



As caring professionals, we set high standards for ourselves

DR SEAN PERT

Authenticity and representation

Dr Sean Pert reflects on how we can find the strength to care for our own and others' wellbeing

The Health and Professions Council standards (HCPC, 2023) state: "To be able to care for your service users, you must take care of yourself". Ewen et al (2021) found that stress, caseload size and inadequate salary may be major factors which negatively impact on SLTs, and you can read more about this research on page 24. With the current increase in waiting times combined with fewer skilled staff, the situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic (RCSLT, 2021).

For such a relatively small profession, retention and the wellbeing of our members is essential to building an effective workforce. Job satisfaction and the drive to make a meaningful difference to our service users is the main reason we are SLTs.

How can we support one another, and what can RCSLT do? Waiting list initiatives and increased staffing needs realistic funding from central government. RCSLT lobbies the government and engages with MPs of all political stripes to highlight our often poorly understood roles and value. Members should not be afraid to highlight service gaps to their local MP at constituency surgeries alongside service users and their parents or carers. We must resist inappropriate rationing, demonstrating the negative impact of waiting for crucial services by helping service users tell their individual stories to commissioners and service providers.


As caring professionals, we set high standards for ourselves, often forgetting that our ability to care is contingent on being well rested and practising self care. This is


especially important for those of us who encounter additional barriers such as racism, ableism or homo-/bi-/transphobia. LGBTQ+ students and professionals face additional threats to their wellbeing. Lenell et al (2022) in a survey for ASHA reported that "...discomfort in living authentically during their academic programs can limit their success and growth as clinicians".

Many students and therapists face multiple barriers due to their intersectionality. Dealing with discrimination and microaggressions is exhausting in any workplace. For those working in healthcare settings, fear of negative attitudes from service users, carers or supervisors can make work life even more stressful (BMA, 2016).

Representation matters. Senior staff should model healthy habits, taking regular breaks, engaging in clinical supervision, and normalise discussions at team meetings on stress management and mental health enhancement. Leaders must be their authentic selves and show that there are many ways to be an SLT. Leaders should go out of their way to be inclusive, ensuring every team member feels included and supported. Every member has a responsibility to check on our colleagues. Many team leads do just that and it makes an enormous difference. Thank you so much. "We look after ourselves and each other." (NHS, 2020) 

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