

Mental Health is Everybody's Business

NSW Bar funding presentations by
Black Dog directly to Barristers

By Kate Ratcliffe



The Wellbeing Committee has commissioned The Black Dog Institute to provide mental health training for barristers, including heads of chambers, clerks and their staff. The NSW Bar Association agreed to fund ten presentations, titled 'Mental Health is Everybody's Business', to inform the membership about anxiety and depression.

This initiative is in response to data collected by BarCare and the Bar Association's Quality of Working Life Survey. The survey revealed several key indicators of stress, anxiety and depression, including insufficient sleep (67 per cent) a lack of general wellbeing (36 per cent) and dissatisfaction with the work/life balance at the Bar (36 per cent). Further, the survey concluded that female barristers were significantly more likely than their male counterparts to report a lower level of overall quality of working life.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS



1 in 5 Australians are affected by mental illness each year*

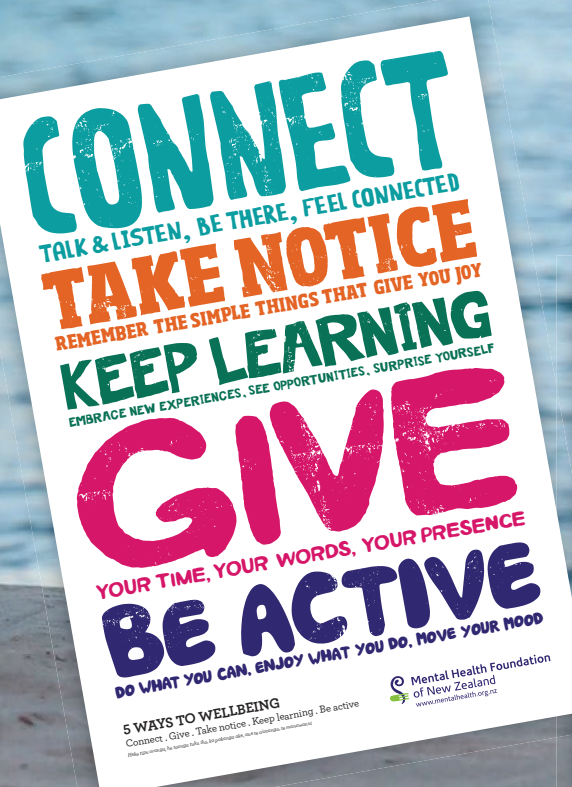


If you're feeling many of these symptoms a lot of the time, for 2 weeks or more you should seek professional help.

- Sustained state of sadness
- Decreased self esteem
- Feeling low or numb
- Loss of enjoyment in life
- Change in sex drive
- Negative self talk
- Change in sleep
- Low energy levels
- Poor concentration and memory
- Less able to control emotions
- Increased anxiety
- Change in appetite / weight

The Wellbeing Committee believed that these seminars would be a good adjunct to the confidential counselling service provided by BarCare because these seminars are more akin to workplace training.

Mental Health is Everybody's Business presentations focus on several key questions: How do we raise awareness of depression and anxiety? How do we spot the signs that someone is in trouble? How does one



Where to get help

Talking about mental health issues should be no different to talking about physical health issues.

If you need help, talk to ...

Your EAP provider
Human Resources
A trusted colleague
Your family doctor
Family or friend

Other services

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au
www.headspace.org.au
www.mensline.org.au
www.mycompass.org.au
www.sane.org.au
www.kidsline.org.au
www.lifeline.org.au
www.beyondblue.org.au

If in crisis call Lifeline on 13 11 14

intervene effectively? What resources are available? In addition to statistics about the prevalence of mental illness, the presentation includes two short videos which illustrate the symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression, as well as personal experiences of sufferers. It concludes with an overview of the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' – Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, Be Aware and Help Others – and how they can be applied in daily life.

The Wellbeing Committee decided not to host a large scale event in the Common Room. Instead, the Committee chose to bring smaller, more intimate presentations in chambers with, at most, 30 persons.

The rationale was that there would be less reluctance to attend and a greater likelihood of discussion and interaction with the facilitator. In this way, the committee hopes to reach clusters of chambers: from Phillip Street and the Downtown area, to regional centres and extending to Crown prosecutors and public defenders.

Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed and disrupted the planned series of presentations. The first, set down for the Bar Association's 2020 Parramatta Regional Mini-Conference, was cancelled. On 18 May 2021 the presentation was re-formatted into a 60-minute Zoom

webinar for rural and regional members, presented by Dr Sarah Edelman. The second was held on 1 June 2021 (hosted generously by Michelle Kearns at Martin Place Chambers), when clerks and heads of chambers gathered for a presentation by Dr Rachel Setti.

If you or other members of your chambers would like to host a Black Dog Institute presentation of Mental Health is Everybody's Business, then don't hesitate to contact the Wellbeing Committee via wellbeing@nswbar.asn.au **EN**



*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009). National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 4326.0, 2007. ABS: Canberra.