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Demoralization and stress—we can all help (?)

‘Finally, it’s the weekend!’ These words or words to similar effect can be heard quite often in and around our city’s university medical centre, and admittedly, these words pass my lips as well occasionally. Most of us will recognize those weeks when nothing comes easy, and we have all probably experienced longing for the weekend when you can clear your mind and recharge your battery. So far nothing unusual or disturbing. Unfortunately, for some of us, longing for the weekend is not a seldomly encountered sensation, but rather a recurring one. Notwithstanding the inspiring, life-changing and even life-saving nature of our jobs, enjoying our work to the fullest may at times feel like an unattainable goal to some. Clearly, we cannot completely control our lives, and we should anticipate encountering difficulties and misfortune in our lives. Occasional setbacks may even be considered beneficial as they may help you to realize how good life can be. Nonetheless, one may wish to apply the dictum of Paracelsus ‘*dosis sola facit venenum*’ (freely translated as the dose determines whether something is harmful) to facing difficulties, and regularly experiencing longing for the weekend may be a symptom of an impaired state of mind.

As a reader of *Occupational Medicine*, you are likely to be confronted with work-related stress and mental health problems on a regular basis, and you may have helped many individuals to regain a positive

attitude. However, these mental health issues are probably not just present in those who seek help; some people in need of support may leave it too late to knock on your door, or do not even dare to do so at all. Therefore, I would like to suggest that we all, professionals and non-professionals, keep an ear to the ground to recognize signs of discomfort in good time. And when we encounter such signs, let us (try to) talk with and listen to those in discomfort, and encourage them to talk and listen as well. Allow them to convince themselves of the (unfortunate) commonness of their feelings of demoralization as well as of the importance of opening up about these feelings, to themselves, to people around them, and possibly also to health care professionals. Together we can contribute to tackling mental health stigma by encouraging openness about mental health problems and by stimulating positive attitudes towards help-seeking. Together, we may contribute to relieving the overall burden of dissatisfaction with work and burnout by helping unhappy individuals to seek the support they need in time. Because in the end, let us not forget how great life is, how great life can be and how it is important to celebrate it all, even when ‘Finally, it’s Monday!’

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