The Flourishing University
Staff well-being in higher education

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TO BE WELL AND WORK WELL

Wednesday, 20 September 17
Workplace policy context

Work is a positive contributor to wellbeing and workplaces have an important role to play (DWP. Dame Carol Black, 2008).

The workplace is a setting for action for health and wellbeing (WHO. 2010).

WHO Healthy Workplace Model

Comprehensive model emphasises four “Avenues of Influence”

- Physical Work Environment
- Psychosocial Work Environment
- Leadership Engagement
- Worker Involvement

World Health Organization, Healthy Workplace Framework and Model, February 2010
Three levels for consideration, of responsibility and for intervening

• Primary – organisational level
• Secondary – psychosocial environment – preventative individual and group
• Tertiary – treat symptoms - individual and group

Models:
From: demands/control (Karusak, 1979)
To: demands and resources model for considering individual stress, wellbeing and engagement. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Burnout          Positive engagement & fulfilment

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Higher education workforce
External and internal culture

- Neo-liberal economic policy and culture in HE Sector
  market needs dominate (student numbers, ratings, research output) - competition - doing more with less - dehumanisation – erosion of opportunities for collegiality and support – individual wellbeing ‘externalised’ as no market value
Higher Education research

Demands Stressors
- Workloads – no let up – no time to think, rest or recover
- Reduced autonomy - Poor management - increased

Resources
- Academic environment
- Autonomy - stimulation
- variety commitment - satisfaction – skill
- utilisation
What is being done?

**Organisational level?** Not known. Training for managers – stress mental health policies

**Individuals** - Most higher education institutions have some form of professional support for staff

- Mostly external agency (EAP – helplines and counselling = minimal tertiary level), through Occupational Health or tagged on to student service
- Handful of dedicated psychological services for staff
- Mindfulness training – usually ad hoc not embedded in organisation
Staff Counselling and Psychological support service

- In house – embedded strategic – working on different levels
- 1-1 consultation, psychoeducation, counselling and coaching
- Group and team psychoeducation workshops – X13
  Personal resilience and bespoke sessions
- Mindfulness training – 8 week courses + workshops
- Organisational partnerships and influence – HR, OH, Staff Development – procedures and training
Our guiding principles

- Working across the mental health continuum – 1 in 1
- Proactive – optimising positive health
- Psychoeducation individuals, roles and activities
- Workable Ranges model based on interpersonal neurobiology and the mindful brain. Sets out visually healthy regulated states and wellbeing and 2 different states of dysregulation that compromise presence wellbeing and functioning. An individual and organizational rationale for attending to wellbeing
Workable Ranges

Hyper arousal reactions and habits

HIGH ENERGY - Mobilisation
• frazzled, overwhelm and panic
• fractured attention, racing thoughts
• agitation, impulsive
• anger-rage, frazzled
• hyper vigilance

Comfortable, coherent arousal = calm energy

WORKABLE RANGE - window of tolerance and effectiveness

Comfortable, coherent slowness = calm tiredness

Hypo arousal reactions and habits

LOW ENERGY – Immobilisation
• passive, lack of feelings, numb
• can’t think or critical or pessimistic thoughts
• shut down, given in, can’t protest

FREEZE

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Mindfulness-based interventions in organizations offer the potential to build individual and organizational resilience, engage employees and address workplace stress. A guide for how mindfulness can be used as a change management and organizational development strategy.

Appraising the implementation of mindfulness within a strategic approach to psychological health.
Conclusions

- Break the silence (Gill, 2009)
- Cross disciplinary perspectives and action
- Got to get into the organisational system as well as individual minds and work on both levels
- Need strong leading ideas about wellbeing, functioning and flourishing that staff and leaders and managers can relate to
- Create culture where the social conditions for thriving are valued and where help seeking is linked with effectiveness in role
- Take a long view and allow conditions and activities and relationships to grow
References


• Burton, J. and World Health Organization, 2010. WHO Healthy workplace framework and model: Background and supporting literature and practices.


• Rose, S. (2014). The key to keeping your balance is knowing when you've lost it. British Journal of Psychotherapy Integration,