

Work & Mental Health: Developing An Integrated Intervention Approach

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MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS COMMON AMONG WORKING PEOPLE

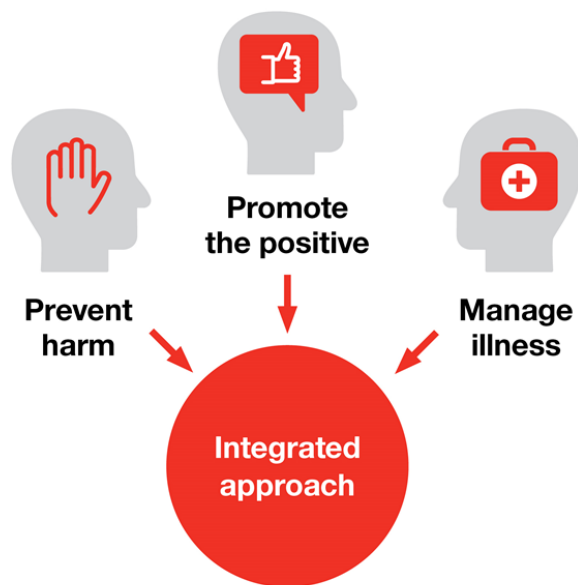


Point prevalence ~
20% of working age
population affected by a
mental health problem
(OECD 2012)

BACKGROUND

- ~10—15 years ago: Early days of policy & practice interest in workplace mental health in Australia
- As a researcher in the area—had too much to say to employers, workers, policy-makers, practitioners
- Realised need to distil best practice advice down to its essence
- Provide a starting point for all workplace stakeholders: a ‘way in’ to this complex area

INTEGRATED APPROACH



INTEGRATED APPROACH

- Addresses legal requirements...
 - prevent harm: requirement for work to be psychologically safe
 - respond to mental health problems
- Also addresses other areas...
 - promote the positive
- Says what to do, *not* how to do it
- Can take many forms, depending on context
 - From a handful to numerous complementary activities

Occupational Health/
Medicine,
Occupational Health
Psychology, Public
Health

Positive
Psychology,
Management,
Org Development

Medicine,
Psychiatry,
Psychology



AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Workplace mental health intervention, to realise the greatest population health benefits, needs to:

1. Protect mental health

- by reducing work–related and other risk factors for mental health problems
(reduce the negative)

2. Promote mental health

- by developing the positive aspects of work as well as worker strengths and positive capacities (promote the positive)

3. Address mental health problems

- regardless of cause (respond)



THE ROLE OF WORKING CONDITIONS

- Work and working conditions influence mental health & wellbeing

- for better and for worse
- positives include income, identity, self-esteem, social connection

- Most prominent potentially harmful influences -- psychosocial work stressors, including:

- job control
- job demands/effort
- job strain
- social support at work
- job insecurity
- bullying
- effort-reward imbalance
- organisational justice
- long working hours
- night shift work

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL STRESSORS

Job stressor exposures predict mental health problems

- poor mental health, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, burnout, suicidality (LaMontagne et al 2010; Harvey et al 2017; Milner et al 2017)

Job strain (low control/high demand jobs) nearly doubles odds of depression

- meta-analysis (Odds Ratio 1.74, Theorell et al, 2015)

Exposure to psychosocial job stressors common in the working population

- translating to large preventable illness burdens

JOB STRAIN-ATTRIBUTABLE DEPRESSION: POPULATION ATTRIBUTABLE RISK ESTIMATES

AUSTRALIA

- Men 13.2% [1.1, 28.1]
- Women 17.2% [1.5, 34.9]

(LaMontagne et al, 2008)

FRANCE

- Men 10.2–31.1%
- Women 5.3–33.6%

(Sultan-Taieb et al, 2011)

REDUCE WORK-RELATED RISK FACTORS

- **What to do** reasonably well-established for job stressors
- **Systematic reviews** (LaMontagne et al 2007; Egan et al 2007; Bambra 2007 & 2009; Petrie et al 2018)
 - Combined work & worker-directed
 - Stress management & prevention
 - Systems approach
 - Comprehensive approach
 - Participatory approach
- Evidence of impact on stressor reduction & mental health

REDUCE WORK-RELATED RISK FACTORS

- How to do this more challenging

- Principles common, but solutions unique
- Generic concepts/constructs manifest differently & require different responses (e.g. job control for sales clerk vs manager)
- Tailoring
- Context-dependence

JOB STRESS INTERVENTION: PREVALENT PRACTICE

- Persisting view of the problem as individual-based
- Stigma issues for job stress as well as MH problems
- Work stress and MH problems as stereotypically feminine weakness
- EAP's most prevalent org response
- Insurance-driven responses can conflict with public health response

(Keegel et al 2009; Page et al 2013; LaMontagne et al 2012)

SUMMARY: PREVENT HARM

- Stressor-based/focused
- Strong on primary, secondary
- Stronger org/envt than individual
- Weaker on tertiary (e.g., early detection, RTW)
- Little on promoting the positive
- Disconnect between best and prevalent practice

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**Prevent
harm**

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**Promote
the
positive**



Medicine,
Psychiatry,
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**Manage
illness**



**Workplace
mental
health &
wellbeing**

PROMOTING THE POSITIVE: DEFINITIONS

- **Complete health** (WHO 1948), **complete mental health** (WHO 2004)
 - "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"
- **Wellbeing**
 - Meaning/purpose (soc & psychol functioning) & positive feelings/ emotions
 - Complete mental health ~ Flourishing ~ high wellbeing in absence of mental illness (Keyes, 2005)

PSYCHOSOCIAL WORKING CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ADVERSE EFFECTS ON POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

- Job stressor exposures more strongly associated with positive MH outcomes than negative/ill-mental health outcomes
 - Caveat: Only a couple of studies to date (LaMontagne et al, 2016; Fan et al 2019)
- Positive mental health ('resilience') buffers or mitigates the effect of job stressors on psychological distress
 - Caveat: One study with job stressors (Page et al, 2014), but others WRT exposure to trauma and depression symptoms (Joyce et al, 2018)

PROMOTING THE POSITIVE: DEFINITIONS

- Overall aim in the workplace is individual and organisational flourishing (Meyers et al, 2013)
- Positive approaches move from *avoidance goals* (manage, control, reduce)...to *approach goals* (encourage, develop)

PROMOTING THE POSITIVE

Strength-based methods	Positive outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appreciative inquiry• Future search• Strength-based development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subjective wellbeing• Eustress/challenge• Positive employee capacities (e.g., engagement, resilience)• Positive org attributes (e.g., climate, social capital)

POSITIVE APPROACHES: EXAMPLE

Most workplace examples to date individual-directed (Meyers et al 2013)

- Mindfulness
- Psychological capital development
- Gratefulness

Organisational development for promoting positive org capacities

- positive manager behaviour (Donaldson-Feilder et al, 2011)
- workplace social capital (Sapp et al, 2010)
- culture of respect (Brun & Cooper, 2009)

PROMOTING THE POSITIVE

Large meta-analysis of general literature (51 studies):

- sustainable enhancement of well-being and mitigating effect on depression; greater benefits among depressed (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009)

Review of pos psych intervention in organisations (15 studies) (Meyers et al 2013)

- Evidence of enhanced employee wellbeing
- Mixed evidence of enhanced performance
- Limited evidence of alleviation of stress, depr, burnout, anxiety

Review of workplace mindfulness interventions (23 studies) (Bartlett et al 2019)

- Evidence of beneficial effects for mindfulness, stress/distress, anxiety, & wellbeing

SUMMARY: PROMOTING THE POSITIVE

- Wellbeing can be eroded by poor working conditions
- Positive MH may mitigate/moderate impacts of job stressors on ill-mental health
- Limitation: intervention emphasis mainly on individual level to date
- Moving to team, group, org level...
- Least developed of the three threads of integrated approach

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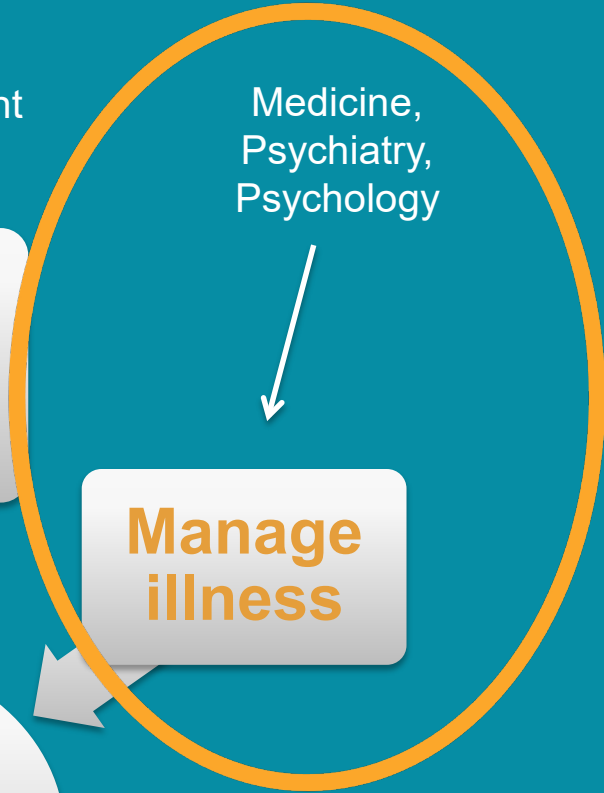
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**Manage
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RESPOND TO MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Wide range of activities (early detection, Return-to-Work, disability employment)

Mental health literacy and anti-stigma main focus of programs entering workplaces *over last 10-15 years*

MHL: “Knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention” (Jorm 1997)

- Psychoeducation: recognition, knowledge, anti-stigma
- Skills for early intervention / helping behaviours

MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Examples:**

- *Mental Health First Aid* (international)
- *beyondblue: national workplace program* (Australia, from 2004)
- *R U OK Day* (suicide prevention)

- **Widespread uptake by employers**

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Meta-analysis of 22 workplace mental health interventions (Martin et al, 2009)

- small but positive overall effects of intervention on symptoms of depression and anxiety

Systematic review of workplace MHL & MHFA interventions: (Kitchener & Jorm, 2004; Jorm et al, 2010; Reavley et al, 2018)

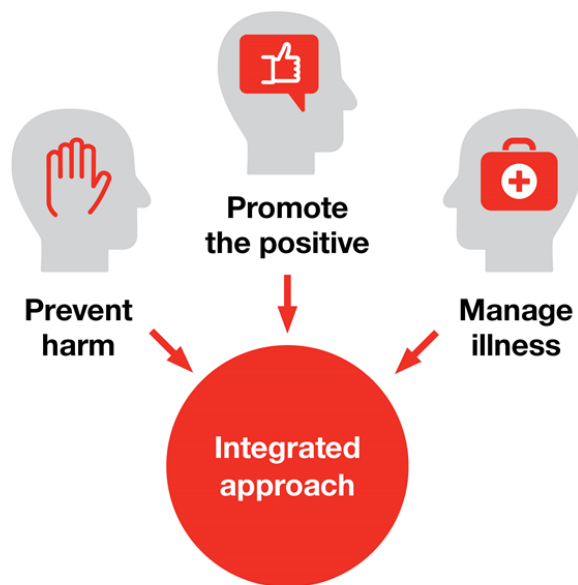
- Improved mental health literacy, and in some cases mental health

Mixed results on workplace stigma reduction (Hanisch et al 2016)

SUMMARY: RESPOND TO MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Illness-based/focused
- Strong on tertiary, weak on primary
- Strong on individual, weak on org/envt
- Little on promoting the positive
- Effectiveness evidence building
- Strongly embraced by employers

INTEGRATED APPROACH



WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY ALIGNS WITH INTEGRATED APPROACH

Mental health literacy:

- “Knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention” (Jorm 1997)

Workplace mental health literacy:

- the knowledge, beliefs, and skills that aid in the prevention of mental illness *and the promotion of wellbeing* in the workplace, and the recognition, treatment, rehabilitation, and return to work of working people affected by mental illness (LaMontagne et al 2014, 2019)

INTEGRATED APPROACHES: EXAMPLES

- **Happening to varying degrees internationally in policy & practice:**

- *beyondblue* National Workplace Program (Australia)
- *Mind: For Better Mental Health* (UK)
- *Mental HP in the Workplace* (European Agency for S&H@W)
- *Guarding Minds at Work* (Canada)
- *Canadian Standard for Psychological H&S in the Workplace* (Canada)



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: WORKPLACE MH GUIDELINES SERIES

- Delphi consensus method using ‘expert panels’
 - managers, workplace health professionals, workers
- What’s seen as feasible in practice, and that workplace stakeholders are ready to act on?
- Generates a range of possible actions

PREVIOUS GUIDELINES (MHFA.COM.AU)



Reavley et al (2012): Development of guidelines to assist organisations to support employees returning to work after an episode of anxiety, depression or a related disorder: a Delphi consensus study. *BMC Psychiatry* 12:135



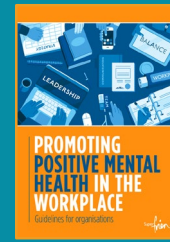
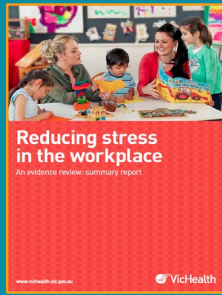
Reavley et al (2014):): Development of guidelines for workplace prevention of mental health problems: A Delphi consensus study with Australian professionals and employees. *Mental Health and Prevention* 2(1-2): 26-34

GUIDELINES

Available open access on *Superfriend* website: <http://www.superfriend.com.au>

Davenport L, Allisey A, Page K, LaMontagne AD, Reavley N (2016): How can organisations help employees thrive? The development of guidelines for promoting positive mental health at work. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 9(4):411-427 .





DEVELOPING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES & PRIORITIES

- Workshop involving researchers, policy-makers, practitioners
- University of Tasmania, Work, Health & Wellbeing Network (2017): *An integrated approach to workplace mental health: Nine priorities for implementation in Australia.* [White paper].
- http://www.utas.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/972395/WHW-Network-White-Paper.pdf

UPTAKE IN POLICY & PRACTICE

- Uptake of ‘integrated approach’ in:
 - 2016: *beyondblue’s 2016 Good Practice Framework for Mental Health & Wellbeing in First Responder Organisations*
 - 2017: *Victorian Public Service Mental Health & Wellbeing Charter*
 - 2017: *beyondblue’s Developing a workplace mental health strategy: A how-to guide for health services*
 - 2019: *WHO’s Mental Health in the Workplace Information Sheet*

CAUTIONARY NOTES

- Over-emphasis on individual (often employer default)
- Conflating of mandatory & voluntary employer responsibilities
 - First priority to prevent harm
- Confidentiality/privacy issues
- Too much focus on softer targets
 - For example: communication over job control & security
- Those most in need probably least likely to receive?
- Exacerbation of inequalities (prevention paradox)

INTEGRATED APPROACH: SUMMING UP

**An integrated approach to work & mental health
could result in:**

- Greater reach of job stress and MHL intervention
- Rebalancing of focus on work and worker
- Transferable (work/non-work) skills (e.g., MH literacy)
- Improved mental health & wellbeing
- Preventive synergies?

THANK YOU

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RESOURCES

- Reducing Stress in the Workplace: an *Infographic* (launched 21 June 2013 by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne VIC AUSTRALIA): <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Video-Gallery/Reducing-Stress-Healthy-Workplaces.aspx>
- LaMontagne AD and Keegel T (2012): *Reducing Stress in the Workplace: An Evidence Review, Full Report*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 52 pages. Open access at <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/workplace>
- Promoting Positive Mental Health in the Workplace – Guidelines for Organisations (2015). <http://www.superfriend.com.au/supporters/research/promoting-positive-mental-health-in-the-workplace-guidelines-for-organisations>
- Workplace Prevention of Mental Health Problems, Guidelines for Organisations (2013): <https://mhfa.com.au/cms/guidelines#mhfaprevent>.
- Guidelines on Providing Mental Health First Aid in the workplace (2016): <https://mhfa.com.au/resources/mental-health-first-aid-guidelines#mhfaworkplace>

RESOURCES

- World Health Organisation (WHO), 2019: *Mental Health in the Workplace Information Sheet* .
https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/
- Worksafe Victoria: Preventing and Managing Work-related Stress – A Guidebook for Employers.
<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/preventing-and-managing-work-related-stress-a-guidebook-for-employers>
- The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ):
<http://www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk/en/publikationer/spoergeskemaer/psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe>
- Guarding Minds at Work: A Workplace Guide to Psychological Health & Safety: <http://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/>
- UK Health & Safety Executive Management Standards for Work-Related Stress:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>
- National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace:
<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/national-standard>
- Workplace Stress: A Collective Challenge (published by the ILO for World Safety & Health at Work Day, 28 April 2016): <http://www.ilo.org/safework/events/safeday/lang--en/index.htm>
- Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace (accessed 24 October 2016): Workplace Strategies for Mental Health: <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/>

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- ***Superfriend***
 - *Promoting Positive Mental Health Guidelines*