



HumanPsychology

Managing Mental Health & Wellbeing SASSLA Conference

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Human Psychology

Think.
Feel.
Perform.
Better.



We will cover:

- Defining mental health and wellbeing @ work.
- Understand the early warning signs of psychological difficulties.
- How to plan and execute conversations about mental health.
- Occupational hazards in Schools.
- Creating a healthy working environment.



Mental Illness

What is your reaction?
Public perceptions?



What is wellbeing@ work?



Mental Health

- ‘Mental health’ – it’s a continuum.
- ‘Mental illness’ – can affect what we **feel, think** and **do**.
- Stigma & myths are still common.



HEART DISEASE. JUST ANOTHER EXCUSE FOR LAZY PEOPLE NOT TO WORK.

IMAGINE IF WE TREATED EVERYONE LIKE WE TREAT PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION.

Shocking, isn't it? But it's true. People simply don't take mental illnesses seriously. They assume that those with depression are weak or somehow at fault for their suffering. But like heart disease or any other serious affliction, the 1 in 4 British adults who experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem can't get better by themselves. Journeys works tirelessly to raise understanding and bring attention to mental health issues. Still, the UK has one of the highest rates of self harm in Europe. And that's as unsettling as the headline. We need your help. If you can, please give. Call 02920 692891 or visit www.journeysonline.org.uk **We Listen. We Care.**



Journeys is a registered charity 1108411. A company limited by Guarantee (5181571).

Mental health facts

- **Almost half** of Australians will experience mental health issues.
- **1 in 5** workers.
- **Untreated:** 3-4 more sick days a month (depression alone).
- **Majority** don't get support.



Australian Mental Health data.

7,200 AUSTRALIANS

are compensated each year for work-related **mental health conditions**



= **6%** of workers' compensation claims

\$543 MILLION

is paid in workers' compensation for work-related mental health conditions
ANNUALLY



Compensation claims involving mental health payments are

\$24,500 PER CLAIM
compared to **\$9,000**
for all other claims



Time off work is
15.3 weeks
compared to
5.5 weeks
for all other claims

Depression costs Australian businesses
\$8 billion per annum
in presenteeism and sick leave -
220% higher
than physical sicknesses.

One out of every
1,470 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES
claim for a mental health condition every year:

41%

caused by harassment, bullying or exposure to violence

91%

attributed to mental stress

60%

awarded to workers aged 40 and over

Source: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/topic/mental-health>

Warning Signs

What signs might observe if someone is struggling with mental health issues?

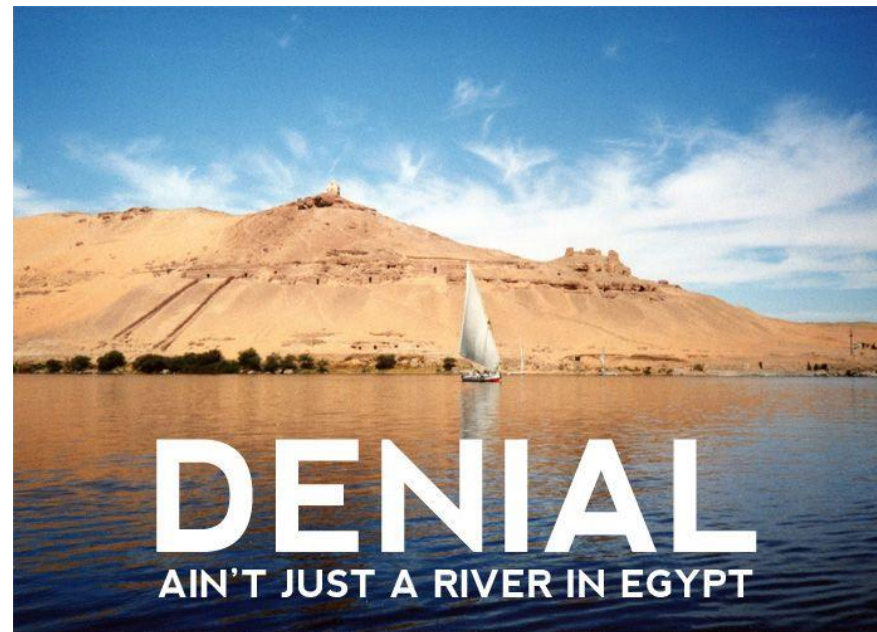
- Behaviour
- Coping strategies
- Emotion



Warning Signs

- Big/sudden changes in performance/behaviour.
- Absent, late, errors, fatigue.
- Under/over-eating, weight gain/loss.
- Poor attention, memory, concentration.
- Sad, teary, not caring.
- Negative, pessimistic, down on self.
- Nervous, worry, rapid speech.
- Isolated, withdrawn, clingy.
- Tense, irritable, angry outbursts, threats.
- Odd behaviour, speech, writing, thinking.
- Body odour, dishevelled, smells of alcohol.

Despite one in five Australians experiencing mental health problems each year, nearly half of all senior managers believe none of their workers will experience a mental health problem at work.



Legal obligations

As an employer / manager, you have legal obligations in relation to the management of mental health in the workplace;

- *Ensuring health and safety*: WHS legislation
- *Avoiding discrimination*: disability discrimination legislation
- *Ensuring privacy*: privacy legislation
- *Avoiding adverse actions*
- *Difficult conversations, if implemented well, do **not** breach legislation. In fact, are **required** for reasonable action.*



A manager's role

- Understanding the impact of mental health conditions on people.
- Identifying and eliminating health and safety risks, including those to mental health.
- Supporting employees with mental health conditions.
- Communicating effectively to employees about mental health.
- Making reasonable adjustments to support employees with a mental health to do their job.

Difficult Conversations

- Why are conversations about mental health so difficult?
- Discuss in your groups for 5 minutes.



Reasons we avoid difficult conversations

- We convince ourselves that talking about the problem will make the problem worse rather than resolving it.
- We do not want to feel bad.
- We do not want the other person to feel bad.
- We may hear things in the conversation about ourselves that we do not want to hear.
- We and/or the other person may get emotional.
- We are not sure where the conversation will end.
- We fear the consequences or retribution.



Disclosure & Confidentiality

- What do I do if a worker is displaying symptoms of mental health issues but they have not told me about any issues?
 - There is no legal obligation for a worker to disclose information about their condition
- Many people choose not to disclose due to:
 - Performance normal
 - Attitudes of others
 - Discrimination
 - Lack of insight and denial



Your role as a Manager

Your main role in this situation is to:

- Invite and promote discussion around job role, productivity, supervision and assistance.
- Determine whether workplace adjustments can reasonably be made, based on how the worker is performing in the job (possibly without needing them to formally disclose their mental illness).
- Consider WHS requirements and privacy principles.

These conversations can feel hard.

There's an emotional toll ...



66%

feel stressed or
anxious if they
know a difficult
conversation is
coming up

...and avoidance tactics are
used in abundance.



57%

would do almost
anything to avoid
having a conversation

52%

prefer to put up with
a negative situation
rather than tackle it

Leadership IS the conversation.

“

**BRAVE LEADERS ARE NEVER
SILENT AROUND HARD THINGS.
OUR JOB IS TO EXCAVATE THE
UNSAID.**

BRENE BROWN - THE CALL TO COURAGE

”


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The Mental Health Conversation: What do I say?

1. Plan a meeting
2. What words do I use?
3. Observe confidentiality
4. Initiate the meeting
5. Prepare for possible responses
6. Create an outcome

Plan a meeting

- Think about what you would like to talk about. What is the purpose of the meeting?
- Meeting with a worker who seems to be experiencing difficulties generally happens so you can:
 - talk about any work-related concerns.
 - identify what may be the cause of the problems.
 - identify what reasonable adjustments the worker may need to enable them to be a productive worker again.
 - develop a plan of action with the worker.

What is reasonable?

- It is important to remember that it is reasonable to ask questions for the purposes of identifying reasonable adjustments in the workplace.
- It is **not** reasonable, and it may be **unlawful**, to ask questions of a worker about their illness that are:
 - personal, that may cause humiliation and/or are in no way related to the real task of determining what reasonable adjustments could be provided
 - used as the basis for discriminatory decisions such as unjustified dismissal.

Planning a meeting

You should also consider:

- the **best place** to meet: find an informal, non-threatening place, such as a work room that is quiet and private
- the **best person** to meet: this may or may not be you, depending on your role and relationship with the worker
- the **best time**: choose a time that best suits you and the worker
- the **best strategy**: reassure the worker and highlight their skills, abilities and value to the organisation.

Observe Confidentiality

- Discuss policies and practices are regarding privacy and confidentiality to reassure them that any information presented will be kept private.
- Make clear that information can only be disclosed is if there is a serious or imminent threat to the health and safety of the worker concerned and/or colleagues.
- Outlining privacy and confidentiality not only critical for developing and maintaining trust, it is essential when negotiating reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

What can I disclose to others?

- It is important not to breach a worker's privacy by telling colleagues about their mental illness unless the worker has agreed that you can do so.
- Discussion between yourself and the worker with mental illness is essential in determining the parameters for disclosing a worker's mental health status to their colleagues.
- If the worker does not agree to disclose their mental illness, discuss what adjustments will be possible without such disclosure

Initiate the Meeting

- It is your role as manager to initiate the conversation.
- Explain why you are meeting with them.
- What words do I use?
- The main focus should be work-related issues that you have noticed in the workplace.
- Asking open ended questions can help start the conversation ~ *“I am concerned about you. You are a competent and valued staff member...”*

Prepare for possible responses

- Be prepared for the meeting to become uncomfortable or for the discussion not to go the way you wanted it to go.
- Some people can feel very threatened when any attempt is made by a manager to discuss personal issues such as mental health.
- Reactions can be as extreme as displaying anger and denial.
- It is important to stay calm, firm, fair, consistent and in control.
- Focus on their **wellbeing & performance & how you can help**: repeat (broken record)

Create an Outcome

There are two outcomes that can occur:

1. Denial of any workplace issues by the worker and therefore withdrawal of the offer of reasonable adjustments in the workplace -> *performance management*
2. Acknowledgement of workplace issues and a subsequent plan of action to identify, implement and evaluate *reasonable adjustments* in the workplace.

Reasonable adjustments

Managers should think about:

- the core requirements of the role – is there anything that can't be altered?
- are there any associated financial costs?
- does the workplace have adequate resources to accommodate the adjustment(s)?
- are any disruptions likely, either to other employees or work flow?
- what is the time frame for introducing any adjustments?

Beyond Blue masterclass.



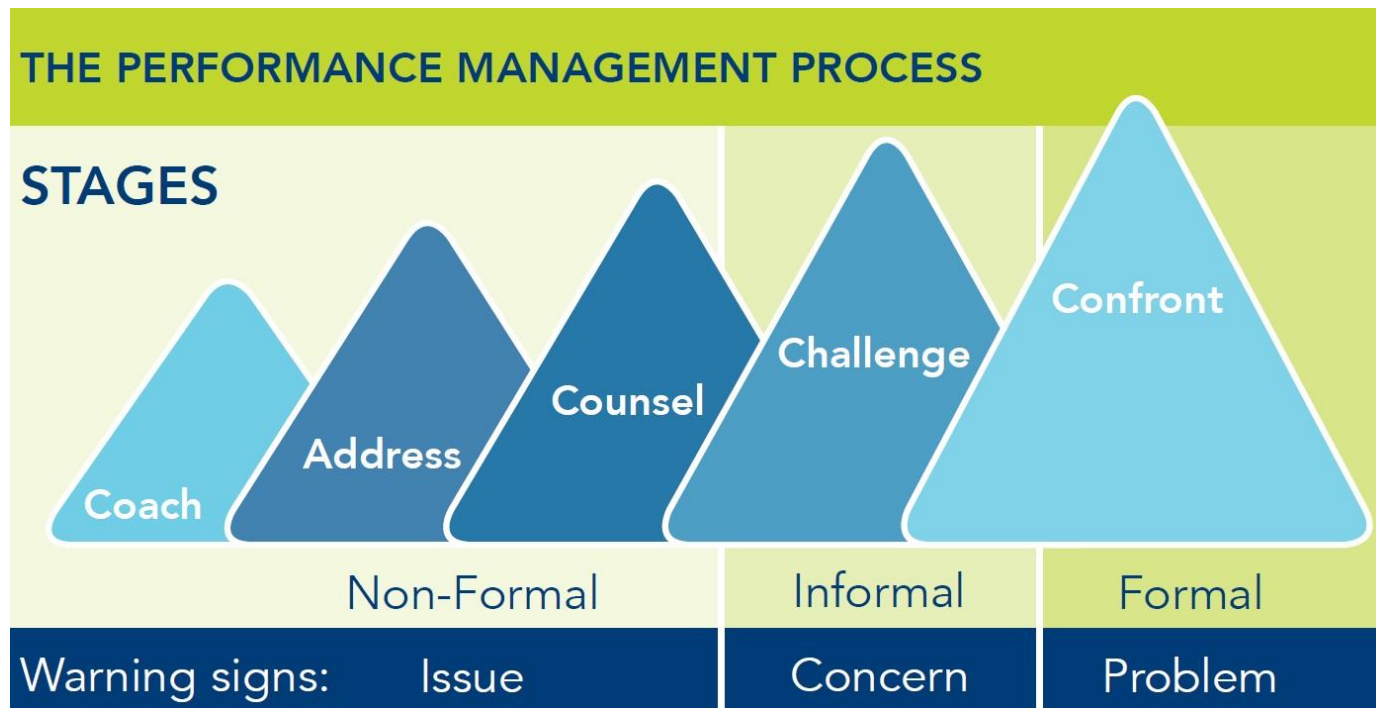
Act now or...

If you do not act now then you could:

- mislead the employee by giving the impression that there is no problem.
- deny the employee the chance to improve or put things right.
- damage the productivity and efficiency of your school.
- lower the morale amongst team members.
- not be doing your job as a manager properly.

Performance Management

If an employee will not disclose reasons for unacceptable conduct / poor performance, managers need to implement normal performance management protocols



“Around 90% of employees think mental health is an important issue for businesses...

But only 50% believe their workplace is mentally healthy.”



State of Workplace; Mental Health Australia report

Percentage of employees and organisational leaders who believe their workplace has specific practices and resources to promote mental health



In my workplace there is/are...

EMPLOYEES

LEADERS

Provision of information about the workplaces' legal responsibilities

46%

72%

Return to work policy for staff with a mental health condition

44%

74%

Processes and policies to support those who disclose a mental health condition

44%

70%

Leaders are committed to promoting the mental health of staff

37%

71%

Employee input into planning, implementation and review of mental health programs in the workplace

25%

57%

Leaders need to...



A mentally 'safe' workplace has...

1. **A positive workplace culture** — "Somewhere that people feel good about coming to work and everyone feels really encouraged and supported."
2. **Reasonable stress levels** — "That means not having unrealistic deadlines, job uncertainty, poor communication, poor boundaries between work and time off."
3. **Supporting people with mental health issues** — "We know that about one in four people will experience anxiety, one in six will experience depression."
4. **Zero tolerance for discrimination** — "Not uncommonly people with mental health issues have had problems with bullying or being poorly treated in their workplace."

Threats to staff wellbeing in schools.

- In Australia, 41% of teachers report high levels of occupational stress (Milburn, 2011) – Teachers make more mental stress claims than any other industry (WorkCover, 2014).
- Excessive workload and working hours.
- Poor student behaviour including lack of motivation and effort, disrespect, violence, challenging authority.
- Management of bullying.
- Aggression from pupils and parents.
- Classroom and school climate.

Threats to staff wellbeing in schools.

- Pressures of assessment targets and inspections.
- Conflict with management and colleagues.
- Adapting and implementing new curriculum.
- Teaching efficacy and learning new skills.
- Self-esteem and status.
- False public perceptions that teachers have masses of holidays.
- Lack of professional opportunities.
- Lack of involvement at the decision making level of educational reforms.

Protective factors

Factors identified as protective against teacher stress and burnout:

- resources to increase sense of self-efficacy
- connectedness with students and colleagues
- feel supported by colleagues
- feel supported by management
- receiving recognition for their work

Your Role and Psychological Well-Being

What key actions could be taken to enhance your effectiveness as leaders in promoting psychological well-being in your School?



Starts and ends with leadership.



Review

What are 3 things you are going to do, stop doing or learn?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

