



Mental health of doctors:

Some thoughts from psychiatry, law,
public health, and literature

A/Professor Marie Bismark

University of Melbourne

@mbismark

There are things that can be forgotten.
And things that cannot.

- Arundhati Roy



Medicine (15/100,000 person years)



Medicine (6/100,000 py)



Other occupations (15/100,000 person years)

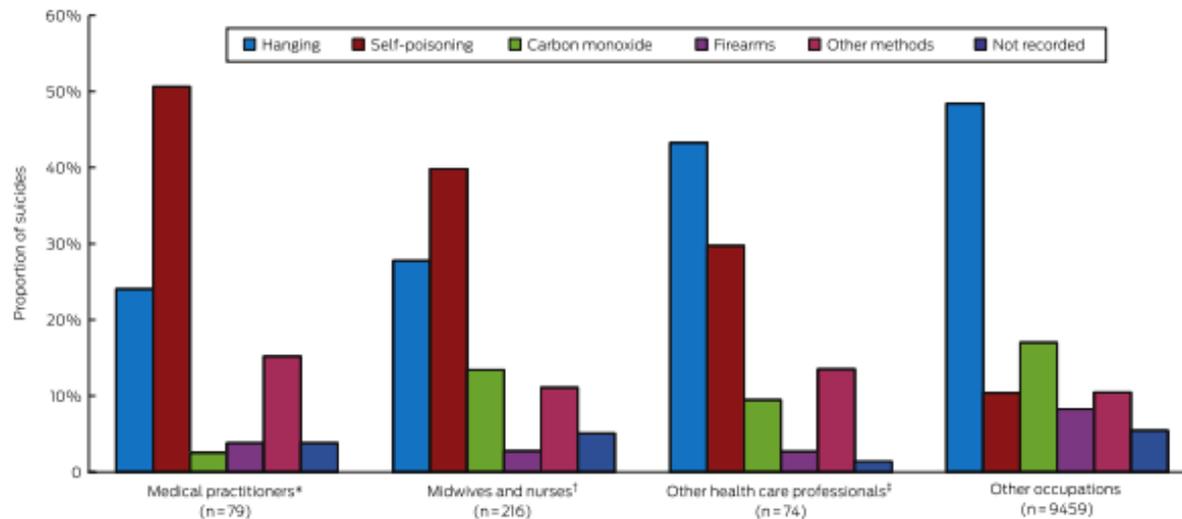


Other occupations
(3/100,000 py)

Suicide by health professionals: a retrospective mortality study in Australia, 2001 – 2012
A Milner, H Maheen, M Bismark, M Spittal; *Medical Journal of Australia*

Dying is an art. Like everything else,
I do it exceptionally well.
- Sylvia Plath

2 Suicide methods used by health professionals and by members of other occupations aged 20–70 years, Australia, 2001–2012



More than 50% of suicides by doctors involve self-poisoning compared with around 10% in other occupations

Suicide by health professionals: a retrospective mortality study in Australia, 2001 – 2012
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The first procedure is to take your own pulse.
- Samuel Shem, House of God

Breathe out slowly, breathe in

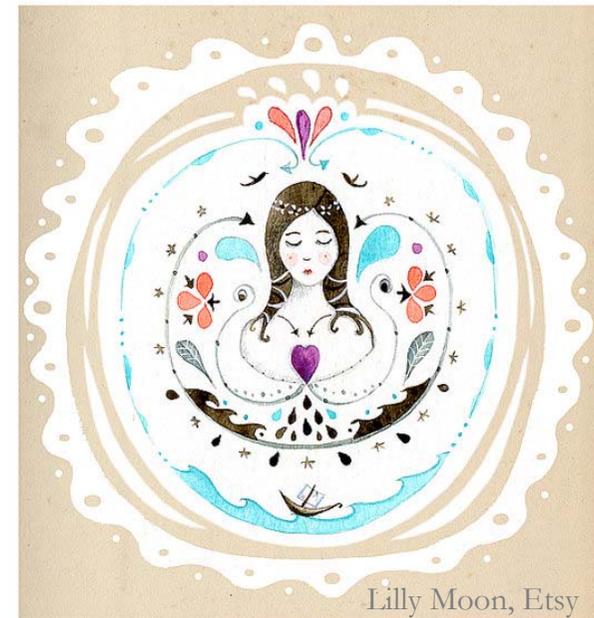
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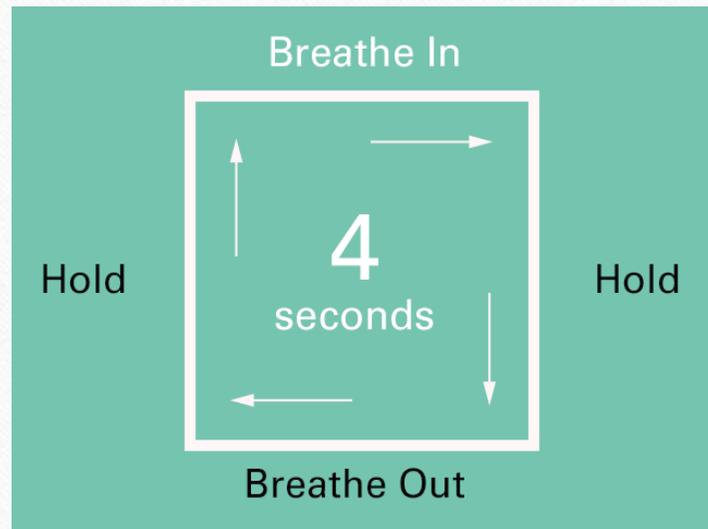
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Lilly Moon, Etsy

Listen - are you breathing just a little,
and calling it a life?

- Mary Oliver



Have you:

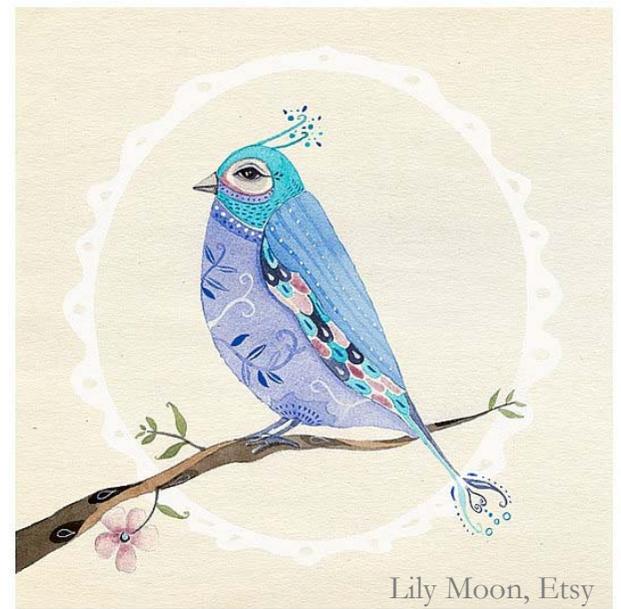
1. Taken 5 slow breaths?
2. Eaten something nutritious?
3. Stretched and moved your body?
4. Had a good sleep?
5. Said or done something nice for someone else?
6. Reached out to a friend for a chat or an outing?
7. Spent time in nature
8. Reflected on something you feel grateful for?

People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. – Maia Angelou

Breathe out slowly, breathe in

Enquire with attention and curiosity

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I wish this for you: to find the people you belong with,
the ones who will see your pain, companion you
– Megan Devine

- Do you want to catch up over a cuppa?
- What do you wish you had more time for today?
- Is there something else you would like to talk about?
- Are you looking for empathy or advice?
- What kind of support would be helpful right now?

For more insights consider a Tea and Empathy workshop with Kate Kenfield, Mary Freer's Compassion Lab, or a difficult conversations workshop with Janet Watson-Kruse

Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness

- Anne Frank

Breathe out slowly, breathe in

Enquire with attention and curiosity

Know the darkness

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N

D



Courage starts with letting ourselves show up
and be seen. – Brene Brown

Feelings: helpless, hopeless, exhausted, ashamed

Acts: substance use, risk-taking, researching or obtaining means

Changes: crying, snapping, withdrawing, neglecting, detaching

Threats: “I can’t go on”, self-harm or suicide attempt

Stressors: relationship, financial, workplace, legal

Some things cannot be fixed,
they can only be carried.
– Megan Devine, Refuge in Grief

Breathe out slowly, breathe in

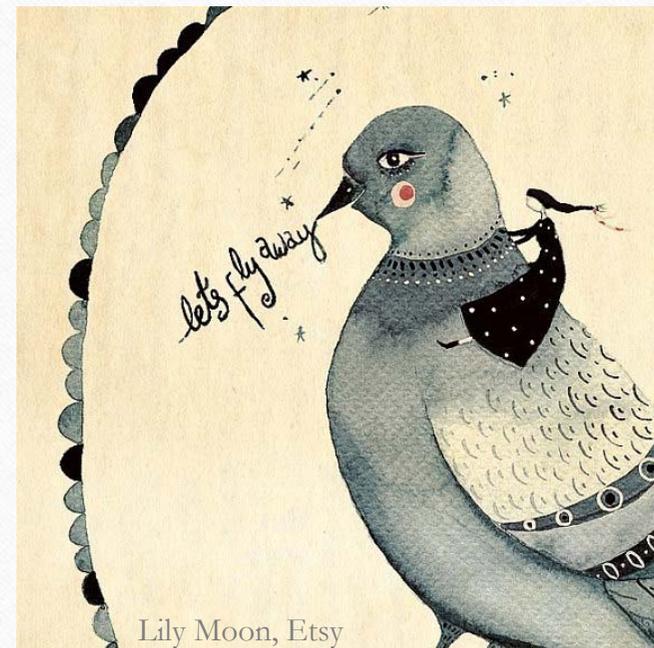
Enquire with attention and curiosity

Know the darkness

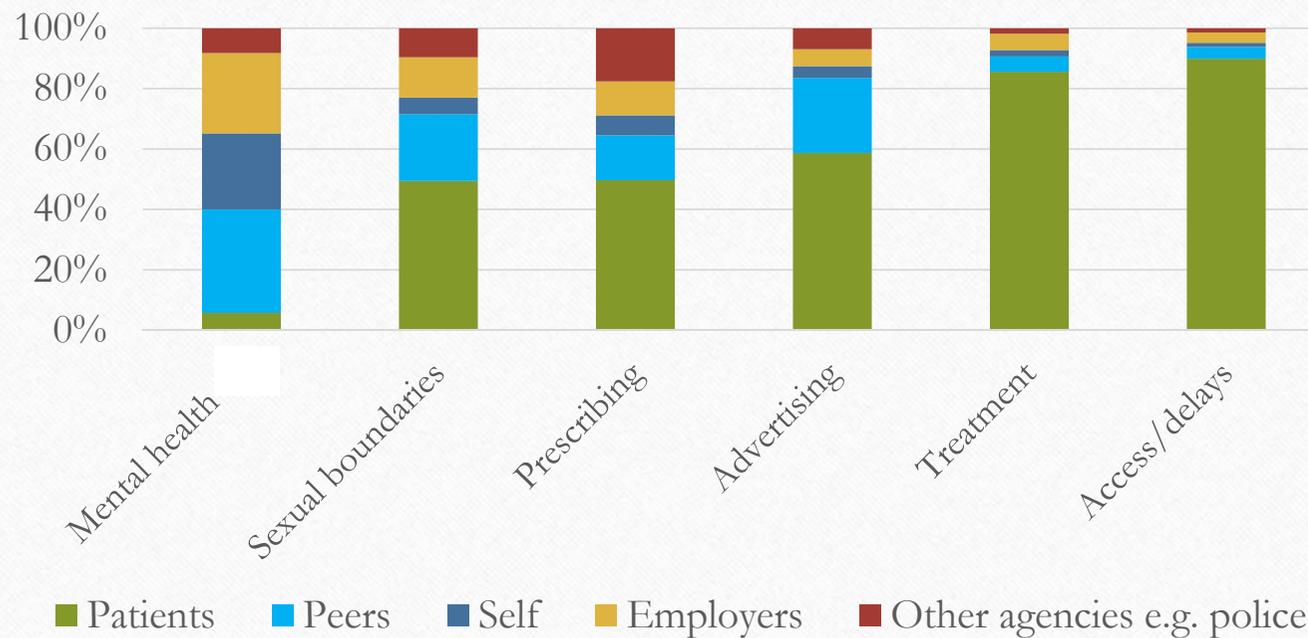
Involve yourself

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I picture “calling in” as a practice of pulling folks back in who have strayed from us. We will and do fuck up, and there is a chance for us to return. - Ngoc Loan Tran



The vast majority of notifications to AHPRA are made by patients and relatives. But employers, peers, and practitioners themselves are best placed to observe risks to patient safety arising from health impairment.

Between stimulus and response, there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
– Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Two practitioners were aware of a colleague's addiction to prescription medicines, and non-compliance with treatment, but turned a blind eye.

The Tribunal noted their inaction “inhibited this impaired practitioner from being provided the supervision & treatment that could have helped him. The ‘code of silence’ prevailed, to the detriment of the public's safety and the practitioner's health and professional standing.”

Health Care Complaints Commission v Orr [2015] NSWCATOD 124

Everything influences each of us.

– Maya Angelou

Breathe out slowly, breathe in

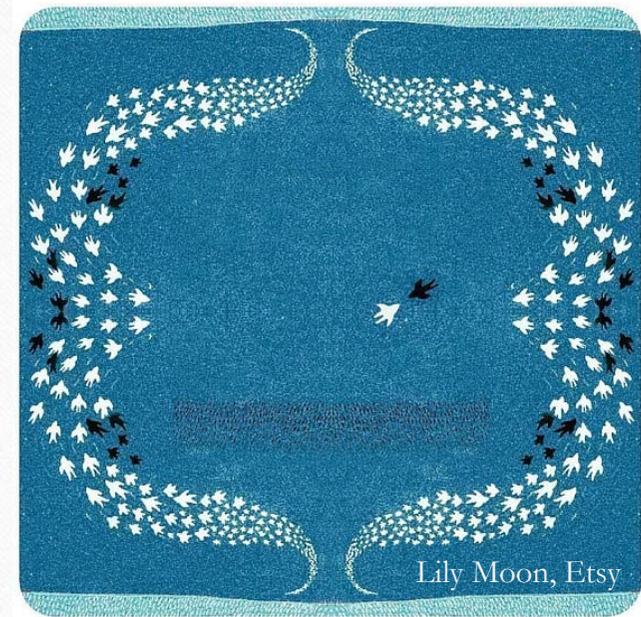
Enquire with attention and curiosity

Know the darkness

Involve yourself

Notice interconnections

D





Pull a thread here and you'll find it's
connected to the rest of the world.
- Nadeem Aslam

The same values and behaviours
that support doctors' health also
support good patient outcomes,
and healthy, resilient communities

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
- Margaret Mead

Breathe out slowly, breathe in

Enquire with attention and curiosity

Know the darkness

Involve yourself

Notice interconnections

Dare to be the difference



Nurture and instill a culture of kindness. Create spaces where joy and purpose can flourish - Mary Freer

Feed time at Federal Council



Dr Jill Tomlinson and daughter Anna

History was made when the AMA Federal Council met at Canberra in March.

For the first time ever (we think), a baby was breastfed during Council proceedings.

While it made no ripple at all, we here at *Australian Medicine* thought it was so cool that we wanted to let you all know about it.

Dr Jill Tomlinson introduced daughter Anna to the Council on March 16. "She is four weeks old today," proud Mum told *AusMed*.



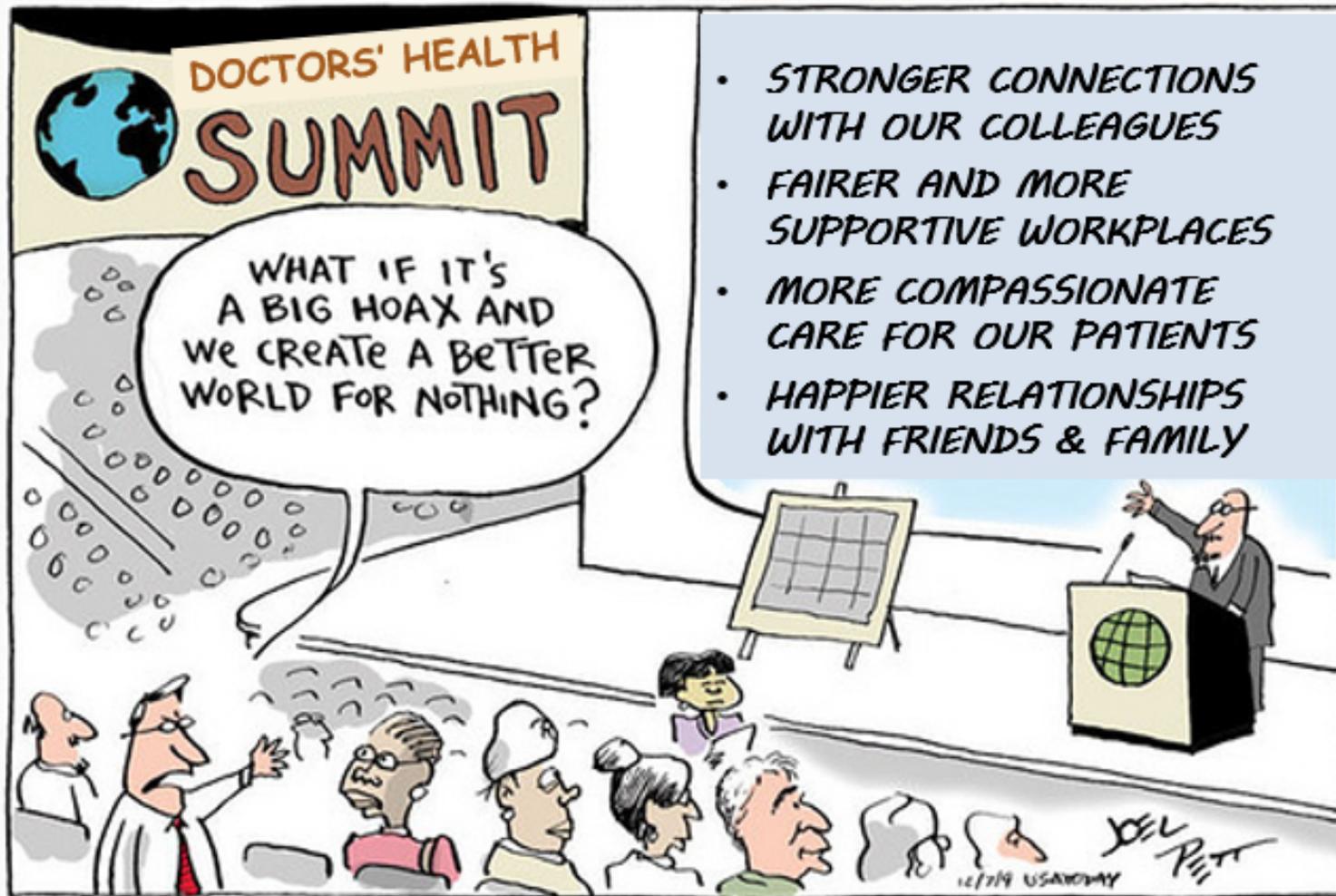
ROSS GIBLIN/STL

Kirstine Bartlett, centre, celebrates the historic \$2 billion Government package announced in April to address the pay inequity in the aged care sector.

The 2018 class of nominees included mental health advocate Mike King and microbiologist Dr Siouxsie Wiles.

Chief judge Cameron Bennett said Bartlett was a thoroughly worthy recipient of this year's supreme award.

"At enormous personal sacrifice, [she] spearheaded the equal pay movement for caregivers in the aged-care sector. In doing so she has changed the lives of thousands of New Zealand's lowest paid workers," he said.



Cartoon adapted from Joel Pett cartoon on Climate Change



Any questions or
reflections?
(now or later)

A/Professor Marie Bismark
University of Melbourne
[@mbismark](#)