



*Equitas*  
EMPOWERING CHANGE, TOGETHER.

**THE EQUESTRIAN  
MENTAL HEALTH BOOK**

**W** My name is Shane Rooney, I am 26 years old and the Co-Founder of the HAY - How Are Ya Campaign alongside Shane McCarthy part of the team here at Equitas. I work in the breeding sector of the equine industry and I'm currently employed with Tinnakill House Stud, as well as being a writer for The Grassroots Gazette.

*My mental health story began at the age of 6, being bullied on a daily basis from my school days up until my professional career as a chef in my early 20s. **I'd gone through countless dips in my mental health, which then spiralled into anxiety and depression. It all changed once I picked up the phone.***

*I was never blessed with having lots of friends, in my head and mentality anyway. However, the friends I do have, I wouldn't trade for a thousand fake ones. Whether it was making me laugh, or starting a campaign that will eventually stop the stigma about opening up and talking, they are there for me. Although I may not have many, I am extremely blessed to have some fantastic friends. Friends that have seen me at my lowest and stuck by my side. Friends that I didn't realise were there, until I started opening up and talking. But most importantly, Friends that are the reason why I didn't make a permanent solution to a temporary problem.*

***I can't stress enough, that reaching out is the hardest and bravest thing someone can do.***

*The memory of fear comes to mind when looking back to the first time in my life that I was admitting I needed help. It is, however, the single-handedly greatest decision I ever made.*

***With this booklet, I am hoping it inspires more to do the same or encourage people to go one step further to being a better friend. Regardless of strength in mentality or lack of in the people reading this at this moment in time.***

*We are all in this to play a part in making our lives and the lives of the loved ones around us much better lives to live! So let's ride the storm together and change the stigma around mental health here at home and around the world.*



*Shane Rooney*

Co-Founder of the HAY - How Are Ya Campaign



# THE EQUESTRIAN MENTAL HEALTH BOOK

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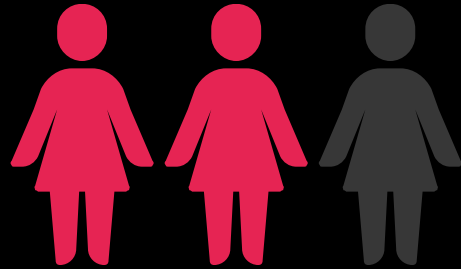
# WHO IS THIS MENTAL HEALTH BOOKLET FOR?

The equestrian mental health booklet is a product of "The HAY How Are Ya?" Equestrian Mental Health Campaign. This is a groundbreaking initiative, which strives to enhance the understanding and awareness of mental health and well-being of Equestrians.

It is aimed at individuals in the equestrian community who are going through a tough time, who may feel isolated, who may be dealing with stressors, pressures, anxiety and grief aligning to equestrian life.

In the process of planning this initiative, we conducted a comprehensive nationwide survey across all levels and all disciplines within the equestrian community to gauge the awareness and attitudes of equestrians towards mental health. The responses were varied.

***"You have the power to change your relationship with your mental health"***



Over two thirds (67%) of equestrians that responded have struggled with their mental health.

# 88%

88% of equestrians believe that more mental health support and resources are needed for equestrians at all levels.



9 out of 10 Equestrians would like an anonymous mental health helpline setup that they can call when struggling with their mental health.

The information contained in this booklet is provided and overseen by qualified professionals (including clinical psychologists) and also has submissions from the equestrian community who have dealt with grief, stress or anxiety. Its aim is to normalise discussions about mental health in everyday life, emphasising that mental health, which can be either good or bad, is an integral part of everyone's life.

**The objectives of this book are:**

- 1** To create a safe space for equestrians to talk about their mental health and seek help when they need it.
- 2** To help people recognise triggers and stressors unique to the equestrian industry
- 3** To help provide them with the necessary strategies and tools to cope with these challenges.

**“There is  
HOPE, even  
when your  
brain tells  
you there  
isn’t.”**

It emphasises that seeking help is not a sign of weakness and we should be encouraging people who are struggling to reach out and ask for support.

The booklet is a valuable resource for anyone in the equestrian community who is looking to take care of their mental health and well-being. Additionally, the booklet includes a list of organisations and agencies that offer assistance and advice on mental health matters. Remember, you are not alone; Let's Ride Together.

# UNDERSTANDING EQUESTRIAN MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is defined as **“The state of health of an individual’s mind”**

A good starting point here would be to ask the question:

*“What is good mental health?”*

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual:

- realises their own abilities
- can cope with normal day to day stresses
- has the ability to work productively
- can make a contribution to their community

The state of an individual's mental health is connected to all parts of life. A healthy mind has the ability to make good choices, remain calm, remain connected and grounded in all situations.

Where mental health is challenged, a disconnect occurs. The individual may lose the ability to make good choices and decisions in their life. They may engage in unhealthy decisions around food, alcohol, smoking, drugs and risky behaviour. The person is seeking solace in all the wrong places.

As simple human beings, which we all are, we fundamentally thrive on the basics; fresh air, hydration, sleep,

good nutrition, a daily routine, positive relationships, social connection, love and a family network. Modern living challenges these fundamentals by providing; excessive stimulation, isolation, questionable nutrition, stress and in a lot of cases huge expectations to “achieve” and look a certain way.

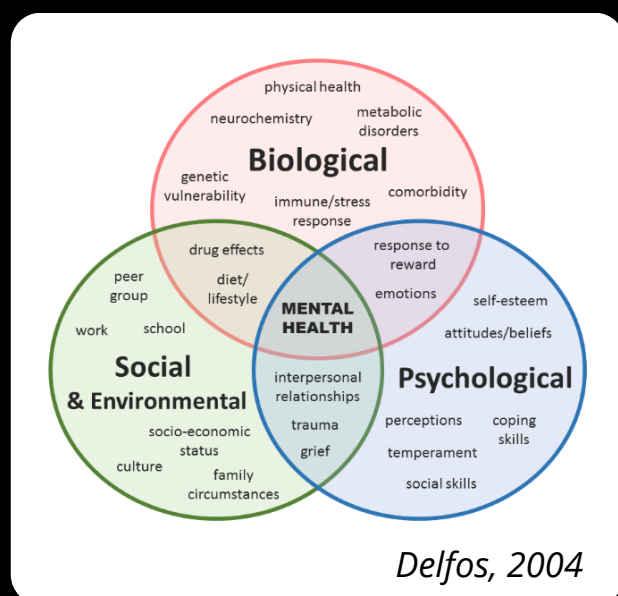
In equestrian sports, individual athletes have large and far reaching responsibilities for; themselves, the people around them (grooms, owners, family), the horses in their care and the environment they provide for the horses. The work is very physical and for most seven days a week.

Modern equestrian society without any doubt, more than ever associates horses with equal money. Talk is often about money and prices achieved for horses, putting a core value on monetary gain in the sport. Social media has exacerbated this reality where there is certainly no fact-checking facility and realities can be extremely skewed.

For the individual athlete if this, more often than not, false reality, isn't being achieved personal feelings of frustration, worthlessness and disconnect can surface. Frustrations can spill over into how individuals associate with the animals in their care and ownership resulting in poor mental health.

Equestrian sport requires long days, physical resilience, often lots of time on the road coupled with financial challenges and expectations. A lot of facets have to be balanced to maintain mental and emotional health. The beauty of the sport and the relationship between horse and rider, is so easily lost along the way.

A healthy human mental state is interdependent on; biological, psychological and social factors. During my Applied Psychology Masters study, I was always drawn to The Biopsychosocial Model for every individual as a foundation to uncovering mental health challenges. If we look at this model for ourselves and see where we are connected in all the parts, we may recognise or be helped to flag areas that we are challenged in and require support. I leave you here with The Biopsychosocial Model visual and hope you have gained some positive insight.



This section has been provided by Julia Knobel.

Having completed an Honours Degree in Applied Biology and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education, I then went on to complete a Masters in Applied Psychology in Career Guidance and Counseling. I have worked in the education sector for many years and have a wealth of experience working with a variety of students from different backgrounds. My passion is in the area of unlocking individual potential and facilitating individual's discovery and move forward on their education and career paths. My strengths are effective communication and understanding of the person and supporting them in exploring options and planning future careers.

# CHALLENGES AND STRESSORS IN THE EQUINE INDUSTRY

Performance anxiety, fear of injury, pressure to win, and the emotional bond with the horse, the long hours, no break, possible isolation and the pressure to keep the dreams alive, pressure of the loss and grief around the unfulfilled dreams and pressure entering the industry with a suitcase full of dreams.

Countering the stressors mentioned:

- 1** Try to learn the difference between and accept the things "YOU CAN CONTROL" and the things "YOU CAN'T CONTROL".
- 2** Talk to a trusted friend/person, phone a help line and TALK about your feelings and remember you are not alone - there are numerous others who have and are feeling the stress you feel.
- 3** Try using relaxation techniques such as breathing and mindfulness to help with stress and if you find yourself in a toxic or unsafe environment don't be afraid to seek help to exit it.

## BREATHING TECHNIQUES FOR ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Using an ancient yogic technique called pranayama, practitioners are able to gain control over their breathing.

The numbers should be an easy give away: 4-7-8- refer to the counts when breathing in, holding your breath, and exhaling:

Start by sitting up straight in a comfortable position

Place the tip of your tongue on the ridge of your gums, just behind your upper front teeth

Expand your diaphragm and slowly inhale through your nose for a count of 4 seconds

Hold your breath for another count of 7 seconds

Open your mouth slightly, keeping your tongue in place, and exhale for 8 counts

Repeat this cycle 4 times



# THE **IMPACT** OF MENTAL HEALTH ON **PERFORMANCE**

Performance Anxiety: What are the signs of Performance Anxiety?

Impact of Stress: Explore the impact of stress on performance, including the effects of chronic stress and burnout.

Role of Self-esteem and Confidence: Discuss how self-esteem and confidence can influence performance in equestrian sports.

*If you are stressed, you might feel:*

- Irritable, angry, impatient or wound up
- Over-burdened or overwhelmed
- Anxious, nervous or afraid
- Like your thoughts are racing and you can't switch off
- Unable to enjoy yourself
- Depressed
- Uninterested in life
- Like you've lost your sense of humour
- A sense of dread
- Worried or tense
- Neglected or lonely
- Existing mental health problems getting worse

Some people who go through severe stress may experience suicidal feelings. This can be very distressing.

### Impact of Stress:

Muscle tension is one of the most common symptoms of stress, which has a huge impact on an athlete's performance. For athletes to be at the top of their game, they need to be agile, with loose, limber muscles. Tight muscles negatively affect flexibility, and mobility, leading to improper form.

Chronic muscle and joint pain.

Weight loss and loss of appetite.

Increased heart rate at rest.

Decreased sports performance and emotional exhaustion combined with doubts about your competence and the value of your work.

***“Remember that stress doesn't come from what's going on in your life - It comes from your thoughts about what's going on in your life.”***

### Role of Self-esteem and Confidence:

Elite sports people in their careers are exposed to some of the most high-pressure situations we can imagine, and they must continually work on building and maintaining their self-confidence, motivation and concentration.

Self-confidence and resilience are well known to have a huge impact on athletic performance. Going into a competition with strength in the specific areas required for your sport, greatly increases the chance of success and the ability to bounce back when things go wrong.

Self-confidence in all walks of life is the capacity/ability to believe in our own skills and ability. For the athlete, how they perceive their abilities affects how they take on their objectives. If an athlete has a low opinion of themselves, this can lead to them making undesirable choices and delivering poor performance. However, when they have confidence in their abilities, they will make better decisions and deliver better performances.

# STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH IN EQUESTRIAN SPORTS

Despite our best efforts, we all know that balancing work, home life, and even our horses, can bring about immense amounts of stress. Therefore, adopting healthy coping mechanisms to address and reduce stress is crucial. Some coping strategies are better than others, and what works for one person might not work for someone else. Nevertheless, management is key in promoting and maintaining positive mental health.

Here, we propose 5 key strategies to help you along the way:

## STRATEGY 1: EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Our first step in managing our mental health is to recognise how we are feeling. Emotional awareness is a skill that can be learned similar the first time we learned to identify how to hold the reins correctly on our horse. Often, when we become overworked, stressed and burned-out, we can lose touch with our emotions but if we don't know how we are feeling, we can not change how we are feeling.

1. Using an emotion wheel can be a useful tool in identifying emotions.
2. Practicing Mindfulness and being present and attentive to your emotions without judgment. This involves checking in with how you are feeling at a given moment, even if it's uncomfortable.
3. Regularly writing down your emotions and their triggers can help identify patterns and gain deeper insight into your emotional landscape.
4. Pause and reflect when an emotion surfaces. What is the emotion? How is it affecting you? This technique helps us understand our emotional reactions better.

### **STRATEGY 2:** **SOCIAL CONNECTION**

Talk to a friendly face. Often, the daily life as an equestrian sports person can be very long and isolating, so if you have worries, anxieties, or concerns, sharing these with someone you trust is one of the most effective ways to relieve stress and calm your nervous system. You may also want to extend a listening ear if you think someone you know is struggling.

### **STRATEGY 3:** **PRIORITISE DOWNTIME**

The equestrian lifestyle accompanies so much uncertainty, one example being in the form of working hours. There is no set time off and activities that mean you are away for more than a few hours can instill more dread than excitement. This is understandable. However, if not managed appropriately, it may be fatal to your mental health. You increase the risk of burn-out, anxiety, stress, and depression if you do not prioritise time for yourself for fun and enjoyment. Research also shows that a lack of sleep and poor diet is linked to poor mental health, so keep this in mind too. The happier and healthier you are, the better you will feel and the better you will perform!

### **STRATEGY 4: DEVELOP A SELF-CARE PLAN**

**An effective self-care plan needs to be created by you, for you.**

Developing one that is tailored to your needs and your life can then act as a preventative to ensure you don't become overwhelmed, overstressed, and burned out. Having a coffee on your own for 10 minutes with no distractions (People/Phone/TV) is self-care, or saying no to extra responsibilities in work is also self care.

This list will look different for everyone; however, you may like to develop a list surrounding the below points.

- Workplace or professional
- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Relationships

## STRATEGY 5: POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Many of us are aware of our inner voice that can either be cheerful and supportive, or negative and self-defeating. It is often the negative self-talk that leads to thoughts, such as “I can’t do anything right” or “I’m a complete failure”. Endless amounts of research have proven that these limiting beliefs are the root cause of stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression. Adopting techniques that encourage positive self-talk, will therefore decrease negativity and psychological symptoms. These techniques include:

- **Talk to yourself like you would a friend.**
- **Practice gratitude.**
- **Change your vocabulary.**
- **Write positive affirmations.**
- **Work with a professional to change unhelpful mental habits.**
- 

Although each strategy will look different for everyone, the main aim is for us to feel our absolute best so we can be our absolute best. If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health, try adopting some of these strategies or reach out to a friend or professional.

This section has been provided by Lauren O’Mahoney.

Lauren O’Mahoney Counselling Services. BA Hons degree in Counselling and Psychotherapy from The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences with experience in all things mental health including, Anxiety, Depression, Bereavement, Drug and Alcohol.

*I think it’s really important to take the stigma away from mental health... My brain and my heart are really important to me. I don’t know why I wouldn’t seek help to have those things be as healthy as my teeth. - Kerry Washington*

# CASE STUDIES / STATISTICS OF EQUESTRIAN MENTAL HEALTH

## RACEHORSE TRAINERS MENTAL HEALTH STATS:

Racehorse Trainer Mental Health: Prevalence and Risk Factors.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0737080621000538?via%3Dihub>

## VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH STATS:

Mental Health of Veterinary Professionals in Ireland.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0737080621000538?via%3Dihub>

## IRISH JOCKEYS MENTAL HEALTH STATS:

Common mental disorders among Irish jockeys: prevalence and risk factors.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0737080621000538?via%3Dihub>

## FURTHER READING

Lost Connections – Johann Hari  
Emotional Intelligence – Daniel Coleman  
The Chimp Paradox – Steve Peters  
Anxiety and Panic – Dr Harry Barry  
Depression – Dr Harry Barry  
Atomic Habits – James Clear

# THE ROLE OF COACHES AND TEAMS IN SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

*Coaches know their athlete(s) / riders well enough to know when something is “off” with them. Though athletes may not be so forthcoming about saying “I have anxiety”, or “I have been feeling low in myself or depressed lately”, the evidence may still be present.*

**“By facilitating open conversations about mental health, coaches can encourage athletes to seek help when needed. This openness can also lead to increased understanding and empathy among team members, fostering a more supportive team environment.”**

*Paul Stapleton*

Co-Founder of Morell Health Care Services Limited



## HOW HAVE OTHER SPORTS APPROACHED THE ROLE OF COACHES AND TEAMS IN SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WHAT CAN OUR REPRESENTATIVE BODIES LEARN FROM THIS?

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Findings and Recommendations of research briefs and papers.

- Coaches are well-placed to act as navigators to care for athlete mental health.
- Formal guidelines are required for when to refer athletes to mental health professionals.
- Coach qualification programmes should include mental health training to increase self-efficacy and promote preventative and early intervention behaviour.

Swimming:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1440244023001482>

Analysis revealed that coaches perceive their role to include open communication, actively observing their athletes' mood, and acknowledging their potential mental health knowledge deficits.

Barriers for supporting athlete mental health included a lack of resources and poor mental health literacy. Coaches suggested a variety of recommendations to ameliorate these barriers including education and redesigning systems of support.

## MINDING AND MANAGING TEAM AND INDIVIDUALS:

- **Culture Setting e.g.** Communicate your role as the coach in supporting your athlete's mental health, hire a mental health professional.
- **Identification and Referral e.g.** Engage with your athletes about how to navigate this time, respond and attend to your athlete's behaviours.
- **Treatment Adherence e.g.** allow athletes to remain involved and engaged with the team and positively reinforce those athletes who seek out support.

<https://www.scienceforsport.com/mental-health-in-sport-a-guide-for-coaches-and-athletes/>

## LET'S LOOK AT THE WIDER PICTURE IN OTHER ELITE SPORTS

It is not just athletes... coaches are people - they are under pressure too and they take a huge amount of responsibility for their team, their athletes, their riders. We need to support our coaches like we support our athletes and give them the resources they need.

**Coaching glorifies a "grindset" and a level of commitment that often becomes unhealthy. To ensure coaches do not experience burnout and are the best leaders and tacticians they can be, sports organisations have expanded mental health treatment beyond athletes and are increasingly focused on coaches as well.**

<https://globalsportmatters.com/health/2022/12/07/sports-organizations-mental-health-support-coaches/>

## THE NEED FOR EARLY INTERVENTION:

***"Coaches who operate in high-performance environments are exposed to performance, organisational, and personal stressors that have the potential to negatively impact mental health and well-being".***

***"One of the most effective ways to provide timely support to coaches is through early intervention. This strategy has been recommended by researchers for both elite and youth elite athletes".***

We argue that early intervention should be positioned at the core of this framework, to address the onset of symptoms prior to the emergence of a mental disorder or mental health crisis. Mental health screening and monitoring of coaches, the psychological safety of high-performance environments, the mental health literacy of coaches, and the tailored pathways to support are discussed.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666061X23000779>



# HOPE

**1303 days** the number of days since my last serious attempt

**1084 days** the number of days since I was discharged from a psychiatric hospital

**183 days** the number of days since my last suicidal thought

**154 days** the number of days in a row that I have finally felt happy

*Life is hard and it does throw curveballs but it does improve and it is something worth fighting for. There is so much goodness in this world that we cannot see with the blinkers mental health puts over our eyes. But it is there. I promise you that. Just keep trying. What's one more day?*

*There was a time when the simple act of getting out of bed was too much for me, I could see no hope for my future. I struggled to even want to be around the horses, feeling like I wasn't good enough and struggling to see the light beyond the darkness that had surrounded me.*

*Laura Jackson*

Yard Manager



*Finally, I broke down, the walls completely crashed down round me but the weight I'd been carrying somehow felt lighter. Taking that first step to admitting something was wrong was massive, it was the first time I'd ever even admitted it to myself. I'd learned to shut off all my emotions and just merely exist in the barest of forms. With the support of my family I got medical help, attended Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and slowly tried to piece a life back together.*

*That was 8 years ago and it's been a journey to get here. I remember every part of it, every emotion, every good day and every bad day and I continue to have to work on my mental health every single day, but I went from no longer wanting to live to helping other people with their mental health. My hope is that my story resonates with those who, like me, once struggled to see the light beyond the confines of their beds.*

*Sonya McAleer*

Irish Equestrian Mental Health Project



*Not many people prepare you for life in your 20's. What are you supposed to be doing? Am I doing enough? Am I not doing enough? It's a struggle that often goes unspoken because many people choose different life paths during this time and the fear of judgement creeps in. After spending a year being an independent adult bouncing between jobs and living in poor conditions to sustain the independency, I started to have an overwhelming sense of constant fear and despair. One day it got so bad I just couldn't even bring myself to go to work, I was hysterical. Suicidal thoughts consumed my mind and I was so scared, I called my parents to pick me up so I could spend a few days at home and see a doctor.*

*After being seen by a doctor and being diagnosed with manic depression and panic disorder, I felt extremely stuck on what to do because deep down I knew the cause was being unsatisfied with my life and career. I desperately wanted to move back home with my parents but the fear of judgement and being scared of losing the life that I had built had me incredibly torn. I had some deep talks with friends and family and made the decision to move home.*

*It wasn't an overnight journey of finding new ways to make me feel happy and satisfied with my life. But little by little, day by day, by taking up new hobbies, not putting incredible stress on myself by comparing my life to others; I improved. I can proudly say I have come out of the darkness.*

*The moral of this story is: don't be so hard on yourself. It is okay not to be okay and taking a step back does not mean you are a failure. Everyone is on their own path of life on different timelines, you don't need to compare yourself to what everyone else is doing. You are enough. You heal. Take the time YOU need. And don't be afraid to seek help.*

*Carly Sterling*

Social Media and Content Creator



*I had been bullied in the first year of secondary school and over the course of the next two years and moving school, I turned the tables and became the bully. I was about 15 when it all got worse - I was in Transition Year when I got even more out of control. Two weeks into 5th year I had a nervous breakdown as I had been self-harming and it was noticed. This was a turning point. I have been to over 20 counsellors, psychiatrically assessed, and psychotherapists; it is definitely not a one size fits all and takes time to find the right fit. I tried to take my own life about 7 or 8 years ago and was blue-lighted to hospital; this was the breaking point for me.*

*It has been about 15 years of treading water and it is only the last 3 years that I have actually got the help to suit me and my diagnoses. My current psychotherapist breaks down and helps me identify my triggers and gives me the tools to help identify and manage triggers in the future.*

*I feel mental health is like being an addict - you can be free of it for a long time but it can always raise its head again. Just like being an addict, you have to want to get better. No one can fix this for you, you have to want to get better and then everyone else can provide you with the tools to maintain it. You need someone who is equipped and who can help teach you and explain to you what is happening and why it is happening so you can understand why you react in certain ways to different situations.*

*I got sick and tired of being constantly sick and tired and the only way it was going to change was if I changed. I wanted to get better. Mindset is a massive part of this. It did take a long time, I am 31 now. I now have learned to say "no" to situations and things that will not be good for my mental health. I have learned to disconnect and have a safe place that I go to, I take deep breaths and let it all go.*

*I know what it is like to go into a counselling session and come out feeling hopeless and worse; going to counselling is the first step but you might need to go to ten different counsellors until you find the right fit. Again, I don't think I will ever be free from mental health but I want to be better and I have the tools now to cope with situations if and when they ever arise.*

*Amanda Power*  
Contributor



# GRIEF

## *Let's Talk About Grief*

*I'm positive and I'm optimistic as a default. I think the mindset helps me keep going, helps keep other's spirits up or makes others feel they can keep going too.*

*This is a double-edged sword. You begin to not allow yourself to be sad or feel that you aren't allowed to have these emotions.*

*But I'm human. I'm still grieving for what I was and what I can't do anymore. Occasionally I'll falter, lose confidence or drive. I'll look back and be keenly aware of the loss. I'll cry, be melancholy, be filled with rage or feel intense loneliness. Feeling like the brave face slips...*

*It's ok to feel.*

*I had a great chat with a friend last night who reminded me I'm "going through", not giving up and that's important. I'll keep going, I always do but I need to remind myself of the spark, the reason, that I do.*

*Keep going forward and allow grief to process but not become you. It's important to keep balanced.*

*Looking back on old videos should slowly start filling me with pride, we accomplished those things and created wonderful memories I cherish. We're going to create even more just slightly different ❤️*

*Heather Lemmon*

Irish para-dressage rider



*My mum always says 'The grief you feel when you lose someone or something, is the price you pay for loving someone.' That has always given me comfort, and a bridge to see the good when I am grieving.*

*Rachel Mackenzie*

Scottish Equestrian



*Grief comes, not only from the death of a cherished person but also from many other experiences such as:*

*Loss of a dream*

*Loss of a relationship*

*Loss of a pet*

*Loss of identity*

*Loss of a job, home or security*

*Loss of health*

*Loss of independence*

*There are many emotions associated with grief and the experience is individual and personal. For me, the overwhelming emotions initially occupied my every waking thought, and a lot of my sleep time as well. Then gradually over time, feelings have settled and acceptance has come. Nothing has been "got over", but happiness has returned and life has continued whilst memories have been cherished.*

*So, if you are grieving in your own life, for any kind of loss, then I send you my love and support.*

*If you have a friend or family member who is grieving, then simply be kind and show support by getting in touch and listening to them.*

*If this is something you are struggling with then don't hesitate to get in touch and I will listen to you and offer you some help and support. I consider myself to be fortunate in my attitude towards death and loss in my own life. I see it as part of the rich tapestry of life and even though life hasn't necessarily turned out as I might have expected when I was younger, I cherish each and every one of my life experiences.*

*Jane Brindley*

Contributor



*My favourite quote is 'grief is all the love you had left to give' and the most honest is: 'We must remember if we have livestock - we also have deadstock.'*

*My heart horse was a mare called Polo, I had to put her down on the 9th April 2018. As I sit here after all these years, with many horses and three kids later, my phone screen-saver is still Polo - My heart horse - I can't say it gets easier.  
Yours through tears and smiles at some of my best memories,*

*Emily Fletcher*

Virtuoso Sport Horses



# GOALS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD WITH THE HAY, HOW ARE YA? CAMPAIGN.

1

*Longevity is key this year. The campaign and movement will run all year round.*

2

*Equitas will be launching a Mental Health E-Book for Equestrians with input from professionals across Ireland and abroad.*

3

*At the Grassroots Gazette, they will be launching an expanded Nationwide Mental Health Survey for Equestrians across all levels and all disciplines after over 1000 people filled out the first survey.*

4

*There will be a number of Charity Fun Rides organised with Riding Clubs and Riding Centres across the Country across the year ahead.*

5

*We will be looking to launch a dedicated call line for Equestrians dealing with mental health issues.*

6

*Garnering support from the governing bodies and from government for funding.*

7

*We have some incredible content being produced behind the scenes internally and through some amazing partnerships we have formed for the campaign.*



## THE HAY CAMPAIGN

# #HAYHowAreYa

Just ask a friend and take the time to listen.



The HAY Campaign - How Are Ya?



@HAY.Campaign



shane@thegrassrootsgazette.ie

POWERED BY



# EQUITAS' COMMITMENTS FOR EQUESTRIAN MENTAL HEALTH 2024 (AND BEYOND) AS PART OF THE HAY CAMPAIGN

## EDUCATIONAL CONTENT:

- Develop a dedicated section on the Equitas website focusing on mental health awareness in the equestrian community.
- Collaborate with mental health professionals to provide expert insights and advice. Publish this information via articles and infographics. These should address common mental health issues among women in the equine industry.

## ONLINE WORKSHOPS AND WEBINARS:

- Host virtual workshops and webinars on topics such as stress management, resilience, and coping strategies specific to women in the equine industry.
- Invite mental health experts, psychologists, and industry professionals to lead these sessions.
- Utilise livestreams and podcasts to facilitate discussions on mental health topics, creating a safe space for open dialogue.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS:

- Launch social media campaigns using dedicated hashtags to raise awareness about mental health challenges in the equine industry like our #stressaffectsusall campaign and Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th.
- Share inspirational stories, quotes, and resources to motivate and uplift the community.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS:

- Collaborate with mental health organisations, foundations, or professionals to strengthen the campaign's impact.
- Partner with equine brands and influencers to amplify the reach of mental health awareness messages.
- Include downloadable guides, checklists, and self-help resources. (Later date)



# MEDIUM TO LONG TERM MENTAL HEALTH PLANNING

## THE EQUITAS MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE HUB:

By developing The Equestrian Mental Health Booklet, we commit to making it a comprehensive online resource hub containing information on mental health resources, helplines, and support services tailored to the equine industry.

## RECOGNITION AND AWARDS:

- Introduce awards or recognition programs to acknowledge individuals or organisations actively promoting mental health awareness in the equine industry.
- Celebrate success stories and efforts that contribute to a supportive community via Equitas.ie and social media.

## TRAINING PROGRAMS:

- Offer mental health first aid training programs specifically designed for those involved in the equine industry (later date)
- Encourage industry professionals, trainers, and barn owners to undergo mental health awareness training. e.g. Jigsaw
- Mental Health First Aider

# LONG TERM MENTAL HEALTH PLANNING

Design, Build and Implement an online support group or forum where women in the equine industry can connect, share their experiences, and provide support to each other

# RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT



An Garda Síochána

Emergency contacts:  
Garda: 999 or 112



samaritans

*you are not alone.*

Samaritans Ireland  
Phone: 116123 open 24/7  
[www.samaritans.ie](http://www.samaritans.ie)  
[jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)

**BODYWHYS**

The Eating Disorders Association of Ireland

012107906  
[alex@bodywhys.ie](mailto:alex@bodywhys.ie)  
[www.bodywhys.ie](http://www.bodywhys.ie)



National Office  
for Suicide  
Prevention

[\(01\) 778 5112](tel:(01)7785112)



Youth Work Ireland

[\(01\) 858 4500](tel:(01)8584500)  
[www.youthworkireland.ie](http://www.youthworkireland.ie)

your  
mental  
health.ie

The Your Mental Health  
information line is a phone service  
you can call any time. Freephone  
1800 111 888

**Aware**   
Your supporting light through depression

AWARE  
016617211  
[supportmail@aware.ie](mailto:supportmail@aware.ie)  
[www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul



State of Mind Ireland  
0857360994  
[stateofmindireland@yahoo.ie](mailto:stateofmindireland@yahoo.ie)  
[www.stateofmindireland.ie](http://www.stateofmindireland.ie)



1890474474  
[info@grow.ie](mailto:info@grow.ie)  
[www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie)



PIETA HOUSE: preventing suicide  
and self harm  
Free 24/7 Crisis helpline:  
1800 247 247 or  
Text HELP to 51444  
[www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)



SHINE: Supporting people affected  
by mental ill health  
01 860 1610  
[info@shine.ie](mailto:info@shine.ie)  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)



SOSAD  
[www.sosadireland.ie](http://www.sosadireland.ie)  
1800 901 909



CHILD & ADOLESCENT  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Services  
[\(01\) 858 4500](tel:018584500)



CRISIS  
Textline 50808



Free phone: 1800833634  
text HELLO to 50101  
[www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)



016753554  
[hello@spunout.ie](mailto:hello@spunout.ie)  
[www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)



Transgender  
Equality  
Network  
Ireland

018733575  
[office@teni.ie](mailto:office@teni.ie)  
[www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)



ICS: Irish Cancer Society  
1800200700  
[supportline@irishcancer.ie](mailto:supportline@irishcancer.ie)  
[www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)

1800 833 634

**TeenLine**  
IRELAND

1800833634  
[www.teenline.ie](http://www.teenline.ie)  
[info@teenline.ie](mailto:info@teenline.ie)

cross care teen counselling

*innovation and action for social justice*

Teen Counselling  
01 5574705  
[www.teencounselling.ie](http://www.teencounselling.ie)



Amber Womens Aid  
[www.amberwomensrefuge.ie](http://www.amberwomensrefuge.ie)  
0818 42 42 44

**STANDING  
TOGETHER**

against domestic abuse

Stand Strong  
Domestic abuse support  
[www.standstrong.ie](http://www.standstrong.ie)  
and [www.volunteerslo.org](http://www.volunteerslo.org)  
24-Hour Crisis Line: 805-781-6400



Alcoholics Anonymous  
Ireland

018420700  
[gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie)  
[www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

Women's  Aid

Freephone : 1800341900  
<https://www.womensaid.ie/services/helpline.html>

**NYCI** National Youth Council of Ireland

Reach Out  
01 764 5666  
[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

 **RCC**

Preventing and healing  
the trauma of rape and  
sexual abuse

National 24-hour Rape Crisis  
Helpline  
1800778888  
[www.drcc.ie](http://www.drcc.ie)



Belong To  
016706233  
[info@belongto.org](mailto:info@belongto.org)  
[www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

 **safeireland**  
Creating safety for women and children

+353 90 6479078  
[info@safeireland.ie](mailto:info@safeireland.ie)  
[www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)

**JIGSAW**  
Young people's  
health in mind

0469071702  
[meath@jigsaw.ie](mailto:meath@jigsaw.ie)  
[www.jigsaw.ie](http://www.jigsaw.ie)


  
**Citizens Information Board**  
information · advice · advocacy

Citizens Information  
0761076150  
[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

Lauren O'Mahoney Counselling  
Based Clonmel, Co. Tipperary  
Tel: 0851645905

freedom  
mood joy  
vitality  
understanding  
courage  
unity  
growth  
strength  
harmony  
disorder  
loneliness  
creativity  
adventure  
positivity  
isolation  
mindfulness  
empathy  
reflection  
connection  
coping  
passion  
trauma  
trust  
vulnerability  
burnout  
fatigue  
psychotherapy  
depression  
diagnosis  
stress  
nature  
treatment  
emotions  
balance  
relaxation  
self-esteem  
happiness  
patience

anxiety  
serenity  
peace  
empowerment  
support  
resilience  
acceptance  
safety  
awareness  
healing  
wellness  
symptoms  
well-being  
achievement  
compassion  
fulfillment  
fear  
inspiration  
recovery  
self-love  
tranquility  
self-care  
stigma  
friendship  
counseling  
swings  
gratitude  
medication  
community  
confidence  
grief  
bonding  
love  
hope



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## THE HAY CAMPAIGN

# #HAYHowAreYa

Just ask a friend and take the time to listen.

POWERED BY

