# Finding happiness in work, rest or play

## How Get Out Get Active helps influence mental health

Three partners talk about GOGA’s influence on mental health, in the community and workplace.

**How do you aim to improve people’s mental health through the GOGA programme?**

A wide range of research into the link between physical and mental health has confirmed that there is overwhelming evidence demonstrating that increased physical activity leads to improved wellbeing and mental health. By helping the least active people in the UK to become more active, we are deliberately aiming to improve their mental health and wellbeing, as well as their physical health.

**Can you give any good examples of people who have recognised a mental health improvement thanks to GOGA?**

It’s not just GOGA participants who are benefitting. We’re also finding that people who volunteer at their local GOGA projects are noticing an improvement in their own mental health. One volunteer we heard from, Neil, credits volunteering with improving his own life and helping him return to employment. He explained, “If you had seen me before I started volunteering, I was a mess; I didn’t really take care of my appearance, I was overweight, I was an alcoholic and I was depressed all the time.” Neil now regularly volunteers with young disabled people in his community, and his newfound skills and confidence have recently helped him to get a new job.

**What do you personally look for in a happier and healthier workplace?**

I think that a workplace is at its happiest when people are supported and encouraged to use their own skills and strengths- to make a difference to their organisation and the wider world.

## Debbie Lye (CEO Spirit 2012)

**How do you aim to improve people’s mental health through the GOGA programme?**

In year two of GOGA, there are some exciting new developments engaging with Mental Health professionals within areas of Nottingham City. The main areas of support will be through Highbury Hospital, Thorneywood and Nottingham Community Housing Association’s tenant support team. We plan to provide physical activity in an in-patient setting to assist with the support, recovery and wellbeing of patients. Following this we will then look at supporting the transition of individuals back into the community through both gym and fitness sessions in their local leisure centres. We want to promote and encourage their long-term wellbeing and activity.

**Can you give any good examples of people who have recognised a mental health improvement thanks to GOGA?**

We have received a number of participants’ feedback demonstrating the positive mental health improvements. In our netball case study, Naseer says, “I love playing netball it helps to reduce my stress levels and improved my sleep!”

**What do you personally look for in a happier and healthier workplace?**

A relaxed and reduced stress environment. A place with natural light and fresh air, and supportive and friendly colleagues. Also, the opportunity for downtime and time away from a desk!

## Sarah Eyley (Disability Sports Development Officer Nottingham City Council)

**How do you aim to improve people’s mental health through the GOGA programme?**

Through the Bradford programme we strive to transform activities and opportunities into an enjoyable experience for everyone. We concentrate on the positive impact physical activity has on the mind and the happy endorphins released when you exercise. We say – your pace, your time, get active your way. So, when you attend GOGA programmes you can do as little or as much as you want, and we will do our best to make you smile.

**Can you give any good examples of people who have recognised a mental health improvement thanks to GOGA?**

We have a fantastic volunteer that supports us on the administration and social media for GOGA. When we first asked what attracted him to the volunteer role, he explained that the relaxed and welcoming approach made him feel at ease. He felt previous volunteer roles had not been suitable. He had 20 years of living with mental health problems and now his role makes him part of the BDSL family. We enjoy every Thursday when he comes in. The positive impact the voluntary role has had on him has been fantastic to see. His confidence and overall demeanour has really improved and you can tell he really enjoys his time in the office. He now has prospects for the future- to gain employment in the administration world and I’m fully confident he will achieve that. Did I also mention he is a fantastic karate coach?!

**What do you personally look for in a happier and healthier workplace?**

ABC – Ambition, Banter and Comfort. It’s really important that everyone has ambition and motivation in the workplace to help each other and pick each other up when you’re down. If you don’t become a work family, you won’t be as happy. Banter – a good tummy giggle is something everyone needs to brighten their day. If you can’t enjoy yourself- you’re not in the right job. Comfort – I’m not talking about wearing onesies to work! But you have to be comfortable with the people you work with and the environment you’re in. Good mental health equals better results. I think it’s really important to check in with your colleagues at least once a day- even if it’s just a smile.

## Karla Burton (GOGA Lead in Bradford)