

# Mental Health Awareness Week – ERG coffee break

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This year, Mental Health Awareness Week was celebrated in a rather different fashion at MediaCom as we continue to work from our respective homes, away from our colleagues, wider family and friends and the comforting day-to-day routines that keep our world's turning.

As part of the week, our Mental Health Allies reached out to the members of other MediaCom employee resource groups (ERGs) to discuss mental health, intersectionality and how to be kind to yourself in lockdown.

When asked what this year's MHAW theme of kindness looks like in lockdown, our panel of

ERG members agreed that it was important to be gentle with yourself both in what you expect to achieve and how you expect to feel.

“I saw so many things in the first couple of weeks that were being written about people who were saying, ‘I’ve got to make sure I come out of this with grade 5 piano’” said Teresa from our accessibility group, Visibility. “Now I’m feeling really stressed that I’m just getting through what’s quite a quiet day just doing the basics!”

Others agreed, with Mike from our LGBTQ+ group, ID highlighting the importance that there’s “understanding that there’s no right or wrong answer and everybody’s going to deal with this in a different way. We’re not prepared or trained to deal with this scenario, it’s something completely brand new for everybody.”

Laurence, a mental health ally agreed saying,

“This whole set up kind of sucks for mental health... it’s going to be putting a lot of additional pressure on everyone. It’s just the easy wins that are most important now.”

The panel also discussed navigating other day-to-day tasks in lockdown, including social media and raising children.

“Social media is quite tricky and draining at the moment,” said Lisa, a member of both the age ERG, Generations and ID. “I only look at Facebook twice a week now.” In agreement, Teresa added that social media was showing a very specific lens on home-schooling at the moment, with people showing off their fully planned home-school curriculum, when the reality for many is far less organised.

You can watch our ERG members talking more on being kind below.

The conversation then turned to how lockdown might be affecting the mental health of different members of society.

Mike highlighted that “LGBTQ+ people are at a predisposition for mental health issues already, so being put into a position of isolation obviously makes that even worse.” In addition, Mike also highlighted other challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community, including how many transgender people may have seen their surgeries postponed, or had a delay in receiving HRT and could even be living with a greater risk of suffering abuse. “One of the immediate things that comes to mind is about people that are isolated in households where

they maybe are living with someone who's homophobic... for those living with parents and their parents are homophobic... I've read about people who have had to go back into the closet."

Rose, from our ethnicity ERG, Roots said, "We know BAME communities aren't exactly upfront in wanting to talk about mental health," but added that some may feel more empowered to speak out or seek help if others around them are also struggling in the same situation.

Teresa and Rosie, also from Visibility, spoke about the additional pressures of working from home if your set up isn't adjusted in a way that best suits your needs, and share information on a new one-pager project their ERG team are working on to make remote working more comfortable.

Finally, Lisa urged others to consider how different age groups would be coping with the crisis.

"We're now in a unique position where you could have up to four or five generations working together, and certainly in this crisis... it affects people in different ways and none of us know exactly who's being affected when," she said. "We should be concentrating on making sure people can talk to one another, can be kind, can really think about taking each day at a time... we're just trying to be as positive and upbeat as we can be."

Watch more from our ERG members talking on this below.

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