

Call to normalise self-care in Mental Health Awareness Month

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Normalising self-care should become commonplace in South African society. That's the view of the healthcare professionals who were part of a series of online events aimed at creating awareness around mental wellbeing in Mental Health Awareness Month.



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The Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA) hosted the Mental Wellbeing Livestream in October in order to encourage dialogue around mental health challenges.

“We need to normalise the culture of people using psychological services, in order to maximise their capacity of coping with stress and depression,” explained Anele Siswana, a clinical psychologist and guest on the series. “By familiarising ourselves with the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, we’ll be able to honestly check-in with ourselves when we realise we are no longer functioning at a normal personal level.”

Speaking of the psychological impact Covid-19 has had on South Africans, he said: “We were all in a space where we had to change our understanding of the way we work. There wasn’t a clear model of working from home, so we were all doing things as we go and there was no consideration for mental health check-ins and how to manage that aspect.”

Dr Bonolo Mashishi, an educator and lecturer in the field of virology and guest on the series, believes the pandemic has provided a firm platform to have open and honest conversations with our loved ones, friends and colleagues.

She said: “We had no place to hide and mask things. The first step is to define your needs and share these with those around you. We need ongoing conversations. Tell your family how you are feeling and have an authentic discussion.

“We’ve unfortunately found that some people struggle to talk to their family members which is why a good starting point is to be open and honest about how you are feeling, setting the stage for constructive conversations going forward.”

Siswana said self-care is also about knowing your limits: “With working from home it may be difficult to separate

boundaries between work and our personal life. But we need to understand the word 'capacity' and as employees we need to let our employers know when we don't have capacity and when you may not be well or able to function optimally."

The Mental Wellbeing Livestreams can be viewed on HWSETA's YouTube channel [here](#).

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