



**EMBELLISH**

The Lawyer of the Future

# **MENTAL HEALTH**

**By Angela Ochieng**

Mental illness is a non-communicable disease falling within the realm of other non-communicable diseases like diabetes, cancer, asthma and hypertension. If detected early, it can be properly managed. Mental illness should not be construed as a disability.

Mental illness manifests in various ways such as: a plethora of phobias ranging from fear of heights, fear of water, fear of snakes etc.; Addictions such as Alcoholism and indulgence in Pornography; Depression, Schizophrenia, Panic attacks, Bipolar Disorder 1 & 2, Burnouts, OECD and Adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The symptoms of a mental health issue are peculiar to the specific disease. That notwithstanding, certain symptoms like feelings of worthlessness, suicidal thoughts, low self esteem, low energy levels and trouble concentrating are apparent in all the mental health disease manifestations.

It is imperative to underscore that Advocates are exposed to the ills of mental health diseases due to the strenuous mental exertions that they go through. In this article, we focus on a mental disease termed as burnouts; which is prevalent amongst lawyers and other stakeholders in the legal profession.

A burnout is a state of complete mental, physical, social and emotional exhaustion. We have 4 types of burnouts as enumerated below together with appurtenant signs:

1. Mental Burnout: This type of burnout manifests in various forms ranging from mental exhaustion, inability to focus, constant dissatisfaction with work and frequent headaches.
2. Physical Burnout: Tell-tale signs include physical exhaustion regardless of the many hours that one may indulge in sleep, frequent fatigue and an increased exposure to disease and sickness due to the weakened immunity.

3. Emotional Burnout: Germane symptoms are not limited to constantly feeling like a failure, apathy and loss of motivation, a feeling of constant self-doubt and generally feeling “stuck” or “unprogressive” in life.
4. Social Burnout: Signs indicative of this burnout include having a sensory overload, having an aversion to going out or engaging in any outdoor activity, experiencing a feeling of detachment during social interactions and exuding a dread towards all social activities.

Kenya has made major strides in insuring Mental Health in Kenya. The same is through the enactment of the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2022.

I am certain you might be wondering how then can we effectively deal with mental health issues, this is what I seek to reveal and explain. Primarily, one has to engage the mind to release happy hormones. The hormones are listed below.

*Oxytocin* –Is a ‘bonding hormone’ that is released when we feel connected to people. The body can be stimulated to release the hormone by either Petting your dog/cat, giving someone a hug, cooking for a loved one and or holding hands.

*Endorphins*- The hormone is referred to as the brain’s natural painkiller. It reduces stress and increases pleasure. To stimulate its release, one can engage in exercises, burning of essential oils, eating dark chocolate and watching comedy shows.

*Serotonin* – This is a mood stabilizer that improves sleep, reduces anxiety and increases happiness.

*Dopamine*- Is a ‘feel good’ neurotransmitter that drives your brain’s reward system. To stimulate the same, one can opt to listen to upbeat music, eat a sweet treat, get a good night’s sleep and complete a small task.

Summarily, the mental health journey should not be a solitary walk. Feel free to reach out to mental health personnel in Kenya through the provided contacts as below:

1. Centre for Suicide Research & Intervention- 0703388130
2. Niskize- 0900620800
3. Emergency Medicine Kenya Foundation-0800723253

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