

# Behind the Idea Pioneering people and ideas in the creative industries

## The founders of Psyched explain how they're helping business leaders reconnect with what's important ahead of World Mental Health Day 2017

### What's the big idea?

**Ben McKie:** We run retreats aimed at corporate leaders called the Psyched Programmes, which are about taking these people out of their day-to-day existence, where a lot is expected of them, and creating the right conditions for them to get to know themselves. The vision is to raise awareness and break down the barriers of stigma regarding mental health. We want to reconnect people with themselves and their environment, and create a space for them to understand themselves more.



Can't beat a retreat.

Psyched founders Ben McKie and Kathleen Saxton

Company I worked with a lot of CEOs and heads of business who said to me in private interviews that they felt a huge level of stress managing hundreds of people and knowing that everyone was looking to them for an answer. They wanted to know how to better support themselves but because of this stigma in the UK about mental health, they struggled to find the right help. They'll take themselves off to Harvard for a leadership course but they aren't attending to understanding their own thinking and inner self.

### What do the retreats involve?

**Kathleen Saxton:** We take a group of six to eight people away for five days, usually to a beautiful farmhouse in the middle of nowhere in southern France, or on a desert retreat in Morocco or Egypt. We have a shaolin master who teaches form and breathing; we have group therapy,

### Do you think mental health issues are even harder to see at a senior level, where the perception is that people who are well-remunerated and given executive treatment must have no cares?

**BM:** Absolutely – it's a common misconception. At that level, where you're in charge of a global business,



# Is it time to psyche yourself up?

which is initially quite daunting, but actually we have some of our most positive experiences there; and there are individual appointments with an executive coach, psychotherapist, nutritionist, shiatzu masseuse... We're working on them the whole time, teaching them how to connect their bodies and their thinking.

### Why did you decide to run these programmes?

**KS:** In my role as the founder of executive search firm The Lighthouse

it's even harder to expose your vulnerability and ask for help with the thing you may be struggling with. A range of distractions and social conditionings that we're subjected to has created a global epidemic of mood disorders. Depression has surpassed malaria, diabetes and even acts of war as a creator of disability, and we all need to be tuned into it.

**KS:** It's no wonder that workplace wellbeing is the focus of World Mental Health Day this year. Our ambition is to make it much more

comfortable to talk about your mental wellbeing, in the same way as you would talk about your physical health. In America they're just about there but we have a long way to go.

### You run a range of other bespoke services, as well as the retreats. What are your ambitions for Psyched in the future?

**BM:** Our main goal is to raise awareness because when people become aware of something, you've already changed the conversation

around it. There are a lot of options out there for looking after your mental health but people don't talk about it so they don't know what they are. They just go to the GP without exercising any other options.

**KS:** Getting coaching at work used to mean you weren't performing properly, yet nowadays people are proud to do it as it shows they're investing in their corporate ability to perform even better. At the moment people are shy about acknowledging they have a therapist but I can see it

going the same way. It's simply something they have in their locker as part of a strategy to look after themselves, just like having a personal trainer or a nutritionist.

**DAVID POLLOCK**


For more info on Psyched Global, see [psychedglobal.com](http://psychedglobal.com). World Mental Health Day 2017 is on October 10 and the theme as set by the World Federation for Mental Health is mental health in the workplace. More details at [wfmh.global/wmhd-2017](http://wfmh.global/wmhd-2017)



# BAD MORNING?

Get the Metro app for puzzles, games, news and celeb gossip. Happy to help.

DE	L	A	Y	E	D		
C	A	N	C	E	L	L	E
D	E	L	A	Y	E	D	
C	A	N	C	E	L	L	E



Download **M** for **FREE**

