

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

GP NEWSLETTER

General Practice is Stressful

General practice is stressful. Numerous studies are now confirming what we have all experienced, but perhaps not consciously acknowledged - the ongoing nature of this stress can take its toll on both our physical and emotional well-being.

Caring for patients with mental health concerns can be particularly challenging. Sitting with the ever present risk of suicide and self harm, the constant exposure to traumatic experiences, past and present, and witnessing at close range the extent of human suffering can all take its toll.

In this end of year issue of our Newsletter we are focusing on the well-being of doctors.

Over the coming festive season, take some time to reflect on your own self-care. What strategies do you have in place to look after your own wellness?

How well are these working for you?

Here are some of the ideas our GP team have found helpful:

1 Look after your own health:

- Eat regularly and eat nutritious foods. Schedule meal breaks into your work day so that you are not going long hours without nourishment.
- Prioritise getting some physical exercise you enjoy most days. Joining a sport team, a cycling or walking group can help with motivation.
- Learn and practice stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness (see page 3).
- Form a relationship with your own GP and allow them to monitor and care for your health.

2 Work - Life balance:

- Think about the way you manage time. Are the things that are most important to you being prioritised?
- Consider time for your
 - > self
 - > partner
 - > family
 - > friends
 - > hobbies /interests
- Try and do at least one thing for yourself each day, something you enjoy.
- Taking regular holidays gives you a chance to recharge. As you return from one break, start planning the next.

3 Look after your professional health:

Many doctors work in isolation and do not have

opportunities to debrief with colleagues when facing difficult situations in their practice.

Regular peer support is at the core of maintaining your 'professional wellness'. Some suggestions include:

- **Small Group Learning activities** (www.racgp.org.au/qacpd) allow you to meet with a group of doctors over the course of a year and gain 40 Category 1 CPD points in the process. Your local division of general practice can help you with forming the group. You have the freedom to set your own topics and format, allowing for both learning and mutual support. Some groups continue meeting year after year making the experience increasingly enriching.

- Balint groups (see page 4)

- Professional organisations such as the Australian College of Psychological Medicine www.acpm.org.au keep members informed of a variety of mental health meetings held throughout the year.

- **The Mental Health Professionals Network (MHPN)** www.mhpn.org.au organises regular interdisciplinary meetings at the local level. This allows you to meet a variety of mental health clinicians in your area. The case discussion format encourages dialogue between the various Professional groups, increasing knowledge of referral possibilities as well as resources and services your patients can access.

- **Attending interactive educational workshops** provides a setting for facilitated discussion around some of the hardships in general practice. Together with the formal learning of the course material, informal learning occurs through the sharing of experiences perspectives and practical solutions. Gaining new knowledge and skills also increases confidence and eases the worry and uncertainty of managing patients with mental health concerns. See www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/healthprofessionals/educationtraining/gps/coursedatesregistration.cfm for an updated list of our educational activities for 2011.

We wish you all a peaceful and rewarding 2011.

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND HAPPINESS

In recent weeks Australia has been fascinated by the series “Making Australia Happy” which looked at the lives of 8 residents of Marrickville who, on testing, were relatively unhappy and examined the impact of the Positive Psychology techniques to improve their level of happiness.

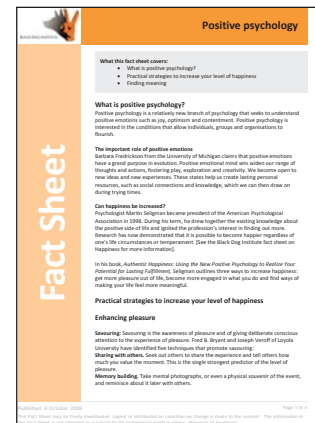
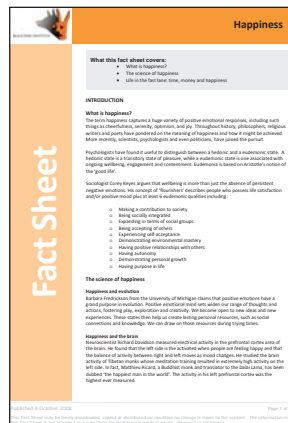


Positive Psychology has been emerging over the last decade as a new approach to mental wellness, identifying ways to increase happiness and fulfilment through increased engagement with a richer more meaningful life.

In the Psychological Toolkit there are two related fact sheets:

(1) Happiness which looks at the theory behind the “happiness movement”.

(2) Positive Psychology which outlines practical strategies that can be used to increase levels of happiness.



MAKING LIFE A LITTLE EASIER FOR YOURSELF WITH THE ONLINE MAP

Looking after patients with mood disorders can be very draining. The online MAP helps make your clinical life a little easier by supporting and increasing the efficiency of your clinical assessment and providing diagnostic confidence.

Users say it:

- Has “definite advantages for doctors who are run off their feet” by improving efficiency of history taking and providing assurance that important areas have not been missed in the clinical assessment.
- Requires “very little input from myself”.
- Improves diagnostic confidence.
- Makes it easier to convince patients about their diagnosis and its implications.
- Facilitates better collaboration between psychologist and GP.



Information about the MAP is available on the website at www.blackdoginstitute.org.au.

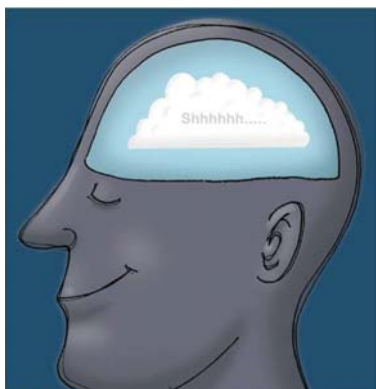


BUY OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

The Psychological Toolkit is available to download free of charge from our website. A bound version of these useful resources is now available to purchase for \$58. Please call Katie Denton on 02 9382 8518 if you would like to order a copy.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has now been shown to be useful specifically for managing stress inherent to Health Care practice. In 2011 the Black Dog Institute will be offering **'Stress Reduction Through Mindfulness'**, an interactive workshop for GPs which we will submit for FPS CPD accreditation and as a 40 point Category 1 ALM.



The workshop examines the core concepts of mindfulness and provides an introduction to the mindfulness skills required to:

- Let go of stressful thoughts
- Manage powerful emotions more effectively
- Cope better with the stress of general practice
- Find a healthy work-life balance

GP WORKSHOP DATES: JAN - MAY **MORE COMING SOON**

JAN

22 Demystifying Depression: Black Dog Institute
(points valid for 2008-2010 only)

FEB

5 Perinatal in Practice: Black Dog Institute
5 The ABC of CBT (Day 1): Ipswich, QLD
19 The ABC of CBT (Day 2): Ipswich, QLD
20 The ABC of CBT (Day 3): Ipswich, QLD
26 Mindfulness: Black Dog Institute

MARCH

5 The ABC of CBT (Day 1): Hobart, TAS
5 The ABC of CBT (Day 1): Toowoomba, QLD
19 The ABC of CBT (Day 2): Hobart, TAS
19 The ABC of CBT (Day 2): Toowoomba, QLD
20 The ABC of CBT (Day 3): Hobart, TAS
20 The ABC of CBT (Day 3): Toowoomba, QLD
26 Demystifying Depression: Black Dog Institute

MAY

20 Perinatal in Practice: Sydney GPCE
21 Mindfulness: Sydney GPCE
22 Mindfulness: Sydney GPCE

Accreditation. We are in the process of updating our programs and getting them re-accredited with the RACGP and GPMHSC. Please check our website for accreditation details.

To register for a program please visit our website: blackdoginstitute.org.au. For further information please email Katie at k.denton@blackdog.org.au or call 02 9382 8518

Please note that the programs listed above are subject to confirmation. Please check our website for further dates and updates.

NEED POINTS FOR 2008-2010?

It's not too late to get points for the 2008-2010 triennium!

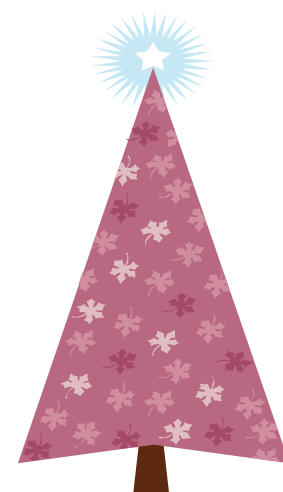
Due to popular demand we are running our Demystifying Depression program on Saturday 22 January at the Black Dog Institute.

This course is accredited with GPMHSC as a Mental Health Skills Training activity, and is Category 1 attracting 40 QA&CPD points.

The points for this course will be awarded for this triennium only, 2008-2010.

Merry Christmas & Best Wishes for 2011

The Professional Education and Training Team at the Black Dog Institute would like to wish you all a wonderful and safe Festive Season. The Black Dog Institute will be closed from the 21 December 2010 & will reopen on the 04 January 2011. We look forward to working with you in 2011!



Tackling Depression in the **Workplace**

The latest Black Dog Institute book, *'Tackling Depression at Work: A practical guide for employees and managers'* was officially launched on November 3rd 2010 by David Gonski AC, Chancellor of the University of New South Wales (UNSW). This new book by Kerrie Eyers (psychologist, teacher and editor) and Professor Gordon Parker (Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute) is published by Allen & Unwin and is available from bookstores for \$24.99.

Managing depression in general practice inevitably involves making decisions regarding our patients' work life. Do they need time off work? How long? What do we tell their employer? Should they disclose their diagnosis to employers or co-workers?

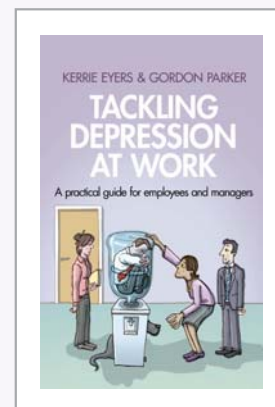
In their recently launched book, Kerrie Eyers and Prof. Gordon Parker explore the interface between depression and employment. Numerous first-hand accounts are shared of experiencing depression through the lens of the workplace, giving the reader a deeper, more personal understanding of the issues that can arise in this context. These are complimented by an informative and practical discussion of the many facets of improving the way depression is identified, talked about and managed at work. Matthew Johnstone's witty illustrations add tangible and creative expression to the key messages of the book.

For general practitioners this is an invaluable reference to assist them in guiding patients and their employers to enable the workplace to have a positive function in a patient's recovery - as a place of support, social interaction, and meaningful activation.

To view our Workplace Wellbeing Fact Sheet, please visit the following website: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/Workplacewellbeing.pdf

The Black Dog Institute offers a Workplace Training Program aimed to equip staff with a better understanding of mood disorders in the workplace and to encourage a positive and supportive work environment. A range of 1-hr, 2-hr or 3-hr programs are offered for all levels of staff including special programs for human resource teams and managers.

For further information, please visit our website or email Jenny Gieng at workplace@blackdog.org.au



Balint Groups

Balint Groups were developed in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s to provide doctors (especially GPs) with a structured way of talking about cases focussing on the doctor patient relationship. The groups provide an opportunity to share heartsink stories and concerns in a safe environment with a trained leader. Hearing the conjecture of others about what it must feel like to be one of the characters in our story can change the way we think about difficult situations and open the way to new solutions.

Balint groups usually involve four to eight doctors and one or two leaders who meet regularly (often fortnightly) to focus on two patient stories over an hour and a half. It is a simple concept but very structured. This structure provides a level of safety for participants that is not guaranteed in less formal peer group environments. For more information about Balint Groups go to www.balintaustralia.org

About us:

The Black Dog Institute is an educational, research, clinical and community-oriented facility offering specialist expertise in mood disorders - a range of disorders that include depression and bipolar disorder. The Institute is located at the Prince of Wales Hospital and affiliated with the University of New South Wales. The Institute is supported by the NSW Department of Health.



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