

REIMAGINE WELLBEING TOGETHER HE TIROHANGA ANAMATA

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When your mental wellbeing is strong and your workplace is safe, supportive and inclusive, you will feel more engaged in your mahi, be more productive and have higher morale and job satisfaction. Of course, sometimes there are things that impact our mental health and wellbeing that we can't control and this can make life difficult.

It's important to acknowledge it has been a difficult year as a result of COVID-19, but with challenges comes opportunity. This guide is designed to help you reimagine a workplace that prioritises mental health and wellbeing.

GETTING THROUGH TOGETHER

WHĀIA E TĀTOU TE PAE TAWHITI

ALL RIGHT?

 Mental Health Foundation
mauri tū, mauri ora OF NEW ZEALAND

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR WELLBEING

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE COMMON

In 2016, a survey of New Zealanders 15 years and older showed:



80% Either had personal experience of mental illness or knew of others who had.¹



30% Personally had an experience of mental illness.¹



33% Reported some degree of depression and/or anxiety.¹



1 IN 4 Adults reported medium or high levels of psychological distress.¹

A Ministry of Health Survey² found



1 IN 2 Meet the criteria for a mental illness at some point in their lives.

Across the world³



At any one moment, around 20% of the working age population in the average OECD country is experiencing a mental disorder in the clinical sense.

COST BENEFITS OF WELLBEING PROGRAMMES

Looking after employee mental health and wellbeing saves businesses money.



Average return per \$1 spent on mental wellbeing programmes was \$4.20.⁴



Workplace cultures that value employee wellbeing are linked to having the strongest productivity.⁵

10%

Organisations that prioritise employee engagement and wellbeing outperform the average by approximately 10% on the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index (FTSE 100).⁶



Higher levels of psychological wellbeing and employee engagement are linked to better performance, productivity, customer satisfaction and organisational citizenship.⁷

Costs from not taking action

Cost from low levels of mental wellbeing at work:³

- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism (being at work while feeling unwell)
- Reduced work performance
- Increased turnover rates
- Higher accident and injury rates
- Higher health care costs
- Higher worker compensation premiums
- Poorer organisational citizenship behaviours
- Greater counter productive work behaviours

In 2019, estimates showed that in New Zealand:⁸



In 2015, only 1 in 4 NZ workers were categorised as flourishing.⁹

7.4 million days

Approximately 7.4 million working days were lost due to absence.

\$1.79 billion

The direct costs of absence alone amounted to \$1.79 billion across the economy.



35%

On average, 35% of staff turn up to work despite being sick (down from 46% in 2017).



Stress has risen by a net 23.5% across businesses in the past 2 years.

The Law



Workplaces have a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to manage risks to mental health and wellbeing just like they do any other health and safety risk.¹⁰



Both the Human Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act lay out responsibilities and obligations for workplaces to ensure workers experiencing mental health problems are not discriminated against, do not face harassment and have access to reasonable accommodations.

DIVERSITY HAS TO BE MEANINGFUL

A diverse workforce (including cultural background, age, gender, as well as diversity of experience and expertise) can add to innovation and performance, but only if the workplace is psychologically safe.



**Diversity plus psychological safety
= high performance**



**Diversity and low psychological safety
= low performance**

According to a 2020 NZ workplace diversity survey¹¹:



Nearly 45% of respondents believed Māori (44.9%) and Pasifika (41.5%) were underrepresented in their organisations.



37.5% of respondents said that bias affects decisions like recruitment, promotion or pay. 48.9% of respondents also said they saw unconscious bias at work.



68% of respondents said staff needed to be educated on the importance of whānau and collectivism.



32% said they experienced stress and anxiety as a result of work.

- According to a 2020 Mental Health Foundation survey that asked Māori about their experiences in the workforce, some workplaces had no or very little integration or recognition of the Treaty partnership or cultural practices.
- Employers said they would like to see their colleagues try to speak te reo, and to do so properly. Respondents said they did not feel safe at work if tikanga and kawa was not respected; and management 'selected' when to apply cultural values in an ad-hoc manner.
- Māori employees expressed that Treaty obligations along with cultural safety, cultural supervision, access to local elders, and hauora initiatives were vital to wellbeing.

The Law



The value of diversity and inclusion is also prescribed in law. The formal legal position of the Treaty of Waitangi is that it is legally effective in the NZ Courts to the extent that it is recognised in Acts of Parliament. Workplaces have an obligation to adhere to the Treaty principles of partnership, participation, and protection.

STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Stress is the response our body has to help us prepare for challenges or perceived threats. When we're faced with a challenge, we get a rush of natural chemicals that amplify physical strength and our senses. It is a helpful automatic physical response that can sharpen our senses but too much stress can be harmful. When our stress response is turned on repeatedly, it puts unnecessary strain on our bodies and impacts our ability to think.

A Mental Health Foundation survey of 335 New Zealand workplaces, conducted in March 2018, found the top three causes of poor mental health in the workplace were high workloads, poor work/life balance and stressful work.

SIGNS FOR STRESS AT WORK

If individuals or teams are experiencing stress in the workplace, you may see:



Arguments



Higher staff turnover



More reports of stress



More sickness absence



Decreased performance



More complaints and grievances

When these signs are present or when staff raise concerns about stress, workplaces have a role and responsibility to assess the impact work may be having on their people's health and to take action to minimise, eliminate or manage.

To reduce the impact of stress, workplaces should consider processes and ways of working that enhance the three Rs:



Refuel/Whakatipu

Looking after wellbeing and cultivating energy to refuel.



Resolve/Whakatika

Identifying stressors and finding solutions that help resolve the causes of stress.



Relax/Whakatā

Switching on the relaxation response to restore and rest.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Reducing immediate stress allows people to be able to problem solve and better cope with the ongoing demands. To do this, talking about how people are feeling and what is worrying or upsetting them is crucial. Clear communication can be simply – “I don’t know right now but we are working on it. What else could help right now?”

WHAT DOES POSITIVE COMMUNICATION LOOK LIKE?



Positive communication is respectful and builds trust, creating positive relationships that support collaboration.



Expectations, goals and processes are clearly explained and people’s understanding checked.



Feedback is encouraged and people feel safe expressing their ideas, concerns and feelings.



Conflict may still occur but it happens safely, recognising that disagreement or things going wrong are an opportunity to learn and improve.

Remember your OARS – this framework aims to help you to think about how to meaningfully and safely communicate.

O Open-ended questions

A Affirmation

R Reflection

S Summarisation

To understand and create change, you need to:



HAVE CLEAR INTENTIONS



ASK MORE THAN TELL



VALUE RELATIONSHIPS



MAKE IT SAFE TO SPEAK UP

