health charity Mind's advice on creating a crisis plan at bit.ly/2Wx6jOv.

Tips for first aid for self-injury and self-harm can be found at bit.ly/36lMgaf.



FURTHER RESOURCES

HERE ARE A LIST OF USEFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO TAKE A LOOK AT.

Body Scan Meditation

bit.ly/2qfDQjX

Breathing apps

- **iBreathe** apple.co/34j2mj2
- **Others that could help you** bit.ly/32cgGbS

MSE debt & mental health advice bit.ly/3280R5G

Meditation / mindfulness apps

- **Buddhify** buddhify.com
- **Third Ear** app.thirdear.com
- **Calm** calm.com
- **Headspace** headspace.com
- **Insight Timer** insighttimer.com/

Performance nutrition

bit.ly/2BZhOom

Sleep apps

- **Pzizz** pzizz.com
- **Sleepio** sleepio.com

Sleep Hygiene

bit.ly/2qamHsc

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Mindfulness based self compassion

bit.ly/2NxayFK

Mood trackers & emotional support

- **Good Thinking** good-thinking.uk
- **Mood Kit** apple.co/2PCdtj5
- **Sanvello** sanvello.com

Morning meditation

bit.ly/2PNthQf

Rethink Mental Illness

rethink.org



HELPLINES

IF YOU URGENTLY NEED HELP AND THERE IS A RISK TO THE SAFETY OF YOU OR THOSE AROUND YOU, CALL IS 999, OR VISIT A&E.

For NHS advice on how to handle a mental health crisis, visit bit.ly/2C315R9

Alcoholics Anonymous
alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Beat Eating Disorders
beateatingdisorders.org.uk
0808 801 0677

**The British Association for Performing Arts
Medicine**
bapam.org.uk

CALM (the Campaign Against Living Miserably)
thecalmzone.net

Help Musicians UK
helpmusicians.org.uk

Music Minds Matter
musicmindsmatter.org.uk
0808 802 8008
MMM@helpmusicians.org.uk.



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Mind

mind.org.uk

0300 123 3393

TheMusic Industry Therapist Collective

musicindustrytherapists.com

Music Support

musicsupport.org/what-we-do

0800 030 6789

The Samaritans

samaritans.org

116 123

Narcotics Anonymous

ukna.org

The National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247





HOW THE MU CAN HELP

MENTAL HEALTH IS A TRADE UNION ISSUE AND MUSICIANS' UNION MEMBERS CAN CONTACT US ANYTIME FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE.

Workplace discrimination because of mental health is against the law, and support for ill mental health at work can be considered a reasonable adjustment.

If you have any questions about mental health and your rights at work, contact the MU via **[theMU.org/contact](https://www.themu.org/contact)**.

The MU can also help with other issues that can impact upon your mental health, such as unpaid fees, contract or legal issues, and bullying and harassment at work.

Start exploring at **[theMU.org](https://www.themu.org)** or contact your local MU team via **[theMU.org/contact](https://www.themu.org/contact)**.