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UBUNTU AND MENTAL HEALTH

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PSYCH HON (WITS)



I AM BECAUSE WE ARE

WHAT IS UBUNTU?

Ubuntu comes from a zulu word which describes the presence of being human.

- Ubuntu comes from the zulu saying, “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, meaning “we are people because of other people”.

Within the context of ubuntu, an individual orders his/her life with the consent of family, clan, tribe and community at large. In essence, an individual does not exist of himself, by himself, or for himself.

UBUNTU

(n) the belief that we are defined by our compassion and kindness towards others.

UBUNTU AND MENTAL HEALTH

In communities driven by ubuntu, mental health is not seen as only a concern for the affected individual, but as a shared responsibility for the welfare of the community. By developing a community that is mentally healthy and challenging stigmas of mental health, ubuntu allows for members of communities to support others in times of need.

HOW OUR PRACTICE WILL BE SHOWING UBUNTU

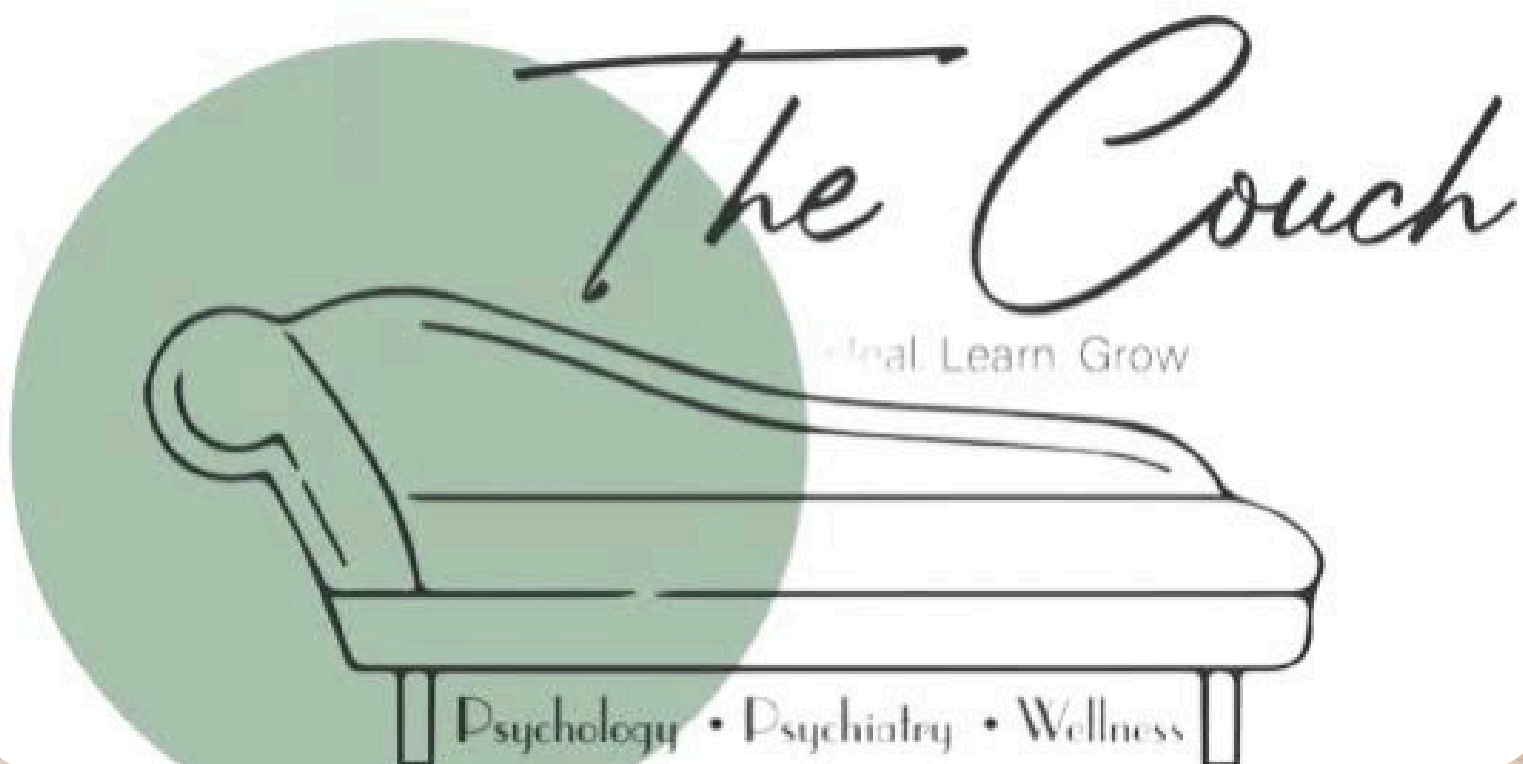
October is celebrated as mental health awareness month and the theme for our practice this year is the role of the community. our practice has partnered with one small act of kindness to give back to the community. Have you thought of ways to show ubuntu for your community?

HOW YOU CAN SHOW UBUNTU FOR THOSE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Mental health services in South Africa are not afforded to many people. However, there is a way to show care for those you love, so they may have access to these services.

Our practice offers a wellness gift card that you can purchase to help those you care about. should you need more information, feel free to contact our practice or come to the practice.

“UBUNTU TEACHES US THAT OUR HUMANITY IS INTREXICABLY LINKED TO THE HUMANITY OF OTHERS; THUS, MENTAL WELLNESS IS A COMMUNAL AFFAIR” -
PROF. MOLEFI KETE ASANTE



ADHD IN WOMEN

By Chloe Kydd (Specialist
Wellness Counsellor)



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder often misunderstood as primarily affecting males. However, recent evidence reveals that ADHD presents differently in females, leading to delayed diagnoses and adverse consequences on social, educational, and mental health outcomes. This essay highlights the importance of recognising female-specific symptoms, addressing gender biases in diagnostic assessments, and promoting earlier identification and treatment.

Research indicates that ADHD symptoms in females often manifest differently to males. While males typically exhibit hyperactive symptoms, females tend to display inattentive symptoms, such as daydreaming, forgetfulness, and a short attention span. This disparity in symptom presentation contributes to the poor diagnosis of ADHD in females, particularly during childhood. Societal expectations and gender norms that encourage girls to conform and please others can mask symptoms, leading to delayed recognition and intervention.

The consequences of delayed diagnosis for females with ADHD are significant. Studies demonstrate that undiagnosed ADHD can impair self-esteem and identity formation, strain relationships, and increase the risk of mental health comorbidities, such as anxiety and depression. Furthermore, females with ADHD are less likely to receive medication and tailored treatment plans, exacerbating negative outcomes.

The current diagnostic framework's limitations and biases contribute to the underdiagnosis of ADHD in females. Traditional diagnostic tools often rely on male-centric symptom criteria, overlooking female-specific experiences. Healthcare professionals may also perpetuate gender biases, failing to consider ADHD in females, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood. To address these issues, it is essential to develop diagnostic tools sensitive to female-specific symptoms and experiences. Researchers should conduct further studies to inform and improve our understanding of ADHD in females. Healthcare professionals should be educated on the nuances of female ADHD, encouraging earlier intervention and tailored treatment plans.

Early diagnosis and intervention are critical in mitigating negative outcomes for females with ADHD. By recognising female-specific symptoms and addressing gender biases, we can provide more effective support and improve mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being. As research continues to uncover the complexities of ADHD in females, it is crucial that we adapt our diagnostic and treatment approaches to meet the unique needs of this demographic.

THE PREVELANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA



Mental health disorders are a significant public health concern in South Africa, affecting millions of individuals across various demographics. According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), approximately one in three South Africans will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives. This staggering statistic underscores the urgent need for increased awareness, understanding, and resources dedicated to mental health care in the country.

Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health disorders reported in South Africa. A recent study indicated that nearly 17% of the population suffers from depression, while anxiety disorders impact about 15% of individuals. These conditions can have a debilitating effects on daily functioning, relationships, work performance, and overall quality of life. The prevalence of these disorders is often exacerbated by socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to mental health services.

However, mental health issues are not confined to any specific age group or demographic. While youth are particularly vulnerable due to academic pressures and social media influences, adults also face significant challenges related to work stress and family responsibilities. The stigma surrounding mental illness often prevents individuals from seeking help, leading to untreated conditions that can worsen over time. This cycle of neglect not only affects individuals but also places a great burden on families and communities.

In addition to depression and anxiety, other mental health disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorders are common in South Africa. The legacy of apartheid, along with ongoing violence and crime, has contributed to high rates of trauma-related conditions. Substance abuse is often used as a coping mechanism for untreated mental health issues, creating a complex interplay between addiction and mental illness that further complicates treatment efforts.

Addressing the prevalence of mental health disorders in South Africa requires a multifaceted approach that includes raising awareness, reducing stigma, and improving access to mental health care. Public health campaigns aimed at educating communities about mental health can foster understanding and encourage individuals to seek help when needed. Additionally, integrating mental health services into primary health-care can ensure that individuals receive comprehensive care tailored to their specific needs. By prioritizing mental health awareness and support, South Africa can take significant steps toward improving the well-being of its population.

BY NOLUTHANDO TYESI
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POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY NATOLA MSIDI
BSOCSCI HONOURS (IN PSYCHOLOGY) STUDENT

Fourteen Percent of women experience postpartum depression, and some partners and fathers do too (Mughal et al., 2022).

Postpartum depression is defined as when a parent has had 5 or more depressive symptoms experienced within 12 months after birth (Kearney & Hutchens, 2020).

These are symptoms such as feeling sad, empty or hopeless almost every day for most of the day, sleep disturbances, fatigue, concentration problems, suicidal ideation, excessive guilt, and psychomotor agitation or retardation (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Postpartum depression can affect a parent's ability to care for themselves and the baby and carry out their responsibilities (Mokwena & Masike, 2020).

Factors that put a person at risk include prenatal depression, stress, lack of social support, and experiencing abuse during the postpartum period (Kearney & Hutchens, 2020).

These factors suggest that many South African women are at risk because of the high incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) experienced in South Africa. GBV rates in South Africa are quintuple the global average (Govender). There might also be greater stress for South African mothers because of poverty and lack of support as 3 in every 6 South Africans experience poverty and almost a quarter of South African households are headed by single parents.





Despite South African mothers being at high risk for postpartum depression, there are no screening strategies in place to identify and treat parents suffering from postpartum depression in hospitals in South Africa (Mokwena & Masike, 2020). There is a need for more research and community psychoeducation on fathers and partners in South Africa and how they might experience post-partum depression.

It is important that we look out for parents in the post-partum stage for symptoms of postpartum depression, and help them get the help they need by referring them to doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists for treatment. Treatment can come in the form of hormone therapy or antidepressants given by doctors, and various therapy models from psychologists (Fitelson et al., 2010).

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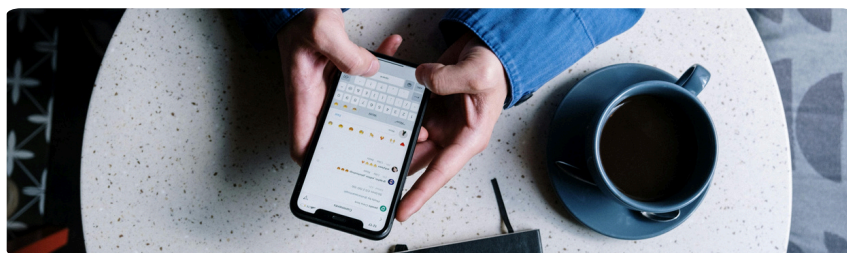
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MENTAL HEALTH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Why Online Communities Matter

By Kholofelo Mashaba
BA (psychology)

Building safe spaces online for people to find the support and information they need is crucial in fighting mental health stigma, helping individuals reach out for help, and informing the public about mental health. Now more than ever, online communities play an effective and significant role in spreading awareness about mental health. Whether through disseminating psychoeducational content or creating a welcoming environment for individuals to share their own stories, all of this information is readily available at our fingertips.



As internet accessibility expands, so do online communities. This growth has created convenient spaces for people to access mental health support that they may have previously found difficult to obtain (Liu & Kong, 2021). In these environments, individuals can share their personal experiences with mental health struggles, offer valuable insights, and provide support to one another (Saha et al., 2020).

Let us explore some reasons why online communities matter:

Provide Alternative Support
Online peer support communities offer an alternative to traditional healthcare, which may be inaccessible for some (Merchant et al., 2022). This broadens the options available for individuals seeking the support they need (Merchant et al., 2022).



Empowerment Through Sharing

These online spaces empower those who have struggled with mental health by allowing them to share their experiences. This not only helps others but also fosters a sense of social connection (Merchant et al., 2022).

Combating Stigma with Education

Education is stigma's kryptonite. Sharing evidence-based psychoeducational content on social media provides bite-sized items of information about mental health, effectively combating the stigma that arises from ignorance (Harris, 2021).

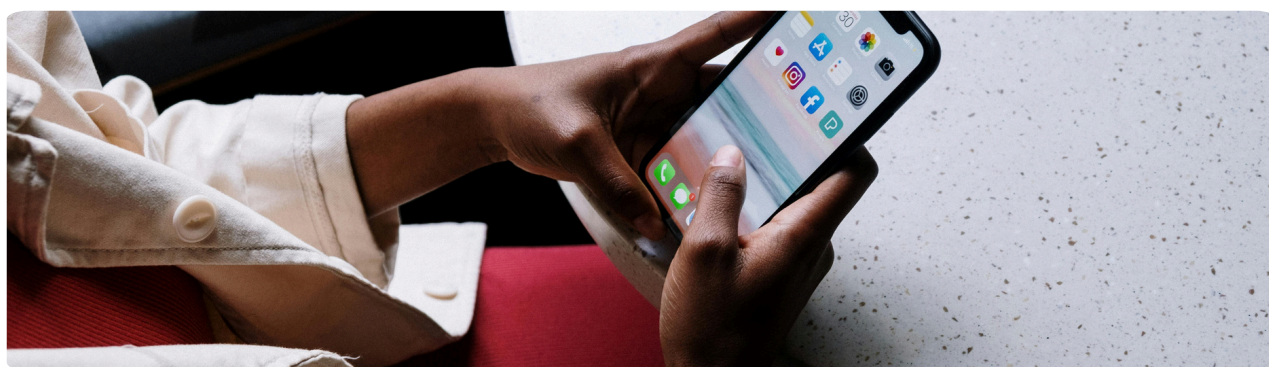
Nuanced Representations

While not a permanent solution, social media can offer a more nuanced view of mental health conditions that have historically been misrepresented (Harris, 2021). Users can share their daily lives with mental health conditions in a way that counters harmful stereotypes (Harris, 2021).

Opening Dialogue

Finally, online mental health communities facilitate discussions about mental health, lifting the veil of silence and empowering people to engage in these conversations (Merchant et al., 2022). Through dialogue, we can spread awareness, support others, and gain diverse perspectives that reshape our understanding of mental health.

These benefits illustrate that online mental health communities are a valuable tool in promoting mental well-being, one that should not be overlooked or underestimated.

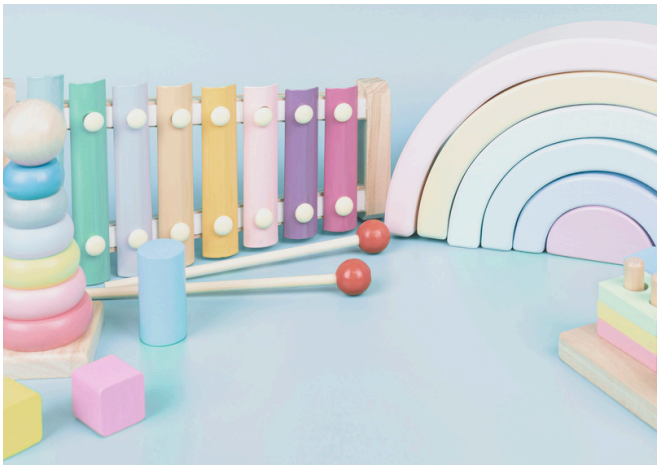


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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects individuals across their lifespan, impacting on their ability to focus, control impulses, and manage hyperactivity. This article explores the key aspects of ADHD, its impact, and approaches to support those affected. ADHD is characterised by persistent patterns of inattention, impulsivity, and hyper-

activity that interfere with daily functioning and development. It manifests in a range of ways, ranging from mild to severe symptoms. Children with ADHD may struggle with following instructions, organising tasks, and staying on task, while adults may find it difficult to prioritise tasks, manage time, or maintain relationships.

ADHD is classified into three main types based on predominant symptoms:

1. **Predominantly Inattentive Presentation:** Individuals with this type of struggle with attention to detail, often making careless mistakes, being easily distracted, and forgetting daily activities.
 2. **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** These individuals are hyperactive and impulsive, fidgeting, talking excessively, and having difficulty waiting their turn.
 3. **Combined Presentation:** This type involves a combination of both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms.
-

Research suggests that differences in brain structure and function, particularly affecting neurotransmitter levels (such as dopamine and norepinephrine), play a significant role causing ADHD. Diagnosis involves comprehensive evaluation by healthcare professionals, considering symptoms observed across different settings (e.g., home, school, work). ADHD is a complex disorder that affects millions worldwide, impacting attention regulation, impulse control, and hyperactivity. By promoting awareness, understanding, and tailored support, we can empower individuals with ADHD to thrive in their personal and professional lives, emphasising their unique strengths and contributions to society.

Thank you for being a part of our Couch Community. Stay tuned for our next newsletter - the October edition of the Psychology Couch Newsletter.

Until next time, as always, our wish for you is to heal, learn and grow.

Get involved and stay in touch via our social media platforms:



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Kirsten Mynhardt

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Chloe Kydd

Specialist Wellness Counsellor

HEALING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

By Kirsten Mynhardt (BSocSci Hons
Psych student, UP)

Painted as a time for celebration, the holiday season is typically filled with lights, laughter, and festivities. But for many, this time of year brings feelings of sadness, stress, or loneliness - often referred to as the holiday blues. The holiday blues can be the result of the pressure to create a 'perfect' holiday, the financial stress of year end, or even the heartache of missing a loved one. If you haven't been feeling the season's cheer, know that you are not alone. This article will remind you of that by offering insights into these emotions and sharing some effective ways for you to navigate them.

The holiday blues often creep in as a response to the emotional triggers of this time of year. Signs of the holiday blues may include negative thinking, self-isolation, disinterest in things you usually enjoy, increased anxiety, changes in appetite, and a sense of loss (Lezcano, 2021).

When feeling this way, it is important to check in with yourself. Recognize what you are feeling and try to understand why you might be feeling it. This way, you can help yourself by focusing on ways to nurture your emotional well-being. By following a schedule and prioritizing your plans, you can manage your time and ensure you do not do too much at once (Lezcano, 2021). This will help you to not feel overwhelmed. With this, you can begin setting boundaries for yourself during this time as you comfortably say no things and people that may cause you more stress during this season.



Be sure to set realistic expectations. Be honest about the activities you can engage in and responsibly plan what you want to do and who you want to do it with. So, avoid isolating yourself. Balance your need to be alone with some quality time with those that are important to you. Reach out to your loved ones and seek their support during this time.

Moderate your food and alcohol consumption. Be sure to limit excessive drinking and eating as this will help to stabilize your moods (Sansone & Sansone, 2011). Eat balanced meals and get regular sleep. It is important that you practice self-care by engaging in activities that relax and calm you. Dedicate time to looking after yourself and reminding yourself of your strength during this difficult time.

The holiday blues can be a challenging experience, but they don't have to define your festive season. Recognize what you're feeling and take small and intentional steps to care for yourself. As the year comes to a close focus on what brings you joy so that you can step into the new year with self-compassion and hope.

References can be provided

When Self-Improvement Overshadows Self-Acceptance: Rethinking Summer Body Culture

Summer is here, and with it comes the familiar refrain: “Get your summer body ready.” But what if your body is already summer-ready? What if you do not want to spend the summer worrying about the way your body looks like? What if you just want to enjoy the summer months living free from society’s demanding beauty standards? While striving for self-improvement is encouraged, the overwhelming focus on our bodies overshadows the importance of accepting ourselves just as we are. This leaves us trapped in an almost never-ending cycle of feeling pressure and inadequacy.

As the weather changes from colder to warmer temperatures, the call to get your body summer-ready becomes more intense with the promotion of weight loss gym routines, restrictive dieting practices, and the lauding of smaller body types. This narrative is rooted in a broader culture that creates an intense pressure to fit into the superficial beauty standard that so often leaves many wondering if they are ever good enough, and creates an insatiable need to self-improve (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019).

This constant pursuit for a “better body” does come at a cost. It can harm your self-esteem, it can lead to feelings of inadequacy, and even serious mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders (Merino et al., 2024). These narrow beauty standards are internalised, rendering many to base their self-worth on what they see in the media (Merino et al., 2024). When summertime draws near, these messages contribute to feeling like you are not enough and create a need for external validation.

Self-acceptance requires us to accept ourselves as we are, our shortcomings and our strengths without judgement, and accept that we are complete (Fielding, 2023). Self-acceptance is telling yourself that you are enough just as you are (Fielding, 2023). Through self-improvement, we reflect and see things about ourselves that we would like to change or improve upon, but we do this without judgment or being cruel to ourselves (Fielding, 2023).

The 'summer body' narrative sends a damaging message that there is an ideal body type we should all strive to achieve. It implies that your worth is conditional and that there is something wrong with the body you currently exist in. Therefore, you are not enough as you exist right now, but you will be once you lose weight or fit into a specific mould. Self-improvement does not happen under these conditions. Instead, you can find yourself stuck trying to achieve something unattainable for many.

What if there were a world where this narrative shifts? Instead of getting your body ready for the summer, you enjoy the warmer weather as well as your body. This requires us to adopt a more diverse representation of beauty, and a culture that embraces all bodies (Merino et al., 2024). Instead of encouraging people to lose weight for mere aesthetic purposes, we should collectively reject these toxic beauty standards (Merino et al., 2024). We should engage in body neutrality practices that focus more on what our bodies can do rather than what they look like. Importantly, we need to have more nuanced conversations about health, both mental and physical, and prioritise creating more positive relationships with our bodies (Merino et al., 2024).

The truth is that you are enough. You do not need to get your body ready for the summer. Self-improvement should not come from a place of shame but from the desire to do what is best for yourself. Learn to celebrate what your body does for you. Spend this summer doing the things you love to do and the things that you enjoy. Relieve yourself from the external pressures to change yourself every year, and embrace who you are, what you look like, and where you are in life.

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END-OF-YEAR BURNOUT

By Chloe Kydd (Specialist Wellness Counsellor)

As the year draws to a close, many individuals are experiencing a phenomenon known as year-end burnout. This state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion is a growing concern, affecting not only employees but also organisations as a whole. Recent research has shed light on the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to year-end burnout, highlighting the need for organisations to take proactive steps to mitigate its effects.

Research has identified several key factors contributing to year-end burnout. A study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* found that employees who experienced high levels of workload, time pressure, and lack of control were more likely to experience burnout. Additionally, a review article published in the *Journal of Workplace Behavioural Health* highlighted the role of poor work-life balance, lack of social support, and inadequate recognition and rewards in contributing to year-end burnout.

The consequences of year-end burnout are far-reaching, affecting not only employees but also organisations. A study published in the *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* found that employees who experienced burnout reported lower levels of job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and physical health. Furthermore, research has shown that burnout can lead to increased absenteeism, turnover, and decreased productivity, ultimately affecting an organisation's bottom line.



Fortunately, research has also identified several potential solutions to year-end burnout. A study published in the *Journal of Workplace Health Management* found that employees who received additional support and resources to manage their workload reported lower levels of burnout. Additionally, research has highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of well-being, recognising the importance of employee mental health, and providing employees with opportunities for rest and relaxation.

Year-end burnout is a growing concern, affecting not only employees but also organisations. By understanding the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to year-end burnout, organisations can take proactive steps to mitigate its effects. By providing employees with additional support and resources, fostering a culture of well-being, and recognising the importance of employee mental health, organisations can help reduce the incidence of year-end burnout and promote a healthier, more productive workforce.

References available upon request.

REDISCOVER BALANCE

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DOPAMINE DETOX

Written by Yumna Zubi for Brainz magazine | Clinical Psychologist and CEO of The Couch

We live in a world of constant stimulation, bombarded by notifications and endless scrolling. This digital deluge can overload our brains, especially the reward system fueled by dopamine. But what if we could reset this system, enhancing focus, creativity, and inner peace? Enter the dopamine detox.

The dopamine detox: A reboot for your brain

Imagine a temporary break from the digital frenzy, a chance to recalibrate your brain's response to rewards. This is the essence of a dopamine detox. By reducing or eliminating activities that trigger excessive dopamine release – think social media, gaming, or even junk food – you can rewire your brain to appreciate the simple joys of life.



Why detox your dopamine?

Think of it as a mental spring cleaning. A dopamine detox can:

- **Sharpen Your Focus:** Reduce distractions and reclaim your mental clarity.
- **Boost Your Mood:** Manage stress and anxiety by breaking free from the cycle of instant gratification.
- **Supercharge Your Productivity:** Gain control over your time and attention, leading to greater efficiency in your daily tasks.
- **Deepen Your Connections:** Engage more meaningfully with others by being present and attentive.
- **Cultivate Healthier Habits:** Shift towards activities that naturally boost dopamine, like exercise and creative pursuits, fostering long-term well-being.

Understanding dopamine: A neurological perspective

Dopamine, a crucial neurotransmitter, plays a central role in motivation, pleasure, and learning. It's the key player in the brain's reward pathway, reinforcing behaviors that feel good.

The dopamine dance: How it works

- **Motivation and Reward:** Dopamine is released during pleasurable experiences, motivating us to seek out rewarding activities.
- **Focus and Attention:** Optimal dopamine levels enhance concentration and cognitive function.
- **Mood and Emotion:** It influences feelings of pleasure and satisfaction.

The downside of dopamine overload

Constant exposure to digital stimuli can lead to excessive dopamine release, potentially causing:

- **Addiction-like Behaviors:** The need for constant digital engagement.
- **Increased Anxiety and Stress:** Overstimulation can lead to mental fatigue and stress, contributing to burnout.
- **Impaired Focus:** Difficulty concentrating on tasks without frequent distractions.

Signs you might need a dopamine detox

- **Compulsive Checking:** Frequently checking your phone or social media without a real purpose.
- **Decreased Productivity:** Struggling to complete tasks without interruptions.
- **Mood Swings:** Experiencing anxiety or irritability when not engaging with digital devices.
- **Reduced Enjoyment:** Finding less pleasure in activities that once interested you.
- **Sleep Disruption:** Difficulty falling asleep or maintaining restful sleep due to screen time.

A 7-day dopamine detox plan: A journey to balance

This plan integrates a bio-psycho-social approach, addressing the biological, psychological, and social aspects of your well-being.

Day 1: Awareness and assessment

- **Track Your Tech:** Log your screen time and note your feelings before and after device use.
- **Food Journal:** Start a food journal. Note cravings and emotional states tied to eating.
- **Reflect:** Reflect on the triggers for your tech use and eating habits.

Day 2: Digital declutter and social connection

- **Digital Detox:** Remove unnecessary apps and notifications.
- **Real-Life Connection:** Schedule a phone-free coffee date with a friend.
- **Talk About It:** Discuss your detox goals with a friend for support and accountability.

Day 3: Mindful consumption and physical activity

- **Tech Time Out:** Designate specific times for checking emails and social media.
- **Move Your Body:** Engage in 30 minutes of enjoyable physical activity.
- **Observe:** Notice how mindful tech use and exercise impact your mood and energy levels.

Day 4: Nature exposure and dietary changes

- **Embrace Nature:** Spend time outdoors, noticing the sensory details of nature.
- **Nourish Your Body:** Swap processed snacks for whole-food alternatives. Prepare a healthy meal with a loved one.
- **Connect:** Connect with others while nourishing your body with nature and nutritious food.

Day 5: Meditation and sleep hygiene

- **Mindful Meditation:** Practice a guided meditation focusing on cravings and urges.
- **Sleep Rituals:** Establish a relaxing bedtime routine and stick to a consistent sleep schedule.
- **Relaxation Techniques:** Listen to binaural beats before bed to promote relaxation and sleep.
- **Recognize:** Notice how improving sleep enhances your emotional regulation and reduces cravings.

Day 6: Offline connection and creative expression

- **Screen-Free Fun:** Engage in a screen-free activity with loved ones, like a board game or a hike.
- **Unleash Your Creativity:** Explore a creative outlet like painting, writing, or playing music.
- **Well-being Boost:** Notice how connecting with others and expressing yourself creatively impact your sense of well-being.

Day 7: Reflection and long-term strategies

- **Review Your Journey:** Review your food and tech use journals. Identify patterns and triggers.
- **Create Your Plan:** Develop a personalized plan for maintaining a balanced lifestyle.
- **Integrate:** Integrate the biopsychosocial model into your plan, addressing biological, psychological, and social factors contributing to your behaviors.

Staying detoxed: A lifestyle choice

- **Set Boundaries:** Limit daily screen time.
- **Move Regularly:** Continue physical activities to promote natural dopamine production.
- **Mindfulness Practices:** Incorporate meditation or yoga into your routine.

By understanding the science behind dopamine, you can take control of your digital life and unlock your full potential. Embrace the dopamine detox and experience the benefits of a more focused and balanced mind.



16 DAYS 
OF ACTIVISM AGAINST
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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