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| Good Practice Bulletin |
| Spotlight on self-care  Office of Professional Practice, Issue 8, April 2018 |

# Chief Practitioner’s welcome

# picture of tracy beaton, chief practitioner Tracy Beaton

This bulletin is focused on the importance of taking care of yourselves and each other particularly given the complex work child protection practitioners do every day. On the front-line, you are focused and give much to optimise the outcomes of children and the families you work with. This work takes courage and skill, and you are making an important difference in children’s lives. There is much to be done as you run to the next important visit or meeting, and you may experience many challenges in one single day given the trauma you see that exists in children and families. It is essential for us all to consider what can be done to maintain our health and wellbeing.

A vignette *That Sunday night feeling* is included in this bulletin. I hope this will encourage you to reflect on what measures can be taken to support you in your roles. Child protection practice is confronting and often highly emotive work. The variety and intensity of working with children and their families is what draws many practitioners to pursue a rewarding career in child protection. And while a certain level of stress is motivating, when stress is consistently high, our mood, health and relationships can be impacted. Supervision is essential and support offered by colleagues is an important source of strength.

I am very grateful for your continued commitment to your colleagues, and to the children and families you support across Victoria.

# Promoting good practice

This year the Office of Professional Practice renews our commitment to recognising good practice by capturing your stories as videos. [Find out more here](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/good-practice-bulletin). Submissions close 15 May 2018.

Submissions are also now open for the annual Protecting Children Awards. Make a colleagues day and nominate them for an award! Nominations also close on 15 May 2018, details can be found [here](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-events/news/2018-victorian-protecting-children-awards).

## *That Sunday night feeling…*

For some time now, on a Sunday night, Yasmin would notice a feeling growing in the pit of her stomach. She struggled to sleep as she thought about Monday and the list of urgent tasks that would be waiting for her. Last week went by in a blur as she addressed many challenging situations. She hadn’t got to finish a range of important matters on her list of tasks. Early in the week, a young woman she was working with had gone missing, and Yasmin was very concerned about her wellbeing. Before the young woman was finally found, which was a great relief, Yasmin had to visit a family and assess the impact of family violence and substance abuse on the parent’s capacity to care for their four young children.

Yasmin had spent most of Saturday going over file notes to prepare for an upcoming contested hearing. That feeling in the pit of her stomach grew as she imagined being cross-examined by the barrister.

On Saturday night she didn’t have the energy to go out with friends as she’d planned. She collapsed on the couch with wine, chips, and chocolate. Her regular Sunday morning walks had dropped off. She just felt too exhausted to keep them up.

Yasmin decided something had to change. She could see the difference she was making for the children she worked with, and she knew she had to look after herself. On Monday morning she…

## Discussion prompts

Yasmin is experiencing the pressure of her role and it is affecting her sleep, diet, and social activities. Do you relate to Yasmin’s experience? Talk about Yasmin's experience in supervision or your team meeting.

We are all working under pressure. Key to managing that pressure is working out for ourselves what elements of the pressure energise us, and what things overwhelm us. For example, some people find writing to a dead line to be quite easy while for others, that leads to sleepless nights and worry.

Reflecting on Yasmin and thinking about yourself, consider the parts of being a child protection practitioner that you love, and what aspects of the job contribute to stress. Take these things to supervision to see what you can impact to improve your experiences.

# Practitioner health and wellbeing tips

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| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Learning and practicing skills to manage pressure that comes with the job can be beneficial to reducing day to day stress. Research shows that talking to another trusted person, a core element of cognitive behavioural approaches to managing pressure and stress, is effective in externalising the thoughts that go around in our minds that can contribute to feelings of pressure.  Here is a short animation on [stress](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnpQrMqDoqE) – things you probably already know but a good reminder!   * Plan time out for the things you know relax and recharge you. * Talk about how you feel. Child protection practitioners are all trained in active listening skills and no one understands your job as well as your colleagues! * Eat well and try to get a good night’s sleep. Diet and sleep are core to maintaining positive physical and mental health. * Make use of supervision and talk about the impact your work is having on you – identify with your supervisor the things that energise you and also the things that contribute to stress it’s helpful to work out which is which! |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Visit the wellbeing at work [intranet](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/wellbeing-programs-and-initiatives) page for more information about wellbeing initiatives such as the peer support network. You will also find contact details for your local health, safety and wellbeing team. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Contact the Employee Assistance Program - this is a free, confidential service to support employees with work and non-work related issues. Phone 1300 360 364 or find out more on the [intranet](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/employee-assistance-program). |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | If you are concerned about a workplace issue, Workplace Facilitator, Rodney McBride may be able to assist you to resolve it. Find out more [here](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/workplace-facilitator). |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | If you have concerns for the safety of a client and are uncertain how to raise these concerns, or your concerns are not being addressed, the [Client Safety Practice Leader](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/client-safety-practice-leader), David Soanes may be of assistance. |

# Become a volunteer peer supporter

The department’s Peer Support Network began in 2017 as an initiative to promote and protect Child Protection Practitioner’s health and wellbeing. All the details you need about volunteering can be found on the [Peer Support Network page](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/peer-support-network) on the intranet.

On behalf of the Office of Professional Practice, we hope you have found this issue of the Good Practice Bulletin useful. If you have any feedback or ideas about what you would find useful to include, please email *officeofprofessionalpractice@dhhs.vic.gov.au*

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