

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

PLEADING SANITY IS A PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION.

Tips for staying well

Be kind to yourself

Internal stigma can sometimes be more damaging than external stigma. Forgive yourself for the things you did or didn't do when you were unwell. You wouldn't blame yourself if you get diabetes or have a heart attack, why then would you blame yourself for experiencing mental health challenges?

Build your tool box

Find out what works for you to stay well. Different things work for different people. Find out what works when. For example meditation may be more useful than exercise when you are too busy. Build your tool box and learn when to use the right tool at the right time.

Get help

If something is wrong, get help. Your broken leg isn't going to get better if you try harder, and you won't try to fix your broken leg yourself. Similarly trying harder won't make mental health challenges go away. There are plenty of free resources available on staying well: books on different coping methods and different schools of thought as well as memoirs and narratives from others who have walked similar paths. Understand, reflect and learn from your experiences.

Have hope

It may be overwhelming at times, but no one can predict the future. Take it one day at a time or one hour at a time. Find something to do, someone to love and something to look forward to. ■

The experience of facing mental health challenges is an isolating one. It is often difficult to find the language or the space to speak about the experience of mental health challenges. One feels totally alone and disconnected from the world. Despite the well-established statistics and the efforts to raise awareness there is still a high level of stigma and lack of understanding about mental health challenges.

Pleading Sanity is a peer support group for members of the legal profession who are experiencing mental health challenges. It provides a much needed space for people to come together in a safe space to share their experiences, challenges and hopes, and to learn from each other.

Pleading Sanity is a casual, informal group. There are no fees for attending the meetings. There is no central authority controlling how the group operates, there are no agendas and no written notes are taken of the meetings. Attendance at the meetings is anonymous. Chatham House Rules apply to meetings: information disclosed during meetings may be discussed outside of the meetings but the source of that information may not be explicitly or implicitly identified. The primary purpose of the meetings is to share experiences and stay well.

The group is under the auspices of the Tristan Jepson Memorial Foundation and it is not allied with any law firms or professional associations. The group meets once a month at Ross House on Flinders Lane.

"At the meetings I have met people who have experienced similar things to me and there is a sense of comfort in numbers. The meetings provide an opportunity to hear about how others manage their condition, and give and receive mutual support." (Pleading Sanity member) Jayakody at pleading sanity victoria@gmail.com

TIPS

- Be kind to yourself
- Build your tool box
- Get help
- Understand and reflect
- Have hope

"Even though I work in a busy office, work is a very lonely place. I have not disclosed my mental health condition to my employer, and an escalating number of white lies and forced affect is required to fit in at work. . . . there is no one to talk to about illness related things."
Pleading Sanity member