

Looking after your mental health podcast transcript

Hi, welcome to my podcast on the Mental Health. But before we get into that, what's brown and sticky? A stick. Hey. Okay. Why am I joking on a podcast about mental health? Well, the reason is, is mental health is serious, but we don't have to make it serious when we're looking at personal development. Mental health is something that is in the media a lot, in the news a lot.

A bit of history

But I think where certainly the recruitment industry people are not quite catching on is it's a skill where you've got to upskill to improve your mental health. So it's something you should be looking at personal development on. This podcast being one of them. What is the reason why I'm doing something on mental health?

Well, it holds a lot of importance to me personally. My dad got institutionalised three times, tried to commit suicide twice. The last time I was old enough to get him help and I got him the help that he needed. And he went on to live a very happy life. I personally have suffered mental health because it tends to be hereditary.

After about three years of recruitment, I had a bit of a, not quite a breakdown, but I was suffering from really strong floods of anxiety, and the doctor at the time just gave me some diazepam, which he basically tranquilizers no use to anybody. Met a cognitive behavioural therapist to help me understand why I was feeling the way I was feeling and what parts of my life were causing it. So I learned how to deal with mental health very early. I think it was only about 23, 24, something like that. So it means a lot to me. So with this podcast, normally I do a lot of structure in it to make sure that I get all the things I want to.

But this, I'm just going to freestyle because I'll probably do something more structured later on, but I kind of want to just get out as much as I could to try and help people with this sort of snapshot for want of a better description. The recruitment industry is very stressful. As much as owner managers and managers want to create a lovely environment for people to have a healthy mental state it's out of pressure, you know, you're only as good as your last month.

The trouble with the recruitment industry

It's very, very transparent. It's very competitive. There is that environment where only the strong succeed. So people are going to suffer. So as a business leader, and an owner-manager myself because I've been through this issue with my father and also with myself. I've been through cognitive behavioural therapy.

I felt morally I had a duty to upskill personally how to help with mental health to help my staff. So I tried to become, what you call, consciously competent. So, although I was fairly good at managing my own mental health, it was understanding how I was doing that to help others. Also, one that I did miss, is when I sold that recruiting business after 14 years, the reason I sold out is quite frankly, I was stressed and depressed.

Didn't really know at the time I was stressed, depressed, but I knew I'd fallen out of love the job. And I just wasn't enjoying my job anymore. Fortunately, I had some peers around where I could talk to them and say, okay, well I've got myself to the point I can exit the business, but what do I do next?

So that's when I started playing with the Davidson Gray model because the feedback was, I'm good at strategy, I'm good at coaching, inspirational and all the things you need to mentor and coach small businesses. Problem I've got is I'm a perfectionist, so when I'm seeing people in the office that aren't performing the best of their ability, I used to get really frustrated and I'm the worst manager for myself. I'm hard on myself, but that meant I had to hold that back managing other people, because you can't expect the same for other people as you can from yourself otherwise, they'd be where I was, which is running a very successful business. So yeah, I wanted to become consciously competent to be able to help the staff.

Strategy: time management

So looking into some of the things that could help recruiters with mental health and one of them was good time management. Because if you have good time management, you're going to be more efficient. But also you should be able to go home at night and switch off. And one of the things that business owners should do; recruiters should do is do a things to-do list before you go home.

So you've got things all in your head, what you need to do, write them all down, prioritize them one to 10 or just priority 1, 2, 3, or four, wherever it might be. And then when you go home, you can feel like you can switch off. So rather than things going round, I've got to do this tomorrow, I've got to do this tomorrow, whatever it might be, is you can kind of switch off and it's switching off that's important because you've got to be able to stop thinking about work at some point. It's not healthy carrying on thinking about work at night because your brain's got to stop. And as a business owner, business leader, it's dead easy to do it all the time.

Also, as a recruiter, because you're playing with LinkedIn, you're playing with your emails, whatever it might be. So you've got to really switch off but also helps you in the morning because you get to work, and you've already got your day planned out. So know you can crack on and get stuff achieved. So good time management helps a lot.

And also KPI-ing yourself because you can't necessarily rely on a manager or the owner of the business to give you good KPIs. I've done plenty of blogs on KPIs and, and how effective they can be if they're used correctly, but how I used to manage myself used to help me achieve more and felt more relaxed about my job because, I target three things that are going to make me the most money that month, whether it be candidate attraction, vacancy attraction interviews is always one, but it allows you that when things aren't going so well, you concentrate on what's going to make your money.

So rather than worrying about what's on the board, what's in placed, what makes you money. Finding good candidates that month because you've got vacancies, interviews, so and so forth. So rather than trying to catastrophize about looking at the board and seeing what's going to, you know, coming in, whatever it might be, just keep doing what you're doing.

As my previous non-exec used to say, just stick to your knitting, so just do what you're good at and it'll come. So that's, that's another tip for recruitment consultants.

Strategy: Exercise

The other one is more of a lifestyle thing, which applies to anybody. It's work hard, play hard, sounds good. But if play hard means drinking like I used to do, quite frankly, a shed load and partying at weekends, like, you know, it's New Year's Eve.

It isn't good for you because if you are taking anything that artificially relaxes you, you get what's called elastic band effect. And what I mean by that is if you have elastic band, you pull it down, let it go, it snaps up. So if you've got something that relaxes you artificially, when it leaves your body, it leaves you hypersensitive want of a better description. So, if any of you out there are big party animals, you know about the fear which you get after you've been partying because your body's hypersensitive because it's been tranquilized. So, you know, indulging doesn't help. One of the things that really does help is exercise.

And recruiters say it, recruiting business owners say it: I haven't got time. What a sack of shit. Okay, some of the best business leaders of the world, best leaders of countries like Barack Obama used to find half an hour, an hour a day. Dwayne Johnson, who I think is awesome, he finds an hour a day to exercise.

You can always find an hour a day cause it's investing in you. It's good for your physical health, but it's brilliant for your mental health because it burns off adrenaline. Burns off cortisol, gives you the endorphins and dopamine and all the great stuff that makes you feel good. So exercise is important.

Even if you're just literally going to chuck on your trainers, 20 minutes a day, go for a run, do that. It's much better than having a drink. I used to drink a lot when I was younger and the way I managed it is if I got home from work and I wanted to drink, I'd go right. I'll go for a run first. If I want to drink after I've been for a run, I'll have a drink. Nine times out of 10 I go, don't want a drink. Now I'm fine.

Strategy: Turn off your phone

So exercise is brilliant as well. The other thing is try and stop playing with your phone because you know, the human brain isn't designed to deal with all the information overload you get through social media, through the television, all that kind of thing.

So try and turn off your phone early. One of the things I do is I've got two phones. I have a work phone, and I have a social phone. So I turn my work phone off at a certain time of night, usually about 6:30. So I don't do any work. I don't play on LinkedIn, I don't look at my emails, I don't do anything.

Then at weekends, you know, weekends are my own, nobody can contact me. So I have two different phones. I have a phone number for my mates who can also ring me at work, obviously. And then, you know, I've got a work one and it allows me to switch off. Now, some of the tips I'm giving you don't

work for everybody because it's a personal thing, but to help you with your mental health, it's understanding the black flags that cause you issues.

Strategy: Check your decision-making

And some of the symptoms of stress are things like if you struggle with decision making. So if you can't decide what you want for tea and you're spending ages, trying to think of it. Now okay fair enough, if you go to a restaurant, you might do that normal anyway, regardless of being stressed.

But you know, if you're really struggling with decision making, if you're struggling with your sleep, if you want to have more sugary foods, because that tends to be as a result of stress. Cortisol in a man can basically give you stomach fat. There's a lot of things that, if you understand and you look up some of the symptoms, you'll understand, okay, I'm starting to struggle a bit and then try and work out what it is.

One of the silly things for me was being pissing about on my phone until 10 o'clock at night, and it was as simple as that, that I just found that was just the bit that pushed me over the edge, that made me struggle. So I've got to be disciplined with that. Also, what I did find when I was running the business is I had to have a lunch hour because some people are fine with it, you know, because everybody has different levels of tolerance to stress.

Okay? I'm hundred mile an hour. Everything I do has got to be the best. You know, I'm just so driven all the time. It does mean that I can burn out. So what I've got to do is I've got to have a lunch hour. I used to just literally go into the shopping centre and walk around and do that sort of thing.

But then it developed into training at lunchtime because as I've already said, you know, training burns adrenaline, and I'd find I was that much more effective in the afternoon because I train at lunchtime, so now it's religious. I train every single lunchtime. If you contact me and you're interested in talking to me about helping you set up a business and you suggest having a call during lunch hour, what I'll do is I'll move my training session.

But I'm religious. I train at lunchtime, and that's one of the things that helped me with my heavy drinking at weekends is when I sold the business. It was only after maybe 12 months, I realized it's the stress that was making me drink so much at weekends. So I got into endurance, and I started doing triathlons, started doing half iron and that kind of thing.

So, you know, it was that training that gave me something at weekends that meant I didn't have to drink. So, you know, training has become a big part of my life. And it's been massively positive. It's reduced the drinking, helped with stress relief. I raised a lot of money for charity even though don't like to talk about it and I'm a lot fitter.

So, you know, exercise for me is part of my thing, but it's not necessarily everybody, you know, it might be going take a dog for a walk every night. Playing with the kids, you know, so you're switching off.

You've got to maybe understand yourself, what it is that helps you and what it is that makes you struggle.

Strategy: Work-life balance

And one of the things you've got to maybe identify as a recruitment consultant, or a business owner is there's a tendency to work too hard. Okay, so what you'll do, you'll go, I've got loads of vacancies in, so I've got to work really hard and fill all these vacancies. So you want to make hay when the sun shines, but the problem is you can fall into the trap of the sun shining all the time.

So you're basically busy all the time and rather than it be unusual, it's the norm, but you deny that it's not the norm. It's unusual, but you've got to understand, yes, you can have busy periods. If you get a load of really great vacancies, you're going to fill them. If with your business it's going through a period, maybe a transition where you're having to put a load of work in - we brought in in-house factoring a year ago.

And that was like, oh, Jesus Christ, you wouldn't do that. It was like an awful childbirth. It went forever, but it was worth it in the end. But we understood that, okay, we've got to push through this because it's a period of intense capacity that will pass. So, you know, I don't mind working super hard, but I do make sure that it is temporary.

I don't kid myself that it's permanent. So, you know, as a recruiter or a business owner, then you know, you've got to understand when you've got to switch off. You know when you've got to go, okay, I need a bit of rest. And like I said earlier on, you'll notice the things in your life that are telling you're a bit stressed and that those are things that you got to look out for.

Strategy: Take your holidays

But the things like taking holidays. When I worked in recruitment the business there didn't give you lost holidays. So I didn't have a holiday for three years, believe it or not, just because I didn't have any mates at the time that were organizing lads' holidays. And, you know, I wasn't a steady girlfriend kind of guy, so I just, I enjoyed my job. I work all the time.

But people give you, employers give you holidays because you want them, but also because you need them. And when you go on holiday, either turn your phone off or limit yourself to when you're actually working. So the two phones idea that I've got, you know, that works really well for me, not necessarily for everybody, but it works well for me.

So it means, okay, if I want to play about on Sky Sports or look at Sky News, or whether it might be, or, you know, Google what something means or something. Then I've got a phone there, but I'm not going to be working. So that's the way I worked. My previous business partner, he used to take six weeks off during the summer because he had a villa.

But he'd work while he was there. He would two or three hours a day, and that meant he was really relaxed. Me, I went on holiday for two weeks. Phone was off, the place could burn down, and if you can't do without me, it's not a business worth having. So everybody is different. But what I'm trying to get across in this podcast, this blog is, understanding that mental health is a skill.

It's something to work on, to develop yourself, to understand what stresses you out, when it stresses you out and what's good for you and be conscious of it because it can creep up on you. Now in recruitment you don't want to get to either. I kind of got burnt out because I fell out of love, not only with the job but with recruitment. And that's dangerous because it's my career. And I absolutely love my job now. Absolutely love it to bits. I took a few years out, pissed about with Davidson Gray. Didn't really do, you know, a hundred percent. I needed a lot of time out. Absolutely love my job now.

Love recruitment. When I finished owning my own business, I've been to Cranford University in 2005. Come out top of my class. I was pretty good at, you know, the whole business spectrum. So I did some non-exec work outside of recruitment, but I migrated back to it because I love recruitment. And recruitment is a wonderful industry.

But don't get to the point you fall out of love with it. And that's the point you can get to. And that's the problem you get to sometimes when you're on a job merry-go-round. Because you're just going from job to job and thinking that you've fallen out of love with recruitment. It might be that you've fallen out of love with that business, or you've fallen out of love being employed.

And I'm not going to get into a sales pitch about being yourself employed because that could be stressful in its own right. And being self-employed, one thing I would say is when you first set up is try and get a mentor, a coach, somebody you could talk to that understands the things you're going through.

But it's somebody just to listen to you. That you feel is listening to what you're saying. And it can help massively. Now, running your own business can be far less stressful than being employed because you are in charge of it. You are in charge of your destiny. So it's brilliant. But if you are on your own, sometimes it can be stressful because you're on your own.

Strategy: Speak to someone

So if you could find somebody you can talk to, a coach or a mentor, preferably somebody with recruitment experience, as in running recruiting businesses, that's the best thing you can do. But the overall message is to be conscious of your mental health. Analyse the things that affect it, analyse things that are good for it.

Look for the black flags of when things are creeping up on you. And don't be in denial. You know, don't try being alpha, you know, I'm not going to start getting all cheesy about, oh, just because you're on mental health doesn't mean you're weak and all that. Absolutely believe in all that, but I'm not going to ram that down your throat.

What I am saying is it's a skill like anything else. And if you're going to work on your career, you can work on your physical health, you're going to work on your appearance. Look after your mental health, because that is what drives everything else. If your mental health is wrong, everything else suffers. Relationships suffer. Your career suffers, you know, you've got to look after your mental health. It's critical you do that.

Conclusion

So, if you take nothing else from this is be aware that everybody at some point will probably struggle with it, but you maybe won't know it. You'll deny it. And you know, don't be scared to reach out and don't be scared to go to the doctors because some people go, I don't want to go to the doctor, I don't want pills.

Well, I had anti-depressants earlier in my career and it was brilliant. I didn't realize I was depressed. I had the antidepressants and all it did was reset my biological chemicals, and I stopped taking them because sometimes you can get into a distressed, stressed, depressed state and your body chemicals stick.

And the only way you can get rid of it, is having some antidepressants that reset it for you. And there's nothing wrong with that. If you've got a headache, you take paracetamol, don't you? So why wouldn't you take that? You know, there's no shame in that. So anyway I try not to keep the podcast and blogs too long because I don't want people to switch off.

This is an important subject why I want to download and just give you as much information as I could now. So I hope you've enjoyed this. Enjoy the right word? Yeah, I think it is. Enjoy's the right word. If you like to, all the usual posting reviews on Spotify, YouTube, click the page, follow it, and all that kind of rubbish.

And yeah, if you want the new podcast, new blogs, sent to you, send me your email address, I'll send them to you. But thank you for listening. Hope it's helped at least some people and I've done the job properly. See you soon.

