

## Opinion

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#### Maintaining my mental health through exercise

Exercise is one way I keep my head in check - whether its fieldwork, swimming or walking, exercise helps me keep my stress gremlins at bay, keeps anxieties under control and allows me to just take a breath.

This is me at one of my favourite local walking routes near my home in North Edinburgh. Once I get to this part of my walk (Newhaven Harbour), I start to smell and hear the water, the urban cityscape opens to a blue expanse. It's at this point that I immediately start to relax, my stresses and worries start to melt away.



Maintaining my mental health is something that has taken me a long time to learn how to do, and it's been especially important during lockdown. Going out for my daily walks has been a real lifesaver and helped me cope with what is a really weird and, at times, stressful situation.

#### Reflecting on mental health awareness

Mental Health Awareness Week has made me reflect a lot on mental health and archaeology.

At the start of my career, I think we were quite bad at managing mental health within the profession, but that has really changed in recent times. While there is still lots to do, I really love that people feel able to be more open about how they are feeling.

Three years ago, I did a 'First Aid for Mental Health course' which really changed my perspective on mental health in the workplace. It helped put a lot behaviours into context and helped me adjust my reactions to those behaviours. Simple actions like offering someone a cup of tea or small acts of kindness, such as asking someone if they are ok and offering to have a chat, can make a world of difference. It's ok to not be ok 100% of the time and we just need to remind ourselves and each other that when we need to.

If you would like to share your experience of managing mental health with other archaeologists please contact us at [admin@archaeologists.net](mailto:admin@archaeologists.net)