

WHY MENTAL WELLBEING?



Healthy Workplaces

“Businesses that invest in mental health are more productive, innovative and likely to recruit and retain the best and brightest people.

Mentally healthy workplaces prevent harm to the mental health of their people, make sure people who experience mental health difficulties are supported and have positive cultures that are conducive to mental wellbeing.”

Prof Allan Fels, Chair Australian National Mental Health Commission

Mental wellbeing is a mix of **feeling good**, **functioning well** and **social wellbeing**. Wellbeing is more than being free of illness or a health problem.



GOOD MENTAL WELLBEING

Good mental wellbeing can increase general health, wellbeing and resilience. At times of optimal mental wellbeing we experience positive emotions, feel able to deal with the ups and downs of life, have a sense of purpose and value, feel connected to our communities and surroundings, and are interested in life and other people.

LOW LEVELS OF MENTAL WELLBEING

Low levels of mental wellbeing reduce our ability to work productively and contribute in our community.

Mental wellbeing can be improved using the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#): give, keep learning, be active, take notice, and connect.

There are many factors that influence mental wellbeing including [mindfulness](#), stress, [sleep](#), [fatigue](#), [alcohol and other drugs](#), [nutrition](#), [connecting with nature](#), [bullying and harassment](#).

IN THE WORKPLACE

Employment provides people with purpose, financial resources and a sense of identity. It provides opportunities to connect with others, develop personal skills, and achieve goals - all of which improve mental wellbeing.

Happier employees are more engaged in their work, stay with their employer for longer, have fewer sick days, and help make organisations more successful. Research suggests that a workplace culture that focuses on increasing positive emotions (e.g. enthusiasm, optimism, contentment) is likely to have a greater impact on engagement, loyalty and performance than one that focuses on reducing negative emotions (e.g. tension, worry, unease).

Work can also be a source of stress and unease, causing poor mental wellbeing.¹

KEY MESSAGES

- The workplace can support positive mental wellbeing by developing a healthy culture.
- Promoting mental wellbeing with staff can improve productivity.
- Build the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) into the workplace to increase wellbeing.
- Poor mental wellbeing can be caused by a variety of personal and work-related factors.

1. LaMontagne A.D., & Keegel, T. (2012). Reducing stress in the workplace (An evidence review: full report). Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

INCORPORATING MENTAL WELLBEING INTO YOUR WORKPLACE

Your efforts to promote and support mental wellbeing in the workplace should consider a multi-level approach to ensure it is effective and sustainable.

A multi-level approach involves considering what is available at each of the following levels:

1. Organisational policies and procedures

Create a healthy culture and prevent harm to mental wellbeing through

- a clear outline of expectations to treat everyone with respect in your wellbeing policy, and the workplace stance on preventing harm, and
- managers and leaders who demonstrate positive workplace interactions.

2. Environmental infrastructure and facilities

Support staff (training, workplace support staff), raise awareness, and reinforce positive wellbeing messages.

3. Individual opportunities to learn more and develop skills in mental wellbeing including:

- information on where to get help
- posters promoting positive messages
- seminar/speakers on managing aspects of wellbeing
- encouraging two-way communication and feedback, and
- taking part in national promotions such as Mental Health Awareness Week

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES FOR MENTAL WELLBEING IN NEW ZEALAND?

[The New Zealand Health Survey 2015/16](#) identified that:

- More than half a million adults (19%) had been diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder, and/or anxiety disorder in their lifetime.
- Over 250,000 adults (7%) had experienced psychological distress in the past four weeks.
- Women had higher rates of diagnosed mental health conditions and distress than men.
- While older people were more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition in their lifetime, younger people were more likely to be experiencing psychological distress.
- Māori and Pacific adults had higher rates of psychological distress.
- Psychological distress was over three times more common among people living in areas of high deprivation.



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