

Next Month  
Self-Expression

Healthcare Marketer's

# Exchange

"Where Healthcare Marketers Connect"

Vol. 33, No. 1  
FEBRUARY 2024

## Mental Health

**Sarah Alwardt**

Avalere, part of  
Avalere Health

**Phil Bartlett**

ConcentricLife

**Brandon Buttrey**

Underscore Marketing, LLC

**Nina Delucia**

Teva Pharmaceuticals

**Kristin Morris**

inSeption Group

**Jon Nelson**

Jon Nelson Advisors, LLC

**Harriet Shurville**

Avalere Health

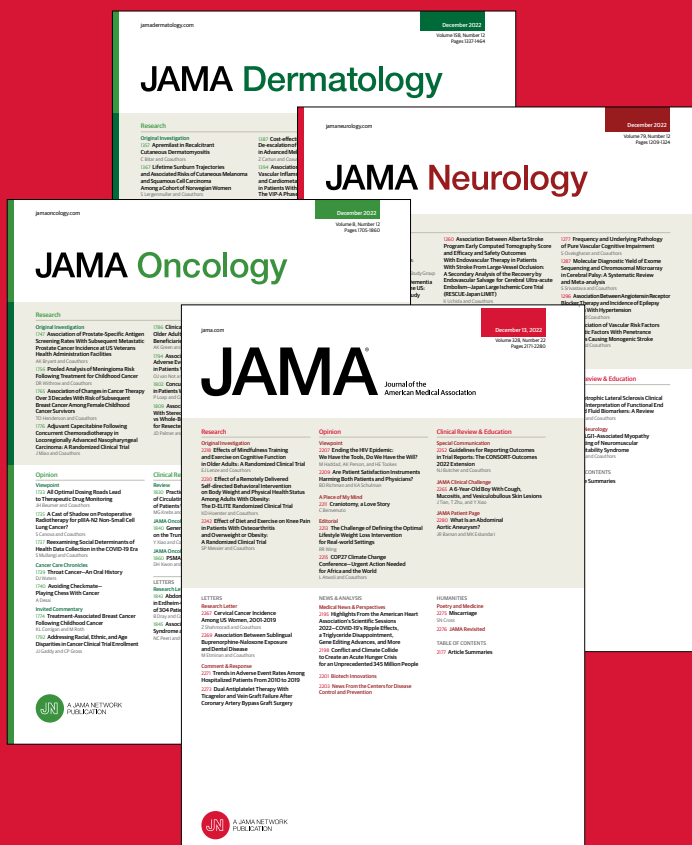
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*Dear Healthcare Marketer,*

**A**s we start our 33rd year of publishing, I want to thank each and every one of you who have advertised in, written for, and read *The Exchange*. As publisher, I have had the best job ever connecting all of you on a personal level each month. I can't believe where it has led me and what I have learned along the way from you, the participants.

Lately, however, my job has brought heartache as I have been the bearer of the news of several deaths in the industry. These have been people I have known and who have supported me since my 20s. Some, I have literally grown up with in the industry. It is scary and it hurts – this age thing stinks! Yet, I am so fortunate and blessed to have learned from those who have passed and thankful to have had them in my life.

This issue is devoted to Mental Health – something we all have to work at, just like our physical health. We are making great strides, but a lot of work still needs to be done to end the stigma. That's why we're covering this topic – to keep the conversations going, to help people know they are not alone and don't have to suffer alone, to bring hope, and to offer some answers to the questions, "How can I get help?" and "What can I do to help my loved ones or colleagues?"

On the following pages, you'll read an update of **Jon Nelson's** remarkable journey to a life-saving treatment that includes 22,500,000 electrical pulses every day...along with his determination to help end the stigma that imprisons some who are suffering. **Kristin Morris** debunks the myth that we can "do it all and be it all" through her realization that she had lost herself in the midst of never enough. **Nina Delucia** shares how she has built up habits that not only make her physically and emotionally healthy day to day, but have helped her weather the sometimes tremendously difficult storms of life. **Sarah Alwardt** offers three excellent tips for de-stressing in a global work world with technology that makes shutting off and stepping away seem impossible. **Phil Bartlett** tells about when he recognized his own symptoms of anxiety and realized he had to do something about it – and how he's working to make it okay for others to share their mental health struggles too. Have you heard of Cold Plunge? **Brandon Buttrey** has adopted this practice as part of his overall mind and body health routine – brrrrrr! **Harriet Shurville** offers us a view into the efforts Avalere Health is making to ensure their employees are getting the care and support they need for mental well-being. And **Allie Raplee** gives us a glimpse of her life in this month's *Personal Exchange*.

When I think back to the workplace environment when I got started in this industry, I have so many fond memories. However, mental health was not something people discussed. I'm sorry so many of us suffer, but I am very grateful there has been progress. No one should have to hide and feel isolated and alone in their pain.

*Be well and, in Jon Nelson's words, be kind,*

*Nancy*



## PARTICIPATE IN ONE OF OUR UPCOMING ISSUES!

### *Celebrating Life*

*From the ordinary to the extraordinary!*

Share with us pictures and stories of significant life events – births, birthdays, weddings, religious markers, new businesses, special friendships, graduations, reunions, awards, and memorials.

### *Humanitarian Recognition*

*Let's inspire one another and honor those who do good!*

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*Send your submissions to Nancy at [NALeonard@HMEExchange.com](mailto:NALeonard@HMEExchange.com) or call 973-420-1192 to discuss.*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## ONWARD & UPWARD

promotions • additions

**Alcami Corporation** has announced the appointment of **Stacey Williams** as Vice President, Marketing.

**Arcutis Biotherapeutics, Inc.**, has announced the appointment of **Aleen C. Hosdaghian** as Executive Director, Marketing. She can be reached at [ahosdaghian@arcutis.com](mailto:ahosdaghian@arcutis.com).

**Area 23** has announced the promotions of **Courtney Thompson Appel** to Executive Vice President, Group Management Director, and **Andrea Caricilli Blotta, PhD**, to Medical Strategy Director.

**Avalere**, part of Avalere Health has announced the promotion of **Sarah Alwardt, PhD**, to President.

**Bristol Myers Squibb** has announced the promotions of **Chris Boerner** to Chief Executive Officer and **Karen Benarzi** to Manager, US Hematology Strategy and Operations.

**Clinical Trial Media** has announced the appointment of **Denise Byrne** as Creative Resource Management.

**CMI Media Group** has announced the following appointments: **Changmin Hahn** as Manager, Data Analytics; **Lauren Stearly** as Director, Programmatic; **Nika Lanzetta** as Senior Project Manager; **John Graham** as Associate Director, Client Finance; **Steve Raj Maan** as Associate Analyst, Data Analytics; **Gregory Rosen** as Analyst, Data Analytics; **Jocelyn Burton** as Supervisor, Media; **Ian Essling** as Director, Audience Intelligence; and **Allison Donahue** as Senior Analyst, SEM.

**Compas, Inc.**, has announced the appointment of **Colleen Fackler** as Senior Director, Supplier Partner Relations, and **Joy Kolicius** and **Susan Swist** as Account Coordinators.

**ConcentricLife** has announced the appointment of **Jimmy Kinderdine** as Account Supervisor. He can be reached at [jkinderdine@concentric.life](mailto:jkinderdine@concentric.life).

**ConvaTec** has announced the appointment of **Jennifer Green** as Specialist I – Product/Brand Marketing.

**CultHealth** has announced the appointment of **Eric Vollmuth** as Executive Vice President, Director of Client Services. He can be reached at [evollmuth@culthealth.com](mailto:evollmuth@culthealth.com).

**EVERSANA INTOUCH** has announced the promotions of **Jonathan Garnick** and **Michelle Coon** to Account Supervisors and the appointment of **Angela Ornce** as Vice President, Media Operations.

**EVERSANA INTOUCH Oxygen** has announced the appointment of **Don Matera** as Executive Vice President, Managing Director, Creative.

**Evoke** has announced the promotions of **Emily Masi** and **Jackie Chan** to Senior Media Managers.

**Evolution Health Group, LLC**, has announced the appointment of **Kim (Rostovskis) Grody** as Vice President, Client Engagement. She can be reached at [kim.grody@evolutionhealthgroup.com](mailto:kim.grody@evolutionhealthgroup.com).

**FCBCure** has announced the promotion of **Madison D'Argenio** to Project Manager.

**FCB Health New York** has announced the promotions of **Atousa Heidari** to Associate Director, Engagement Strategy, **Lindsay Petosa** to Vice President, Account Director, and **Madison (Maddie) Grube** to Group Art Supervisor. **Madison** can be reached at [Maddie.grube@fcbhealth.com](mailto:Maddie.grube@fcbhealth.com).

**Havas Media Network** has announced the promotion of **Ariella Perlman** to Senior Buyer, Digital Investment.

**Hearts & Science** has announced the appointment of **Matthew Torino** as Supervisor, Paid Search.

**HumanCare** has announced the appointment of **Ali Smith** as Project Manager. She can be reached at [alimargsmith@gmail.com](mailto:alimargsmith@gmail.com).

**Initiative** has announced the promotions of **Fatima Chaudhry** to Client Solutions Director and **Kaylee Hoeler** to Director, Communications Design. Joining the company is **Jaden Cheng** as Senior Negotiator, Digital Partnerships, and **Francesca Russo** as Manager, Communications Design.

**Ironwood Pharmaceuticals** has announced the appointment of **Matt Potter** as Director, Marketing – HCP. He can be reached at [mpotter@ironwoodpharma.com](mailto:mpotter@ironwoodpharma.com).

**Klick Health** has announced the appointment of **Riley Donovan** as Account Supervisor. She can be reached at [rdonovan@klick.com](mailto:rdonovan@klick.com).

**Merck** has announced the promotion of **Andrew Driver** to Director, US Oncology – Digital Customer Engagement and Agility. **Andrew** can be reached at [Andrew.driver@merck.com](mailto:Andrew.driver@merck.com). **Lane Lehigh** has been appointed Associate Director, Campaign Development Lead – US Anesthesia, and **Renee Reehl** has been appointed Global Marketing Lead for Clesrovimab (RSV). **Renee** can be reached at [Renee\\_Reehl@merck.com](mailto:Renee_Reehl@merck.com).

**MJH Life Sciences** has announced the appointment of **Wynn Hansen** as Director of its Business Solutions Group. He can be reached at [whansen@mjlifesciences.com](mailto:whansen@mjlifesciences.com).

**Mosaic Group** has announced the promotion of **Brittney Thiel-Petosa** to Vice President, Director, Project Management.

**Neon** has announced the appointment of **Sam Lauro** as Associate Creative Director and the promotion of **Evelyn Bedzyk** to Account Supervisor.

**Omnicom Health Group** has announced the promotion of **Jessica Lustig** to Senior Director, Human Resources. She can be reached at [jlustig@omnicomhealthgroup.com](mailto:jlustig@omnicomhealthgroup.com).

**Phreesia Life Sciences** has announced the promotion of **Ashanti Barrett** to Strategist.

**PRECISIONvalue** has announced the promotion of **Christina Tomczyk** to Vice President, Group Account Director.

**Publicis Groupe** has announced the appointment of **Lora Lukin** as Chief Creative Officer and **Olivier Zitoun** as Chief Strategy Officer, Health.

**Publicis Health Media** has announced the appointment of **Akilah Blackman** as Associate Director, Media Technology, and **Megan McNally** as Associate Director, Strategy.

**RXMOSAIC** has announced the appointment of **Alex Hamer** as Senior Account Executive.

**Sumitomo Pharma America, Inc.**, has announced the promotion of **Milijana Drobnjak** to Executive Director, Marketing, Market Access.

**Syneos Health** has announced the appointment of **Rachel Garfield** as Senior Vice President, Media Strategy. She can be reached at [Rachel.garfield@syneoshealth.com](mailto:Rachel.garfield@syneoshealth.com).

**Takeda** has announced the appointment of **Erik Cline** as Head, US Sales Operations and Solutions, Commercial Operations and Business Solutions USBU.

**UCB** has announced the appointment of **Jeremy Schafer** as Vice President, Head of Immuno-Dermatology Strategy and Global Access.

**Vertex Pharmaceuticals** has announced the appointment of **Bonita Thomas** as Associate Director, HCP Marketing – Heme.

**Wildtype Health** has announced the promotion of **Carolyn Powers** to Vice President, Group Account Director.

## NEW & NOTEWORTHY

awards • mergers • approvals

**Eli Lilly and Company** has received U.S. FDA approval of Jaypirca® (pirtobrutinib, 100 mg and 50 mg tablets) for the treatment of adult patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia or small lymphocytic lymphoma (CLL/SLL) who have received at least two prior lines of therapy, including a Bruton's tyrosine kinase (BTK) inhibitor and a BCL-2 inhibitor.

**Spectrum Science** has announced the acquisition of **CrowdPharm**, and its partner consultancy, **Hot Iron Health**. The acquisition solidifies **Spectrum's** growing work in promotional engagement and advertising and will expand the firm's existing client base, as well as adding key advertising and consulting talent.





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# Mental Health

MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

## It's Okay to Not Be Okay

BY PHIL BARTLETT

I've worked in agencies since the turn of the century, in leadership positions for the last 15 years or so. And, for most of that time, I prided myself in my ability to handle a lot of stress. For a lot of Gen Xers, that's our superpower. Take the hits and keep on going.

Yes, as I got into positions of responsibility and leadership, I started to feel like I was only just holding on, but pretending to myself that it was "nothing I can't handle." I was losing sleep, losing patience with people, and losing myself.

### A MOMENT OF RECKONING

In March 2018, I was absent-mindedly scrolling through Facebook whilst on a business trip in Germany, when I saw the post pictured on the right.

*Woah, I thought. That's me.*

I recognized maybe a dozen of these symptoms immediately. Another handful if I looked closer again. This was the slap in the face I needed. The very first step was admitting to myself that being really good at dealing with lots of stress whilst also being really good at hiding it perhaps wasn't my superpower after all.

In fact, it was my Kryptonite.

### STEPS TOWARD BETTER HEALTH

So I started talking. To my wife, my close friends and colleagues, then to a therapist and my doctor. In 2019, I started on medication that I found really helped. To a degree, anyway...

I was better at managing the ups and downs, but they still seemed to be there. I couldn't switch off, always going down rabbit holes of *What if that bad thing happens?* thinking, losing sleep along the way. In the Summer of 2022, I got as close to burnout and breakdown as I ever want to get.

And I was confused. *I had the meds now, why wasn't I fixed??*

### ADULT ADHD?

Later that year, I met someone who'd recently been diagnosed with adult ADHD. When she told me how she experienced the world, I had another *Woah, that's me moment*. So, I followed a long-held hunch and got assessed for ADHD myself. I was diagnosed in March 2023, and started learning about and treating what seems to have been the root cause of all that anxiety in the first place. Turns out, it's hard to shut off when your hyperactive mind won't shut up.

### PUSHING PAST STIGMA

I've learned a lot over the last few years about some of the stigmas that still exist around mental health, particu-

larly in men. Those stigmas are with all of us, I think. I was really anxious about telling people about my anxiety (the irony of that isn't lost on me!). Yet, I decided early on in this journey, I would be open about it.

I figured if I was able to talk about it, I'd have more authentic relationships than if I tried to hide it. I also felt that if I, as a leader, could be open about some of my struggles, it would make it "okay to not be okay" for others. It would encourage people to support each other through all the stressful times with a bit more honesty and vulnerability. Both of those turned out to be good hunches.

And, of course, I've found that every single person I opened up to has been totally supportive, and kind, and empathetic. Just like I would be if it were the other way around, I guess. Turns out quite a few people have felt the same.

### REALITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN BUSINESS

The truth is our business can be stressful. We're all trying to hit deadlines and budgets in increasingly competitive marketing environments. We're trying to be creative whilst also trying to get things right the first time. That's a difficult balance. And yet there's still not enough acceptance from most organizations about the realities of that business climate, or their responsibility in guiding people through it.

I believe our organizations have to do more than offer free subscriptions to a mindfulness app. Having open, vulnerable conversations – from the top down – around stress, anxiety, burnout, and the crucial importance of

self-awareness and self-care will allow people to truly bring their whole selves to work, without having to hide anything or pretend everything's okay when it's not.

Only when we do that, within our wonderfully diverse industry, can we unlock even more of the creativity and innovation needed to do the thing we're all working towards: getting life-changing drugs to the patients who need them most.

Just as we owe it to those patients, we owe it to ourselves.



The post that changed it all.



*Phil Bartlett is Managing Director, Global, ConcentricLife. He can be reached at [pbartlett@concentric.life](mailto:pbartlett@concentric.life) or +44 (0) 77 79 29 43 77.*



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\*Source: Kantar Media, May 2023 Medical/Surgical Readership Study, Internal Medicine Office and Hospital, Table 402



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# Mental Health

MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

## When Enough Is Truly Enough

BY KRISTIN MORRIS

“I don’t know *how* you do it all.”

There was a time when that phrase felt like a badge of honor. I’d hear it from colleagues after chairing a company volunteer event the same week as a major launch deliverable, or after showing up to work with shark-shaped cupcakes when my colleagues knew I’d gotten off a plane past dinnertime the night before. I was on a mission to be everything to everyone, and I was running myself into the ground in the process. But hearing those words made it all feel worth it. It meant I was doing enough. And for a long time, I believed that meant I was enough.

### ON THE FAST-TRACK OF ALL THE THINGS

I got married and had kids in my early 20s. So, less than 18 months after I graduated from college, I had already slipped into a hectic life as a wife, mom, and career creative with a two-hour daily commute. Skipping right past those critical early adult years where you learn how to incorporate space for yourself into your own life, I jumped headfirst into all the roles at once. As a result, I never really felt like I mastered any of them. All I saw were my own shortcomings, and I tried to hide them with Pinterest-worthy birthday parties and handcrafted teacher gifts. I added hobbies to my resume like trophies and turned them into part-time businesses. I was a hurricane of rainbows and sunshine.

### THE MYTH OF DOING AND BEING ALL

I accidentally took the same approach to my career trajectory. I was determined to become the poised presenter, the consummate creative, the perpetual hand-raiser. I built an entire identity on being the rare disease champion in my company. Looking back, I realize I moved through life at a million miles an hour. I knew if I slowed down even a little bit, I’d have to admit to myself I could not, in fact, do it all and, as a result, could not *be* it all either. I curated the *experience* of Kristin because I didn’t actually believe that Kristin, on her own, was enough.

That seed of doubt became a mantra that played in my head for years to come, and the driving force behind

my all-nighters, self-imposed burnout, and chronic volunteering.

- Am I doing enough? Giving enough?
- Am I tough enough? Approachable enough?
- Creative enough? Strategic enough?
- Old enough? Young enough?
- Serious enough? Smiley enough?
- Relevant enough? Grounded enough?

### A RAPIDLY CHANGING INDUSTRY LANDSCAPE

Then, healthcare marketing and advertising began changing so quickly that the standards for *what’s enough* became a moving target. What was considered visionary a few months ago didn’t hold water today. There was no time or room to learn, grow, and adapt. As companies went through major transitions and layoffs became rampant, many were questioning the solidity of the professional ground they walked on. Our industry evolved into offering basic health and wellness perks (who doesn’t love a walking challenge?), but not at taking true steps to address stress and burnout.

### ENOUGH WAS BECOMING TOO MUCH

Professionally, the minute you show vulnerability is the minute people stop taking you seriously. So, I fought even harder to protect my personal brand of relentless optimism. Even at the top of a seemingly storied climb to group creative director, some days it felt like my willingness to be

a martyr was all I had going for me. I still wore my trademark smile for my teams, but I was suffering from daily panic attacks and crying myself to sleep.

Eventually, I got brave enough to take the big question inward: *When would enough be enough?* The path that had once brought me such joy was now eating me alive. I had lost my light, and I wanted it back.

It took a year of therapy to unravel my own identity from the one I had built in my career. But once I started taking steps to reclaim myself, my approach to mental health changed drastically. I am still a serial hobbyist, but I’m allowing myself to learn things slowly instead of

(Continued on page 10)



My family and me doing what we love most — seeing the world and seeking adventure.





# Mental Health

## MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

### BE KIND

BY JON NELSON

**M**y life was saved on August 22, 2022, after receiving deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery as part of a clinical trial at Mount Sinai for my treatment-resistant major depressive disorder. I battled severe depression for over a decade. I tried every single treatment option and nothing worked. My disease slowly progressed to the point where I lived with a constant desire for death and my body was ravaged with persistent feelings of dread. It was horrific. After the surgery, I was cured from the hell of the disease immediately.

My medicine is electricity. I have 22,500,000 electrical pulses per day in two specific portions of my brain. The electrical pulses are controlled by a pacemaker located below my collarbone in my chest.

I am now living a bonus life. It is amazing to not feel like dying every single second of the day.

#### **MANY SUFFER FROM MENTAL ILLNESS DUE TO THE STIGMA**

There is a stat used all the time that one in five adults in the USA have mental illness. Based on my experience, I think the number is far higher. Weekly and sometimes daily, I have people that reach out to me for guidance because they or someone they know is suffering from some type of mental illness and don't know what to do. My pediatrician told me that 80% of what she deals with is some form of mental illness. I would have expected it would be the sniffles and flu. Not the case.

The reason the person suffering usually stays quiet and isolates is due to the stigma of mental illness. I despise it with a passion. The stigma is the reason so many people suffer, enter the medical system very late in their disease progression, and die by suicide.

#### **DE-STIGMATIZE THE DISEASE OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

People suffering from mental illness didn't ask for this just like people diagnosed with any other disease. To prove my point, think of cancer. When you hear about someone you know who is diagnosed with cancer, there are immediate feelings of sadness, love, and empathy. We immediately wonder *How can I help?* That is how it should be for all diseases. The exact opposite happens with mental illness. There is constant judgment and confusion. THAT is what keeps those suffering to feel awkward and labeled, and it

keeps them quiet. That is why people die. If you want to save a life then stop the judgment.

Treat anyone who is vulnerable enough to share what they are going through with mental illness the exact same way you would if someone told you they had cancer.

The most common question I get is, "I am sick. What should I do?" I'll attempt to answer that question here based on my experience.

The major issue when it comes to mental illness is that our insurance system is broken. When you are fighting to stay alive and constantly being met with insurance denials, it is infuriating. I exceeded the medical necessity for

each treatment option, and at every step of my journey I was initially denied therapy. Every letter stating my treatment wasn't medically necessary was a letter telling me I should die. So many aspects of the recovery journey have to be done as private pay. The system is broken and needs a major overhaul.

#### **"WHAT SHOULD I DO?"**

**Immediately seek therapy.** Talk therapy can be done with counselors, therapists, or psychologists. Psychiatrists are

primarily used to manage any prescribed treatments along your disease progression. I currently see my therapist once a month and my psychiatrist once a quarter to manage my medications. The frequency was much higher when I was sick. Initially, after my surgery, I met weekly with both a psychologist and psychiatrist.

It takes a lot of time to find the cocktail of medicines that will hopefully provide relief. When you have high cholesterol, there is a straightforward pharmacologic option to lower your cholesterol. Not here. Everyone is different. One treatment does not work for everyone.

Talk therapy does not mean you are weak. It means you are smart and logical. We spend tons of time taking care of our teeth, eyes, and having yearly physicals. There is no judgment for maintenance in this regard. So why judge taking care of the most important part of your body, the brain?

**Diet and exercise.** You hear this all the time. The challenge is most people suffering want to isolate and do nothing. The disease is physically exhausting. There is also avolition, which is the medical reason you can't do many

*(Continued on page 10)*



Post-op brain scan at Mount Sinai.



# Mental Health

MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

## Be Kind *(Continued from page 9)*

routine tasks. I never heard that term until the morning of my surgery. I couldn't walk my dog around the corner. That made me feel useless and crushed my self-esteem. Well, avolition is the reason for that. I knew I should eat better and meditate, yet I still ate poorly, slept constantly, and couldn't do the most basic routine tasks. Knowing there was a medical reason I couldn't function provided me with a lot of relief.

**Investigate psychedelics.** They are rapidly becoming more accessible and a standard treatment option. Do not shy away from attempting to find relief here. Mine was with ketamine. It was prescribed relief.

**Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) are interventions for more severe and persistent depression.** For me, this was the next part of the treatment process. TMS is used to stimulate a portion of your brain that needs a jump start. If that doesn't work, the last FDA approved gold standard for treating severe depression is ECT, aka, shock therapy. You are put under anesthesia and seizures are activated in your brain. Think of this as a reset button. For me, ECT was an awful experience that provided no relief and severe side effects.

**If you continue to decline** and need a greater level of care beyond standard therapy, the order of care is an intensive outpatient program (IOP), partial hospitalization plan (PHP), residential treatment programs, and hospitalization.



Jon and his wife Barbara enjoying their first vacation while in remission from depression.

All of these serve a purpose to help keep you safe and provide relief. Call your insurance provider and ask about your behavioral health options here. They can at least guide you on the process and hopefully cover this part of your journey.

**Consider a clinical trial.** I was fortunate to be accepted into the DBS (deep brain stimulation) clinical trial and it saved my life. There are many more options with new pharmacological offerings and also continual advancements in neurotechnology.

### "HOW CAN I HELP?"

If you know someone who is suffering, simply give them a hug. Tell them you are sorry they are going through this and that you will help them try to find relief. Proactively take something off their plate. Help them find moments of joy, show empathy, and be kind.

Please do your part in helping those suffering. It all starts with being a quality human being and providing an environment of kindness, empathy, compassion, and love.

Try it, and you will save a life.

*Note: Read more of Jon Nelson's remarkable mental health journey in an article that ran in January 2023. [hmexchange.com/archive/Nelson\\_0123.pdf](https://hmexchange.com/archive/Nelson_0123.pdf)*



**Jon Nelson** is a Medical Marketing Executive, Mental Health Advocate, and Founder of Jon Nelson Advisors, LLC. He can be reached at [jnelson66@gmail.com](mailto:jnelson66@gmail.com) and 215-595-5948.

## When Enough Is Truly Enough *(Continued from page 8)*



I feel most like myself when I'm out in the wild, physically exhausted, but spiritually fulfilled.

immediately setting up a side hustle. I seek out challenging hiking trails that will continuously give me goals to work towards. I stopped throwing self-help books and spin classes at my stress and started spending more time with my own thoughts, embracing the darkness until the light broke through. I let myself stand still long enough to learn what peace felt like.

In a new role at a new company at a new end of the industry, I have an

opportunity to make my experience with mental health mean something. I'm working closely with the owners and fellow colleagues to create a health-and-wellness hub that reflects the interests and needs of the people who will use it.

Along with my coworkers, I'm working to offer services that go beyond surface level...to unify teams and combat isolation...to acknowledge and validate the stress and sacrifice it takes to simply exist in this industry.

And, most of all, I'm working to help make sure people *have* enough and know they *are* enough.



**Kristin Morris** is the Senior Director of Corporate Communications at inSeption Group. She can be reached at [kmorris@inseptiongroup.com](mailto:kmorris@inseptiongroup.com) and 267-397-8980.





# Mental Health

MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

## Nurturing Minds, Nourishing Spirits: Avalere Health's Holistic Approach to Mental Health

BY HARRIET SHURVILLE

In both the fast-paced environment of healthcare and the evolving landscape of workplace dynamics, companies increasingly recognize the role and necessity of mental health support at work. As the Chief People Officer at Avalere Health, I am proud to be part of a team deeply committed to fostering a workplace environment that acknowledges the significance of mental health and places it at the heart of our employee experience and benefits package.

In collaboration with our internal groups and external partners, Avalere Health is building a supportive culture that prioritizes mental well-being, going beyond conventional programs and embracing a holistic approach that will only grow in 2024.

### BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF SUPPORT

The workplace is more than just a venue for professional tasks. It's a community made up of and for employees that enables them to build connections and deliver powerfully together. With a significant portion of our lives spent working, nurturing mental health is not simply a perk but a fundamental aspect of any thriving work environment.

Avalere Health has long championed initiatives for a mentally healthy and supportive workplace. As part of our health and well-being offering, our Employee Assistance Program goes beyond immediate crises, offering professional guidance and resources for various needs, from financial consultations to legal advice. For example, our partnership with Virgin Pulse encourages our employees to set well-being goals for their fitness, sleep, mindfulness, and nutrition, keeping them motivated to lead healthier lifestyles.

Employee Network Groups (ENGs) also play an important role in providing safe spaces for employees from diverse backgrounds to connect, learn, and develop internal initiatives to nurture greater inclusivity and equity. At Avalere Health we have created ENGs focused on mental health, LGBTQ+, family, race/ethnicity, gender, and diverse ability to foster a deeper sense of community and understanding. Each group is also sponsored by a member of our Executive Team to show leadership support for our diverse teams, as well as giving our leaders a better understanding of the individual employee experience.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) programs are another valuable resource, offering mental health support from fellow employees who have voluntarily participated in professional training. Our biggest learning is that there is no single solution to building a mentally healthy workplace. Finding the right combination of programs, backed up by leadership support, is essential. With our Employee Assistance Program, professional counseling support, ENG communities, and regular MHFA drop-in sessions available throughout the year,

we are continuously working to destigmatize mental health support and encourage our employees to seek the assistance that is right for them.

### BENEFITS BEYOND THE BASICS

While we have robust foundations, genuine and proactive mental health support transcends conventional expectations. For example, Project Rebalance is an initiative we launched to bring about healthier ways of working, including only holding 20- and 50-minute meetings (with clear agendas) to allow breaks between meetings. It gives employees more time back, improving productivity on the things that matter most and providing calm and clarity over time dedicated to career development.

On top of this, we provide an enhanced paid time off (PTO) policy, with a focus on encouraging intentional well-being and self-care. We want to emphasize the importance of taking breaks, prioritizing oneself, and providing an outlet for improved well-being alongside the more targeted mental health support offered across the company.

As a leader at Avalere Health, I hope to set an example, and use my PTO to fully shut off from work and engage in self-care. I can say from personal experience, time off helps me return to work with a refreshed perspective and renewed energy.

### GIVING AND GROWING IN 2024

This year, we introduced a new mental health-focused benefit in collaboration with Peppy, a health and well-being provider with a targeted approach for specific life events and transitions. Supporting our employees as they navigate difficult and often traumatic experiences – for example, around cancer care, starting a family, or dealing with menopause – is important to us and reflects our commitment to stay ahead of the curve, continuously evolving to meet the diverse needs of our workforce.

Expanding our mental health offering helps set the standard for a working environment that celebrates the mind, nurtures our people's spirit, and propels individuals toward their best selves. As we continue to grow the benefits and support offered, our focus remains on creating a culture that not only acknowledges the complexities of life and mental health but actively supports each employee in navigating them.



*Harriet Shurville is Chief People Officer, Avalere Health. She can be reached at +44 161 528 9606 and [harriet.shurville@avalerehealth.com](mailto:harriet.shurville@avalerehealth.com).*



## 3 De-Stressing Tips To Improve Productivity and Innovative Thinking

BY SARAH ALWARDT

Not surprisingly, it's harder to unwind from work today than a generation ago, according to the American Institute of Stress. Technology and globalization have made it difficult for people to turn off and wind down at the end of each workday. Because stress can affect productivity, collaboration, and innovative thinking, agencies like Avalere Health encourage their teams to find ways to destress.

**WHEN ASKED WHAT TIPS I RECOMMEND, HERE ARE THREE THAT WORK FOR ME.**

- **Minimize the number of alerts and notifications on devices.**

We hear the familiar sound every time a new email, text, or Teams message comes in. On Apple Mail Apps, they appear as red dots. This constant bombardment of information can lead to less focus and increased anxiety. But not every message is a five-alarm fire. A simple solution is to turn off these alerts, enabling people to focus on things that matter. Another option is to only look at the phone or emails during specific hours (i.e., 9 - 5, 7 - 4).

- **Avoid tight shoulders syndrome.** Stress can manifest as stiffness, tension, and pain in the neck and shoulders. The muscles around the neck and shoulders contract, forcing the shoulders to rise up toward the



ears. To avoid this tension, I purposely remind myself to "get the shoulders out of the ear." Do a shoulder roll to loosen up the muscles. When doing a Zoom or Teams video, check your posture and shoulders. Another option is to hang a small mirror nearby and when you see yourself tensing, remind yourself to move the shoulders down.

- **Find a "happy place."** Having a happy place provides an escape and diverts our mind away from negative or stressful thoughts. This special place could be anywhere in the house where you feel

relaxed, a nearby park, or out in the backyard. Finding your special happy spot might take some time, practice, and patience. I'm fortunate enough to live near one of the happiest places on earth – Disney World, which to me represents magic, wonder, family, and many smiling faces.



*Sarah Alwardt is President, Avalere, part of Avalere Health. She can be reached at [info@avalere.com](mailto:info@avalere.com).*

## BABY, IT'S COLD IN HERE

BY BRANDON BUTTREY

I've been doing a new regimen that has been helpful for my Mind, Body, and Soul...It's cold plunge. It's been so great for my mind, helping me clear my head and empty random thoughts. For my body, it is helpful to build my immunity. And for my soul, it's helping me slow down.

I do my cold plunge at a place called Contrast. First, you spend 20 minutes in a sauna. Then, you transition to a 37° water bath for one to three minutes. I do three minutes. You have to breathe slowly to make it through, otherwise you will not relax your body. Once you get out and dry off, change clothes, and allow your own body to



**Doing cold plunge for my health.**

warm itself back to normal body temp...this process is very health-beneficial. It's a Swedish tradition and it's really powerful. The cost is \$150 per month and you do it three times per week.



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# Mental Health

MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

## Mental Health – Establishing Habits Through Ordinary and Extraordinary Seasons

BY NINA DELUCIA

It's safe to say that life has its ups and downs, good days and bad. Then there are those times in life when a rough storm rolls in that you might not have been prepared for. When it comes to mental health, for me, it is about your everyday habits and finding new ones to weather the storms. I read the book *Atomic Habits* by James Clear and realized it's small changes that set up the process of a new habit.

Some of my daily habits for mental and physical health include quiet morning time. When I wake up, it's coffee, the silence of the morning, a reflection, and journaling. I follow that with exercise to start my day.

Getting to this place wasn't easy. But once this habit was established, I leaned into it during some of the most challenging times of my life, including my late husband's cancer diagnosis, three-and-a-half-year battle, and then his passing in 2021.

### TRAINING FOR LIFE

I created the routine of exercise to start my day back in 2007 with a 5:15 a.m. spin class. It was jarring at first. After a month of following this routine, however, I was hooked, getting up five days a week to spin. Eventually, this transitioned into outdoor riding, running, and swimming as part of training for an Ironman Triathlon in 2015.

In life, I have often turned to coaches and mentors when tackling new challenges. My Ironman coach offered me great advice throughout training and for race day. Some of the best advice included:

- Be present to the moment or leg of race you are in.
  - Worry only about what you can control.
- Many things in life can happen, but worrying about them ahead of time doesn't serve you well.
- Use the tools in your toolbox when bumps in the road happen.
  - Remember "What is your why" and let it keep moving you forward.

### TRAINING FOR LOSS

This training and coaching helped me complete many races I didn't know were possible for me. Then it served me well when my late husband was diagnosed with cancer. His cancer diagnosis presented a new perspective – death. I was 45 years old when he was diagnosed and had two kids in high school. The thought of raising them without him was not something I was prepared for. I had to go back to the mental coaching from Ironman to help me be present, live day by day, and worry only about what I could control.

As the cancer progressed, I needed more. So, I dug into my faith. I worked with mentors to help me set the tone of my day with reflection and journaling. It wasn't easy at first, but I set small goals like five minutes when I wake up. I left my journal and pen by my bed. It wasn't long before it became a habit – five minutes turned into 10, and then 20.

When my husband's cancer took a turn for the not so good, I knew I needed even more. I began work with a therapist to prepare me. She was a great resource and also encouraged me to join a grief group, which I did. Having others who shared the same experience was comforting.

### TRAINING FOR THE STORMS OF LIFE

When my husband passed, I used all of the tools in my toolbox – from my morning routine, to time with family and friends, therapy, group therapy and training for races, and holding onto my why, which was to be strong for my kids. I leaned into training, racing, and work. These were things I could anchor to when the storm rolled in. I was fortunate to compete at some amazing races like Ironman 70.3 World Championships and USA Triathlon Age Group Nationals. I also focused on work and even got a promotion.

The biggest challenge was packing up my house of 17 years full of memories to get a new start. It seemed I was doing okay, maybe even thriving. Then, I started to lose interest in racing and some of my other passions. It didn't feel like

me. Reflection helped me realize I had not processed all of my grief. I went back to therapy and worked through the grief stages again. This showed me what parts of grief I was holding on to. I am happy to say I am now in a better place and ready for my next challenge.

As life changes and we are presented with new journeys, having the right tools in our toolbox and habits in place can certainly help. Finding mentors in the form of coaches, therapists, or friends can help guide the way, too. Also important is recognizing when you need additional tools to help you through. Whether you're forming habits for every day or navigating the extraordinary, I hope you can take the time to reflect on what you need and use all your tools to help you live your best life!



Triathlon racing goals helped me to leverage training for mental health.



*Nina Delucia is Director, Consumer Brand Marketing, Teva Pharmaceuticals. She can be reached at 973-658-1279 (o), 862-465-3828 (m), or [nina.delucia@tevapharm.com](mailto:nina.delucia@tevapharm.com).*

# Allie Raplee



**Birthplace:** Huntington, NY, but I grew up in Freehold, NJ  
**Marital Status:** Single  
**Children:** None, just a dog!  
**Job Title:** Director of Media  
**Years in Industry:** 8  
**College:** Bucknell University

*"You can disagree without being disagreeable."*

— Ruth Bader Ginsburg

## WHO IS YOUR MENTOR AND HOW DID HE/SHE IMPACT YOU?

*I've had a few separate mentors throughout my time in the industry. They each had their own unique impact, but collectively they all taught me to be confident and to voice my opinions if I have the support to back them up.*

## WHAT ARE TWO THINGS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

*Go on a Safari in South Africa and see the Northern Lights in Iceland.*

## WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

*Teaching swimming lessons where I was on the swim team. I spent my whole summer at the pool.*

## DO YOU HAVE ANY PETS?

*I have one dog, Cooper. He's a 12-pound Chihuahua-Dachshund mix I adopted during early COVID through BARRK rescue organization.*

## HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE INDUSTRY?

*I was working in PR for a bit before I switched over to media. I started my first job in media as an associate media planner. I don't think I could have explained the job to anyone for the first month or so but as soon as it clicked, I loved it. Still today, I can't see myself in any other industry!*

## WHAT THREE ADJECTIVES BEST DESCRIBE YOU?

*Curious, Sarcastic, and Thoughtful.*

## WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN TO DO?

*I would love to learn to create pottery or do glassblowing. I love painting, coloring, or anything creative in my spare time. Even though I'm not a good artist, it's a great stress reliever and creative outlet.*

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO OR BUY IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY?

*I would buy an apartment in New York City, ideally one with a balcony and laundry in-unit, a NYC luxury.*

## WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

*You don't need to have your life planned out. Enjoy the journey. It will all work out!*

## WHAT ONE LITTLE THING ALWAYS MAKES YOU HAPPY, OTHER THAN YOUR FAMILY?

*Living in New York, I love being able to explore new neighborhoods with friends and family. It makes me happy to wander around a new area, try a new cuisine, or find a new local bar.*

## CRAZIEST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

*I've always been one to say yes to new adventures. I think the craziest thing I've done so far would be skydiving. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to go bungee jumping one day.*

## WHAT IS YOUR PET PEEVE?

*Loud chewing.*

## WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE BIRTHDAY?

*This past year for my golden birthday, I did a 12-day trip to Paris, London, and Copenhagen. I had different friends meet me in each city to explore and adventure with.*

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SERIES TO BINGE-WATCH?

*Not a show for everyone, but I love "Law & Order: SVU (Special Victims Unit)." I've seen all 24 seasons, some a few times!*

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE VACATION SPOT?

*My most recent favorite would be Banff and Jasper National Parks in Canada. I just visited this past summer, and it is beautiful. I love being surrounded by nature, exploring a new place.*



Allie and Cooper on their favorite walking route in NYC.

*Allie Raplee is Director of Media, Greater Than One. She can be reached at 929-999-7820 or araplee@greaterthanone.com.*



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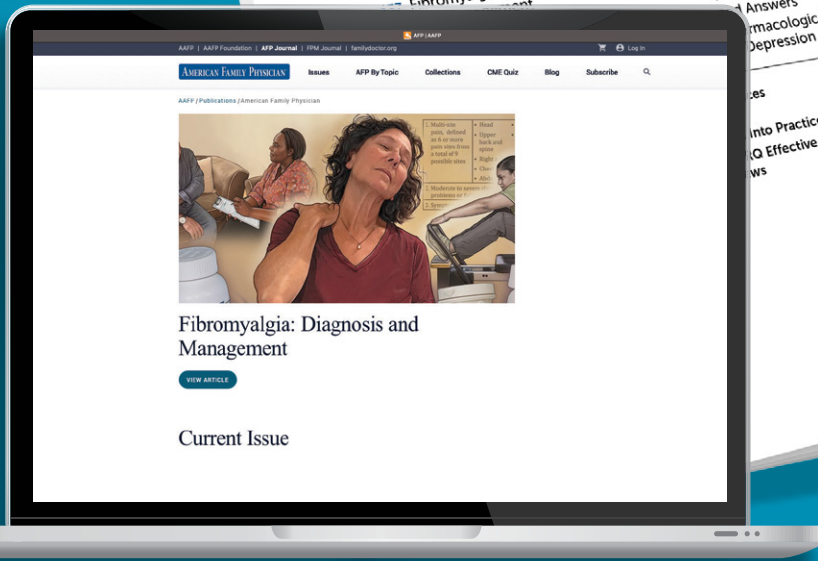
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