

A SMALL BOOK ON

OR HOW I STOPPED WORRYING AND LEARNED TO LOVE THE FRINGE.

PRODUCED BY OBJECTIVELY FUNNY



We made it! A full-powered Edinburgh has returned, with whole industries returning to bring ideas that've been worked on for years now, and show them to the world. It really is a pleasure to be back.

Picking up where we left off in 2019, we at Objectively Funny have made another Small Book, to provide a little bit of support where it might be needed: directly into the hands of people working at the festival.

Since then, well. It's been something of a time. Particularly so for people's mental health. As an industry, we were of course hugely impacted in the last few years, and the dent it has left on lives, plans, and aspirations has been undeniable.

So it feels very significant to be back here en masse as an industry in 2022, bringing thousands of shows to this beautiful city, and making our best work. But that's a lot of expectation and a huge amount of hope to pin on one summer.

And this year, more than ever before, we feel the financial burden of this festival. Landlordism is threatening the very fabric of the Fringe; skyrocketing rent on top of the myriad other costs that go into putting on a show means that this Fringe for many feels more perilous than ever. For many, it meant coming was simply out of the question. As you make shows happen – whether you are a performer, flyerer, technician, venue support, stage manager, producer, director, or whoever else may be involved each day – we know what a stressful, vulnerable position you occupy each day. It may feel like a lot rides on each show.

This book, we hope, can alleviate some of that stress. It contains plenty of Fringe experience, a sprinkling of wit and wisdom, and some valuable tips and ideas. If it's useful, please let others know about it.

As I said to the thousands of people I gave our first book to three years ago: *I hope this is of no use whatsoever.* But if it is, I hope it helps you make the most of this brilliant festival.

Martin

Objectively Funny

Objectively Funny is a critically acclaimed, emerging production company, run by 6 comedy lovers and makers. We put mental health first; with dozens of Edinburgh Fringe runs under our big, collective belt, we know how rough the festival can feel. As well as informed and experienced mentoring, we provide our acts with a supportive network of people to help them make the best work they can and feel good about it.

MHFA England

Mental Health First Aid teaches people the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right support.

A month in Edinburgh for the Fringe will hopefully be fun, but it also could be stressful. We all squeeze into Edinburgh with high hopes, under intense pressure to make it the best possible experience.

We are surrounded by busy people during the Fringe: performers, venue staff, flyerers, producers, friends and colleagues. Below are a few tips on how to start a chat with someone who you feel may be experiencing poor mental health.

- Actively look out for those around you. You may be around the same people every day, whether they are the performer that you are working with, staff at the venue you are performing in, or part of your street team. If you notice that someone's demeanor has suddenly changed, or they are acting out of character, this may be a good indicator that they are experiencing poor mental health.
- One of the easiest things you can do is ask "how are you?" Simply checking in with people around you can make them feel cared about and heard within the hubbub of the Fringe. Don't be afraid to ask twice - sometimes people feel they need permission to really open up.
- Invite the person for a chat while doing something non-Fringe-related. You
 could suggest a walk in Holyrood Park, or a hot drink in a cafe out of the
 centre of town. Taking yourselves out of the heart of the Fringe will give you
 both some breathing space and open up space to chat.
- Give yourself time to talk. Ten minutes may be enough, but do not rush them. Put your phone on silent and out of sight. Make sure you are giving them your whole attention.
- Everybody communicates differently so pay attention to their body language and tone. This can hint at how they are feeling. Mirroring your own body language and tone to theirs can put people at ease.

- Keep your questions open. Asking "how are you feeling?" instead of "are you feeling OK?" gives the person the opportunity to elaborate and opens up the conversation.
- Affirm what the person has told you in a supportive manner. Acknowledging what someone is going through can help them feel validated, and tackle the stigma around talking about poor mental health.
- It may seem helpful to say "it'll all be better soon" but this can shut the conversation down and trivialise their feelings. By listening attentively, you are being positively supportive.
- Contrary to what may feel natural, try not to offer advice. Remember that what works for you will not necessarily work for others. It is very likely that the person you are trying to support has already thought of it.
- Practice active listening listen to understand. Accept the person for who they are and do not judge or criticise them because of your own beliefs or values.

What to Do Next?

- Keep the conversations going. Check in with them and reassure them that they can come to you with any further issues. It's always a comfort to know that someone has your back.
- Offer reassurance that there are lots of resources out there. Many of us will be only staying in the city temporarily, but there are still plenty of UK-wide and Edinburgh-based resources available. You can find a list of some of them at the back of this book, and further at the MHFA website (list here).
- Encourage further support from a professional. Once they are back home, they may want to talk to their GP about NHS-funded mental health support programmes.

The more we check in with people and practice these basic Mental Health First Aid tips, the better we can tackle the stigma surrounding poor mental health. Edinburgh Fringe can be tough, but if we look out for each other's mental health, we can strive to make it better for everyone.

If you have questions about providing one-on-one support to someone who is experiencing bad mental health or have questions about becoming a Mental Health First Aider, you can email Ellie at *ellie@objectivelyfunny.com*.

TECH SUPPORT BY MOLLY STEWART

Working on a show as a tech is truly great. The power you yield when a show can't start until you trigger than first cue is as exhilarating as it is terrifying! But it can also be quite a lonely and chaotic existence at the Fringe, often working on several shows a day with no time to head home in between — and when one show is over and the performer is away for a drink, you're slithering off to another venue...

SO, what can you do about it?!

Know where's good to use the loo. A couple of absolute FAVES are the Pleasance Dome (Potterow) and the National Museum (Chambers Street). We're talking LOTS of cubicles, perfect for a poo or simply a ten-minute sit down. The National Museum also has all-gender toilets on levels -1, 1 and 3. For the loooove of God, WEE BEFORE THE SHOW. Especially if you've just had your daily chocolate cold brew and a pint of tap water.



Eat and, famously, drink enough! Which of your venues has easy access to a sink to fill up your bottle? When will you have a window to get a cup of tea? Working during lunchtime? Have a big breakfast before you head out and take something with you – a sandwich, a banana, a Nākd Chocolish bar. Supermarket punnets of grapes and/or tomatoes are a snack and a drink in one. If someone offers you a biscuit or a crisp accept it, because they might not offer again.



Do something unrelated to the Fringe – go to the National Museum for an hour and see what animal you weigh the same as (you'll have to queue behind lots of children); watch Ratatouille with your breakfast before you head out for the day; walk around the Meadows for a bit listening to that 99% Invisible podcast that talks about how we're running out of sand; or go for a swim – it's hard to think about QLab when you're thrashing about in the deep end!

Make social plans (even if it's only for thirty minutes!) Dashing from show to show makes it hard to catch pals when they just happen to be sinking a syrupy half of thick Blue Moon. Send a few WhatsApps, find out when people will be free, plan something to look forward to – a pint, a double potato roll or just a wander round Sainsbury's.

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Who is looking out for you? You're doing more than just turning the lights on and off: you're often acting as moral support for the performer – you're a friend at the back when the audience is quiet, someone to celebrate with when the show went the best it's ever gone. You'll need that moral support too, and the relationship MUST work both ways. Whoever you're working for – act, agent, production company – they should be checking in on you. If they aren't, maybe don't work with them again.

We're all in it together, everyone needs a cry and a pint of Diet Coke from time to time – let it out, glug it down. It's hard work, but it should also be eggstremely fun — see some shows, have some drinks, go to Mosque Kitchen... and if you want an early night, Just Do ItTM.

Follow Molly @molionides on Twitter and @molionides_ on Insta.

SELF-HELP TECHNIQUES ON THE GO

A guide for performers experiencing stress or anxiety. Brought to you by Breathing Space, Scotland's mental health phone line.

TOO STRESSED TO IMPRESS?

Stress causes physical changes in the body designed to help us take on threats or difficulties. Changes such as our breathing quickening, heart racing, muscles tensing and increased sweating. This is sometimes known as the flight or fight response. This response is helpful when we face immediate danger, but debilitating emotionally, physically and mentally if we feel constantly stressed.

In the creative industries, anxiety and high levels of stress can be triggered by factors which include working hours, pressure to meet high standards, irregular work, meeting new people, financial pressures, travelling around, and balancing work and family life.

We can always do more for our mental health. Here are some simple techniques for helping to manage stress and anxiety which can easily be practiced during the busy month.

CALMING BREATHING TECHNIQUE

This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic attacks, takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere. Performing this exercise regularly, as part of a daily routine, will achieve the most benefit.

- Make yourself as comfortable as possible
- If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground and hip-width apart
- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five. You may not be able to reach five at first
- Without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from one to five again, if you find this helpful
- Keep doing this for three to five minutes.

BEING MORE MINDFUL

Mindfulness is a simple form of meditation which involves maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings and surrounding environment. Being fully present in the moment can help to decrease stress, and increase levels of focus and happiness. There are several free mindfulness apps that can be downloaded but here are a few tips to get started.

Take notice – avoid going through life on 'auto-pilot'. Becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings and body sensations can help us to enjoy the world around us

Keep it regular – pick a regular time to practise mindfulness, whether that's in the morning or on a lunchtime walk

Try something new – trying new things, which can be as simple as choosing somewhere different for lunch, can help us notice the world in a different way

Watch your thoughts – becoming more aware of thoughts and feelings can help us see thoughts as 'mental events' which have no control over us

Name feelings – sometimes silently naming thoughts and feelings e.g. 'This is anxiety', can help us to develop more of an awareness of them

Free yourself – take a mindful approach if you realise that for several minutes you have become 'trapped' into reliving past problems or 'pre-living' future worries.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Sharing our problems with family or friends can help. Talking to someone might sound like a simplistic solution but it really is one of the best possible things we can do.

Speaking to a GP or calling a helpline such as Breathing Space can also help.

Breathing Space is a free and confidential phone service for anyone in Scotland feeling low, stressed or anxious. Advisors are available on 0800 83 85 87 in the evenings (6pm-2am) and 24 hours at the weekend (6pm Fri- 6am Mon) to offer listening, advice and compassion.

OTHER ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER

- Make time for interests and hobbies you are allowed to enjoy yourself!
- Exercise and regular, nutritious meals walk into town, remember your packed lunch.
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep and tell FOMO to shove it.

Further advice on managing stress and anxiety can be found under 'Mental Wellbeing' on www.nhsinform.scot



EDINBURGH FRINGE A Mental Health Decathlon

People like to describe an Edinburgh Fringe run as a marathon not a sprint, but I'd take it one step further and call it a decathlon. There's plenty to consider when taking on the challenge of a Fringe run, not only selling tickets but making sure you look after yourself too.

Let me take you through your ten stages of your Edinburgh Decathlon:

Audience. If you're fortunate enough to be able to pay for PR and get some press and pay for flyerers - great. For the rest of us, factor in the time and energy it will take to flyer before your show every day. Make sure to hydrate, wear proper footwear and be prepared for heat, cold and rain, it really could be any (or all) of these weather conditions in Edinburgh at any given moment.

Performing. Make sure to take some solo time for yourself before and after your show to help with the mental stress that performing everyday for a month can have.

Internal Body Clock. People's shows are on at all sorts of hours and it is likely you will be hanging out with your mates after your show or theirs – day is night and night is day now!

Other performers. Despite being a really busy environment, it can feel lonely if the people you're engaging with are constantly seeking the next person to talk to. Remember to check in with friends that you have a good relationship with, and have a rule that you won't talk shop. Having a group of friends where you can each rely on each other for moral support and feel truly connected is so incredibly important and will make you feel less lonely. I found it really useful to regularly speak to friends who weren't at the fringe but who have previously been as their insight was so invaluable; it also helps you to evaluate situations outside of the Edinburgh bubble.

Gossip. lit runs rife during the fringe and my best advice is to keep out of it for your own sanity.

Reviews. Try not to read reviews; even the good ones can have an errant line that causes you to spiral. If you do decide to, try not to read them before bed or just before your show – the last thing you want to do is have it affect your sleep or your confidence. Sometimes it can help to have a friend read your reviews for you and to give you the toplines.

Lack of reviews. Of course you'd love to have a review and it can feel like a lack of reviews is a comment on your show, but it is essential to remember it's simply just a numbers game. Personally, finding tweets and messages from people in the audience who have seen your show is much more rewarding. One thing you can do is let people know where to find you on social media and encourage them to post nice things about your show.

Exhaustion. It's inevitable, you're going to get tired, you're going to get short with people – but it's important to recognise that we're all in the same boat. Take some time out – leave the city on your day off, go to the beach if you can. Exercise can be great for mental health. Some people in the past have set up running groups and yoga on the Meadows to encourage each other to do something outside of performing. And something like yoga can be beneficial for exhaustion.

Sustenance. For the love of everything, eat! A lot of people don't like to eat before their show which is fine, but make sure to eat at other points in the day. Try to have a nourishing meal and drink lots of water! Try to limit how much you drink per day or have a few alcohol free days – it can help you in the long run.

Racism.* (Obvs this one won't be experienced by all but important for everyone to be aware of it happening). The sad truth is there is a lot of it, from micro-aggressions to out-and-out racism. Of all the many times I experienced it at the Fringe, the one that sticks out for me is being refused entry into the party organised for people of colour at the Fringe by a white security guard, until a black member of staff came over and immediately let me in. It's hard to recommend how best to deal with all of it because sadly there just isn't one solution, but I think surrounding yourself with people that you trust helps and having a wider support network of people you can talk to goes a long way.

Follow Saima on Twitter and Insta @saimaferdows. Saima would like to encourage you to support Get Off Live Comedy and attend their Gala - 24th Aug, 23.20, Pleasance Courtyard.



August is an exciting and hectic month for performers heading to the Scottish Capital to take part in the infamous Edinburgh arts festivals.

Each summer many creatives visit our central Crew Drop-in on Cockburn Street, looking for resources, information and support on drugs and sexual health. We specialise in harm reduction, so we thought we'd share a quick essential guide to looking after yourself this festival time.

TIPS FOR A SAFER FESTIVAL

All drug use has risks, and the best way to avoid them is to not take drugs, but if you choose to take drugs including alcohol the following info can help to reduce harm:

BE PREPARED

- Eat well to maintain energy and line your stomach. Supplements like magnesium, and vitamins C, D and B12 can also be helpful when combined with a good diet
- Think about any other health conditions and medication you may be taking – including antidepressants. If you're diabetic, make sure your body has what it needs to avoid hypo- or hyperglycaemia and pack snacks. Our "Drugs and Diabetes Guide" has some great tips on how to look after yourself
- Sleep! A "play hard now/sleep in September" approach is tempting, but as many seasoned performers will tell you, factoring in good sleep, including naps, will improve your experience. Sleep may help you avoid feeling strung out or making unwise decisions and generally putting on a less-than-good performance!
- Plan how you are getting home before you start your night and make a note of where you are staying. Never drink/drug drive - the drink drive limit in Scotland is low (22 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath) meaning even 1 drink can put you over the limit!
- Spend a few hours researching any drug you plan to take
- Try not to accept/buy drugs from people you don't know
- Carry safe sex materials and think about consent Crew has free condoms and lube!
- Home drug testing kits are available online. They give a basic understanding of what the drugs contain but may not identify mixtures, newer drugs or adulterants, and can't tell you about purity or strength

TAKING DRUGS

- Avoid mixing with alcohol and other drugs (including medicines)
- Avoid taking drugs alone and try to have a 'straight/sober' friend around
- If taking for the first time or taking a new batch/packet take a small test dose first - this might be a tiny dab of powder or scrapings of a pill
- The purity of some drugs in Scotland is at an all-time high. Start low, go slow - take small amounts – this might be quarter of a pill, one small line, a few puffs of a joint or vape
- Pace yourself and wait 2 hours before taking any more
- Drug paraphernalia isn't for sharing. Keep all injecting equipment, pipes and tooters/snorters to yourself
- Stay hydrated, drink small sips of water or isotonic drink (about half a pint or 240 millilitres per hour) and never leave drinks unattended
- If experiencing issues with jaw clenching, chew gum or soft sweets
- Take regular breaks when dancing NEED HELP?
- If you feel unwell, tell someone and be honest about what's been taken, how much and when
- If the effects are stronger than expected, stay relaxed and take small sips of flat sugary juice
- Negative feelings will pass, changing the environment and letting someone know how you are feeling can help
- If the person taking drugs is sleeping or unconscious place them in the recovery position (on their side) and check them frequently
- In an emergency get help. Call 999 and ask for an ambulance. Be honest about what has been taken. Stay with the person and reassure them
- Have at least a few drink/drug free days a week to allow your body to recover
- If you need support, our Drop-in is open Monday-Saturday 1-5pm and Thursday 3-7pm, during the Fringe. We offer free pregnancy testing, blood borne virus testing, condoms and lube, confidential chat and signposting to services

For information about specific drugs please check out www.crew.scot. For a confidential chat with one of our trained staff or volunteers, visit the Drop-in at 32-32a Cockburn St, Edinburgh, EH1 1PB (just behind Waverley Station) or text 07860047501 FREE for a call back.

HOW TO SURVIVE AS A F L Y E R E R B Y C H R I S TIAN B R I G H T Y FORMER STREET TEAM MANAGER, HERDES

Personally, I hate that the Edinburgh Annual Festival of Flyering is hijacked by artists demanding we publicise actual, real shows. Our egos don't require baying crowds or reviews. However, our integrity comes at a cost. Constantly putting yourself in the firing line, dealing with rejection – all for someone else's career – is exhausting and terrifying. But, if you follow the below, it can also the best way of experiencing Edinburgh.

SURVIVAL Get the physical basics sorted. Have somewhere to permanently stay. Eat a big breakfast. Wear trainers or good boots. Waterproof coat. Backpack. Water bottle. Portable phone battery. Vegetables. Drink less. Sleep more. Honey & lemon & ginger. Make friends (it's easy here). Get cuddles. As many cuddles as you can find.

You don't need to work for a dick. It's very easy to find flyering work during the fringe, through the Flyerer Network facebook group or by asking to work for an act you loved. If someone is abusive or exploitative in any way, such as paying you less than 10 p/h, don't work for them.

DON'T TRUST STRANGERS

You're being paid to talk to strangers, but some strangers are AWFUL. Be extremely careful flyering after 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays, as that's when the baddies come out. Avoid night time on Cowgate at all costs. Put your physical wellbeing first in all instances, and don't approach groups if you don't feel comfortable.

PLAY You're being paid to talk to strangers, and most strangers are AWESOME. Flyering is a chance to perform for longer each day than anyone else at the Edinburgh fringe. You get to make strangers laugh, to play and to help support an artist you believe in. If you can find the joy in it, and I promise you it's there, it's the easiest and most fun job in the world. That's why I do it full time, with a lot less success outside August.

REMEMBER WHY YOU'RE HERE

You're probably already following a dream by being up here, but don't trick yourself into thinking that that in itself is enough. You'll be so much happier if you make the effort to see even more shows, meet more people and learn as much as possible about the art you want to make. And crucially, come back next year with a show. There's a home for you here - you just need to find it.

Christian has a show called "Christian Brighty: Playboy", 3rd-28th (not 10th & 17th) Aug at 21:40, Pleasance Courtyard. @brightybuoy



Fringe Central is a space exclusively for participants and industry (the Fringe's very own green room!), so you can pop in to escape the crowds and grab a cup of tea or just sit down.

Every year, Fringe Central also puts on a programme of events for participants. All of the events are free for participants so you can just turn up and get involved. **Most events take place at the new Fringe Central site which is located in St James Quarter, EH1 3AD.**

Below is a selection of events surrounding mental health that may be useful for you but you can find more information and book into sessions on connect.edfringe.com, or pick up a programme from Fringe Central. More events are added throughout the Fringe so keep checking back.

BUILDING A MENTALLY WELL FRINGE

Aug 9, 14:30 (1 hr) and Aug 16, 10:30 (1 hr)

This seminar explores ways to look after both your own mental health and wellbeing, and also the wellbeing of those around you during the Fringe. What are the ways you can look after yourself, prepare for challenges and build your resilience? Andy Freeman from Space to Breathe leads us through ideas, practical tools and discussion.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID APPOINTMENTS

Aug 9 - 19 (excluding weekends) 50 min sessions bookable on the hour between 10am and 6pm

Andy Freeman from Space to Breathe will be onsite at Fringe Central to offer artists, producers, directors and teams free Mental Health First Aid sessions during the Festival. Mental Health First Aid looks to provide wellbeing & signposting advice so you can care for your wellbeing during the Festival plus and know what to do when you get home.

EDINBURGH AND UK BASED RESOURCES

EDINBURGH / SCOTLAND

Breathing Space

www.breathingspace.scot - 0800 83 85 87 A confidential phone line for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16, feeling low, anxious or depressed.

CREW

www.crew.scot - 0131 220 3404

An Edinburgh-based service for anyone looking for information and services related to drug safety and sexual health.

Edinburgh Crisis Centre

www.edinburghcrisiscentre.co.uk - 0808 801 0414 Open 24 hours a day 365 days of the year and provides community based, emotional and practical support at times of crisis.

Health in Mind

www.health-in-mind.org.uk - 0131 225 8508

Edinburgh-based charity which seeks to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. Another website with good selfhelp resources.

Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

www.samh.org.uk - 0344 800 0550

SAMH is Scotland's national mental health charity. Their website has self-help resources and signposts to other services.

EDINBURGH AND UK BASED RESOURCES

UK-WIDE

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

www.thecalmzone.net - 0800 58 58 58

A free and confidential helpline as well as a webchat service, offering help and information to anyone who is struggling or in crisis.

Drinkaware

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Provides independent alcohol advice, information and tools to help people make better choices about their drinking. Lots of good online resources and tips for managing alcohol intake.

Living Life to the Full

www.llttf.com

Free and short online courses covering low mood, stress and resilience in the cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach. Recommended by major charities and widely used within health and social care services.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org - 116 123 / jo@samaritans.org Samaritans provides emotional support for anyone who's struggling to cope, via a 24/7 365 days a year phone line and email service.

Objectively Funny present some of the hottest new acts on the circuit for Your delectation. Different line-ups daily.

'The art form's cutting edge'

'The line-up is such a banyo.

JUST THE TONIC SPARE ROOM: 13:00

objectively

show

BJECTIVELY HILARIOUS SHOW

JORDAN BROOKES NINA CONTI AND MORE TBC.



AUG 13TH, 22.45

SPECIAL THANKS

A big huge thank you to these wonderful people for making this booklet happen:

The Objectively Funny Team: Ellie BW, Maddy Bye, Kathryn Higgins, Michael Julings, Lois Walshe, Martin Willis.

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Conor Jatter and Dylan Woodley for their design wizardry.

Sally Desborough, MHFA Instructor/Director of Your Wellbeing Hub.

All the team at Signature Brew.

All of our acts for being lovely and kind human beings. Go and see their shows. Support live comedy. Peace n love.





Twitter: @objectivlyfunny Insta: objectively.funny Website: objectivelyfunny.com