



## LET'S FOCUS ON WELLBEING

### THIS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



One of the most pertinent themes in the month of October is a keen focus on our Mental Health and wellness, especially for us in the Health and Social Development sectors. During this time we are all invited to educate ourselves and others about mental health related issues. This is so that we can all play our part in reducing the discrimination that many people who are plagued by, and psychological issues face on a daily basis.

As reported by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), they have noted a significant rise in the number of individuals, who have reached out to them due feelings with anxiety, loneliness, worry or depression since the onset of the pandemic and imposed lockdown measures. These feelings of emotional distress have been further exacerbated as a result of job insecurity, financial distress, grief and even gender based violence.

Though more people than ever are comfortable discussing mental health, finding effective resources and knowing how to get help remains a challenge. Noting the staggering statistics that show that mental health and nervous system disorders rank third highest behind HIV and other infectious diseases.

And given the fact that Psychological disorders, because they don't always present obvious symptoms, they are far less likely to be treated in comparison to physical disorders. The need to have robust dialogue on this subject and the need to find sustainable solutions cannot be overstated.

It is with this understanding that we as an organisation the HWSETA has taken it upon ourselves to create a platform that will enable us to highlight some key issues that are relevant within the Mental Health discourse today. Titled The Wellbeing Livestreams, every week

for the month of October we are hosting renowned experts from the medical and psychology professions to lead us as we tackle a variety of pertinent issues.

To this end, on 7 October 2021 we launched the first in a series of Wellbeing Livestream sessions which we will be running for the month of October. Dr Bello Alvarez was invited to serve as the host of these virtual sessions for the first two weeks. She is a highly accomplished Medical Doctor with a keen interest in the mental health space. Joining her in the discussions is Mr Anele Siswana, our resident Clinical Psychologist with a wealth of knowledge and experience in this space.

In week one they led us in a discussion about fighting the stigmas associated with Mental Health issues and how we can raise our voices against this stigmatisation in our communities. To view the recording of the first weeks livestream, click the following link: [https://youtu.be/QYta\\_exFJQo](https://youtu.be/QYta_exFJQo)

In week two Dr Bello and Mr Siswana will aid us in tackling issues associated with the impact of Covid-19 on the mental wellbeing of healthcare professionals in our country over the past 18 months.

We are also excited to have Dr Nokukhanya Khanyile, a Medical Doctor who also serves as the Vice President of Mental Health Matters, as the host of our virtual sessions in the last two weeks of the Wellbeing Livestreams. She will be joined by Sharon Louria, a highly accomplished Psychologist with significant experience in counseling individuals with mental health issues.

Together they will discuss the challenges of distance learning and the toll that this is taking on the mental health of learners and students, in the third week of October. This will be followed by a discussion around access to mental healthcare services in South Africa, in the fourth week of October.



We are honoured to have such a venerable caliber of experts to help us to navigate these various topics under the umbrella of Mental Health Awareness. And we would like to encourage all South Africans to participate in the first edition of our Wellbeing Livestreams. It could be life changing and life saving.

Follow the conversation on all our social media networks for updates on these upcoming events and don't hesitate to send us any relevant questions you would like our experts to address during these virtual sessions.

**ELAINE BRASS | HWSETA CEO**