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A JOURNEY TOWARDS HEALING, LEARNING & GROWTH: ON BECOMING A LEADER IN HEALTHCARE – EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH YUMNA ZUBI

This is an extract from an article written by Yumna Zubi (CEO of The Couch) for Brainz Magazine. For the next 11 months, Yumna has been asked to be an executive contributor for their magazine. This is the first of her series of articles to come. Continue reading for a sneak peak into The Couch's next chapter!

As a clinical psychologist, and founder of The Couch Practice in South Africa, I have had the privilege of navigating the challenging yet rewarding intersection of clinical practice and entrepreneurial innovation for over a decade. My journey has been shaped by the trials and triumphs inherent to both spheres, fostering greater understanding of the critical balance between business acumen and compassionate care. In this article, I invite you to join me in thinking about mental health advocacy, effective leadership and the adaptability required to thrive in the ever-evolving healthcare landscape. My intention is to inspire you and share insights, to empower you to chart your own course of personal and professional growth.



BRAINZ.



In 2013 I entered entrepreneurship as CEO of a private practice, The Couch. Over the past decade it became a space that embraces collaborative development of business courses, continuous professional development of workshops, volunteer programmes and innovative healthcare.

The Couch's precept "Heal. Learn. Grow" encapsulates our core values and vision for healthcare and business leadership. It represents commitment to facilitating the healing process, promoting continuous learning, and enabling personal and collective growth.

How do you integrate leadership principles into the healthcare space?

The integration of leadership principles into the healthcare space is a critical aspect of my approach. While corporate environments often employ a competitive model, at The Couch we prioritise a collaborative approach, with inclusivity paramount. Our leadership principles emphasise the active participation of all, challenging traditional top-down hierarchies. We believe that a work environment that encourages diverse perspectives empowers individuals to contribute more meaningfully to our collective goal of providing accessible, holistic treatment solutions.

Reflecting on our journey, I recognise that the growth of The Couch required the collective efforts of all team members. Through positive contributions and constructive feedback every individual played a vital role in shaping our practice. An inclusive approach fosters innovation, and creates a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to excel.

Furthermore, we developed a volunteer program, in which a team of aspiring psychologists collaborate to create psychoeducational content for various social media platforms and destigmatise mental health.

We also coordinate community outreach efforts at the practice, emphasising multidisciplinary collaboration in addressing the mental health needs of our community.

We integrate leadership principles into the healthcare space at The Couch by offering continuous professional development and mentorship opportunities for healthcare professionals and business owners. Technical, clinical and business tools developed in 2017 through the Healthcare Accelerator program by GE and Standard Bank and the business acumen acquired in 2018 from the Harvard ManageMentor program, inspired me to develop and tailor "The Business of Private Practice" course for healthcare professionals looking to start or grow their private practice. The course addresses essentials of healthcare entrepreneurship, providing invaluable insights, strategies and practical advice to navigate daily challenges. Through such initiatives, we aim to support individual growth and broaden impact, striving to revolutionise mental health care.

“ IT IS NO LONGER SUFFICIENT TO UNDERSTAND PATIENT CARE; WE ALSO NEED TO COMPREHEND THE INTRICACIES OF THE INDUSTRY – REMAIN PROACTIVE RATHER THAN REACTIVE – AND STAY AT THE FOREFRONT OF POSITIVE CHANGE AND INNOVATION. ”
- Yumna Zubi



How do you stay adaptive and responsive to changes in business and healthcare?

Staying adaptive and responsive is a dynamic process. It requires balancing innovation with staying true to my vision and mission as a healthcare practitioner and business leader. One of the game-changers for us at the practice has been leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) for administrative tasks. AI reduces redundancy and frees up valuable time for team members to focus on learning and growth, drawing on their passion and expertise. The shift enables everyone to contribute to shaping our practice and the broader healthcare space.

Staying adaptive also involves nurturing team leadership. Each person brings unique insights and skills. Through harnessing AI, we create space for all to innovate and contribute in diverse ways. This is not only about efficiency; it also lays the foundation for transformative change in healthcare.

By remaining adaptive and forward-thinking, we not only keep pace with change, but can also drive it, with a vision to revolutionise and enhance healthcare.

Another moment in healthcare that signifies change is the recent signing of the National Health Insurance (NHI) into law in South Africa. Universal health coverage (UHC) stands as a key policy goal for sustainable development in numerous nations, aiming to promote equitable access to healthcare services and alleviate health disparities. While health insurance is crucial for achieving broader healthcare objectives, it also necessitates careful considerations when making healthcare-related decisions. The effective implementation of NHI requires a significant shift in how healthcare services are delivered and managed. To meet these challenges, there is a pressing need to develop more integrative healthcare approaches that combine the strengths of various disciplines and sectors. Ensuring ethical responsibility, transparency, and accountability at every stage of the process is essential.

In ongoing efforts to evolve and integrate business advancement with healthcare while adapting to changing patient needs, we recognise the importance of remaining responsive to the global climate. Our commitment to online services has expanded significantly since the COVID pandemic, broadening our global client-base and satisfying the growing demand for accessible mental health care.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to share our plans to enhance our capabilities to satisfy mental health needs. We are now poised to open a state-of-the-art, patient-centred, value-based healthcare hospital. The facility will be dedicated to revolutionising mental health care, implementing innovative business practices and evidence-based treatments. Our goal is to support patients and healthcare providers through future healthcare development.

**TO READ THE REST
OF HER ARTICLE
[CLICK HERE](#)**



Holly Claase on: *The Couch*

In this article, Holly will be reflecting on her journey at The Couch.

As I reflect on my time at The Couch, I am filled with gratitude and excitement for the incredible growth I've experienced. My journey began in February 2023 as a volunteer, and little did I know that it would evolve into such a fulfilling and transformative path.

Starting as a volunteer, I had the privilege of assisting the administrative team, contributing to the practice's newsletter, and creating engaging psychoeducational content for our social media platforms. This initial involvement allowed me to immerse myself in the heart and soul of The Couch, where I witnessed firsthand the dedication and compassion that permeates every aspect of the practice.

Eager to continue making a meaningful impact, I was then entrusted with the management of The Couch's social media platforms. This opportunity allowed me to grow my skills in digital marketing and communication, while amplifying the practice's mission and connecting with our valued community.

As a volunteer, I had the honour of participating in the practice's milestone events, including the 10-year anniversary celebration and the year-end function in 2023. These occasions were not just celebrations; they were testaments to the unwavering commitment of the team and the deep impact The Couch has had on countless lives. I felt privileged to be a part of these transformative moments, capturing them through my role in social media management.



Pictures from The Couch's 10 year anniversary celebration



Collecting content at The Couch's 10 year anniversary celebration and Mental Health Awareness Event.



The team at The Couch threw me a surprise Bridal Shower.

The pinnacle of my journey came when I was promoted to the role of volunteer supervisor. This new responsibility enabled me to nurture and empower the very individuals who, like myself, were eager to contribute to the mission and vision of The Couch. It was a humbling experience to guide and support others on their own paths of growth and service.

In December 2023, Yumna, the CEO of The Couch, offered me the opportunity to join the team full-time. I was so excited, as working in the mental healthcare field has always been a deep-rooted passion of mine. In January 2024, I officially became a member of the administrative team, continuing my social media management duties while also overseeing the volunteer program.

In July 2024, I was promoted to the role of Marketing Manager and Events Coordinator. This new position has allowed me to leverage my skills, creativity, and dedication to further elevate the practice's brand, connect with our community, and coordinate transformative events that inspire and empower our community.

Throughout my time at The Couch, I have been continuously amazed by the warmth, support, and collaborative spirit of the entire team. We each bring unique strengths and perspectives to the table, and our shared commitment to the well-being of The Couch's clients is truly inspiring. I am honoured to be part of this extraordinary community, where growth, learning, and empowerment are not just aspirations, but the very foundation upon which we build our practice.

As I look ahead, I am excited to continue my transformative journey at The Couch, contributing to the practice's mission and witnessing the impact it has on the lives of those we serve. This is more than just a job; it is a passion-driven endeavour that allows me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others while continuously evolving and growing myself.

The team at The Couch has truly been the backbone of my transformative journey. I am consistently in awe of the welcoming and supportive environment fostered by the practitioners and the administrative team. They have been instrumental in my growth, always eager to teach, share their expertise, and lend a helping hand. Everyone approaches their work with a deep sense of compassion and a genuine desire to empower one another. I feel incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by this exceptional group of individuals who embody the values of The Couch – a place where growth, learning, healing and collaboration are the cornerstones of our collective mission.

- Holly

WORLD POPULATION DAY

11 July 1987 is marked as the day when the world population reached five billion people. The United Nations then established this day as World Population Day. This day seeks to bring awareness to various population-related issues.



The percentage of the world's population that lives in rural areas has steadily declined over the last three decades. As of 2022, only 43% of people worldwide lived in rural areas, a decrease of more than half since 2007. Various factors drive individuals to move to urban areas, including more opportunities and a better quality of life. However, urbanization can lead to overpopulation in cities, which affects various aspects of people's lives and the world as a whole.

Top 3 countries with high population rate in the world

- India 1,441,719,852
- China 1,425,178,782
- United States 341,814,420

The famous quote “no man is an island” by Cleric John Donne means that we cannot survive by ourselves. Despite living in a society that increasingly values individualism, we still need each other. For instance, a business needs people to help make it successful. Many parents agree that raising a child requires a supportive community. When you get sick, you need someone to take care of you. We are social beings, created to have relationships with each other to live healthy, happy lives.

2024 population
stands at 8 billion
people

However, despite the great contributions of humans to the world, there are also significant challenges related to population. Global issues such as overpopulation, gender inequality, poverty, mental health issues, human rights violations, and environmental degradation are critical concerns. World Population Day aims to bring awareness and highlight these challenges. These issues affect the human population in various ways, impacting daily lives, future generations, and the cost of living.

To celebrate, one can increase their awareness of the different issues and challenges we face. Sharing this awareness with others is also important. When more people are aware of an issue, there is a better chance of discovering a solution. Knowledge and awareness are powerful tools for change.

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EATING DISORDERS DO NOT DISCRIMINATE

Tshoanelo Kilowan (Psychology Honours graduate WITS)

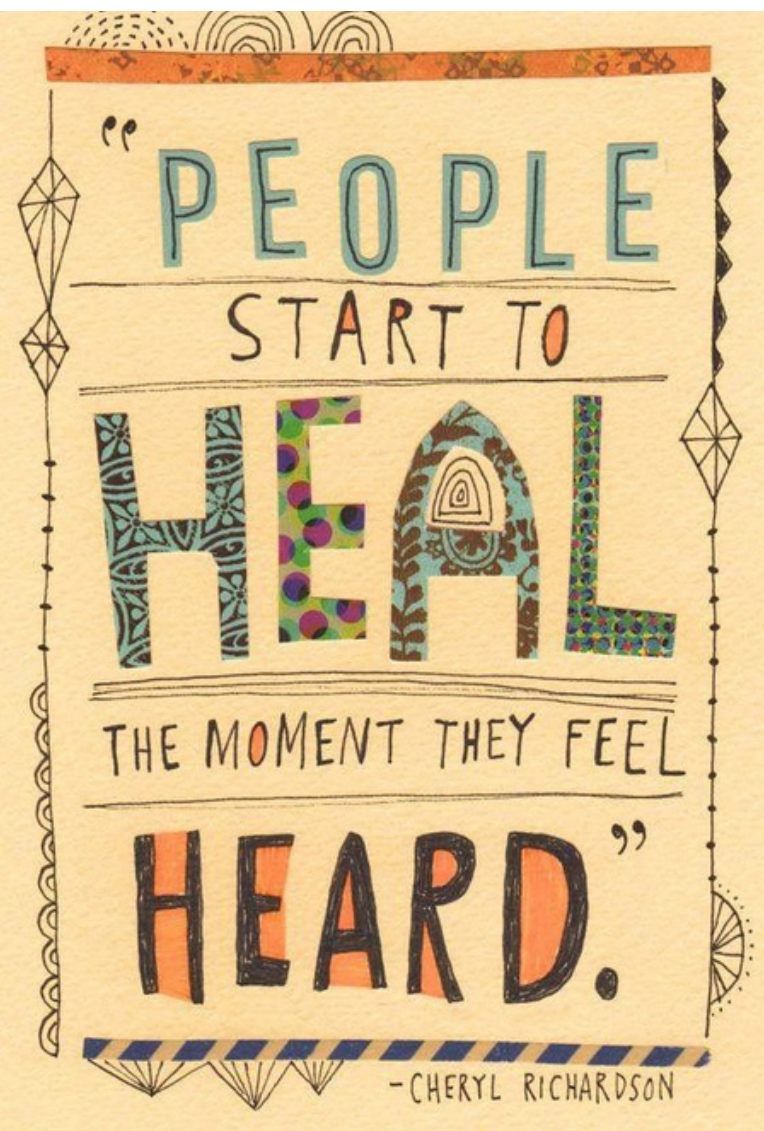


Disordered eating affects individuals from various walks of life, disregarding age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status. It is defined as physically or psychologically unhealthy eating behaviour, often manifesting as chronic overeating or dieting to lose weight or control. Within the DSM-IV, eight different eating disorders are recognized. However, globally, there is a high prevalence of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating (Rikani et al., 2013).

- Anorexia Nervosa: "A constant attempt to maintain body weight below minimally normal weight (85%) or body mass index <17.5 for age and height, with an intense fear of weight gain even though underweight, and inaccurate perception of own body size, shape, or weight." (DSM-IV)
- Bulimia Nervosa: "Recurrent binge eating episodes followed by recurrent purging, excessive exercise, or prolonged fasting at least two times per week for three months. Excessive concern about weight or shape is also very common in bulimia nervosa." (DSM-IV)
- Binge Eating: "Recurrent binge eating without purging, excessive exercise, or fasting." (DSM-IV)

Purging involves expelling food from the body to maintain one's body weight, whereas bingeing involves the overconsumption of food over a short period. Patients often diagnosed with an eating disorder use the control of their food intake as a means to regulate their emotions. Having examined the various types of eating disorders, it's crucial to recognize that these disorders affect individuals from diverse backgrounds.





Even though eating disorders affect individuals from diverse backgrounds, the prevalence of disordered eating among white young affluent women has created the narrative that this demographic is the only group susceptible to developing an eating disorder. As a result, the experiences of various gendered groups, queer communities, and marginalized groups such as black women have been discredited. As we consider the implications of diversity in eating disorder research, it's essential to acknowledge the challenges faced by marginalized groups in accessing appropriate treatment.

Research, such as that by Halbeisen et al. (2022), explores how diversity itself can be perceived as a risk factor in the development of eating disorders. They report higher rates of eating disorders among Asian-American men, Black women, transgender, and other sexual minority individuals compared to White, cisgender women. Halbeisen et al. (2022) link this rise to the socio-cultural and minority-stress model. The socio-cultural model emphasizes peer pressure and compliance with (sub)cultural beauty standards as important elements in the increase of eating disorders. This pressure relates to the minority stress model as there is an increased level of stigma-related stress due to the need to conform to a minority group socially. However, due to the overfocus on the development of eating disorders among white women, there is a lack of research on how marginalized groups present, as well as the contributing factors that aid in the development of an eating disorder (Halbeisen et al., 2022).

Recognizing these challenges underscores the importance of adopting comprehensive approaches that prioritize diversity sensitization in professional education and training. Research that encompasses understanding social inclusion when discussing eating disorders aids in the detection and treatment of these disorders is highly needed. Inadequacies can be found in treatment, as men suffering from an eating disorder often feel unwanted within women-dominated facilities. Men, transgender youth, and adolescents feel that gender-related concerns are inadequately explored during treatment (Thapliyal et al., 2018). Addressing these inadequacies requires a comprehensive approach emphasizing diversity sensitization throughout professional education and training (Halbeisen et al., 2022). Engaging, sensitizing, motivating, and diversifying student bodies, teaching staff, and academic administrations, in addition to establishing a broad, evidence-based knowledge base on the crucial significance of diversity in the presentation and treatment of eating disorders, are essential steps in achieving this goal (Halbeisen et al., 2022).

Corporate Wellness Week

NATOLA MSIDI, PSYCHOLOGY HONOURS STUDENT



WHAT IS CORPORATE WELLNESS WEEK ABOUT?



Corporate Wellness Week was from the 1st to the 5th of July 2024. It is a week that is dedicated to recognising the importance of healthy working environments.

Corporate wellness is practiced when organisations put initiatives and programs in place to promote and support the overall health and well-being of their employees.

Corporate wellness practice recognises the importance of employee well-being and acknowledges how it affects performance, and organisational success.



Implementing Programs

Corporate wellness programs aim to create a work environment that prioritises employee wellbeing by offering resources and benefits that encourage a healthy way of life.

Corporate wellness programs are guided by the organisations values, mission, and vision.

Corporate wellness programs offer the benefits of better employee wellbeing and productivity and better employee satisfaction.

In order to ensure employee wellbeing, employees must receive benefits in terms of physical, mental, social, occupational, financial, and environmental factors .



Here are effective ways to promote workplace well-being across various dimensions:

1. Physical Well-being

- Promotion of physical well being can be done by having an ergonomic workspace and providing items such as comfortable chairs, adjustable desks, and proper lighting to support good posture and reduce physical strain. Offering fitness classes and yoga sessions to encourage regular exercise and physical activity along with stocking the workplace with nutritious snacks and beverages can help .

2. Mental and Emotional Well-being:

- Mental and Emotional well being can be practiced through corporate wellness programs that offer confidential counseling services and resources for employees that need it.

3. Social Well-being:

- Improving social well being can be done in many ways, one strategy can be by organizing team-building events, retreats, and activities to strengthen relationships and foster a sense of belonging. Another can be by creating a culture of open communication and inclusivity, allowing employees to express their opinions and concerns freely, on top of helping share knowledge and establishing mentorship opportunities to facilitate professional development.



4. Occupational Well-being:

- Providing opportunities for skill enhancement and career growth through training, workshops, and professional development programs, additionally setting clear job expectations, responsibilities, and performance metrics to reduce ambiguity and stress, are a couple techniques that can be used to reach Occupational well being. Offering job rotation or shadowing experiences to provide employees with new challenges and broaden their skill sets or empowering employees to make decisions within their roles and fosters a sense of ownership and control.

5. Financial Well-being:

- Financial well being can be attained through financial education, with methods like organizing workshops on budgeting, saving, and investment strategies to improve employees' financial literacy. Ensuring that employees are compensated fairly and receive regular reviews and salary adjustments, alternatively providing information and resources for retirement planning, including access to retirement savings accounts or financial advisors, are couple more courses of action worth taking to attain financial well being

6. Environmental Well-being:

- Finally tactics that can be used to accomplish environmental well being include Implementing eco-friendly practices, such as recycling programs, energy-efficient equipment, and sustainable office supplies. Maximizing natural light and incorporating indoor plants to improve indoor air quality and create a soothing environment, furthermore allowing employees to work remotely, reducing commuting stress and promoting a healthier work-life balance, will also promote environmental well being

By addressing these different dimensions of well-being, employers can create a comprehensive workplace wellness program that promotes a healthy, engaged, and motivated workforce. Remember that each workplace is unique, so tailor these approaches to suit the specific needs and culture of your organization.

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Thank you for being a part of our Couch Community. Stay tuned for next time as we share the August 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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