

WELLBEING SERIES 2023 7BR



WELLBEING SERIES: IN CONVERSATION WITH AYANNA NELSON



CHRISTIANAH BABAJIDE



AYANNA NELSON

7BR

For Stress Awareness Month 2023, Chambers' Marketing and Events Executive, Christianah Babajide interviews Ayanna Nelson who is a Barrister at 7BR and a Member of Chambers' Wellbeing Committee.



As a Barrister, what are your top tips on how to manage and beat stress?

Carve out time for yourself. A few years into my career, I was really struggling with maintaining a balance between work and home life. A colleague then told me that at the beginning of every year they sit with a calendar and decide when they are going to take time off. I tried it, and this has been the single best piece of advice I have received for managing stress in the long-term. I now try to take at least one week off every quarter, and book these into my diary months in advance. Sometimes I will book a short break away or a longer holiday. Other times I will simply catch up on all of the life admin I've accrued over the previous three months: dentist, hairdressers, gardening etc. plus ensure that I have at least one full day to binge on Netflix!



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Get outside. On days when I am struggling to cope with a particularly heavy workload, I find that the best way to reset my mind is to go for a walk, if only for ten minutes. When you're under the pressure of time it sounds counterintuitive, stopping working for even a second, however I find that getting fresh air, and allowing my brain to slow down for a short while, acts almost as a 'restart' button, and resets my mind, giving me an extra burst of energy to continue with my day.



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Ride out the bad days. Some days, no matter what you do, you just cannot beat the feeling that it's all a bit too much. The joy of being self-employed is that nobody is breathing down your neck to check whether you have made a billing target, or taken an extra-long lunch break. On days like that, and if time permits, I find the best thing to do is simply give in. If your brain is telling you that the only way to survive the rest of the day is to watch an entire season of Scandal, again, then do it. (Olivia Pope has particularly powerful healing qualities if you're a wannabe 'girl boss' – check it out, for those who do not know!)

Lastly, drink tea! If you don't drink tea, this is probably where you've been going wrong.



In what ways can the Bar maintain or improve the mental health and well-being of its barristers and staff?

The profession, and the world in general, has come a long way in understanding the impact of stress on individuals, and suffering from poor mental health is no longer seen as taboo. As ever, we can never rest on our laurels and think that we know everything there is to know. Continued learning is key. On 7BR's Wellbeing Committee, we all share a commitment to improving the well-being of our members and staff, and we all bring unique perspectives, which makes for fascinating and fruitful discussions. We recently partnered with Wealthbrite to provide financial wellbeing training to members and staff over a number of sessions.



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In the current economic climate, ensuring financial wellbeing is so critical, yet is often overlooked in favour of more traditional concepts, despite the reality that financial worries are one of the most significant contributors to poor mental health. For barristers specifically, there needs to be an understanding within the clerks' room that there is only so much we can do. I am so fortunate to have clerks who do not even bat an eyelid when I submit my list of "do not disturb" weeks at the beginning of each year.



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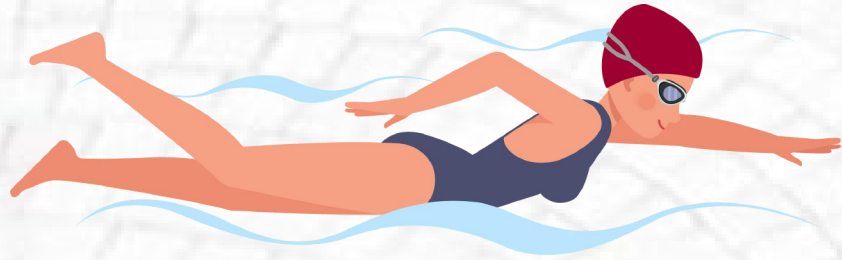
Similarly, a few years ago, when I was struggling with a combination of pandemic anxieties, shielding, and bereavement, my diary was cleared at my clerk's insistence, to allow me time to recover. I will forever be grateful for their support and I am comforted in the knowledge that whatever challenges await me, they will be made more manageable with the help of my clerking team. I am also fully aware that this level of support is not universal across the Bar, where there is often an expectation that barristers will simply "Keep calm and carry on". While that may have worked 20 years ago (it didn't), it will not work now, and the sooner this is understood, the better.



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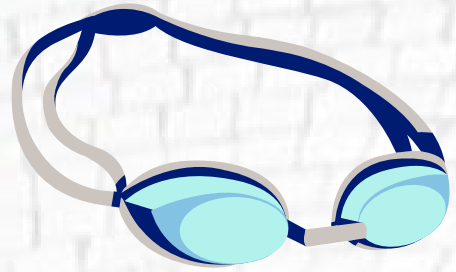
WELLBEING SERIES: IN CONVERSATION WITH RACHEL LANGDALE KC



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For Stress Awareness Month 2023, Chambers' Marketing and Events Executive, Christianah Babajide interviews Rachel Langdale KC, who is a senior Barrister and Head of Chambers at 7BR.





As a Barrister and Head of Chambers, what are your top tips on how to manage and beat stress?



There are positives around some types of work stress - it can be energising and provide drive as an advocate. But we definitely need to be able to “switch off” or reduce our stress levels at times. One great stress buster for me is cold-water swimming. I swim with a close group of friends most weekends and in all seasons. There is nothing like it for clearing the mind!





In what ways can the Bar maintain or improve the mental health and well-being of its Barristers and staff?

**POSITIVE
MINDSET**

Draw up a list of your worries and cross off the things that are out of your control and focus on the things that you can change or influence - this was a practical tip given to me that has helped to manage stress. As far as our cases are concerned, whether you have been successful or not, after constructive reflection and doing the best that you can for your client, it's time to move on to your next client. For the wellbeing of everyone in Chambers I would say understanding the perspectives of those around you is key. Be interested in and take the time to know your colleagues, and always look for the positive.



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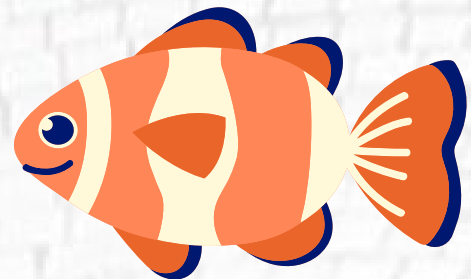
WELLBEING SERIES: IN CONVERSATION WITH JULIAN MATTHEWS



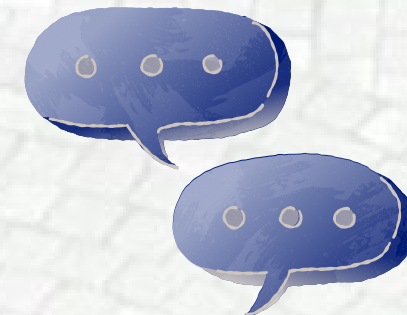
For Stress Awareness Month 2023, Chambers' Marketing and Events Executive, Christianah Babajide interviews Julian Matthews who is a senior Barrister and Treasurer at 7BR.

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As a Barrister, what are your top tips on how to manage and beat stress?

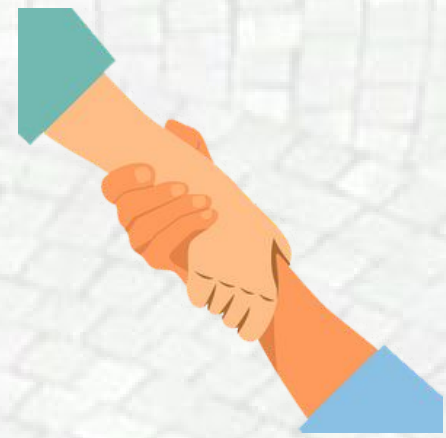


The support of colleagues is important when starting out: sharing the sense of adventure and practical tips, as well as discussing difficult cases and tribunals. It is no surprise that even the most senior members still tell tales from their early years, which formed the basis of collegiate spirit. In the middle years the competing demands from work and domestic life become hard to juggle, and can sometimes feel overwhelming. My tips are to keep as physically fit as you can, and to take regular short breaks. A long weekend in the city, or the seaside in February, feels much longer than it is, and allows you to switch off and reset.





In what ways can the Bar maintain or improve the mental health and well-being of its barristers and staff?



The freedom of self-employment and having your own business has an inevitable cost in terms of stress and pressure. The key to minimising the impact on mental health is ensuring an awareness of this from the outset, and establishing essential skills: not only in law and advocacy, but also IT, financial and time management skills, as these issues often lead to increased stress. Mentoring also has an enormous role to play in navigating the complexities and understanding what is required to build a practice, market yourself, and make sensible strategic choices.



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SELF
CARE
COMES
FIRST

A large element of mental health for barristers is maintaining their own sense of agency, rather than allowing themselves to feel “done to” by external factors. Guidance and support from those who have been there is invaluable. The wellbeing of our staff is essential to our success and ensuring that they feel valued for the support they provide is key.



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WELLBEING SERIES: IN CONVERSATION WITH SENIOR CLERK PAUL EELES




For Stress Awareness Month 2023, Chambers' Marketing and Events Executive, Christianah Babajide interviews 7BR's senior Clerk, Paul Eeles, who has nearly three decades of clerking experience.

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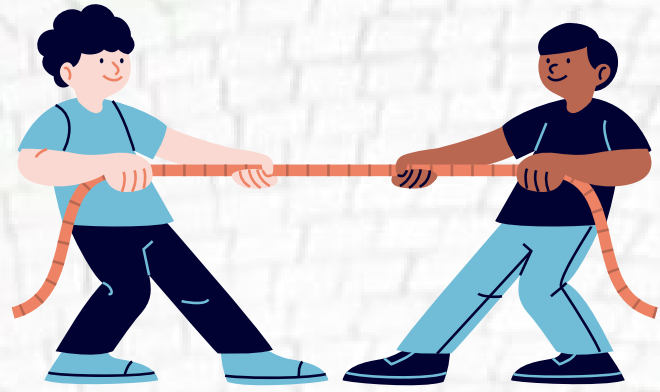


As a senior Clerk, what are your top tips on how to manage and beat stress?



As Barristers Clerks there are many facets to the role and a clerk wears many hats. Managing the practices of Barristers is demanding and stressful. The job can be very challenging because you are working in a fast paced environment. Stress can be a good tool for progress and drive but too much of it can be difficult to manage and cope. So, it is important to not lose sight of what is important and remember to prioritise. The support and understanding of colleagues, friends and family at times, is extremely important.



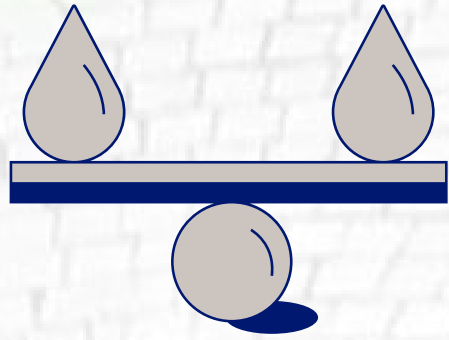


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There are many demands on your time and it can feel that you are pulled in different directions. Time management, emotional intelligence, good communication and being mindful of the people around you helps manage this. In order to manage the levels of stress, it is very important, in my view to have proper rest. Sleep is very important and doing something that takes your mind away from it all. I find that playing golf gives me a few hours a week to download and recharge. Having a young child does make this difficult at times.





In what ways can the Bar maintain or improve the mental health and well-being of its Barristers and staff?



There have been many changes in the 25 plus years I have been clerking. We are now so much more aware of the need for a work/life balance and looking after our own and each other's mental health and wellbeing. I have long been an advocate for the need to consider individuals wellbeing, both members of chambers and staff. The improvements in both these areas is great, but we shouldn't rest on our laurels. There is always more to be done to help each other and ourselves.





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Most importantly, reading the signs and listening to the responses when asking the question “are you ok?”, “are you *really* ok?” is so important. A culture where it is accepted that individuals can voice their concerns or difficulties is key to this. Don’t ever be afraid to ask for help.



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WELLBEING SERIES: IN CONVERSATION WITH HARI KAUR



CHRISTIANAH BABAJIDE



HARI KAUR



For Stress Awareness Month 2023, Chambers' Marketing and Events Executive, Christianah Babajide interviews Hari Kaur, who is a Barrister at 7BR.

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As a Barrister, what are your top tips on how to manage and beat stress?



The best way to manage stress for me is to fit in one of the following forms of exercise each day of the week: swimming, running or yoga. There is no 'spare' half an hour of the day so I find planning ahead to ensure I make time for one of these activities is vital. Exercise helps boost my concentration and energy levels and manage the long and pressure filled days. Doing things outside of my comfort zone has also helped re-focus my mind. Last year, for the first time, I took a two-month sabbatical and back packed around South America. Prior to this I did not even possess a backpack! The natural beauty and images of the Salt Flats in Bolivia and hiking up Machu Picchu will stay with me forever.





In what ways can the Bar maintain or improve the mental health and well-being of its Barristers and staff?



We all need to take stock of our own mental health and there are now numerous well-being resources available to us: for example, signing up for a group run along the Thames or exploring different types of yoga online. You can't really "outsource" your own well-being. The circle of friends you choose to hang out with also makes a huge difference to your mental well-being and hopefully, for example, a friend who cold water swims will spur you on to try an activity you never considered doing. Diet and nutrition are also key and there is a lot to be said for "you are what you eat". Most people at the Bar end up picking up sandwiches / eating nothing whereas my packed lunches are legendary in the advocates room!



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**WELLBEING SERIES:
IN CONVERSATION
WITH ROSE
HARVEY-SULLIVAN**



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ROSE HARVEY-SULLIVAN

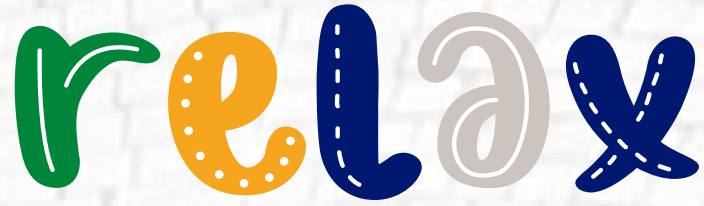


CHRISTIANAH BABAJIDE



For Stress Awareness Month 2023, Chambers' Marketing and Events Executive, Christianah Babajide interviews Rose Harvey-Sullivan, who is a Barrister at 7BR.





As a Barrister, what are your top tips on how to manage and beat stress?



My practice changed when I learned to accept that there is never a 'perfect time' to book time away: I used to find myself worrying whilst on holiday that I was missing some important case or opportunity. This meant that I didn't properly relax, and wasn't refreshed when I did return to work. Ultimately, as self-employed practitioners we will always be missing out on some hearing or other when we take time off, but it is essential to trust that a different opportunity will come along soon, invariably at a time that actually suits us. Embracing this has meant that I am now properly able to enjoy my time off, which means I perform better when I get back to work.





In what ways can the Bar maintain or improve the mental health and well-being of its Barristers and staff?



We could communicate and share more, both about the stresses we experience, and about ways to combat it. In chambers we have a wellbeing committee which regularly circulates details of programmes offering support to barristers and staff, as well as events or opportunities that take people away from work such as concerts in Temple church.