

The Science of Wellbeing



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This document is an invitation to join a community of like-minded people who share similar beliefs. The most important of which is that work can be one of the biggest contributors to your health and wellbeing. Individuals who take the time to deeply understand themselves, their strengths, their weaknesses, their loves, their hates, and the environments where they can excel, will be at a distinct advantage. Knowing these factors they can select a role, a manager, a team, an organisation, a culture where they feel a deep alignment, bringing a level of coherence to their lives, a place where they can experience flow, a place where they can be at their very best and experience a deep sense of personal satisfaction with what they are achieving as a human being - your work can be one of the best parts of your life, in this document we hope to show you how.

Everything Starts with Energy

Organizations that maximize their performance are characterized by large amounts of energy. Energy cannot be created or destroyed, but it can change form according to the first law of thermodynamics. Thermodynamics also states that there are two kinds of energy:

- Potential energy is stored energy
 - An example is a tree branch as it has the potential to fall
- Kinetic energy is energy in motion
 - This would be the act of the tree branch falling

We have an enormous amount of energy that we can tap into, which we refer to as potential. However, making use of that ability is critical in helping an organization perform at their maximum capacity. It is now well established that transforming potential energy into energy in motion can be done through ensuring the health and wellbeing of employees, therefore, workplace wellbeing is of paramount importance in a company's overall success. In order to identify how much energy an organization is producing and how much more it can potentially benefit from the concept of energy needs to be divided into suitable categories to allow for measurement, we refer to these categories as pillars.

The Elements of Success

If you accept this fact it makes sense to breakdown the component parts of an employee's health and wellbeing into its distinct elements and measure them so that we can better understand how each influences the overall sense of wellbeing that the individual feels at any given moment and the energy they must expend to deliver great work.

The Culture Connection

However, employees do not operate in isolation within an organisation, so you also need to view the system in which they exist as a whole and determine how its parts interact. We call this culture. As the father of organisational culture, **Edgar Schein** explains that culture has several layers from superficial (artifacts) to espoused values to deeply held assumptions that can often be difficult to uncover but play an incredibly powerful force in the ongoing operation of that system. It is the interaction of the individual employee with the culture that will determine the success or otherwise of an organisation. Building a culture of health is the key prerequisite for creating a Healthy Place To Work®.

Framework for Success

In this '**Science of Wellbeing**' document, we want to share with you our model (pillars and elements) and our Healthy Place Development Plan.

Both provide a framework for any person to utilise in their ambition to move their organisation from where it is today to a high-performance system where employees have the vitality to flourish and the organisation thrives.

Evidence-based Decisions

Understanding the elements of this model really matter. It is by measuring each that we get a sense of how the whole will be affected to a greater or lesser extent. Our ambition is to deliver data that provides an evidence-base which allows focused interventions where they are needed most and result in real value creation. Our Healthy Place Development Plan is a living document and a roadmap charting the course on a journey with a clear destination – creating a Healthy Place to Work for everybody and a healthy high performing organisation.

Resourced and Resilient

The recent pandemic highlighted the critical need to be resourced and ready and to have the capacity to withstand an existential shock. It is clear that many in society did not have that privilege. Many are fragile and walking a very tight rope in their lives, living day to day.

While many organisations will embark on the journey to create a Healthy Place To Work® for the benefit of their shareholders and board, we hope many will do so for a higher reason, because it is the right thing to do. Governments and States are ill-equipped to turn the tide however organisations are perfectly placed to have a significant impact on societal health.

We hope leaders will step forward in a new way and commit to building organisational cultures that support people to be holistically healthy, resourced and resilient.

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Healthy Place To Work® is a mission-based organisation focused on improving the health of employees and organisations all across the world.

Our model and methodology draw on research and theory in fields as diverse as

- psychology,
- anthropology,
- medicine,
- neuroscience,
- economics,
- management and leadership.
- sociology,
- health,

Assisted by the deep expertise of academics, professionals and leaders in human resources and the health arena. We extend our deepfelt thanks to all who have supported us on our journey.

Healthy Organisation with Healthy Employees

At Healthy Place To Work®, we are clear in our contention that it is impossible to be a healthy organisation with unhealthy employees. Equally, it is impossible to be a healthy employee in an unhealthy organisation as the two are inextricably linked and highly interdependent. The ambition is to create healthy organisations with healthy employees – this is the sweet spot of sustainability – and build resilient people in a resilient organisation.

Aaron Antonovsky

We would particularly like to thank the great Israeli-American sociologist and academic whose work inspired us to create a more holistic and **Salutogenic** model of health. One that focuses on the factors that support human health rather than on the factors that cause illness (Pathogenesis).

We owe him a debt of gratitude and appreciation. May we ensure his life's work continues to touch many today and into the future creating a more sustainable world.



Aaron Antonovsky

4 Pillars of Workplace Health

The Healthy Place to Work® model consists of four broad pillars of wellbeing, each of which comprises a number of elements.

The pillars are:

- Purpose
- Connection
- Mental Resilience
- Physical Health

The model implicitly recognises that mental and physical health are interrelated. It maps to the **biopsychosocial model** of health which was first formulated by the American psychiatrist George Engel in 1977 and which is widely used by healthcare professionals. This states that our biological health can be affected by psychological and social factors and vice-versa.

The **Connection** pillar recognises that we operate in a social environment and assesses key aspects of our relationships both inside and outside of the workplace. The extent to which we feel connected to other people, whether in the workplace or outside in wider society, affects our mental health. A strong feeling of Connection can help to strengthen our mental resilience and reinforce our purpose.

The next two pillars look at our internal psychological environment. **Mental Resilience** measures aspects of our 'mental toolkit' such as our beliefs about our self-efficacy and our orientation for personal growth that give us mental strength. It also measures some factors that can have a big impact on our mental health such as workplace and financial pressures.

The **Purpose** pillar looks at the things we consider important in our personal and work lives and the extent to which there is alignment between the two. A sense of purpose helps individuals to be mentally resilient and to foster connections both inside and outside the workplace.

The final pillar, **Physical Health**, covers the visible and tangible aspects of biological health such as diet, exercise and the physical working environment. The demographic section of the survey also includes a number of indicators of health, and these mainly inform the Physical Health pillar. Each pillar and its associated elements are described in more detail below.



4 Pillars of Workplace Health

Purpose

- Wellness Culture
- Flow & Gratitude
- Congruence
- Organisation & Values

Mental Resilience

- Learning Mindset
- Financial Wellbeing
- Self Efficacy (health, job & career)
- Work Control and Work Demands

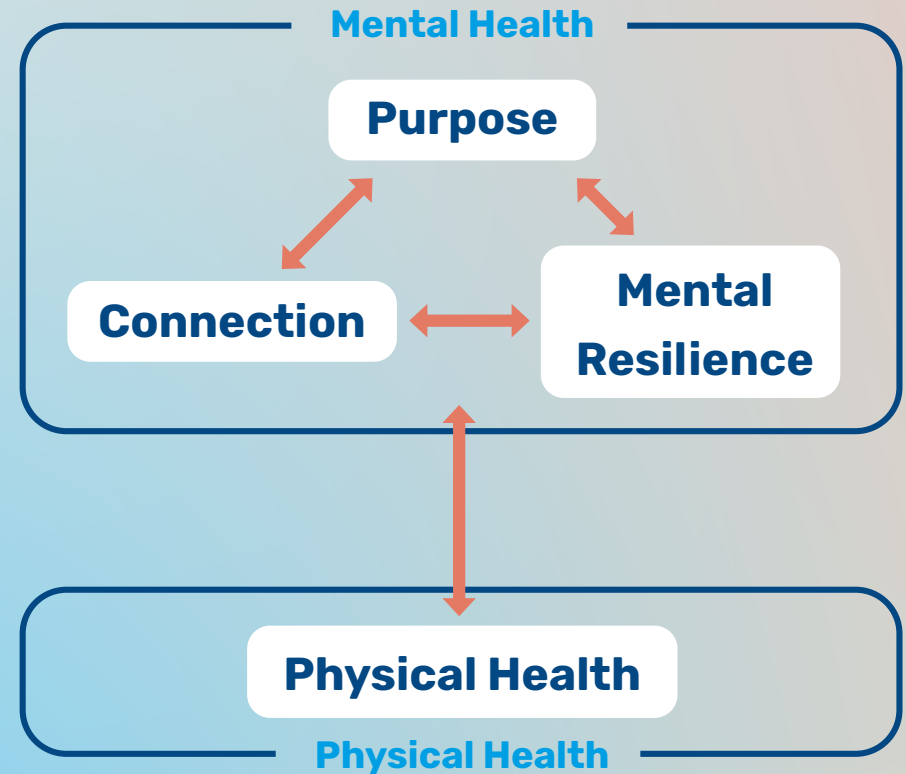
Connection

- Manager Support
- Belonging
- Relationships
- Peer Support
- Social Wellbeing
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Emotional Expression

Physical Health

- Work Environment & Safety
- Energy & Sleep
- Fitness and Diet

Strategic Framework



Purpose

Ancient Greek philosophers understood that a sense of purpose is important for wellbeing. In the 5th Century BC, Socrates described Eudaimonia (literally 'human flourishing' i.e. 'life purpose' or personal fulfilment) as being important for happiness and wellbeing. Life purpose can include personal growth through learning and discovery or raising a family. Such eudaimonic happiness is distinct from 'hedonic happiness' which is the short-term pleasure gained from, say, a drink with friends.

When we have a strong sense of purpose, whether in work or life, this gives us intrinsic motivation to do what we enjoy doing and contributes to our eudaimonic happiness. Extrinsic motivators such as pay and incentive plans only have limited effectiveness as motivators.

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's **Self Determination Theory** (1985) is one of the most influential theories in the psychology of motivation. They argued that we have a need for what they call 'relatedness'. By this, they meant that we need to understand how our role or the project we are working on contributes to something bigger than ourselves such as organisational goals or societal benefits: in other words, our Purpose.



Elements of Purpose

Organisation & Values

Congruence

Flow & Gratitude

Wellness Culture

1. Organisation & Values

This element measures whether the organisation 'walks the talk'. The organisation's values need to be 'lived' throughout the organisation and not merely empty slogans on a wall or web page. This is particularly important for anyone in a leadership role. Senior leaders above all need to be seen to be role modelling values. They need to demonstrate clear alignment and exhibit healthy behaviours consistently.

It also assesses whether employees feel that the organisation will act on employee feedback such as the HPTW survey. If employees give feedback but the organisation does not acknowledge that it has heard or acted on the feedback, then they may become more disengaged and will certainly be less inclined to give feedback in the future. Declining scores on this statement are a leading indicator of declining survey response rates and probable declines in employee engagement and wellbeing.

2. Congruence

In a healthy workplace, our individual purpose at work will align with the overall aims of the organisation. This alignment also includes the opportunity to use our strengths and do what we do best. As individuals, we want to be in the role and organisation to which we are most suited. In psychology, this is known as **person-organisation fit**.

Congruence can therefore be described as 'the degree to which my current self and my ideal self are aligned with my organisation'. Significant misalignment can lead to lack of purpose, ill -health and possibly depression. People who do not feel they 'fit' are much more likely to leave their organisation and will not be in a position to do their best work.

3. Flow & Gratitude

When we do something which we really enjoy and are passionate about - whether an aspect of our job or a hobby - we can get into a state of mind called '**flow**' where we lose track of time. This concept was described by psychologist

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his 1990 book **Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience**. Flow expands your mental and physical skills and is fundamental to your wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Work that can put us into flow is at a sweet spot where it is neither too easy to bore us, nor too difficult or challenging to motivate us. It should have enough challenge to be enjoyable, and where we are demonstrating our mastery of the skill and/or learning something new. A job and an organisation that is designed to allow you to spend more of your time in 'flow' is most definitely a Healthy Place To Work®.

As individuals, we are often tempted to look towards our weaknesses and our deficiencies. This can lead to very negative feeling about our self-worth and general self-esteem. A healthy individual in contrast will always seek to focus on things they have and things that are important. Each day they will be thankful for their health, friends/family and skills and talents that allow them to navigate the world around them. There is a strong correlation between people who exhibit this level of gratitude and their general feelings of wellbeing.

4. Wellness Culture

Culture is key to ensuring the creation of a healthy organisation with healthy individuals. Employees need to believe that their organisation and its leadership truly and authentically cares about them. They need to experience an environment that has been thoughtfully designed to be conducive for healthy behaviours, healthy ways of working, and one where it is easier to be healthy than not. This element assesses whether employees consider that the organisation does actually care for workplace health and whether they participate in workplace health programmes when they are available.

A key aspect is that senior leaders 'walk the talk': in other words, they don't just talk about workplace health, but that they actively role model healthy behaviours. A workplace in which senior leaders work late in the office, thus fostering a culture of presenteeism and one where there is an ongoing expectation that emails will be answered out of hours is highly unlikely to be a healthy workplace.

This element obtains the employee's overall perception using the statement: 'All things considered, I would say this is a Healthy Place To Work®'.

Mental Resilience

Resilience is the ability to learn and bounce back from difficulties or problems. This improves our ability to deal with future challenges. Resilient people are better at dealing with uncertainty as they are constantly learning and better able to adapt. As a result, resilient people tend to have better mental health.

The good news is that one can develop one's resilience by changing one's mindset. Our thinking is critically important and can have a significant impact on our health – we think all the time – but often we do not think about the type of thinkers we are. How you think affects how you feel. For example, resilient people are likely to be optimists.

Optimism is defined as an inclination to put the most favourable construction upon actions and events or anticipate the best possible outcome. Martin Seligman, Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the founders of the positive psychology movement, contrasts two types of thinking and their effects on us as humans in his 1990 book *Learned Optimism*. Seligman invites us to view life events through the frame of an optimistic thinker versus a pessimistic thinker using three key aspects namely permanence, pervasiveness and personalisation.

Looking at the first Permanence: optimistic people believe negative events are more temporary in nature unlike the pessimists who believe they have a more permanent nature. Next is Pervasiveness: pessimists believe failure in one area of life will move to failure in a range of other areas, in contrast optimists

tend to compartmentalise the negative event. Thirdly Personalization: optimists attribute bad events to forces outside themselves and good events to forces within themselves while pessimists do the exact opposite. Therefore, optimists see a bad event as situational and unlucky, not permanent in nature and just specific to the context.

The Mental Resilience pillar consists of six elements. Three elements assess part of our 'mental toolkit' - our learning orientation and our beliefs about our self-efficacy - which help strengthen our armour. This is echoed by the **European Council** which recognised 'personal, social and learning to learn competence' as one of its eight key competencies for lifelong learning in 2018. The definition includes "the ability to reflect upon oneself ... remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn ... and to be able to lead a ... future-oriented life, empathise and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context."

The three remaining elements of Mental Resilience assess some of the biggest factors that influence our mental state: our work pressures, the amount of control we have over how we do our work, and the extent to which we are impacted by personal financial pressures.

Purpose and Connection support our Mental Resilience by helping develop our mental 'armour' which helps to protect us when times get tough.



Elements of Mental Resilience

Learning Mindset

Self Efficacy: Job & Career

Self Efficacy: Health

Work Demands

Work Control

Financial Wellbeing

1. Learning Mindset

One of the most important developments of the positive psychology movement is the recognition of the need to keep learning. The psychologist Carol Dweck first articulated this with her concept of the '**growth mindset**' in her 2006 book **Mindset: The New Psychology of Success**. She argued that people who have a fixed view of their own abilities were more likely to stop when faced with a difficult task. However, people with a growth orientation were more likely to keep going and figure out a solution. She discovered that people can be encouraged to develop a growth mindset by praising effort put in ("Well done, you worked very hard!") more than apparent ability ("Well done, you are very clever!")

Closely related to a growth mindset is the ability to keep going after failure, and to pick oneself up and try again. Psychologist Angela Duckworth described this resilience in her 2016 book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. She found that an individual's '**gritiness**' can be a better predictor of success than their ability as measured by, say, academic achievement.

2. Self Efficacy: Job & Career

This element concerns our self-beliefs. Fundamentally, many in life believe that their own personal decisions matter little as there are forces much stronger than they are that will determine the results that will be achieved. However, people with high levels of self-efficacy believe that their decisions are crucial and highly correlated to the success or otherwise that they experience. High levels of Self-Efficacy in ourselves and our context enables us to do our best work. When we believe that we are capable we are most able to be at our best and accomplish great things. This element looks at whether we believe we are actually in an environment that enables us to be at our best, and whether our role and/or work tasks make the best use of our talents both now and in the future. It can be stressful if we perceive a mismatch between the role we are in and our capabilities such as being out of our depth.

Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura developed **Social Cognitive Theory** (1986) which states that the self-efficacy beliefs we have about ourselves often predict behaviour better than our actual capabilities "I'm not very good at something, so won't give it a go". Our perceptions of self-efficacy affect how we use our knowledge and capabilities

and how much discretionary effort we are willing to put in. Supportive line managers who adopt the correct management and leadership style can help develop our self-efficacy beliefs.

Deci and Ryan's Self Determination Theory (1985) is also important to this element. They argued that we all have a basic need for what they called 'Competence' by which they meant that we need to feel competent enough to control the outcome and demonstrate mastery of the task or skill at hand. They found that unexpected positive feedback increases our intrinsic motivation to complete a task because such feedback supports our self-perceptions of competence. Negative feedback has the opposite effect.

Achieving mastery is important because we are most likely to be able to get into Flow when we are good at something and striving to become even better.

3. Self Efficacy: Health

Our self-efficacy beliefs also impact the extent to which we are motivated to take responsibility for looking after our own health and wellbeing. Sometimes knowing where and how to start can itself be a challenge, and organisations can help us understand what we need to do to improve our own individual physical and mental health. This includes taking time out for reflection and putting things into perspective.

This element also helps to inform the organisation where its health promotion efforts need to focus and whether they will be viewed as credible. Healthy workplaces give people the tools that help them manage their wellbeing as well as providing a supportive environment. This particularly applies to mental health where organisations need to provide a supportive framework for mental health such as Employee Assistance Programmes and mental health first aiders). Healthy workplaces have leaders who are compassionate in dealing with mental health issues of their direct reports and can direct them towards support, as well as being open about their own mental health issues.

4. Work Demands

One of the biggest stressors many people face at work is a heavy workload. A certain amount of pressure for a short period - such as completing a demanding project - can be a good thing as it provides a challenge and can help us grow. However, unrelenting pressure for a sustained period of months, or more probably years, is bad for our physical and mental health. This becomes even more acute if we are facing stress in our home life, such as financial pressures.

One of the most important models in understanding the effects of Work Demands is **Burnout Theory**. The social psychologists Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson developed the **Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)** in 1981 which considered burnout in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is considered the 'core' of burnout. The Dutch psychologists Arnold Bakker and Evelina Demerouti developed this further in 2001 with their **Job Demands - Resources model** which shows that high job demands drain us of energy causing emotional exhaustion.

The Japanese have a word for sudden death - usually heart attacks or strokes - through overwork: *karoshi*. This is brought on by years of excessive work pressure, typically the sheer volume of work and little control in being able to manage it. The effects of burnout are discussed further in the Physical Health pillar.

The key ambition of any organisation is to set the correct demands to the individual so that they can perform to their best. The role of a manager is critical as they are close enough to determine where this level should be set.

5. Work Control

The other aspect of the **Job Demands - Resources model** comes into play in the Work Control element. Lack of resources, for example, time, training, support from colleagues, equipment and inefficient IT systems undermine our ability to cope with the demands of a job. Emotional exhaustion is inversely related to the extensiveness of resources.

One of the biggest resources that people may be lacking in an unhealthy workplace may simply be control over how they actually do their work. Lack of control - such as little or no say over the way they work, and not being allowed to focus on the task - exacerbates the pressure of a demanding workload. It is well known that being micromanaged is one of the main killers of motivation at work.

Micromanaging is often a default behaviour of line managers with a transactional style. However, Healthy Workplaces select and develop their line managers to produce a **situational leadership** style where leaders are able to step away from the detail.

Having flexibility in when to take a break is important particularly for cognitive tasks where breaks can help us refresh and solve problems. However, some job roles, such as production lines, are not structured to allow people to stop whenever they want. These employers need to compensate for the lack of flexibility in breaks by maximising the opportunity for employees to give their input into how work is done in order to improve quality control and suggest improvements and innovations. Even the ability to press a button and stop the production line to address an issue can be seen as giving some control to those employees associated with this task.

The third component of Deci and Ryan's **Self Determination Theory (1985)** is important in Work Control. This is 'Autonomy' by which they do not mean working independently, but in having agency and free will to make their own choices in how the work is done. When someone is motivated by autonomy their job performance, engagement with the job and organisation and their wellbeing is higher than it would be if they are told what to do under a 'command and control' style of management.

6. Financial Wellbeing

After a bereavement, serious illness and relationship breakdown, one of the biggest non-work stressors that people face is financial pressure. Bringing money worries into work affects our ability to do our job. This has been demonstrated all over the world. For example, research by the **Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)** in the UK in 2017 showed that as a result of money worries, 19% of employees had lost sleep, 10% had found it hard to concentrate or make decisions and 8% had spent working time dealing with money problems. For 6% of employee's money worries had caused health problems.

Healthy workplaces contribute to financial wellbeing by giving people the tools to improve their financial literacy, as well as being supportive of those who are in difficulty with access to financial counselling services and in some cases loans to stop the debt spiral. People can often hide financial difficulties making it more difficult to access help and support.

Connection

People have a fundamental need to feel as though they are making a positive contribution to society. This is the encompassed in the Connection pillar. The crucial nature of connection is demonstrated by how it breeds empathy. Since we are social creatures, we are hardwired to connect with others. Schurz et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of neuroimaging data from 4,207 participants and found that the ability to understand others can be shown through neurocognitive processes similar to intelligence and personality.

Neuroscience also shows us that many of the positive behaviours associated with the Connections pillar encourage production of the hormones, **serotonin** and **oxytocin**. When we feel that we belong, are supported and that the organisation has a sense of community, then these hormones are more likely to be produced, leading to lower stress levels and the improved ability of our bodies to repair themselves.

Connection is closely linked to the sociological concept of cohesion. Social cohesion is the strength of interpersonal bonds among group members. Healthy workplaces have higher social cohesion. Another aspect of cohesion is 'task cohesion' which is a feeling of a shared commitment to the team's (or organisation's) objectives, and thus links to the Purpose pillar.

Cohesion is considered by psychologists to be one of the most important properties of small groups and has been extensively

studied in diverse environments such as industry, the military, and sports teams. Research shows that group cohesion is related to outcomes such as work group performance, job satisfaction, and well-being. For example, cohesion in the military has been found to have a strong positive relationship with physical and psychological outcomes such as well-being, enjoyment and belonging. Higher levels of cohesion are associated with lower rates of stress and moderate post-traumatic stress disorder.

Sociologists consider that we each belong to a **primary group** - usually family and close friends. Primary groups tend to be long-lasting and are marked by members' concern for one another, where the goal is actually the relationship itself rather than achieving another purpose. The workgroup is typically a '**secondary group**' which is more transactional in nature and where the team is working toward shared goals. However, in Healthy workplaces, teams can develop many of the characteristics of a primary group which is why people can say that their team - or even their employer - 'feels like a family'.

Connection is, however, a very personal thing. The amount and nature of connection that we consider appropriate varies from person to person according to factors such as personality and neurodiversity, cultural background, life stage etc.



Elements of Connection

Diversity and Inclusion

Emotional Expression

Peer Support

Manager Support

Relationships

Belonging

Social Well-being

1. Diversity & Inclusion

In order to be our best at work, we need to be able to be our authentic selves regardless of our personal characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

If we constantly have to hide a facet of our personality in the workplace this can affect our mental health.

The development of LGBTQ+ groups for example have allowed a significant group of people not only take pride in who they are but celebrate it.

Vernā Myers, the TED speaker, author and VP of Inclusion Strategy at Netflix is often quoted on this topic by saying “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.” However, many have built on this stating that empowerment is feeling comfortable to ask someone to dance ourselves not feeling that we need to wait to be asked.

Many organisations have made great strides in becoming more diverse, in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation but have been slow to introduce cognitive diversity. If your organisation needs high levels of innovation, then cognitive diversity is essential. If everybody thinks the same way, the organisation probably will not be creative enough to get those breakthrough ideas.

Sometimes people run the two words of diversity and inclusion together as if they are one in the same but that is not the case and unfortunately inclusion has often straggled behind. Organisations need to give everybody the opportunity to contribute, speak up and share their ideas. All too often there is simply not the space or will to let this happen. Those organisations that pursue a policy of inclusion ensuring every voice is heard are the ones that will win and are the ones who care about the health and wellbeing of their employees. It is unhealthy for anyone to feel they cannot express their views, opinions or even be themselves because of fear of repercussions.

A diverse and inclusive environment gives people ‘**psychological safety**’. This concept was defined by William Kahn in 1990 as ‘being able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career’. Harvard psychologist Amy Edmondson has since applied the concept to team functioning in agile working. Google’s famous Project Aristotle study of team and manager effectiveness found that psychological safety was one of five key characteristics of successful teams.

2. Emotional Expression

Building on the inclusion in the preceding element, Emotional expression is being able to speak -up and be oneself at work, and it is therefore a consequence of psychological safety. It is not good for our mental health to feel that we cannot speak up about our concerns or not be able to express ourselves. In an environment where we do not feel safe to be ourselves, we will not feel able to use all our talents. However, a culture of emotional expression drives mutual support and loyalty where **Emotional Intelligence** (EI) can become an organisational asset.

The concept of EI has gained traction since Daniel Goleman’s book of the same name in 1995. Zeidner et al (2012) found that greater EI facilitates more positive emotional states and fewer negative moods, thereby achieving a greater sense of wellbeing. This helps to reduce stress.

N Sanchez-Alvarez et al (2015) carried out a meta-analysis of 25 studies with a combined total of 8,520 participants and found a significant relationship between high EI and subjective wellbeing: ‘In general, individuals who perceive, know and manage their emotions might deal better with emotional issues, and therefore experience greater psychological wellbeing.’

3. Peer Support

Given that we spend a high proportion of our waking lives at work, the presence of supportive relationships with one’s peers is an important factor in our mental health. We need to feel that we get on with our colleagues and can count on them for support. This is most likely to happen in a psychologically safe environment where people are more likely to share information, ask for help and feedback, suggest new ideas and learn from mistakes.

This element has become more important as organisations have become flatter and people need to work across organisational boundaries. This is about a culture which fosters collaboration to improve the way things are done rather than internal competition which can result in the hoarding of resources and knowledge and the creation of silos. In the knowledge economy, an emphasis on the sharing of tacit knowledge can become the basis of competitive advantage.

4. Manager Support

Surveys have consistently found that one of the main reasons why people leave organisations is because of poor line management. Although people do quit for other reasons, such as a lack of growth opportunities, there is certainly much truth in the old adage “people join organisations, but leave their bosses”. Managers have a big impact on employee experience and wellbeing. Managers, who are not clear on their expectations, are poor at giving constructive feedback and are ineffective at communicating and implementing change, will demotivate their teams and cause stress. These managers often perceive the manager-direct report relationship in transactional terms.

Unhealthy organisations often do not have good processes for selecting and developing line managers which means that the quality of line managers can vary widely and demonstrate inconsistent behaviours. These workplaces display the phenomenon of the ‘accidental manager’ where people are appointed to line management roles because of their technical skill: “You are a great salesperson, now become a sales manager!” In many cases, the result is the exchange of a great salesperson for a poor sales manager. Of course, some will turn out to be effective managers, but this is far from guaranteed.

Healthy Places to Work give line managers the support to develop so that they can, for example, give constructive feedback and lead change effectively. This is a transformational leadership style.

A 2018 literature review by psychologists at the Universities of Surrey and Exeter in the UK showed a number of ways in which leadership behaviour affects wellbeing. This relationship can be positive, such as the traits associated with transformational leadership, or can be negative leading to burnout, exhaustion and poor-quality sleep.

5. Relationships

This element takes a broad overview of the strength of relationships across the organisation beyond that with one’s peers and line manager, and the extent to which the organisation is seen as supportive in times of crisis.

Clayton Alderfer’s **Existence-Relatedness-Growth** (ERG) theory from 1969 updated Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943) by arguing that we can fulfil different needs simultaneously (e.g., ‘starving artist’). The Relatedness component concerns our requirements for social interaction and external self-esteem. This element measures the extent to which we perceive our efforts at work are appreciated which can have an impact on our self-esteem.

Lahey and Orehek’s **Relational Regulation Theory** (2011) describes ways in which social support in interpersonal relationships affects mental health. This shows that we regulate our emotions with everyday conversations and shared activities rather than through conversations on how to cope with stress. This regulation is relational in that the people who provide support, conversation topics and activities that help regulate emotion are specific to the individuals involved: we all do this in a way that works for us individually.

6. Belonging

The need to belong is one of the most basic human needs. This applies as much to work groups as it does to our other family and social groups. This element provides a high-level measure of the strength of Connection in the organisation and as such is a summary of the combined effects of the previous five elements of this pillar.

Firstly, it measures the extent to which people feel that they will not be let down by their colleagues. Being able to rely on one’s colleagues is a critical aspect of a high-trust, high wellbeing workplace. Conversely, the feeling that one will be let down by one’s colleagues creates stress and inhibits building strong relationships.

Secondly, it measures the extent to which people will stay with the organisation even if higher pay is available elsewhere. This **Intention To Stay** (ITS) statement is an important outcome. An organisation with a poor workplace culture will foster a transactional mindset in which people are much more likely to move for monetary reasons. A Healthy Place To Work[®] on the other hand is much more likely to be able to retain people, even if they are able to obtain slightly better remuneration elsewhere.

7. Social Wellbeing

A Healthy Place To Work[®] recognises that people’s lives outside work are important and that we are all members of a wider society. Our broader social networks are important for sustaining mental health. Strong personal networks boost our emotional stability and wellbeing. They are particularly important for supporting us and acting as a sounding board when we face problems.

An important aspect of social wellbeing for many people is volunteering which helps them connect to wider society. Volunteering can take many forms but whatever form it takes for us individually is good for mental health as it helps build aspects of our ‘life purpose’ in a way that the workplace may not necessarily be able to do. Volunteering can help us to develop our skills, to feel good about ourselves and build confidence.

Physical Health

While the first three pillars cover many aspects of mental health, the fourth pillar covers the visible and tangible aspects of health, such as whether people have a nutritious diet and exercise adequately.

This pillar mirrors the biological aspect of the **biopsychosocial model of health**. Whilst we cannot change our genes, we can do things to improve our physical health - getting good sleep, being physically active and eating a nutritious diet - that will ameliorate our genetic propensity to certain conditions. Good physical health helps to build our Mental Resilience.

While many people will be familiar with the Latin phrase *mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body) and the good intentions it implies, a challenge we all face is not to make poor health decisions when under stress and pressure.

Extensive research from all over the world shows that job-related conditions exert a big influence on individual decisions that affect health such as unhealthy eating, smoking, drinking and drug abuse.

For example, a study of workers in Japan showed that high levels of job-related stress were linked to overeating and obesity. Another study of over 46,000 smokers showed that they were more likely to smoke and to smoke more, when under work stress.



Elements of Physical Health

Work Environment & Safety

Fitness

Energy & Rest

Diet

1. Work Environment & Safety

The Hierarchy of Needs developed by Abraham Maslow (1943) is a well-known theory in human resources. Our most basic human needs include food, water, and safety. In order to meet these needs, a good work environment must, above all, be safe. Due to the risk involved, manual roles that require physical labor, such as mining, construction, manufacturing, and agriculture, all necessitate knowledge and skill. At least one million workplace deaths occur globally each year, and little concern for health and safety is a significant contributing factor. Health and safety legislation should be implemented so that people know it is being followed and that they can raise concerns if they see risks being taken and corners being cut. Behavioral safety (aka zero-incident safety) refers to programs and procedures that foster a deep safety culture without resorting to rules, regulations, and legislation.

2. Fitness

Physical activity helps with mental health as it can lift one's mood. It is also important in controlling one's weight. Because of this, according to the **World Health Organisation**, physical activity lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease, Type II diabetes and certain cancers. It also strengthens the body's physiology and systems' functioning. These combined effects contribute to the slowing of ageing.

Some job roles involve a great deal of physical activity. Employers need to ensure that this is done in a way that it does not cause injury or excessive fatigue. Conversely, other roles involve little or no physical activity: combined with other health risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle these roles are detrimental to health. In this case, employers need to encourage physical activity (taking a short walk at lunchtime, using the stairs instead of the lift etc.)

Studies have shown that regular moderate physical activity during the working day can increase workplace productivity and lower absenteeism and staff turnover.

3. Physical Health - Energy & Rest

Sleep and rest are very important for maintaining our health. Lack of sleep can be caused by shift work, working long hours or other stress at work or in one's personal life.

When we are under stress, the stress hormone, cortisol, suppresses the repair mechanisms in our bodies. When under stress for a sustained period the reduced effectiveness of the repair mechanisms compromise our immune system. This increases our health risks e.g. heart and other cardiovascular diseases and cancer. This is why **burnout** is such a risk.

Sleep-deprivation also leads to lower emotional resilience and greater irritability. In the short-term, a single sleepless night can impair performance as much as a blood-alcohol level of 0.08- 0.1% (the legal limit for driving in many countries). We become less alert, are more prone to making mistakes and find it harder to learn.

A sleep deprived workforce is one at greater risk of health & safety incidents. Tiredness contributes to many accidents and it has been estimated that 20% of motorway accidents are due to fatigue.

4. Physical Health - Diet

Most workers will have one main meal during a typical 8 hour working day. It is important that employees have access to healthy food while at work, but also have enough knowledge to be able to make healthy eating decisions during the rest of the day.

Skipping lunch because one is too busy to stop can have side effects. It can lead to low blood sugar - Hypoglycaemia - which can shorten attention span and slow the speed at which humans process information. This can lead to lower productivity and more workplace accidents. The **World Health Organisation** estimated in 2003 that adequate nourishment can raise national productivity levels by 20 per cent.

Undernutrition - where people do not get enough to eat, thereby missing vital nutrients - is a factor in many developing countries. For example, iron deficiency is an important factor in restricting growth and general health in poor communities in many countries. According to the **WHO**, iron deficiency results in extreme fatigue for 740 million adults world-wide, thus harming productivity and contributing to accidents. Physical work capacity and performance can be impaired by as much as 30 per cent.

Conversely, many rich economies are suffering from an epidemic of obesity because of easy availability of processed foods with high fat and sugar content. The **International Labour Organisation** states that in the USA 39.2 million work-days per year are lost to illness related to obesity.

Improving our diet can make a big difference. For example, the Mediterranean diet - a balanced diet rich in fish, vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes and olive oil, with little red meat and moderate alcohol consumption has been shown to support brain function as we age. It has also been associated with a lower risk of heart attack and stroke in women.



The 4 Pillars and 21 Elements

The Healthy Place To Work[®] survey is an opportunity for an organisation to gain valuable data on the health and wellbeing of its workforce. This data is the starting point in responding strategically to the biggest issues affecting their employees.

By drilling down into geographies, locations, departments, teams etc, they can focus with precision their resources and start the process of improving the state of health of their workforce.

These improvements often lead to higher productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation. In turn, organisations report lower staff turnover and lower absenteeism. Finding a workplace that really cares about its workforce is exceptional. Employees quickly realise they are lucky and then to reciprocate their good luck with extra effort.

When an organisation focuses on the 4 pillars and 21 element model, they are building a resilient workforce and ensuring the continued sustainability of their business.

Healthy Place Development Plan

Firstly, it is important for you to know that most organisations do not have a Health Plan or a Strategic Health and Wellbeing Strategy, so when you have finished developing yours you will be in an elite group of organisations that are committed to the health of their people.

Secondly, we have found that most organisations implement a lot of initiatives in the area of employee health but have not brought them together in one place, the development of a Healthy Place development plan is an opportunity to do just that.

Finally, because most organisations use a very narrow definition of Health, they are not getting recognition for investments they make in many areas like training and learning and development for example. Using the Healthy Place To Work[®] holistic definition embracing Purpose, Mental Resilience, Connection and Physical Health allows you to incorporate all your investments in this area and get recognition for all your efforts.



We assess submissions under four headings; Integration: Impact: Innovation: and Inclusion

Under **Integration** – we seek to see that your strategy, business plans and goals have all been tested for their impact on your employee’s health. In this section, you can explain the data you use to drive your investment decisions in your workforce’s health.

Under **Impact** –we ask organisations to discuss how they measure the impact of initiatives and assess success particularly, from a return-on-investment viewpoint.

Under **Innovation** – we like to understand how the organisation is integrating the latest findings in employee health and the types of creativity it is bringing to bear on its practices around employee health.

And finally, under **inclusion** we ask the organisation to explain how its health plan incorporates everyone in the organisation; all roles, all departments all geographies and especially all at risk groupings.

The Healthy Place Development Plan is a living, breathing document, constantly changing, being updated by the latest quantitative and qualitative data.

It will describe what are the key priorities that it will address in the plan period, how it will support initiatives and practices to address highlighted issues and how it will promote those approaches ensuring buy-in from all parties so that it can achieve its goals and targets.

Healthy Place To Work[®] will always endeavour to support an exemplar organisation that is committed to using our model and supporting the development of a healthy workplace with healthy employees by highlighting to the marketplace any particularly innovative practices that you have implemented, which should support your organisation’s employer brand.

Conclusion

An organisation or company is best viewed as a system with many interrelated parts, many in fact dependent on each other acting like dominos. This is not a closed system but rather one that is open to many influences outside of itself. It is constantly evolving and changing. The ability to measure and manage these components and changes in each is critical to its overall performance. We provide a tested framework with key indicators that give insight using a range of data points allowing the identification of risks and acting as one of the best predictors of future performance. Remember everything in this system is constantly changing, nothing stays the same. It is made up of living organisms with feeling, emotions, beliefs, perceptions, energies, capacities and capabilities. These human beings can be the drivers of unbelievable innovation and performance. Your ability to stay in touch and create and develop an environment where they can thrive is your number one job as a leader.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John S. Ryan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

John S. Ryan - CEO
Healthy Place To Work®





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