

The FAMILY Files

Insight and inspiration for your family's mental wealth

FamilyMentalWealth.com/FamilyFiles

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The hidden cost of childhood mental illness to the families that care for us

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Laying in a hospital bed, aged 14, after an emergency admission to deal with the life-threatening effects of Anorexia Nervosa, I was relieved to see my Dad come through the door to the ward. He'd been away on business but had dropped everything and travelled back to be with me. At that point, he didn't realise that this was just the start of many years when he would struggle to continue his working life as he, and my mum, cared for me. This is one of the hidden costs of childhood mental illness, affecting many workers and their employers, with an incalculable cost to the economy of families, companies and the country alike.

Thankfully, after many months in hospital, and with the support of my parents, I was able to fight back against the illness, obtain a place at medical school, qualify as a doctor, write my story in the book *Life Hurts: a doctor's personal journey through anorexia*, and co-found the company Family Mental Wealth.

This has enabled me to hear the stories of many other families whose children's mental health has taken a significant toll on their working lives. Like Joe (not his real name) whose daughter is seriously ill with a mental health condition, requiring lots of monitoring and support from her father. 'But, how can I do this and carry on working?' he says. Unlike the fortunate position of my father, who was the boss of his organisation and able to schedule his work around my needs, Joe is an employee in a regular job. He fears that providing the support his daughter needs will lead to him losing his job, not being able to pay his mortgage, losing his house and... the consequences could be devastating.

I am delighted to see that employers are increasingly recognising the importance of preventative care for the mental health of their employees. And there is an obvious economic case for the commercial value of such an investment. Quite apart from the moral and social decency of caring for one's employees, no employer chooses to lose the money they have spent on the recruitment and training of their team when an employee requires an extended time off work through mental illness. But the same argument applies to extending this



My illness caused great distress to my family as well as to me

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investment into helping employees to take preventative care for the mental health of their family.

That is why Family Mental Wealth offers lunchtime talks, workshops and keynotes, to help employers invest in the mental health and wellbeing of their employee's families. Whether under the banner of 'Health and Wellbeing' or 'Diversity and Inclusion', a small investment like this will not only benefit the employee, but also their family, the company and the country.



Building Your Family Mental Wealth

Helping companies invest in the wellbeing of employee's families
FamilyMentalWealth.com/Companies

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