

High performance is the result of mental wellness

Everything we do for work directly depends on our mental wellness.

Although we work with the “head”, relying predominantly on our inner mental functions to get work done, the commonplace workplace approach to mental wellness has been of a reactive type, only becoming highlighted when serious problems begin to emerge. Mental wellness needs a more systemic pro-active approach. People need to learn practical skills so that they can effectively deal with daily work challenges and perform well when life and work demands more from them.

Employees often look to employers for a solution for their rising mental health issues, but they don't have one. According to an online survey by Wrike, 87 percent of people admit to overworking, with only 29 percent of employees satisfied with their work-life balance compared to managers (37%) and team members (51%). Overworking without the ability to lead our inner processes is a road to mental health problems, it is little wonder then that stress, burnout and depression affects one in every four people around the world.

Flexible working arrangements, taking a vacation and breathing exercises are often seen as solutions, but in the absence of sound ‘intra-personal skills’, results from such surface level measures remain short-lived and compensative in nature. Most mental health problems form over a period of time and are based on our inability to understand what part inside us is the leader and what parts in us can be lead. Lack of education on how our mind really functions can have a dramatic affect on employers:

- › In Europe, a company on average loses 700-1000 € / per employee every year because of stress and mental ill-health related absences. That is no small price to pay; and could easily become a significant cost that can could mean the difference between profitability and loss making.
- › According to Gallup studies, globally, on average 80 percent of people are not engaged or passionate about what they do for work. Sometimes motivational trainings are seen as an obvious quick fix solution. However, when people are

overwhelmed with stress, or on the verge of burnout or otherwise mentally exhausted, emotional motivation training that preaches positivity is not helpful as emotions aren't constant and can quickly change. Strong positive emotions often just hide previous negative emotions. Practical proactive intrapersonal skills stop stress from escalating. The problem is that those skills are not taught in schools or universities, therefore it's up to employers to provide such education.

- › The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work points out in "Calculating the cost of work-related stress and psychosocial risks" the costs of presentism, showing up to work but unable to perform at an optimal level, are higher (58%) than those of absenteeism (33%) or workforce turnover (9%). Whilst physical illness is often quite obvious, mental health problems go unnoticed and remain invisible until illness forces people to take time off from work.
- › According to the 2012/13 New Zealand Health Survey found that mental disorders as a group are the third-leading cause of health loss for New Zealanders. It is a very similar story for inhabitants in northern Europe.
- › The study by Killingsworth & Gilbert highlights that 50 percent of the time our mind is wandering, and 90 percent of people attending meetings admit to daydreaming. Since awareness is the tool everyone uses for concentration and time-management, education about its practical application through training of intrapersonal skills is a must for everyone, enabling people to restore their productivity independently.

Mental Wellness and Mental Illness

Too often ‘mental health’ gets confused with ‘mental illness’. The two couldn't be more different. Mental health is something that everyone has when their inner functions operate in the most optimal manner.

Mental illness is lack of health, and is the result of not dealing with problematic ways of functioning due to the absence

of specific education, most notably, intra-personal skills. Mental illness is the direct result of neglecting the need for proactive education, favouring prioritising fire-fighting problems and their subsequent consequences instead.

As the topic of mental illness is often stigmatised, people postpone speaking up and seeking help. There have been lot of promotional campaigns that encourage a wider dialogue about mental health and encourage people with mental illness to seek professional help. Although this is welcomed, many professionals feel that simply highlighting the issue in the mainstream spotlight every now and then is far from a sustainable solution. If employers don't pay more attention to normal mental functions and wellness, and continue to not seek the skills to sustain it, then the escalation of mental illness into a global epidemic cannot be stopped.

What is mental wellness?

Good mental health equals wellness. Mental wellness is a optimum inner functioning and effective use of our innate potentials: purposeful attention, embracing change and the unknown, initiative, creativity, inner motivation, having insights, awareness of emotions, self-management and more. These are all specific inner capabilities that can be developed into individual skills with their own well-crafted curriculum. When mental wellness is a considered in a proactive approach, it can be likened to going to the gym. We all know that going to the gym is good for our physical health and overall well-being. What workplaces need in this sense is a mental wellness gym where employees can train their knowledge-tools and practice directing their own inner functions whenever they want or need to.

Companies can compensate the national shortcomings by becoming educators

It is a fact that people spend most of their waking hours at work and employers need people who are mentally well who are capable to perform their tasks consistently



at a high level. Although personal responsibility over one's own mental state is elementary, it would be naïve to expect people to be able to apply skills that they have not yet learnt. Mental Wellness falls into no-man's-land. Today there is almost no practical education about mental wellness in schools and the wellness-centered proactive education is not in focus for medicine and health-care institutions. This means it is down to companies and organisations to fill in this major gap in skills education.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is about humans, our inner selves

The next revolutionary development is neither a new technology nor a new rocket type. Instead we need to fundamentally change the way we understand the human 'mind'. 'Mind' because even the word is too general a term and needs to be properly understood. We need very practical skills for leading all our inner functions – including thinking, emotions and our own awareness. To the surprise of most people, the solution is not something waiting on the shelf, ready to be used.



Proactive intrapersonal skills are not taught in schools; therefore it's up to employers to provide such education



Employers have equally limited knowledge about inner functions and what makes them operate in non-optimal way. Apart from myself and a handful of others who are actively trying to reinvent a new and systematic approach to proactive mental wellness, mental health professionals have been more focused on diagnosing and treating illnesses rather than advocating proactive well-being. This needs to change.

Routledge published my scientific paper about this topic, 'Developing Intra-Personal Skills as a Proactive Way to Personal Sustainability - The Preventative Side of the Mental Health Equation'. We need to

bring practical intrapersonal skills that lead to mental wellness in to our offices and workplaces.

Focusing on mental wellness is an opportunity to positively influence the lives of all employees, entrepreneurs and achievers. I see that everyone can have mental superpowers like the ability to differentiate and focus, have access to insights, intuition and creativity. This is what the mental wellness discussion should be about! That's why every HR manager, company owner and leader of any team should be interested in investing in learning intrapersonal skills. **HR**



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