

9th July 2020

# KEEPING YOU IN MIND

## This issue:

- Your Lockdown stories
- Art in Lockdown
- Chitchat from the Cat
- Cornel Cymraeg



## Lockdown



Plus brainteaser and  
how to draw  
mandalas!

In this lockdown  
special we hear  
from you, our  
readers!

Welcome to the 6th edition of Mind Aberystwyth's fortnightly newsletter.

We want to stay in contact with our service users during this difficult time, and realise that many of you may not have or do not wish to use the internet to keep in touch. The theme for this edition is: LOCKDOWN

HELLO

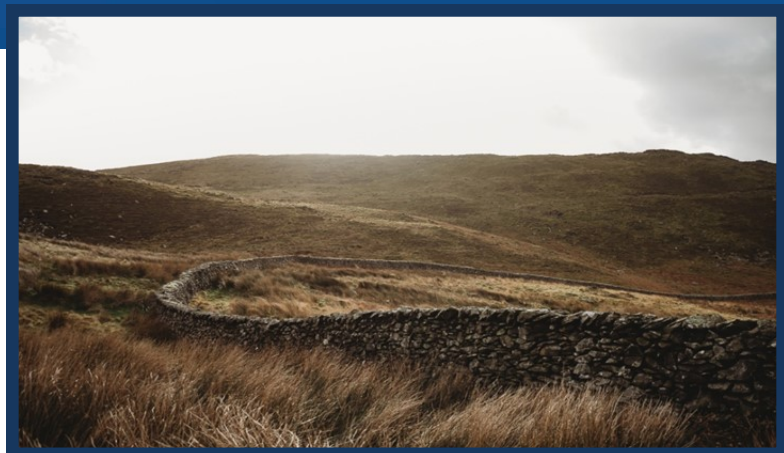
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SHWMIAE

This edition we will be focusing on people's lockdown experiences.

Some of our readers have written about their experiences over the past few months, in particular how lockdown has impacted their mental health.

Stress, anxiety and isolation can add to psychological distress, and those with a mental health issue can find themselves deteriorating rapidly. Many people have found lockdown incredibly difficult, but we hope that hearing about how some of us have reacted and managed will help you to feel less alone if you are struggling.



**TRIGGER  
WARNING**

Trigger warning: If you feel that your mental health may be affected by reading about other's experiences, then we advise you do not read pages 3 to 10.





# Life in Lockdown

Just as it was all going swimmingly, coronavirus happened.

We officially entered quarantine on March 23rd as a way of trying to curtail the pandemic. This meant that some of the more vulnerable of our society were 'shielded' or 'shielding' and others could go about their business albeit severely restricted. Life was not going to be the same, even though some of those strict rules are now being eased.

For myself, I must confess that I did have some wobbly moments when lockdown happened. Although I'm a fairly anxious person at the best of times, this situation did me no favours. The daily briefings on TV and Facebook scrollings made me feel uneasy. Sleep became my enemy.

I would wake with a jump at silly o'clock worrying about the pandemic and its impact- real and imagined. I knew then that I would have to cut myself off from the media to a certain extent. And so, I did.





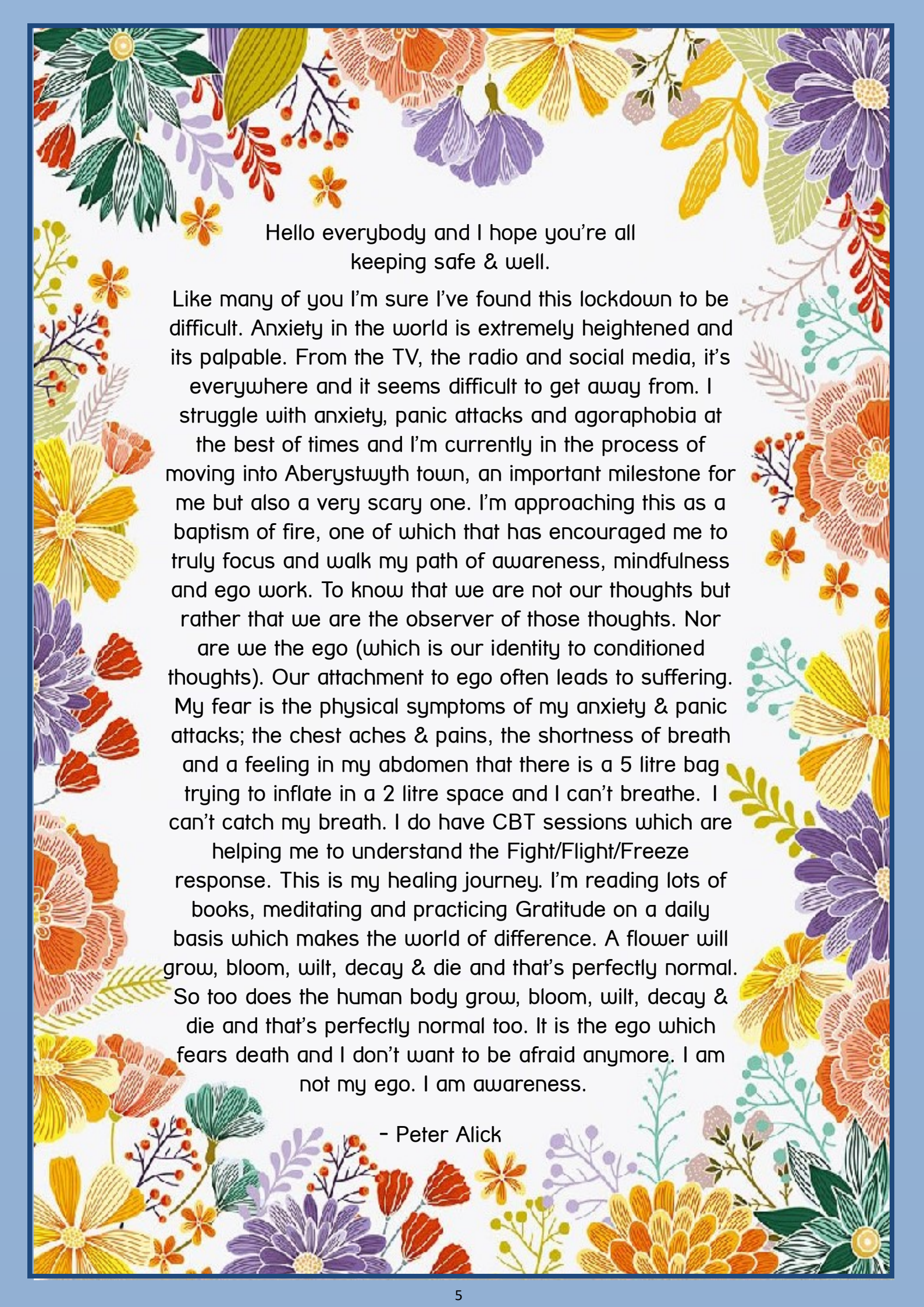


Other than the pandemic, we were also in the midst of a heatwave, a blessing in disguise. Even though it was extremely hot and sometimes muggy and sticky, I was able to connect with nature. This generally meant that I sat out a lot in the garden, pottering or reading. I took walks near to my home and planted Jerusalem artichokes. I felt blissed out and much less anxious. My family were and still are at home, and this newfound family time led to playing more board games, cooking, chatting generally and binge-watching box sets.

The outcome of this different way of living has brought us much closer together and for that I am grateful. This coupled with the beautiful

warm weather has made living in a pandemic much more tolerable. I'm feeling quite blessed and am coping better.



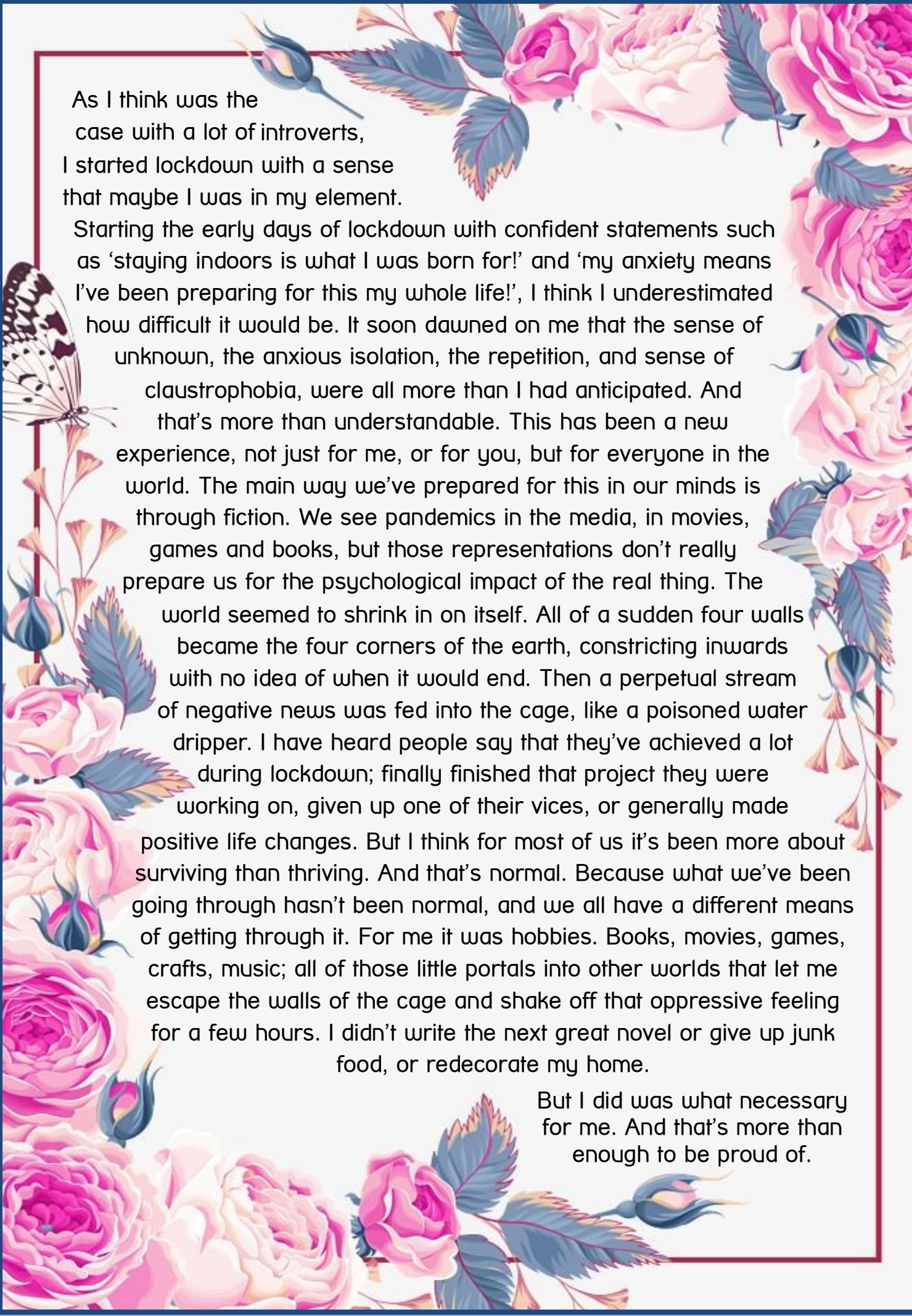


Hello everybody and I hope you're all  
keeping safe & well.

Like many of you I'm sure I've found this lockdown to be difficult. Anxiety in the world is extremely heightened and its palpable. From the TV, the radio and social media, it's everywhere and it seems difficult to get away from. I struggle with anxiety, panic attacks and agoraphobia at the best of times and I'm currently in the process of moving into Aberystwyth town, an important milestone for me but also a very scary one. I'm approaching this as a baptism of fire, one of which that has encouraged me to truly focus and walk my path of awareness, mindfulness and ego work. To know that we are not our thoughts but rather that we are the observer of those thoughts. Nor are we the ego (which is our identity to conditioned thoughts). Our attachment to ego often leads to suffering. My fear is the physical symptoms of my anxiety & panic attacks; the chest aches & pains, the shortness of breath and a feeling in my abdomen that there is a 5 litre bag trying to inflate in a 2 litre space and I can't breathe. I can't catch my breath. I do have CBT sessions which are helping me to understand the Fight/Flight/Freeze response. This is my healing journey. I'm reading lots of books, meditating and practicing Gratitude on a daily basis which makes the world of difference. A flower will grow, bloom, wilt, decay & die and that's perfectly normal. So too does the human body grow, bloom, wilt, decay & die and that's perfectly normal too. It is the ego which fears death and I don't want to be afraid anymore. I am not my ego. I am awareness.

- Peter Alick



A decorative border featuring pink roses, green leaves, and a butterfly is positioned around the text. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some showing vibrant pink and others more muted tones. The butterfly is perched on a stem with small yellow flowers.

As I think was the  
case with a lot of introverts,  
I started lockdown with a sense  
that maybe I was in my element.

Starting the early days of lockdown with confident statements such as 'staying indoors is what I was born for!' and 'my anxiety means I've been preparing for this my whole life!', I think I underestimated how difficult it would be. It soon dawned on me that the sense of unknown, the anxious isolation, the repetition, and sense of claustrophobia, were all more than I had anticipated. And that's more than understandable. This has been a new experience, not just for me, or for you, but for everyone in the world. The main way we've prepared for this in our minds is through fiction. We see pandemics in the media, in movies, games and books, but those representations don't really prepare us for the psychological impact of the real thing. The world seemed to shrink in on itself. All of a sudden four walls became the four corners of the earth, constricting inwards with no idea of when it would end. Then a perpetual stream of negative news was fed into the cage, like a poisoned water dripper. I have heard people say that they've achieved a lot during lockdown; finally finished that project they were working on, given up one of their vices, or generally made positive life changes. But I think for most of us it's been more about surviving than thriving. And that's normal. Because what we've been going through hasn't been normal, and we all have a different means of getting through it. For me it was hobbies. Books, movies, games, crafts, music; all of those little portals into other worlds that let me escape the walls of the cage and shake off that oppressive feeling for a few hours. I didn't write the next great novel or give up junk food, or redecorate my home.

But I did was what necessary  
for me. And that's more than  
enough to be proud of.





# The Dark Side of Lockdown

Mental health advice frequently urges us to pay attention to the positives of lockdown – people getting to spend more time at home with family; an increase in community spirit, positive ecological developments.

Unfortunately, focusing only on these things means that people who are sick of the sight of their significant others and not using the time to learn Tai kwondo or Taiwanese, or who are isolated and despairing, can feel even more alone and like they are somehow “failing” at lockdown.

Mind has been giving me and others invaluable support- one to one phone calls, online groups, this wonderful newsletter. But no one can take

away the fact that within a week we lost the life we knew and had it replaced with a so-called “new normal” and that this isn’t necessarily easy for anyone to adjust to. Mental health problems don’t go away just because there





is a pandemic on. In fact, loss of routine, control and meaning can easily exacerbate an existing mental health problem or create one where none existed previously.

So, for the sake of those of you who are hating it as much as I am, here are the lows of my lockdown:



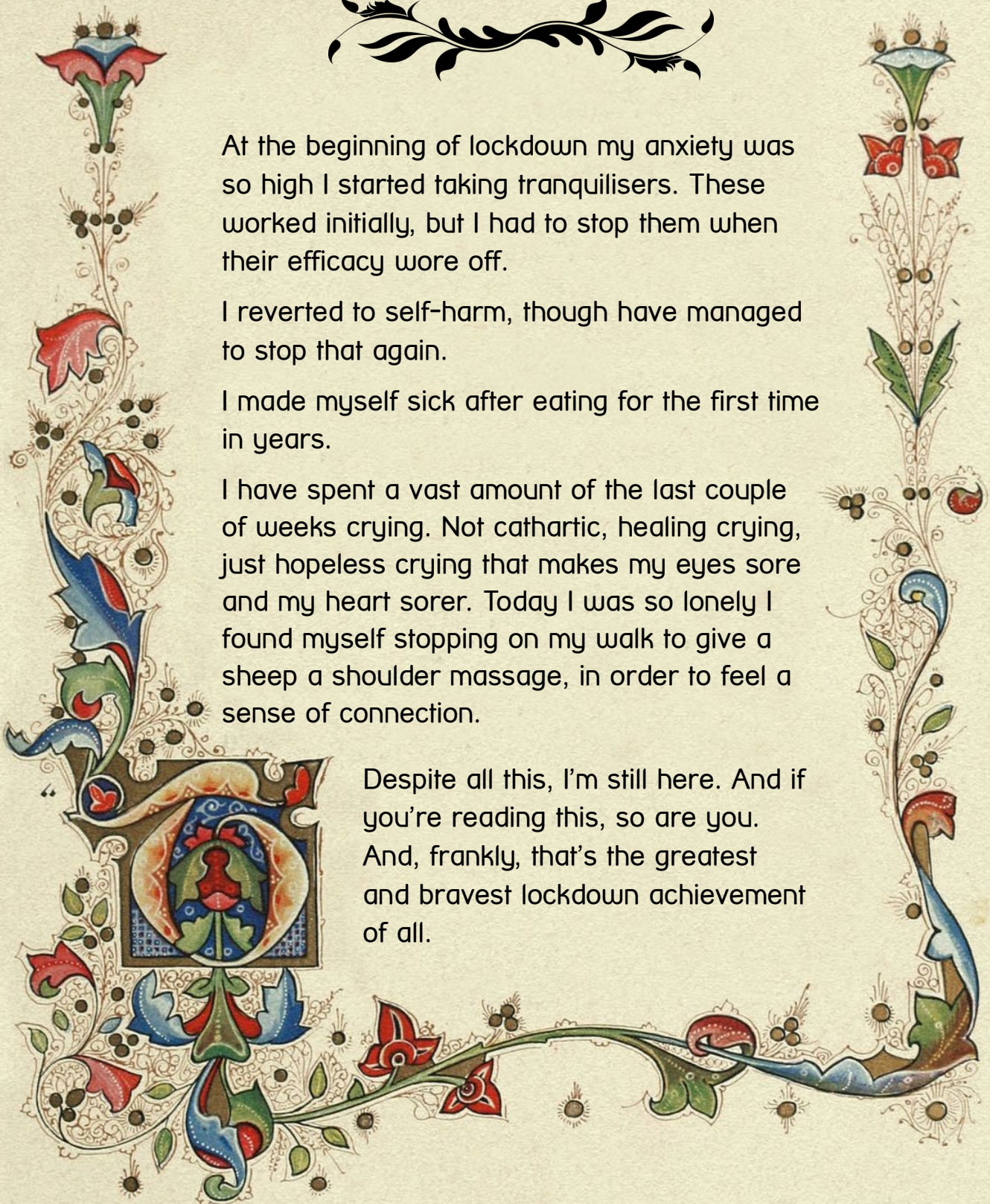
At the beginning of lockdown my anxiety was so high I started taking tranquilisers. These worked initially, but I had to stop them when their efficacy wore off.

I reverted to self-harm, though have managed to stop that again.

I made myself sick after eating for the first time in years.

I have spent a vast amount of the last couple of weeks crying. Not cathartic, healing crying, just hopeless crying that makes my eyes sore and my heart sorer. Today I was so lonely I found myself stopping on my walk to give a sheep a shoulder massage, in order to feel a sense of connection.

Despite all this, I'm still here. And if you're reading this, so are you. And, frankly, that's the greatest and bravest lockdown achievement of all.





So, I'm 66, diagnosed depression & anxiety, diverticulitis and aortic aneurism.

Since retiring last year, I have become increasingly isolated, which I largely welcome, following 27 years working care & support which left me traumatised, exhausted & depressed.

Oddly, coincidentally, I had earmarked Feb-March to put myself into a personal mindfulness retreat at my home where I live alone.

My freezer was well stocked so I was already prepared when the Covid balloon finally went up and I launched myself into a routine of blended work and practice, or rather, work becomes the practice, the practice becomes the work.

Ignoring the distractions is key to this of course, to enable a stronger focus on the present moment.

The days became productive, I got into a rhythm and jobs got done, energy waxed and waned as I tried to find my balance of work, rest, chores, practice, work, rest, I didn't find it easy.

At all.

It really was ok though, for a while.

Because I'd had plenty of experience of attending Buddhist meditation retreats, I was accustomed to engaging the mental disciplines helpful when immersing oneself into such an unusual experience.

I had confidence.

However, the difference this time was that I did not know how long the restrictions, or retreat, would be lasting for.

That little detail had a truly profound impact.

So, filled with the feeling of needing support, I reached out, online, to help and accompany me on my retreat . . . who was I kidding ? Firstly I'm way out of practice . . . plus it was a huge mistake because by accessing the internet, my curiosity and conditioning, slowly and bit by bit reeled me in till I was spending silly amounts of time on it, massively winding up the anxiety, which actually moved me further away from any possible 'awakening'.



Emotions would arise as self pity leaped onstage for a while, anger, revulsion, hatred, inspiration, hope, strength and resolve, all dancing all singing and what a circus it has been!

As I review the period with myself now as I write this, I know there has been a shifting, a movement within me, a new power emerging, of awareness of the connectedness of all things which I now experience much more intensely, particularly in nature, compared to before. What I did not have before was an appreciation of the enormous power of modern media and of the great extent to which we are being manipulated en masse.

The impact of isolation has been profound as it has forced memories and reflections upon me and has disrupted my sense of identity. There have been days when it has felt like I was standing in a field of broken chains with salt in my mouth. . . and others that presented me with a full on state of grace, temporarily illuminating my entire being with benevolent energy.

I have found myself re-evaluating my relationships both past and present, starting with an upgrade of self respect. During the most difficult days I feel raw and wretched, desperate and hurt inside, so I sit and face the desperateness, wretchedness and raw hurt, trying to regard that with warmth, good humour and positive regard – an approach I've cultivated through Buddhism.

But it's tough, challenging work made so much more difficult by being alone.

As trauma arises, I curse memory, laugh and cry, indulge in self pity, renew and reframe relationships, it feels bloody uncomfortable but I know it's just me growing, evolving.

So I'm blessed with insight and gratitude . . . to finally accept that I've never really fitted in with conventional society and have wasted so much time trying to do so.

I would now seek a new life in a Dharma community, preferably somewhere warmer than UK, where the politics are of the heart, where it's safe to practice empathy and compassion without getting screwed.



Nathan Wyburn

## ART IN LOCKDOWN

**From the rainbows thanking the NHS in windows to graffiti murals inspired by the global coronavirus pandemic, all sorts of artists have used lockdown to capture this period in history.**

While some works draw on the sense of fear and isolation felt by many, others are inspired by the heroes who have emerged during the crisis. Some centre around lockdown itself, ranging from boredom to chaos to stockpiling!

The collage above was created by Cardiff artist Nathan Wyburn, who was inspired after the first Clap for our Carers took place in March.

"I was overwhelmed and it brought me to tears," he says.

"Most of my friends, including my housemate, work for the NHS, and seeing them go to work each night with worry in their eyes was heart-breaking. But that's what they do - day in, day out."

Nathan posted on Facebook requesting for NHS workers to send him their photos.

"With over 200 sent in I then digitally collaged them together to make the image of a health worker wearing a mask," he says. "It was so greatly received on social media, shared by NHS workers and celebrities around the world."





Jonjo Elliott, from Leicestershire, is an artist who has exhibited everywhere from Leicester and London to Los Angeles and New York, and is currently using his time in lockdown to film online art classes for children.

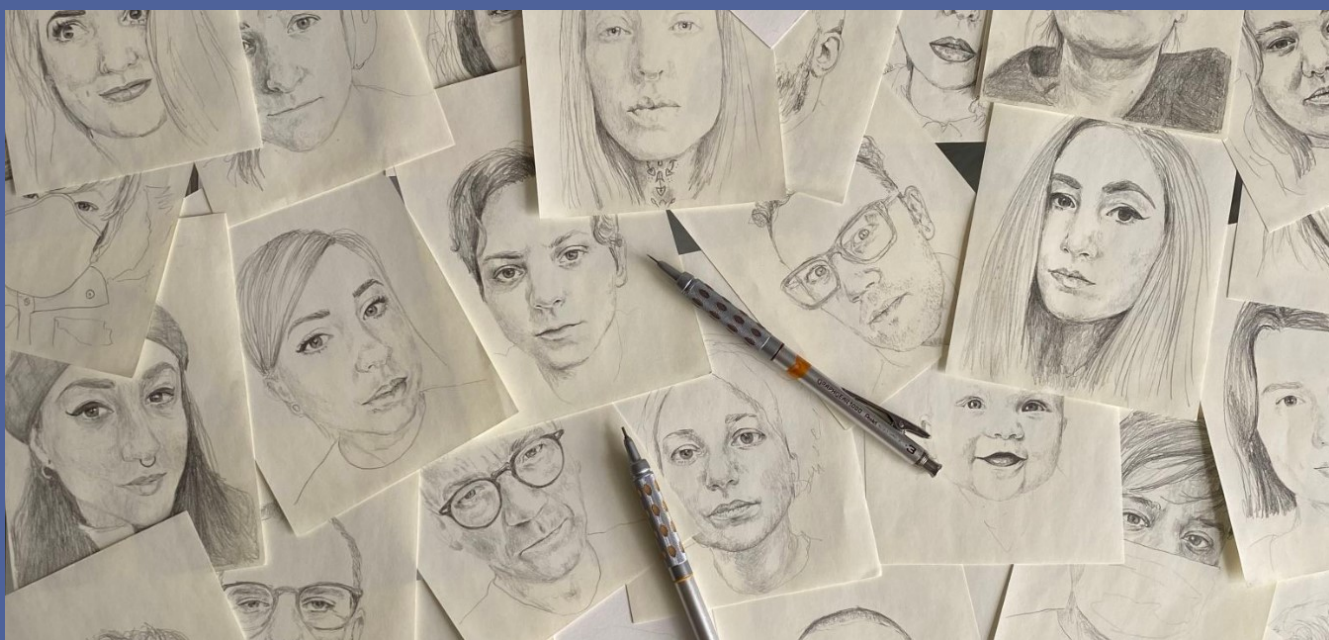
The 48-year-old father of four has created a series of large artworks inspired by the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, entitled Last Trace Of Light.

"These new paintings are all based on the current situation and part of a large series, which I'm continuing to create during lockdown and plan to carry on after I get back to my studio," he says.

"The series will feature paintings, sculptures, collaborations and online workshops, all inspired by the current situation and the spaces we share together."







The Isolation Archive, by Georgia Kitty Harris, is a series of portraits based on worldwide submissions from the public, including NHS nurses, which documents how we are all living apart, together.

"Being able to draw people's faces from all around the world is just one artist's way of showing how we are facing it together."

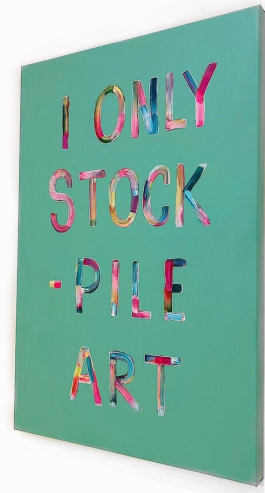


**"Everyone's individual stories are fascinating, even though we're collectively facing the same thing," the Putney artist says.**





Sophie Tea



Sophie Tea

Illustrator Nina Cosford, 31, from Hastings, says she often uses humour in her work to tackle sometimes tricky or sensitive subjects.

"I wanted to show the funny side of being cooped up indoors and highlight the odd little domestic rituals that so many of us share (talking to our plants, trying and failing at home crafts and spying on the neighbours, for example).

"We are going through such a strange time right now and one of my coping mechanisms in difficult or bleak times has always been humour.

"It has the ability to comfort, entertain and unite us, and that's something I think a lot of people need right now."

Sophie Tea's new series of toilet roll painting depicts the UK's "top panic-buy item to stockpile".

Inspired by shops and supermarkets running out of toilet paper even before lockdown was announced, she wanted to capture the strange phenomenon of stockpiling.



Nina Cosford





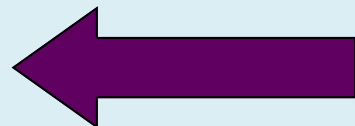
# BRAINTEASER

Can you spot the hidden objects in these mind-muddling puzzles?

Find the marigold gloves!



Find the crayon!



Answers on page 29





## ACTIVITY:

# DRAWING MANDALAS

Mandalas are circular designs with repeating shapes. Many people find drawing mandalas to be a very centring and expressive activity.

We are going to give you some tips on how to draw one!

To draw your own, it helps to use a 'mandala grid'.

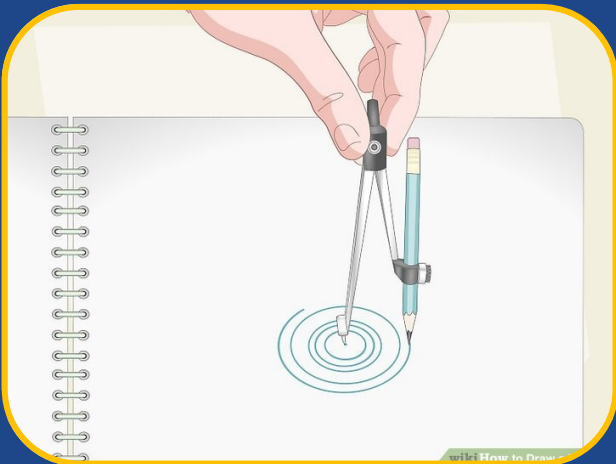
This is a template of concentric circles. You can create this yourself using a compass, or try drawing around different circular objects such as cups, plates and bowls.

We also provided you with a ready-made template. You can trace over it on another piece of paper or draw straight onto it to it!



# How to draw a mandala grid

**FIRST** Pick a centre or middle point of a page.

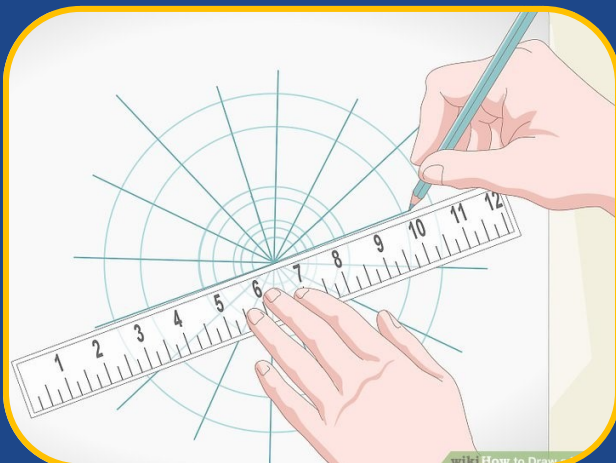
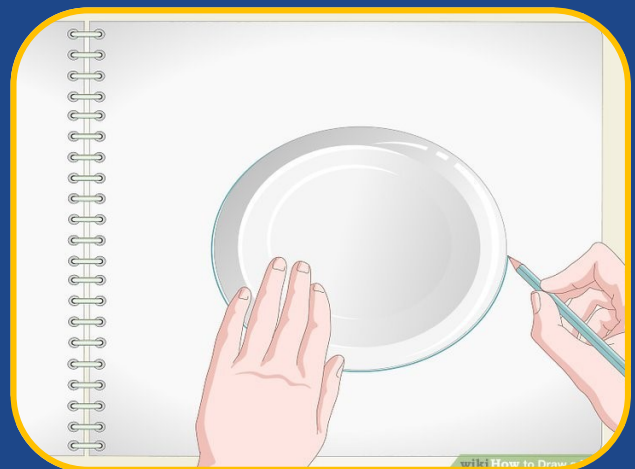


**THEN**

Use a compass to draw concentric circles around the point.

**OR**

Trace around things to make circles if you prefer.

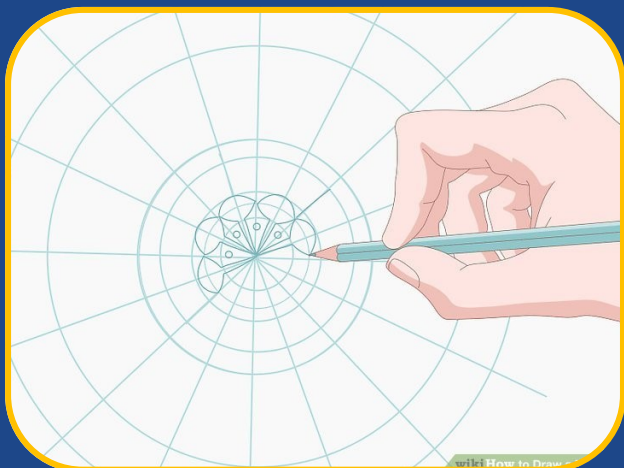


**THEN**

Draw axes across your circles in pencil.



# How to draw a mandala

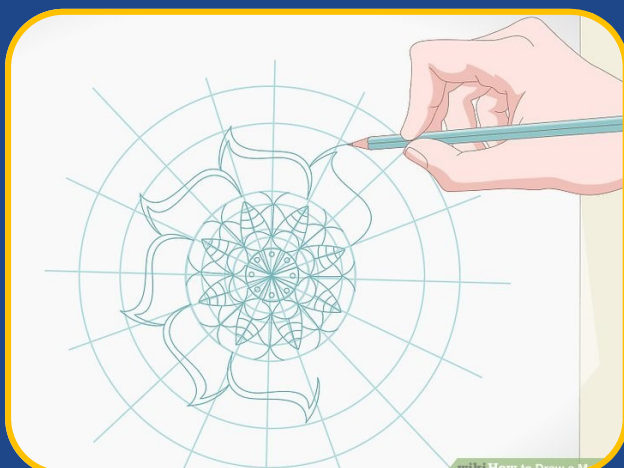
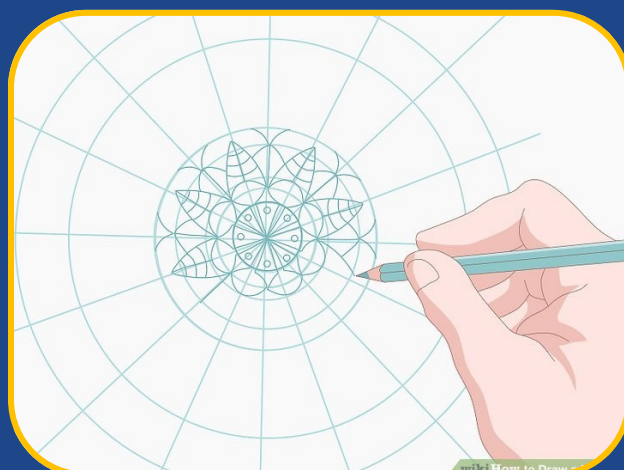


## FIRST

Draw one shape in a ring around your centre point

## THEN

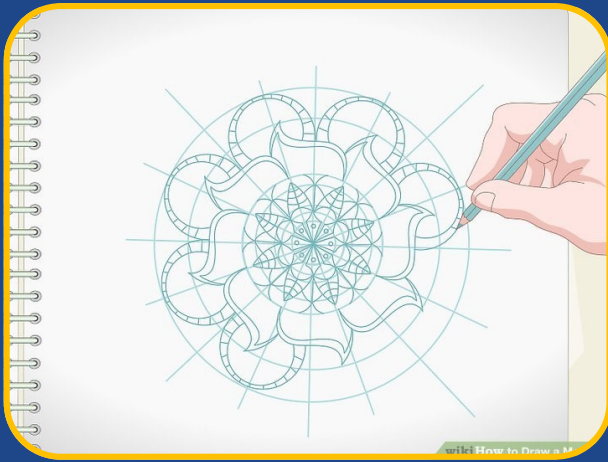
Continue drawing concentric rings of shapes



## THEN

Let loose and relax!



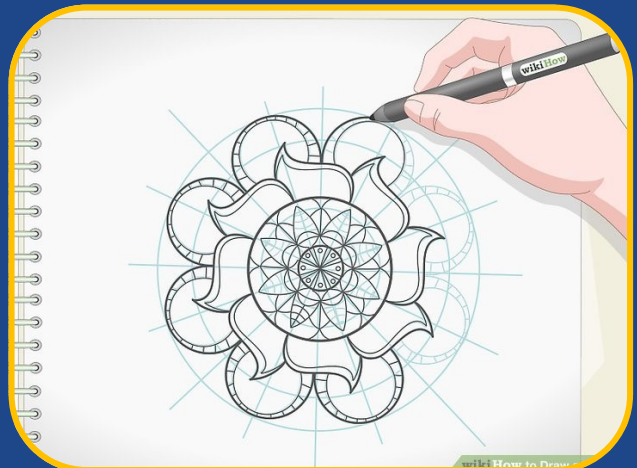


## THEN

Stop making rings before you hit the edge of your paper.

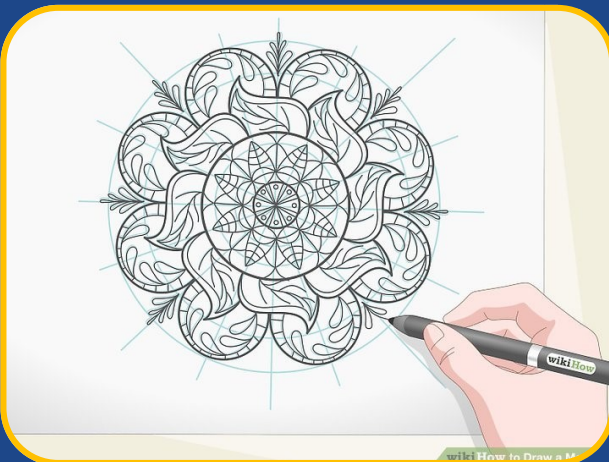
## THEN

Trace over your design in pen if you drew it in pencil.



## THEN

Add fine details within the shapes



## FINALLY

Erase your pencil markings once you've inked your mandala. You can then colour it in if you like!





# CHITCHAT FROM THE CAT

## #6 My Lockdown Experience



Written on behalf of Billybob by  
his mum, Pat Griffiths

**According to the radio this morning, “ many households in UK have been very productive in Lockdown”. Really?**

My observation would indicate that, certainly there has been a change in activities in my house. My habits have stayed the same really. I have always spent quality time on the sofa, in bed, eating and sleeping. So it appears that where I lead, others follow.....

I celebrated my birthday in May. Actually, so did everyone else here. Not celebrate MY birthday, but have their own to celebrate. Random. One of the criteria for being in this family unit is obviously to be born in May. Good month mind, two public holidays..... And a week off if

you're at school. And all because of my birthday: now you know.

New skills have been learned. I had never been around the car park of the nearby community centre. Not all the way around anyway, as it is usually full of cars. But not in. The last few months. I am becoming good at stalking, via my interactions with NDD ( next door's dog ). As he is now substantially bigger than me, I am feigning friendship. So he is off his guard for my next move against him. Otherwise I may not have many more opportunities....

Have you noticed how much more hair everyone has? Whereas I am brushed regularly to get rid of excess hair, it seems to be the opposite for everyone else. They spend ages brushing, and their hair grows and grows. Down, and out, so to speak. . Other things have grown? The charity pile, the library pile, online shopping,



Amazon boxes.....and tummies. I do like a good tummy: I can expand and lengthen, relaxing on a nice, big. lap. I have even been known to fall off whilst relaxing. Not very dignified.

My garden has been “ re-purposed” . It is now a type of rockery with “ an authentic Mediterranean vibe “. This is the closest to the Mediterranean any of us is likely to get anytime soon, apparently. I wonder if anyone else has had 3 holidays cancelled in a row ? My mum has. (This record did start last year mind).

It has been a treat to see so much more of everyone. But I am now ready for change. It simply must be time for them to “ go back”. To school, to work, anywhere really as long as it's soon. I would like to regain my old lifestyle. And more specifically, not share it with others. Pottering, lounging about, sleeping, eating.....with just myself as company...marvellous.

Without the family copying me.

Next time- How to crochet.

- Billybob





# Cornel



# Cymraeg

Gair i gofio/Words to remember

nyrs

nuh-rs

nurse

sebon

seh-bon

soap

meddyg

meh-th-igg

doctor

mwgwd

mooh-good

mask

papur toiled

pah-peer toy-led

toilet paper

cymuned

kuh-meen-ed

community

Ffaith difur

Cynhaliwyd yr Eisteddfod cyntaf yng Nghastell Aberteifi gan yr Arglwydd Rhys yn 1176.

Fun fact

The first Eisteddfod was held by Lord Rhys at Cardigan Castle in 1176.

Pwy ydw i? Who am I?

**IRS HOTYANN SKIPNOH**

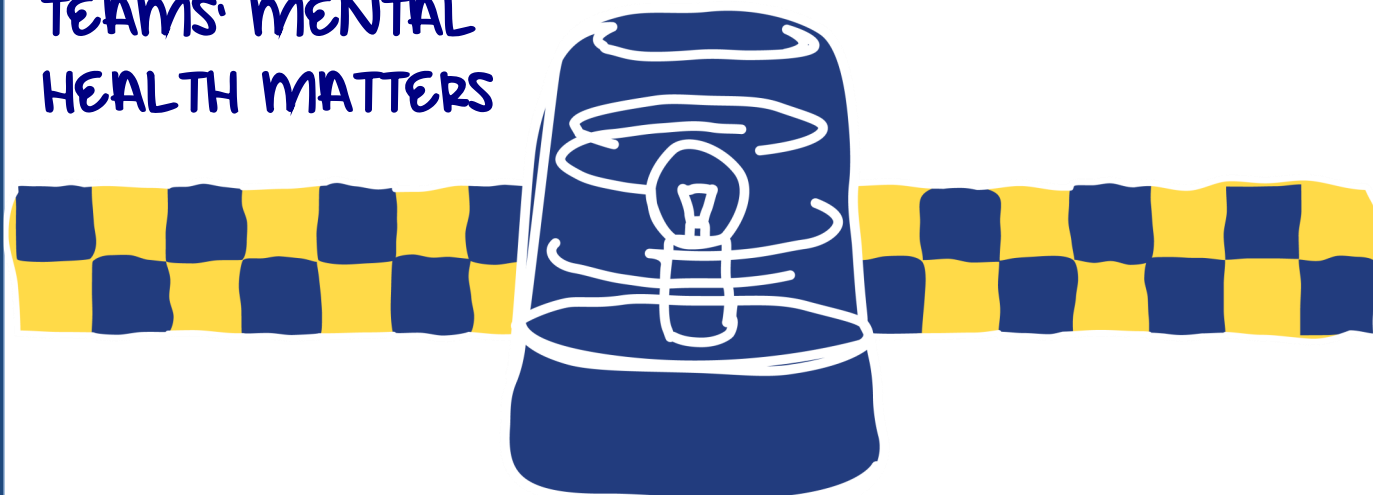
Awgrym: Actor yn enedig o Port Talbot sy'n enwog am chwarae 'Hannibal'

Hint: Port Talbot born actor who famously played 'Hannibal'

Atebion ar tudalen 29/Answers on page 29



## SUPPORTING 999 TEAMS' MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS



Mind Aberystwyth is proud to announce that it is offering Blue Light mental health and resilience training courses to emergency services across Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Powys. Blue Light is a programme of training courses aimed at reducing stigma, promoting wellbeing and improving mental health support for those working or volunteering in the ambulance, fire, police and search and rescue services (coast, cave and mountain).

We understand that our emergency services are busy doing a fantastic

job at this most challenging of times. However there will be a developing need for mental health training and support for staff and volunteers. The Blue Light programme from Mind Aberystwyth is one of the options: to help individuals and teams stay mentally well; to encourage self-help; and to support people in being able to process, and reflect upon, the current corona virus crisis.

The new updated training brochure for 2020 is published today and is available to members of the emergency services by writing to [bluelight@mindaberystwyth.org](mailto:bluelight@mindaberystwyth.org).

*"You cannot overestimate just how positive this whole programme has been for our staff. If I could do it every six months, I know I would have the same response. It's just been amazing, amazing for staff."*

Manager, Police Service.



## Reduce feelings of anxiety, isolation and loneliness with these helplines



During this challenging period, **Porth Cymorth Cynnar** has established a virtual platform to ensure that we are able to keep in touch with vulnerable residents across Ceredigion. We are ensuring that all residents whom are known to our services, and others, are kept in touch with, through regular welfare calls, should they wish.

Around 2,000 residents from young people to families to carers, who may require or benefit from regular contact whilst their service is not operating in its usual form will receive communication from our staff.

To date, almost 2,000 welfare calls have been made, and have been well received by people across Ceredigion. Residents have said that it is great that someone is keeping in touch with them, to give them an opportunity to have a weekly phone call and someone to talk to.

If you, or anyone you know would benefit from the Keeping in Touch Service, please get in touch with Clic on 01545 570881 or [clic@ceredigion.gov.uk](mailto:clic@ceredigion.gov.uk) who will triage your query to Porth Cymorth Cynnar.

**Age Cymru** is to offer a check-in-and-chat telephone service for the over 70s in Wales who live alone. It is hoped that the initiative will provide some reassurance to older people, answer basic queries and link people to local services and support during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Anyone over 70 in Wales can register with Age Cymru free of charge, to receive a regular telephone call from the charity in either English or Welsh. All you have to do is call the Age Cymru Advice Number on 08000 223 444 or email [enquiries@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@agecymru.org.uk)

**Shout** is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Shout is powered by a team of volunteers, who are at the heart of the service. Text SHOUT to 85258.

**HUTS Workshop** (the mental health charity in Newcastle Emllyn) is offering a free telephone chat service for anyone feeling lonely and in need of a friendly conversation. If you would like to register for this service, call 01239 710 377, you will receive a call back.



# MEET THE TEAM:



This edition we'll be hearing from Tyler, one of our support workers and Active Monitoring practitioners!

Tyler

## **Tell us a little about yourself and what you do at Mind Aberystwyth?**

I'm Tyler and I've been a support worker at Mind Aberystwyth for nearly two years. That means I work one to one with clients, and I run the Drop-in and the women's craft group, Clwb Crefft, too! I moved to Aber to study history at University in 2014 and got a job at Mind the day I handed in my dissertation, brilliant timing! Since then, I've run a digital inclusion project to help people get online, and have helped with the Side-by-Side project.

## **What are some of your interests and hobbies?**

I have an avid interest in history (some may call it an obsession...) particularly the history of the Soviet Union, and of pirates. I have a cool pirate tattoo that I'm itching to add to once I'm allowed! I also enjoy painting and

drawing, and spend a lot of time reading and writing. I'm currently bingeing through Stephen King's enormous catalogue! I like playing the piano, bass guitar, and drums – which my neighbours \*love\*. I have recently started watching Grey's Anatomy and Black Sails and they have filled a lot of hours of my time.

## **How are you staying resilient during the lockdown?**

I've focused on making time for things I know I enjoy. I deliberately set aside time in my week to be creative, painting or making music. I also keep an eye on how much I'm sleeping, and try to wind down before bed without any computers, by listening to music and reading, though I'm not sure I'd recommend Stephen King as a pre-bed pursuit...

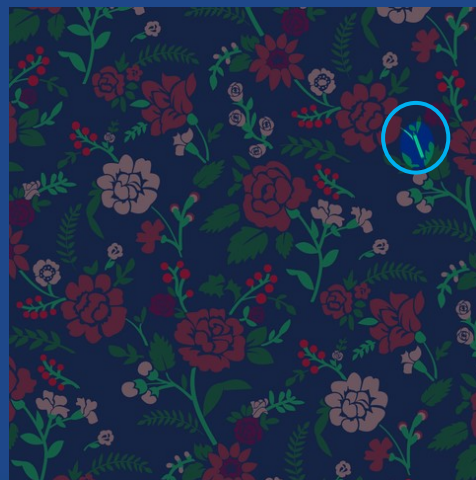
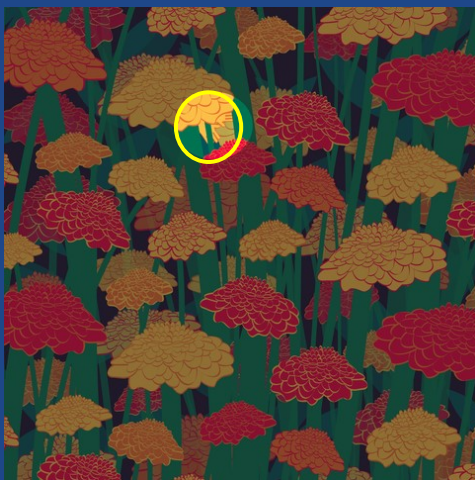
I'm also keeping in touch with my friends and family using Zoom and FaceTime, as I find it's more important than ever to stay connected to a support network.

# THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of Keeping You In Mind. As lockdown begins to ease, we have decided to transition from a bi-weekly newsletter, and will be with you monthly moving forward. Our next issue will be out for print on Thursday 6th August.

We would love to feature more contributions from readers – stories, poems, art, quizzes, recipes or anything else you want to put together. Please submit your work to [emma@mindaberystwyth.org](mailto:emma@mindaberystwyth.org) by Monday 3rd August or post to Mind Aberystwyth, The Cambria, Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, SY23 2AZ

## Brainteaser Answers:



Cornel Cymraeg: SIR ANTHONY HOPKINS