



# Mentally Healthy Work: An update from the workplace health and safety regulator.

Dr John Fitzgerald  
Mentally Healthy Work - Lead  
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**WORKSAFE**  
Mahi Haumarū Aotearoa

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# Introduction

- HSWA requires PCBUs to identify and eliminate risks to mental health as far as reasonably practicable as a part of their duty of care.
- Positive mental health is good for people and for productivity.
- There are psychosocial risks in work design, work environment, and in relationships (the social and organisational context) and from individual factors.

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## What is mental health?

DEFINITION FROM  
THE WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANISATION, 2014

Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

## What is mentally healthy work?

WORKSAFE POSITION  
STATEMENT, SEPTEMBER 2020

Mentally healthy work is where risks to people's mental health are eliminated or minimised, and their mental wellbeing is prioritised.

## What is mental harm?

WORKSAFE POSITION  
STATEMENT, SEPTEMBER 2020

Mental harm is significant cognitive, emotional, or behavioural impact arising from, or exacerbated by, work-related risk factors. Mental harm may be immediate or long-term and can come from single or repeated exposure to risks.

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## Why is good mental health important to PCBU's?

The burden on workers, their families and the wider economy from work-related ill-health far outweighs the burden from work-related injuries. Mental ill health is a significant part of this.

- Reduced mental health is now the primary cause of lost working days in most Westernised countries.
- 17% of work-related DALYs are due to mental health problems.
- The cost of at-work related productivity loss (that is, 'presenteeism') can be 1.5 times greater than the cost of absenteeism.
- Estimated that mental health problems costs New Zealand business at least \$1.6bn pa.

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# Flourishing for all at work

## AN ASPIRATION

- Mental health is more than the absence of a disease or a disorder. There is a difference between pathology and functioning.
- We can function well even if we have a diagnosed mental illness.
- We can struggle and experience mental distress at times in life without having a diagnosed mental illness.
- Our mental health and mental wellbeing is fluid. We can move back and forth along the continua.
- Mental distress is when there is a sense of crisis in our lives or severity in the symptoms.
- PCBUs need to be aware of factors that contribute to both mental wellbeing and mental distress of their workers in the workplace.

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# Flourishing for all at work

CONTINUED

AN ASPIRATION

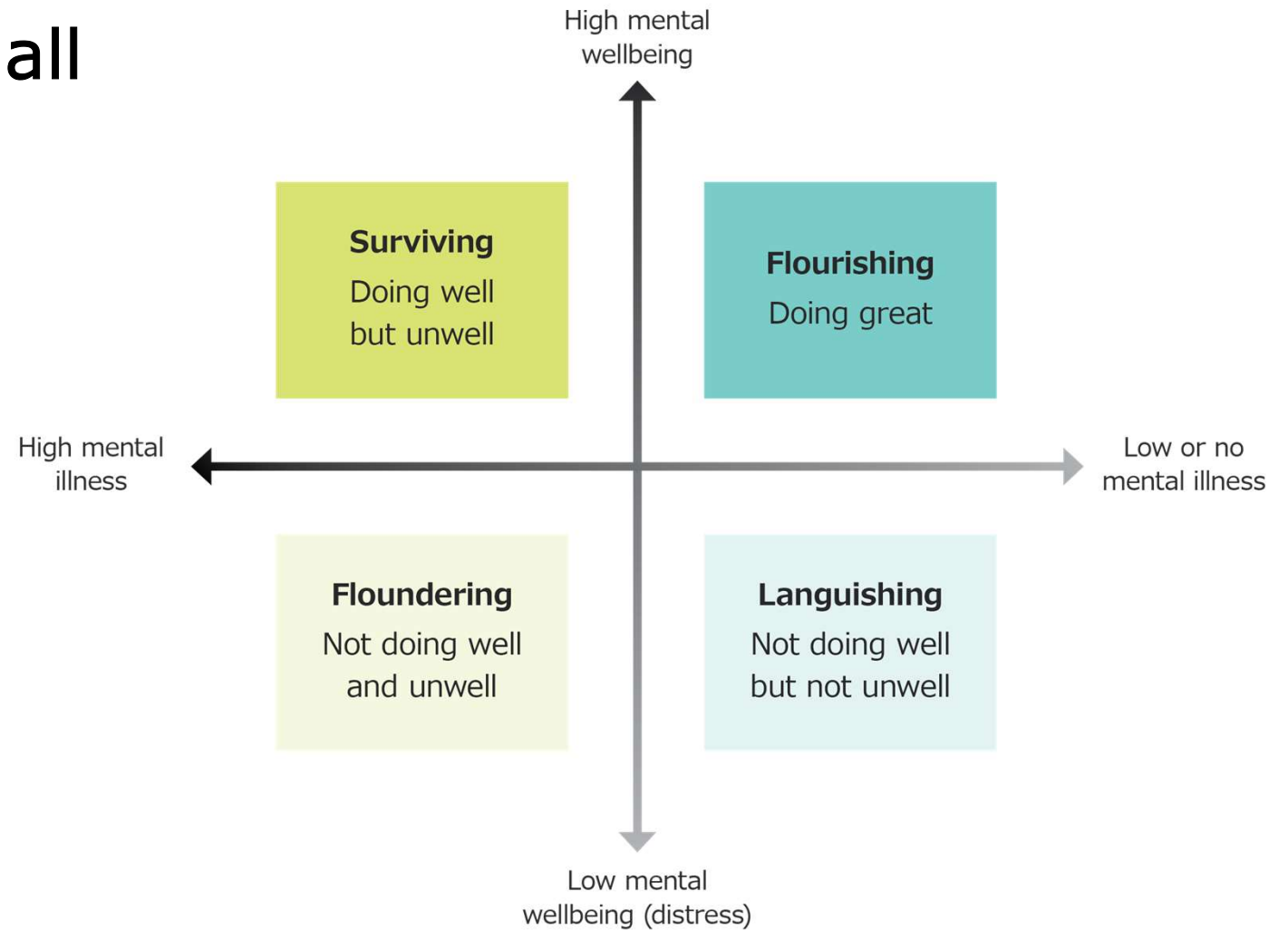


Diagram is based on theory of Dual Continua of Mental Health and Illness (Keyes 2014)

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# Mentally health work: What do we know

WORKSAFE SEGMENTATION AND INSIGHTS PROGRAMME (RESEARCH 2019)

EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS		PREVALENCE IS HIGHER AMONG THESE GROUPS
Depression	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Younger men and women (25% of workers under 40)</li></ul>
Anxiety	31%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Younger women (38% of women under 40)</li><li>- High socioeconomic status (31% of workers in levels 1 or 2)</li><li>- Workers in information medical and telecommunications (50%), and professional, scientific and technical services (44%)</li></ul>
Stress	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Young women (70% of women under 30)</li><li>- Workers with higher household incomes (67% \$100,000+ vs 42% for under \$30k)</li><li>- High socioeconomic status (66% of workers in levels 1/2 vs 51% in levels 5/6)</li><li>- Workers in professional, scientific and technical services (71%) and information media and telecommunications (72%)</li></ul>
Bullying or harassment in the workplace	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Women in their 30s (27%)</li><li>- Workers in commercial fishing (29%) and healthcare and social assistance (25%)</li></ul>

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# Four key areas of risk to mentally healthy work

## 1 Work design - stressful work flow

For example, low job control, high and low job demands, lack of role clarity, remote and isolated work, poor support.

## 2 Work environment

Poor environmental conditions which impact physical and mental health such as: poor air quality, noise, extreme temperatures, working near unsafe machinery.

## 3 Relationships (within the social and organisational context)

For example, poor organisational change management, poor organisational justice, poor workplace relationships, violent or traumatic events, low recognition and reward.

## 4 Individual factors

Individual disposition, cultural background, social supports, personal stressors, coping mechanisms, previous or current experience of trauma and mental illness.



# Causes of workplace mental injury (risks) – Worksafe Victoria (2020)

- low job control
- high and low job demands
- low role clarity
- remote and isolated work
- poor support
- poor environmental conditions, such as:
  - hazardous manual tasks
  - poor air quality
  - high noise levels
  - extreme temperatures
  - working near unsafe machinery

- poor organisational change management
- poor organisational justice
- poor workplace relationships
- violent or traumatic events
- low recognition and reward

**Stressful work flow** (*work design*)

**Environment** (*work environment*)

**Relationships** (*social/organisational context*)

**Collins, J. (2014). Assembling the pieces: An implementation guide to the national standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace. Toronto: Canadian Standards Association.**

- Organizational Culture
- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Civility and Respect
- Psychological Support
- Recognition and Reward
- Work/Life Balance
- Psychological Protection from Violence, Bullying, and Harassment

- Psychological Job Demands
- Workload Management
- Growth and Development
- Engagement
- Involvement and Influence

- Protection of Physical Safety
- Other Chronic Stressors as Identified by Workers

**Stressful work flow** (*work design*)

**Environment** (*work environment*)

**Relationships** (*social/organisational context*)

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# Role of the Mentally Healthy Work team

Our role is to champion mentally healthy work and to provide high level, specialist and evidence-based advice to:

- support employers to create mentally healthy work and mentally healthy workplaces
- ensure PCBUs understand their HSWA and 'duty of care' obligations to provide mentally healthy workplaces
- assist WorkSafe Inspectors and other WorkSafe staff assess mental harm in a PCBU and develop/apply the types of interventions that may be required
- contribute to the design and development of resources and best practice guidelines.

He aha te mea nui o te  
ao. He tāngata, he  
tāngata, he tāngata

What is the most important  
thing in the world? It is  
people, it is people, it is  
people.

**Mauriora**



Getting you home healthy and safe.  
That's what we're working for.

**WORKSAFE**  
Mahi Haumarū Aotearoa