

Access All AREAS

From dynamic dance meditation and hands-on healing to intuitive storytelling, these pioneering members are employing innovative new ways to tackle the taboo of mental health

INTERVIEWS BY EMMA J PAGE

LOCAL HOUSE: SOHO HOUSE LONDON

COLOUR PORTRAITS BY ANDY LO PÒ

LOCAL HOUSE: SHOREDITCH HOUSE

JOANNE BRADFORD

The Shoreditch House member is an author, healing practitioner, life consultant and creator of Motherheart

'I would love to see more mental health professionals incorporate a spiritual element into their work; I believe science and faith-based healing can operate in tandem.'

Set up in 2017 by author and life consultant Joanne Bradford, Motherheart is founded on the principle that each of us can tune into our nurturing instincts and successfully mother ourselves. She uses a range of therapies, from talking and sound healing to EFT (also known as 'tapping'), releasing

emotional blockages commonly associated with anxiety, anger, phobias and low self-esteem. 'I'm really passionate about creating a space where mental wellbeing and spirituality can interact,' says Bradford, who now works full-time in the field, having faced her own set of emotional challenges in her early twenties. 'There are still relatively few therapies that really seek to align mind, body and spirit,' she says. Decoding coping mechanisms to understand the root of emotional trauma

is at the heart of Bradford's work. 'Of course, the irony is that if you're in a bad place, your instinct is to hide and isolate, which is counterintuitive,' she says. 'Often, we simply don't realise how much we need support. But in my experience, the process of truthful sharing always proves to be nourishing.'

Recharge sessions run regularly at Soho House 76 Dean Street; motherheart.co



ANDREW CLARKE

Shoreditch House member and creator of Pilot Light, a campaign debunking the stigma of mental health within hospitality

'Small improvements can make a big difference – for me, that has meant limiting mainstream media, not overthinking, running a family minded kitchen and spending more time in nature.'

It was a single Instagram post that led to the birth of Pilot Light, an initiative launched by chefs Andrew Clarke and Doug Sanham to combat the stigma of mental health issues in the hospitality sector. After depression hit him 'like a ton of bricks at a time when I least expected it,' Clarke decided to share his experiences via a candid post on World Mental Health Day in 2016. He had little clue that it would go viral. 'I never knew that other people were suffering, as no one talks about it,' says Clarke, who at the time had just taken over as chef director at Brunswick House,

and was putting in up to 100 hours a week. 'I don't blame the industry, as there's so much that's good about it, but it's intense, pressurised and often involves long hours in return for little pay. That means we have to look out for each other.' Through a mutual friend, he teamed up with Sanham and together they conceived a campaign aimed at supporting both employees and employers in the industry. 'It's OK not to be OK all the time,' says Clarke, who admits frankly that he didn't believe in depression until he had it. Now he has a different view. 'Bravado and the idea of being an "alpha male" doesn't help,' he says. 'I am perceived as a "big" guy, and if I can open up, I hope others can too.'

pilotlight.org.uk



Sebastian Böttcher

HOSANNA MARSHALL

The DUMBO House member is the creator of StorySculpting, which combines reiki and storytelling to improve mental health

'I'm part of a collective mission to expand and change the narrative and scope of what it is to be human. From there, we can consciously build supportive, seeing communities.'

The career of former advertising producer Hosanna Marshall took an unexpected turn when she injured her foot on a trip around Spain and Portugal. On returning to her native Brooklyn, she was told she had broken a bone that was unlikely to mend. She sought alternative ways to heal, including reiki. It was a pivotal moment that led to the blossoming of The Open Series, a healing and self-discovery platform

that combines reiki with story exploration – which Marshall calls StorySculpting. 'Words are dynamic but we can also become disconnected from their power,' she reflects. 'For instance, I'm a healing practitioner; I'm a woman of colour. Those words hold a lot of value, but they can become mechanical and pedestrian if connection to their meaning is lost.' Through a combination of spoken story, guided writing, creative visualisation and reiki, Marshall helps others to connect with their stories and the power of their words.

Look out for sessions at DUMBO House, Brooklyn; theopenseries.com

EUAN PLATER

Little House Mayfair member and creator of podcast XY, which shares conversations around men's mental health

'My aim is to normalise dialogue around male mental health. It's about picking up the phone and asking someone how they are feeling and being comfortable enough to vocalise your own vulnerabilities too.'

A desire to provide more outlets for men to discuss mental health prompted media creative Euan Plater to conceive a podcast series that throws the spotlight on human issues, including anxiety, depression, toxic masculinity and male suicide. 'I realised the need to talk about these topics was always there, but the scope was not,' he says of the series, which profiles a mix of guests, from online influencer Jim Chapman and Jackie Doyle-Price, Minister for Mental Health, to documentary film-maker, Orlando von

Einsiedel. 'Male suicide is the biggest cause of death in men under 45, yet we still think of heart disease or cancer as more immediate threats.' Plater believes that British culture has always portrayed men as 'strong providers' who are largely 'confident, hetero, lotharios'. Instead he wanted to open a conversation that aligned vulnerability with strength rather than weakness. 'I felt like I knew myself pretty well, but I soon realised that once your issues are out in front of you, there's no point looking away,' he says. 'Conversation is always a good thing.'

XY launches in July in partnership with Time to Change. Podcasts available via Apple and Spotify; postemedia.co



Carmen Chan

NEO MORETON

Cities Without Houses member (Stockholm) and creator of Urban OM, a community of yogis using meditation to aid mental wellbeing

'I realised that there was a big part of me still trying to avoid life by escaping into yoga. So I decided to launch a new type of practice that tapped into something active, vital and essential.'

A self-confessed yoga disciple since the 1990s, London-born Neo Moreton is an advocate of a dynamic kind of meditation that interacts fully with the challenges of modern life. 'Our way isn't about sitting around on mountain tops, it's about rocking up in life and being everything that you are,' he says of Urban OM, the community of yogis and meditators that he set up in Stockholm, where he now lives with his family. 'I started it to see if it was possible to find both connection and silence in the city, having moved there after a stint in New York.' As a result, Moreton has pioneered a number of initiatives focused on how to stay in tune within a hectic world, including Let Go, a combination of meditation and dance that encourages both inner and outer connection. 'We don't need to wrap ourselves in cotton wool,' he says. 'So I try to find ways to disrupt the norm.' His latest venture, BYOND, takes that concept one step further by helping creative leaders and change-makers tap into their natural agility and resourcefulness.

urbanom.se; byond.se



EMMA MAINOO

High Road House member and creator of Surviving Sundays, a web platform for those suffering mental health issues

'Whether people are experiencing addiction, bereavement, anxiety or workplace bullying, a common thread is a sense of loneliness. I hope that this platform fosters community instead.'

Sunday was once the most dreaded day of the week for Emma Mainoo. 'It was the day I feared the most as a single person living with excruciating depression, but now, it's my favourite day,' she says. A serious breakdown in 2012 prompted her to re-examine her life. 'I had to start over, remove some weeds and plant some new seeds to be able to survive. That partly involved finding positive things to do on a Sunday to help me to rebuild.' One of the results is Surviving Sundays, a platform that enabled Mainoo to share her story of hope and survival, as well as a place where others can safely document their own challenges. 'The key thing I wanted to share through the blog is that mental health issues are indiscriminate,' she says. 'For most of my life, I've lived with anxiety and depression, but people believed that because I dressed well and had a thriving career, I was OK. There is still work to be done on breaking down what someone with depression, addiction, bipolar or any other mental illness looks like and we are helping to dismantle those barriers. Writing represents a 'slow moment' because it takes time and that can be extremely cathartic in such a frenetic world.'

Soho House White City hosts regular Self Love Sundays with Mainoo; surviving Sundays.com