



Understanding & Managing Mental Health in the Legal Profession

ESTABLISHED WELLBEING TRAINING & SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN LEGAL SETTINGS IN AUSTRALIA, NZ, UK & CANADA. DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

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Who am I?

- ▶ Mental Health Accredited Social Worker from NSW Australia
- ▶ Been training lawyers in mental health & resilience for over 20 years
- ▶ Consultant to Legal Aid NSW, ODPP NSW, CDPP Australia, AFP, Knowmore, Royal Commission into Child Abuse, NSW Law Society, NSW Bar, UK Bar, numerous tribunals and Ombudsman in Australia and NZ and many more

Why are we talking about this?

- ▶ The mental health of the legal profession in the western world is now consistently well documented to be the poorest of all the professions
- ▶ White older male mental health is the poorest of all
- ▶ Anxiety, depression, and suicide rates of lawyers are almost double that of the general population
- ▶ The attrition rate of the profession is extremely high
- ▶ So far wellbeing initiatives are uncoordinated, and undervalued even as the profession visibly continues to struggle
- ▶ Stories of bullying and a feeling of isolation remain high

Training and initiatives currently underway

- ▶ In Australia, NZ, UK & Canada

A Demystified View of Mental Illness

- ▶ Mental illness through the lens of neuroscience
- ▶ Aetiology & early symptoms
- ▶ How to manage self & others when symptoms are present
- ▶ How to get help for self & others
- ▶ Referral and further information

Stress Management & Resilience Training

- ▶ Stress explained from a biological, and neuroscience point of view. Notably Robert Sapolsky, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*
- ▶ Practical Strategies for Individuals
- ▶ What teams can do
- ▶ What workplaces can do
- ▶ Resources & referral information

Vicarious Trauma

- ▶ Explain it
- ▶ Teach early warning signs
- ▶ Give strategies for individuals and workplaces
- ▶ Policies & procedures for handling difficult material
- ▶ Strengths based approach
- ▶ Pride in the ability to do this difficult work
- ▶ Mentoring and supervision in the workplace
- ▶ VT manual
- ▶ Knowmore, Holding Redlich, RACS

Mindfulness the essential tool

- ▶ Teach mindfulness again from a brain based perspective
- ▶ Teach a technique, have them practice it with you
- ▶ Websites and tools
- ▶ Ruby Wax, Prof Mark Williams & others
- ▶ Adam Fraser The Third Space

The elephant in the room: teaching skills to discuss & manage suicidality

- ▶ Teach the basics dispelling many harmful myths about suicide
- ▶ Assessment of self & others
- ▶ How to have the conversation
- ▶ Dealing with confidentiality fears
- ▶ Where to go for help
- ▶ Training responders
- ▶ NSW Law Society initiative of Lawyers' Lifeline
- ▶ NSW ODPP runs this training
- ▶ UK Bar has a resource on their wellbeing portal

Leadership & Mentoring Training

- ▶ Train managers in how to lead effectively & supportively
- ▶ Andrew O'Keefe hardwired Humans as resource
- ▶ Train, supervise and support mentors
- ▶ Legal Aid, crown Solicitors, ODPP

Workplace Wellbeing Committee

- ▶ Drawn from all levels of staff
- ▶ Meets regularly to research, plan and implement wellbeing initiatives in the workplace
- ▶ These include social, policy, physical fitness, wellbeing checks, training and work practices
- ▶ NSW Legal Aid and ODPP are 2 government agencies doing this
- ▶ Family Law Bar UK
- ▶ TJMF guidelines are a great starting place

Managing Change Training

- ▶ Courses for both managers and individuals to cope with change
- ▶ Should include how to approach change in a way that will bring people with you
- ▶ How to consult & collaborate
- ▶ Implementation & review
- ▶ Crown Solicitors

Managing Conflict

- ▶ Courses on recognising & dealing with bullying, both intentional & unintentional. See Evelyn Field Bullyblocking @ Work. Also John Clark Dealing with Monsters in the Workplace
- ▶ Policies & procedures also need to be discussed in this space.

Individual & Team Support Models

- ▶ Providing a mental health professional to both individuals and teams on a regular basis to check and support morale and wellbeing.
- ▶ Supportive & instructive, confidential.
- ▶ Examples: RACS, Royal Commission, Knowmore.
- ▶ Wellbeing checks e.g. Legal aid
- ▶ Coaching for lawyers
- ▶ Canadian example: Ontario and a number of other jurisdictions have embedded counsellors employed in house for the lawyers.

Other Skills Based Training

- ▶ How to manage difficult clients
- ▶ How to have difficult conversations
- ▶ Business skills
- ▶ Technical skills (See FLIP program on NSW Law Society website)

Web Based Resources

- ▶ UK Bar WATB portal with referral links
- ▶ Young Bar UK
- ▶ NZ Law Society
- ▶ NSW Law Society
- ▶ FLIP Hearings

Providing Clinicians

- ▶ Lawyers are great mentors and peer supporters but are not clinicians
- ▶ Wellness @ Law UK is piloting a clinical practice near the Inns of Court specifically for lawyers
- ▶ NSW Law Society Solicitor Outreach Service (SOS) 1800592296
<https://www.lawsociety.com.au/sos>

Incentives for Uptake of Wellbeing Training

- ▶ CPD points for attending such training.
- ▶ E.g. NSW Law Society
- ▶ Compulsory component of Orientation Training.
- ▶ E.g. NSW ODPP, Legal Aid
- ▶ Online resources an intranet e.g. Law society of NSW, LawCover
NSW Legal & ODPP intranet wellbeing pages
- ▶ The Resilient Lawyer by Robyn Bradey
<http://www.lawcover.com.au/personal-wellbeing/>
- ▶ UK Bar Wellbeing at the Bar portal www.wellbeingatthebar.co.uk

Still to be done

- ▶ Engage the judiciary in all of the above training which is now happening in the Federal Courts and some others
- ▶ Career counselling for young lawyers and law students
- ▶ Law schools teaching so called soft skills and the content of this presentation
- ▶ Teaching lawyers social & emotional intelligence
- ▶ Finding & encouraging more flexible ways of working in the law and collaborative legal models
- ▶ What else??

Contact

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