



Cashing-in or Pitching-in on Our Mental Health?

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Mental Health is on Fire

There is a lot going on when it comes to mental health – People are interested now, more than ever in what this means and how it impacts us. What seems to stand out most is that poor mental and mental illness is on the rise, it effects millions of us around the world and it is hitting the bottom line of businesses hard

Times Are Changing

A great many people, governments and businesses recognise that this really matters - Mental health is extremely popular - the bandwagon is going around and lots of people are climbing aboard. Being a psychotherapist for many years, I should be jumping for joy. Finally, the penny has dropped and we are recognising how fundamental and vital our mental health and well-being are. For sure this is an immensely positive shift, however this trend is seeing both good, as well as very disturbing and dangerous developments

Passion or Profit?

Greater requests and financial investment, in support strategies, are turning up on the mental health scene. All targeted at bringing about improvements in making us better. In response we are seeing mental health professionals and non-professionals waving their array of commentaries and remedies. Should we be worried about this growing wave of people, who are expressing their passion for improving mental health and supporting those who are suffering and are in need of support?

Mental Health is not a Cash Cow or an Easy Ride

I would have to say yes. The most disturbing concern in this development are individuals with little or no knowledge, training or experience, who are asking people to tell them about their mental health. People setting themselves up as mental or wellbeing health coaches, advisors or experts offering strategies with limited, amateur or untested interventions, as answers to dealing with deeply personal and difficult mental health problems

Sailing in Dangerous Waters

There are those who merely want to help and those who feel that good intentions are enough, believing that knowledge, education, training, experience and skills are not necessary or important. Although well-meaning, if support is not provided in a well-informed, safe and professional way, it can do more harm than good. Sadly, as with any new trend there are also those who simply see people's mental health needs, as an opportunity to make money or to use this as a means to gain attention and promote their own status. This is a state of affairs that should not remain unchecked

Somebody Skilled Needs to be Holding the Knife

The fact is that, in order for support to be relevant and safe, mental health responses need to be given by those competent, knowledgeable and skilled enough to deliver them. Just like medical professionals trained and experienced mental health professionals know what is involved, they understand how to deal with the issues and most importantly they know

How to Spot and Respond to the Risks

Just as we would not allow a surgeon to operate on us with next to little or no education, training or experience why would we allow this for our mental health? After all both are complex, essential and life sustaining factors for our existence

Heeding the Professionals

I have to admit that when it comes to mental health, I am strongly protective. I began my career over 25 years ago. As a young psychology graduate, I learnt something about the psychology, emotion, neurology and social aspects of how

we operate or fail to function, as humans. My understanding and know-how became much stronger through my psychotherapy training, further education and on-going experience. Along with time and experience I honed my gut feeling for recognising when something was missing or not quite right about my client's situation. This intuition stems from continued involvement, spotting the subtle and not so subtle cues, which guides some of us to follow that strong urge not to let it go, look deeper and to react in a way that protects our clients

From Bandwagon to a Part in the Band

This is not to say that non- mental health professionals do not have a crucial part to play. There is an essential need for advocates and people to support, promote, campaign and champion for greater awareness, openness, understanding, resources, investment and better mental health practice. People are gaining the courage to share their lived experience, in order to help break the stigma and bring about positive change. However, like with any professional practice, in order to treat our mental health adequately and safely, rules and competencies need to apply

Ten Ways to Protect Our Mental Health

So, what are the steps, that can be taken to ensure that people's mental health needs are met in the most skilled and protected way? The basic essentials are to at the least know enough about what you are doing, in order to do no harm and to have sufficiently skilled experience or training

If people are serious about supporting good mental health, in a beneficial way then the following ten factors need apply:

1. **Know Your Stuff:** Have a clear understanding and use in the distinction between mental health and mental ill health
2. **Create Trust & Safety:** Fully understand and respect privacy and the complexities of confidentiality
3. **Know Your Limitations:** Be completely open and clear about your role and abilities. If you are not a professionally trained and experienced mental health professional say so and be honest about exactly what you can and cannot do

4. **Build Your Competence:** Engage in skilled training, as well as on-going personal professional development
5. **Stay Clear & on Track:** Regularly make use of professional guidance and support
6. **Build Your Self-Awareness:** Continuously self-monitor your reactions and needs. React to these in a way that keeps you on track and maintains safety
7. **Maintain Self-Care:** Take time out whenever necessary, in order to maintain clarity and your own wellbeing
8. **Set & Follow Good Standards:** Join or become members of relevant professional associations and follow a code of ethics
9. **Be Well Prepared:** Become familiar with relevant government and professional guidelines, resources and support services regarding mental health
10. **Hand over to the Experts:** Refer to relevant mental health professionals, bodies or support services whenever possible and necessary

Respecting Our Mental Health

Those who view mental health as an easy touch or focus on financial pay offs are doing all of us a huge disservice. The fact is that there is no single or quick fix to mental illness or keeping us in good mental health. What is clear is that, in order to safely develop our mental health, it is essential to know what this involves, understand how this runs our lives, engage more in healthier reactions, promote effective and competent support strategies, along with a continual investment in ample resources



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