

SANE

We're people like you

Peer Group Chat

Date: 03/11/2022

Title: Study, Work and Mental Health

Description: Work &/or study can take up a large part of our lives and there can be unique challenges with this. How we prioritise our mental health in these spaces is important. Join this group where we will share our thoughts, experiences, and strategies with each other.

PurplePanther (PSW)	Hi everyone. First, we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands we are all joining this event from. We pay deep respect to the Elders of those Countries, past and present, and we further extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people joining this group tonight. Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about work, study, and mental health.
PurplePanther (PSW)	Tonight, Peer Support Workers @Amber22 and myself will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of mental health in the context of work and study. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both, we could all stand to benefit from better supporting our mental health through potentially challenging circumstances. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation may be heavy in nature as we talk about times we may struggle. @tyme, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. If you're having any technical difficulties, please see our FAQ (https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/chat-faqs) or message @tyme. We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn more together about improving our mental health in work and study.
PurplePanther (PSW)	Within this group tonight we'll be talking about: Our experiences and what we'd each like to get out of the group Ways we cope, whether its ourselves in the work or study situation, or supporting a loved one working or studying Services, systems and processes that exist to support our needs at work or educational institutions

PurplePanther (PSW)	We will be starting the discussion shortly, and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join 😊
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	Hi and Welcome everyone :)
Amber22 (PSW)	Hello everyone!
PurplePanther (PSW)	Welcome everyone! Feel free to introduce yourselves. I'm @PurplePanther
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	I'm tyme, and this topic os work, study and mental health certainly resonates with me.
Amber22 (PSW)	I'm Amber22 :) Definitely agree @tyme (PSW/ Moderator)
PurplePanther (PSW)	What are your experiences generally with working or studying with complex mental health issues, or supporting someone in this position? What would you like to be able to get out of the group tonight?
Amber22 (PSW)	I was really surprised at just how difficult it was to do things when I am struggling mentally than before. For example, concentration, my ability to understand certain concepts, and especially my motivation was lacking when my mental health was. Tonight, I would like to get some advice and other peoples experiences from the group to help with this.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	For me, it was challenging to study with MH issues. However, I had tremendous support from my university in that I had a reasonable adjustments plan in place so that I could get that extra padding of support whenever I needed it.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	I'd be interested to consider some strategies people have in place around work and study. I'd also be interested to hear people's experiences of - To tell or not to tell (their work that they have a MH condition).
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	I remember discussing it once, and I was bluntly told, "debrief to who you have to, but remember people have to move on. We have targets to meet."
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	This was a former workplace....
Amber22 (PSW)	Definitely not the way to go about things at all - I hope that they updated their opinions about MH after that, its 2022 and I think people should be more aware of mental health and how hindering it can be in the workplace
PurplePanther (PSW)	Special consideration, disability support services, workplace reasonable adjustments etc. are available to support us when

	needed. Have you used these? If so, how did those experiences go, and did you learn anything from it?
Amber22 (PSW)	I have utilised special considerations during my exams when I was at university, and I found it very helpful. I went through a period when I was battling with a lot of anxiety, so having the space to be by myself and be considered in that sense, really put me at ease, and helped me get through semester season a lot easier.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	My reasonable adjustment plan helped a lot. It meant I didn't have to go through the trauma of seeing a doctor/specialist each time to get a medical certificate. The supporting documentation was obtained as part of the adjustment plan application. I'm so glad I went down that path.
PurplePanther (PSW)	There has slowly but surely been an increased understanding of mental health and associated stigma in society today. Has this changed how you feel about your complex mental health within your place of work or study?
Amber22 (PSW)	I think that as society gets to be more open about mental health, I would hope that complex mental health is a lot more accepted within workplaces or study. For example, it should be a lot more common to take 'mental health days' off work or study, and to set boundaries where needed.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	Thank goodness my doctor is a firm believer in taking mental health days. She encourages me to take them. I've only ever taken one.
Amber22 (PSW)	Mental health days are so great, I agree
Amber22 (PSW)	And extremely important within the workplace/ study
PurplePanther (PSW)	Have you ever taken a mental health day off work or study? What have these experiences been like for you?
Amber22 (PSW)	I have taken a mental health day off work before. At first, I felt almost guilty for doing it, as I hadn't taken a day off for my mental health before, and I wasn't sure how it would be received. But I also realised that it was beneficial for me and helped me to get back on track a lot faster than pushing myself to unrealistic standards.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	@amber22, me too! I always felt guilty for taking a MH day!
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	Hi Captain24
PurplePanther (PSW)	If you care for someone who is in an unsupportive, stressful work or study environment that is challenging to their mental health, it can be hard to sit by and watch. If you have experience like this, how have you managed to take care of yourself?

tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	So great to have you over here :)
Amber22 (PSW)	I have witnessed friends and family that have been stuck in a cycle of a stressful workplace, and it is difficult to watch as oftentimes they are not able to get out of it due to financial circumstances. When I have witnessed this, I try and find gratitude in my own situations, and take some extra self-care steps as I know that it can feel quite heavy on myself.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	@pinkpanther, for me, I like to take time out. Time to re-focus and re-adjust myself so that I don't have an emotional outburst/reaction.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	This can mean going for a walk, having a sleep, going for a drive, going to the beach
Amber22 (PSW)	I second going for a walk, it really calms me and gets me into a better mind space
PurplePanther (PSW)	Working or studying with complex mental health issues can be difficult. Is there anything specific to you that helps you cope throughout this process?
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	For me, boundary-setting is the big one! I know my limits so I set boundaries to maintain my MH.
Amber22 (PSW)	I find that making sure I am open with others about how I am feeling can be really difficult but also extremely beneficial when coping with complex mental health. This way, it is a little bit easier to be open to mental health days, or if my study or work is lacking for a period. Also, making sure that I am properly listening to myself and what I need.
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	Being open is soo important! It takes guts though!
Amber22 (PSW)	Definitely something I have had to learn how to do little by little over the years!
PurplePanther (PSW)	Do you know of any extra support services available at your (or your loved one's) workplace or place of study? E.g. counselling services; Employee Assistance Programs. Have you reached out to them before? What has that experience been like for you?
Amber22 (PSW)	I do know that many workplaces have on-site counsellors or psychologists that encourage the staff to communicate with them on a regular basis if they are struggling. This is the same as at many universities, or schools, or other places of study. I have definitely thought about utilising this as it does seem really helpful that it is so easy to access (and free as well).
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	I used to feel bad for using uni services.... up until I was told that our uni fees covers it and we SHOULD be accessing these services if we need them!

PurplePanther (PSW)	Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what did you learn?
Amber22 (PSW)	I have learnt that even doctors prescribe mental health days! And that some workplaces need to be updated in their opinions about people taking time for their mental health :)
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	I learnt that it's never too late to reach out :) It's important to speak out and set healthy boundaries.
PurplePanther (PSW)	Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do? 😊
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	Have a hot hot shower!
Amber22 (PSW)	I think that I am going to make a cup of tea tonight :)
PurplePanther (PSW)	Here are some further resources we recommend having a look at: 1: How to Talk to Your Boss About Your Mental Health: https://www.psychom.net/how-to-talk-to-your-boss-about-your-mental-health 2: Let's Talk About Mental Health At Work: https://www.australianunions.org.au/2022/03/22/lets-talk-about-mental-health-at-work/ 3: Mental health helplines- for support and referrals to services in your local community https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-helplines
PurplePanther (PSW)	Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion 😊 If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat . You can also ask questions for us to discuss in future peer chats!
tyme (PSW/ Moderator)	Hi Cluelesscat!
Amber22 (PSW)	Welcome!
Amber22 (PSW)	Here is the link to some previous transcripts by the way! And this one should be up within about a week too :) https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/previous-chats#2021-group-chat-transcripts