President's Page: Take good care of yourself

Welcomes

22 April 2022

Mental Health Awareness Week is once again upon us. A recent government paper on ‘wellbeing’ reveals that the Covid pandemic has led to a surge in significant mental illness across the UK. One of the reasons cited by experts is that homeworking has led to the blurring of ‘work/life’ balance and increased working hours.

Often a taboo subject, mental illness is becoming an increasing concern for everyone. The constant and often intense pressures of being a tax adviser, as we try to satisfy the demands of our clients, can be very stressful. However, if we are unable to manage our stress properly, this can result in ‘burn out’ (the fashionable term for mental and emotional exhaustion). This story may chime with a number of members and students.

I do not mind saying that, over my life, I have had battles with depression, often caused by working too hard and not looking after myself. The text books will tell you that Type A personalities – workaholics with perfectionist tendencies, who are extremely driven – are particularly vulnerable to this illness. Many texts try to provide comfort by saying you are in great company, reeling off the names of Buzz Aldrin, Winston Churchill, Stephen Fry, Sheridan Smith, Ben Stokes, Monty Don and the like. But this is of little comfort when you are the one in that ‘black hole’.

Clinical depression is a serious illness (like high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes), which has to be managed due to the chemical imbalances in the brain. Often this vulnerability lies in our DNA. Like all other illnesses, you cannot simply ‘snap out of it’ - otherwise you would!

When depression creeps up on you, there is nothing you can do about it – but you need to take time out, rest up and get the right professional help. Depression is not

a sign of weakness. A number of you will be aware of the bravery and determination that is required to recover from depression, which is typically a slow process and involves taking small steps at a time on the journey to fully regaining your cognitive abilities.

Why am I saying all this? The pandemic has generated higher levels of stress for us all. Many of us have been cocooned for months on end, missing our work colleagues, family and friends. I urge everyone to step back and learn to look after yourselves and your partners and families. Also be vigilant for signs that your work colleagues may not be coping.

We must all strive to create a healthy work/life balance – whether this be going for brisk walks, taking exercise, having regular massages, listening to music, reading books, watching sport or whatever you enjoy doing to relax.

Thank you

Talking of relaxing, this is my last article as your CIOT President, which has been an incredible and hugely enjoyable experience for me. It's been a challenging and rewarding Presidency since we have had to quickly adapt to many new ways of working and delivering services to our members.

I want to give huge thanks to Helen Whiteman (CIOT Chief Executive Officer), my fellow officers (Glyn Fullelove (Immediate Past President), Susan Ball (Deputy President), Gary Ashford (Vice-President), our CIOT Council members, the fantastic CIOT executive team and staff, my mentors, and many others who have provided me with such wonderful and friendly support during the last 18 months. There is insufficient space to name everyone – but you know who you are. I also appreciate the encouragement of all our members – it has been great to see so many of you 'virtually'.

Heartfelt thanks must also go to my wife, Patricia Caputo-Rayney, who has given me her enthusiastic and indefatigable support throughout my Presidential term.

At the forthcoming AGM, I shall be handing over the Presidential Badge to Susan Ball – who will be a fantastic and passionate successor. I wish you the very best Susan.

I am so proud of all the great things we have done together – it is truly a team effort. Now I am off to listen to my 'Ludovico Einaudi' playlist and I would ask you to take very good care of yourselves!