Mental Health: Obligations and Opportunities

Dr Hillary Bennett
One of the most basic of universally accepted ethical principles is to do “no harm” to others and to ensure employees’ “health and safety”

(5 Keys to Healthy Workplaces, Work Health Organisation)
Guiding principle of the HSWA (2015)

Workers and other persons should be given the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety, and welfare from work risk, by eliminating or minimising these risks, as is reasonably practicable.
Leadership is vital to creating a workplace culture in which protection and support against harm is the guiding operating principle.
Leaders create and embed culture by what they pay attention to, measure and control.

We have been shouting safety and whispering health.
Cost of poor work-related health in New Zealand

- According to WorkSafe, every year some 600 to 900 people die from work-related diseases.

- The number of people who die of a work-related disease is about 10 times the number who die from work-related instant trauma, such as a fall.

- In addition to work-related deaths, each year about 30,000 people suffer from work-related health conditions. Of these people, about 6,000 are hospitalised.
Wellness in the Workplace Survey, 2017

- 6.6m working days lost in 2016
- $1.51b due to absence
- An absent employee typically costs their employer $600 to $1,000 a year
- 3/4 of businesses do not have policies or arrangements in place for older workers, although the trend shows gradual improvement.
- 4.5-5 days annually is the average rate of absence per employee.
- Wellness has a sizeable impact on productivity of most enterprises, with most experiencing a noticeable drop in output when staff are unwell.
- 46% of Kiwi workers still turn up to work despite being sick.

Southern Cross and BusinessNZ
Defining health and mental health

• “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organisation)

• Mental health is the ability to think, feel and behave in a manner that enables a person to perform effectively in their work environment and in their personal lives

• Mental health does not mean “mental ill health”
Costs of poor mental health

• 1 in 5 New Zealanders live with mental illness and/or addiction (NZ Mental Health and Addition Services, September 2018)

• 1 in 6 New Zealand adults had been diagnosed with a common mental disorder at some time in their lives (2016/17 New Zealand Health Survey)

• As the workplace is a subset of the broader New Zealand population, it can be expected that most organisations will reflect similar trends

• *Your* employees are highly likely to be affected - directly or indirectly - by a mental health issue
What is the stone in your shoe about mental health?

“It isn't the mountains ahead to climb that wear you out, it's the pebble in your shoe.”
Muhammad Ali
Mental health in the workplace: Principles
The right thing to do

• Everyone who goes to work should go home safe and healthy, both physically and mentally

• Ensuring this a legal obligation - it is also the right thing to do

• “Employers have a huge positive role to play in improving mental health and it also makes perfect business sense to keep everyone as mentally fit and productive as possible.”
Applies to us all

We all have mental health. Everyone is somewhere on the mental health spectrum. Mental health is not an absolute but a continuum. It is a dynamic, changing state that can deteriorate or improve.
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Mental Health Continuum Model

- Healthy
- Reacting
- Injured
- Ill

Flourishing Languishing / Struggling Unwell
Not simply the absence of mental illness

- At any one time most employees will be thriving, but can move between thriving, struggling and being ill, and possibly off work.

- Someone with a diagnosed mental health condition and the right support can enjoy positive mental health and thrive.
Work can be both good and bad

The workplace can have both a negative and positive impact on mental health

Businesses have:

- A duty – *obligation* - to protect workers from both physical and mental harm, and to support those that are experiencing harm
- An *opportunity* to foster wellbeing and to encourage people to restore their wellbeing
Good work is good for mental health

Good work can help prevent new mental health problems arising, as well as support those with existing conditions to thrive.
Poor mental health is costly

Significant human and economic costs are associated with poor mental health including:

- Increased absenteeism, sick leave and presenteeism
- Loss of diversity and skills
- Knock on effect on others
- Workplace conflict
- Injuries
Investing in mental health has positive outcomes

• The return on investment (ROI) of workplace mental health interventions found an average return of £4.20 for each £1 spent

• Australian Fire Service found that the ROI was £9.98 for each £1 spent on mental health training
Mental health is everyone's responsibility

• Businesses have the primary responsibility for the health (physical and mental) and safety of their workers and any other workers they influence or direct.

• Everyone has a duty of care for their own health and safety, and that their actions don't adversely affect the health and safety of others.

• Officers: you have a duty of Due Diligence. What does this look like in terms of mental health?
Prevention is better than cure

• Interventions to both protect, foster and reclaim mental health and wellbeing should be proactive not just reactive

• Addressing mental health issues proactively is reduced by the stigma and discrimination that exists in many workplaces

• “Mental health is still the elephant in the room in most workplaces – employees are reluctant to raise the subject for fear of discrimination, while managers often shy away from the subject for fear of making matters worse or provoking legal consequences. This culture of silence means that opportunities to support someone in the workplace are being missed, resulting in staff being off sick or falling out of the workplace altogether.” - Emma Mamo. CEO Mind
Mental health in the workplace: Interventions
Framework for managing workplace mental health

**OBLIGATIONS**
Use these approaches to prevent harm

- **PROTECT**
  Identify risks to mental health and wellbeing. Eliminate or minimise at source where practicable.

- **SUPPORT**
  Provide access to appropriate workplace and clinical support.

**OPPORTUNITIES**
Use these approaches to help people thrive

- **FOSTER**
  Develop the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and teams.

- **RECLAIM**
  Restore the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and teams.
Protect
To identify risks to mental health and wellbeing, then eliminate or minimise at the source where practicable
Wellness in the Workplace Survey, 2017

Top five reasons for increasing stress and anxiety:

1. general workload
2. relationship issues
3. pressure to meet targets
4. management style/work relationships
5. long hours

Stress, up by a net 22.9% across businesses is on the rise for the second consecutive time with general workload being the main cause of anxiety.

Employers with fewer than 50 staff, are now more likely to have some form of ‘employee assistance programmes’, rising from 14.5% in 2014 to 32% in 2016.

Southern Cross and BusinessNZ
Foster
To develop the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and teams.
Reclaim
To restore the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and teams

WINNING WAYS TO WELLBEING

CONNECT
Talk & Listen, Be there, feel connected

Give
Your time, your words, your presence

Take Notice
Remember the simple things that give you joy

Keep Learning
Embrace new experiences, see opportunities, surprise yourself

Be Active
Do what you can, enjoy what you do, move your mood

INTRODUCE THESE FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES INTO YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL FEEL THE BENEFITS.

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand
www.mentalhealth.org.nz
Support
To provide access to appropriate workplace and clinical support
## Making Sense of Mental Health

Use the set of contrasts to make sense of your approach to mental health
Identify which aspects of mental health are getting most attention
Discuss how helpful your approach is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>Thriving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obligation (Protect / Support)</td>
<td>Opportunity (Foster/ Reclaim)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Investment</td>
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<td>Individual responsibility</td>
<td>Joint Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
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Has this discussion, removed or added, stones to your shoe?
Getting started

Complete the CEO assessment - ‘Lead By Example’ section (pg. 6)
“Employees will respond negatively to wellbeing initiatives if they believe they are merely being implemented to get them to work harder. This is why harnessing the right culture in the workplace is important. So it is an environment where employee wellbeing can flourish. Leadership is key to developing this culture and its success relies upon buy-in and cooperation of all leaders from the board level down.”

Professor Sir Cary Cooper, CBE, Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health, Manchester Business School
What support can the Business Leaders’ Forum provide?