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Staff Health and Wellbeing Symposium

ADVANCING AN INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE OF CARE

19 April 2024

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Welcome

Prof Nico Koopman

The symposium commenced with a speech by the Deputy Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation, and Personnel, Prof. Nico Koopman, emphasising the importance of advancing a culture of care within the institution. The event was organised with the collaborative efforts of various committee members.

Care should be seen through the lens of mutuality and reciprocity, acknowledging our interdependence as human beings and the responsibilities both individuals and institutions hold. Common objections to care, such as it being condescending or merely addressing symptoms rather than root causes, were addressed and refuted.

The ECARE values—Excellence, Compassion, Accountability, Respect, and Equity—are foundational to creating a caring institution:

- **Excellence in Care:** Striving for the highest standards in all activities, particularly in learning, teaching, research, and transformation.
- **Compassion:** Cultivating an environment where individuals share in each other's joys and sorrows, fostering a community of empathy and mutual support.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring transparency and openness builds trust and integrity within the institution.
- **Respect:** Valuing the dignity of every individual and nature, promoting an ethos of reconsideration and impact awareness in decision-making.
- **Equity:** Committing to fairness and justice, recognising and addressing the complexities of human challenges without oversimplification.

Institutional policies must align with the Bill of Rights and the 2017 Transformation Plan, emphasising dignity, justice, freedom, equality, and healing. Healing extends beyond the physical to include social, political, ecological, socioeconomic, and psychological dimensions, reflecting a holistic approach to well-being.

Culture embodies care as the way of life within the institution, permeating every aspect, from policies and practices to everyday interactions and decisions. Well-being is linked with the deeper notion of being, advocating for a habitus of care where spontaneous actions reflect caring values, creating a habitat conducive to human and environmental flourishing.

A collective effort to advance this culture of care is necessary, with heartfelt dedication, intellectual engagement, and actionable steps. Practical implementation is essential, reflecting the symposium's goal to embed care in the institution's fabric.

The symposium gathered members from various faculties, rectorate, general management, health and well-being ambassadors, and students, demonstrating a unified front in pursuing the vision of a caring institution. The motivational quote, "We cannot always cure, but we can always care," encouraged participants to move forward with empowerment and a commitment to care.

Keynote address: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace

Prof Soraya Seedat

Summary

The keynote address offered a thorough examination of the mental health challenges faced by university staff and proposed a range of interventions to address these issues. Insights were given into the interconnectedness of work and mental health, coupled with practical recommendations for creating a supportive work environment. This report synthesises the key points from the address, presenting a detailed analysis of the factors contributing to mental health problems in the workplace and proposing evidence-based interventions to create a supportive and healthy work environment.

About

Prof. Soraya Seedat is a distinguished professor of psychiatry and Executive Head of the Department of Psychiatry at Stellenbosch University. She held the South African Research Chair in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder for 15 years (until the end of 2022) and currently directs the South African Medical Research Council Unit on the Genomics of Brain Disorders.

She has more than 20 years of clinical, epidemiological, and basic neuroscience research experience as a psychiatrist working in the field of traumatic stress, anxiety, and neuroAIDS. She has published over 500 peer-reviewed journal manuscripts and co-edited four books and 30 book chapters. She has served two terms as the President of the College of Psychiatrists of South Africa and three terms as Secretary and is currently a member of the Board of Directors and an Honorary Registrar of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa.

Prof Seedat is an expert in the field of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety disorders, in adolescents and adults, and in the investigation of mechanisms of risk and resilience in adolescent and adult samples and has published widely in these areas. She has ongoing projects in PTSD, anxiety disorders, neuroAIDS, and foetal alcohol spectrum disorders. She has also been involved in multiple research training, capacity building, and leadership development activities in sub-Saharan Africa and internationally, supported by NIMH grants and other funding initiatives.

Introduction

At our university, it is our common responsibility to actively foster a culture that promotes mental and physical well-being. This benefits all individuals affiliated with this establishment, including the staff and students. The three questions that we should all contemplate are as follows:

- How would you characterise your present state of health?
- How would you react to the statement: "I am at ease discussing my mental well-being with my coworkers"?
- What strategies could Stellenbosch University employ to enhance the overall welfare of its entire staff?

The key point to remember is that self-care is crucial. There is a need to remove the negative associations and social disapproval surrounding it. Moreover, it is imperative that we consistently inquire if my self-care at any given moment is sufficient.

Complexity of mental health

Mental health issues are intricately complicated, as they stem from a myriad of contributing variables. Mental diseases do not have a single, obvious origin. Instead, they result from a combination of biological, environmental, neurodevelopmental, genetic, psychological, and personality elements that interact in intricate ways. Work-related pressures may be a contributing factor, but they are not the sole cause of mental illness. Mental health disorders are often defined by a complex interaction of biological, behavioural, psychological, and cultural factors that do not fit neatly into existing diagnostic categories.

Mental health is a continuum that varies between states of good health and discomfort in response to everyday stimuli. Mental well-being refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage stressors, retain productivity, develop meaningful interpersonal relationships, and work towards self-actualisation.

The interconnection of work and mental health

Moving beyond the concept of work-life balance, we should strive for work-life harmony since it suggests a dynamic individual experience. Occasionally, our involvement in work-related tasks may surpass our involvement in activities related to home and leisure. However, this is acceptable if it enables us to thrive and prosper. Work-life harmony refers to the achievement of a balanced and stable state in which one can strive toward.

The reciprocal relationship between job and mental health is crucial. Universities, as smaller representations of larger societal systems, are progressively becoming more demanding environments. This shift has a substantial effect on the mental well-being of both academic and non-academic personnel. In order to address the ongoing and widespread mental health crises in higher education, it is essential to develop novel and effective solutions to alleviate these difficulties.

Focus on staff mental health

Although there has been notable advancement in addressing student mental health, the mental health requirements of university workers sometimes go unnoticed. Creating a culture that prioritises the well-being of staff and students, encompassing mental and physical health, is of utmost importance. Preserving education and research excellence relies on a robust and well-being-oriented workforce. Therefore, the mental health care offered to staff must be as extensive and strong as the support provided to students.

The ingredients for addressing mental health issues

By drawing upon the analogy offered in Sally Andrew's book, *Recipes for Love and Murder*, one might conceptualise the elements that contribute to mental health disorders and their cures as components in a recipe. The institution has the potential to create a figurative guidebook titled "Recipes for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace," which includes interventions targeting both the systemic and individual aspects. These "ingredients" may consist of techniques for stress mitigation, promotion of well-being, and establishment of a nurturing work atmosphere.

Understanding mental health terminology

In order to dispel common misconceptions, it is essential to clearly define the differences between mental health, mental well-being, and mental illness. Mental health is a fluctuating condition experienced by all individuals and can change over time. Mental well-being encompasses coping with daily pressures effectively, maintaining high levels of productivity, and fostering meaningful connections with

others. Mental disease occurs when symptoms persist and have a negative impact on daily functioning and interpersonal interactions. It is crucial to clearly define these concepts in order to deal with mental health problems successfully.

Prevalence and impact of mental health problems

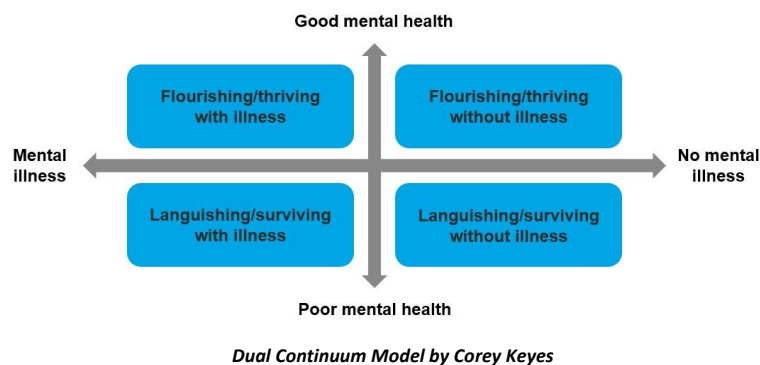
Global data highlight the concerning frequency of mental health illnesses. In the year 2019, over 970 million people experienced mental health disorders. Occupational stresses, such as stress related to work and burnout, play a substantial role in this worldwide burden. Significantly, burnout frequently acts as a forerunner to more incapacitating ailments, such as depression and anxiety disorders. Burnout, caused by work-related causes, is an organisational stressor that requires significant attention.

According to the latest data, 25% of employees are at an increased risk of experiencing burnout. This heightened risk reduces job satisfaction and creates a series of harmful effects, affecting coworkers, family relationships, and the whole work environment. The widespread impact of burnout highlights the pressing necessity for efficient interventions and preventive measures.

One important issue that needs to be addressed in the academic setting is the difference between the high occurrence of mental health illnesses and the limited availability of treatment. Disturbingly, a staggering 75% of individuals in South Africa who have mental health disorders that can be diagnosed do not obtain the essential treatments they require. Although certain individuals may face limited access to healthcare, a significant portion of the population goes completely untreated due to a combination of circumstances, including lack of information, widespread stigma, and fear of adverse consequences like unemployment. The impact of mental illness has severe consequences, such as substantial economic burdens and a significant decrease in productivity, as demonstrated by global data from the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization.

The dual continuum model of mental health

The dual continuum model, developed by Corey Keyes, offers a nuanced understanding of mental health. This model posits that the absence of mental health problems does not necessarily equate to the presence of positive mental health. An individual with a mental illness can still experience good mental health, while someone without a diagnosable condition may suffer. This model underscores the importance of promoting overall well-being rather than merely addressing illness.



Triggers and consequences of poor mental health

The main factors that contribute to poor mental health include burnout, bullying, prejudice, and the stressors associated with transformation. The COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated these problems while also intensifying focus on mental health. The substantial expenses linked to unaddressed mental health issues, such as decreased productivity and heightened absenteeism, underscore the imperative of tackling these factors to enhance mental well-being in the workplace.

Depression in the workplace

Depression is one of the primary causes of disability worldwide, exceeding heart disease, respiratory disorders, and cancer. Stellenbosch University employees who are dealing with depression frequently encounter cognitive impairments, such as compromised decision-making abilities, memory deficiencies, and diminished cognitive adaptability. As a result, their capacity to perform efficiently may be hindered, resulting in presenteeism - being physically present at work but unable to operate at their best. Hence, it is imperative to recognise the intricate influence of mental illness, which includes both absenteeism and presenteeism.

Despite being widespread, there is a notable lack of awareness in numerous workplaces regarding depression and its potentially grave repercussions. Approximately 25% of employees in South Africa are diagnosed with depression, resulting in an average of 18 days of yearly leave used by each employee owing to depressive episodes. Nevertheless, the consequences of presenteeism present a more significant danger to productivity and result in significant expenses. Convincing research indicates that presenteeism imposes a substantially greater financial burden on the nation than absenteeism.

Ideal Workplace Interventions

A comprehensive and multimodal strategy for addressing depression in the workplace is suggested. This strategy should include attempts to raise awareness, individuals who advocate for mental health, support from peers, and tailored accommodations for individuals with mental illnesses. Creating a conducive work environment is essential. The endorsements of the US Surgeon General regarding the indispensability of mental health in the workplace are particularly emphasised.

To effectively address mental health in the workplace, it is essential to implement a wide range of interventions that include prevention, support, and creating a conducive environment. Prevention efforts should give priority to safeguarding and advancing mental well-being. This can be achieved through initiatives like awareness campaigns, appointing mental health champions and peer support networks, and implementing interventions that benefit all employees, regardless of their mental health condition. These comprehensive approaches may encompass the implementation of training initiatives and the establishment of peer support networks.

Moreover, it is crucial to establish strong support systems for persons who are already facing mental health difficulties. This assistance may encompass appropriate adjustments to facilitate their ongoing employment and promote their welfare. Targeted therapies, specifically designed for individuals identified as being at risk of developing mental health issues, can offer focused assistance and prompt intervention. Furthermore, persons who already have mental health disorders necessitate access to certain interventions, such as professional counselling, therapy, or other suitable therapies.

The success of these initiatives relies on the crucial requirement for a supportive environment characterised by effective leadership, significant financial resources,

and the smooth incorporation of care packages across the entire institution. This requires a cooperative strategy that includes senior executives, staff members, and students, all working together harmoniously to establish a culture that gives utmost importance to mental health and well-being.

Conclusion

It is crucial to have a comprehensive and proactive strategy towards mental health at Stellenbosch University. This requires implementing evidence-based, innovative solutions, adequate allocation of resources, and flexible reactions to the changing environment. The goal is to shift from a responsive to a proactive position, advocating for mental well-being throughout the entire university system.

Panel discussion: What is in place at SU - Our Journey: Staff Survey/Employee Wellbeing/Diversity & Inclusion/Wellbeing Ambassadors/Neurozone

Panel members: Jan Knight, Alten du Plessis, Shibu Mamabolo, Katlego Letlonkane, Joanne Williams, and Cuan McNab-Holding

Jan Knight: Survey on Wellbeing Culture and Climate at Stellenbosch University: An Overview

Introduction

This report provides a detailed overview of the wellbeing culture and climate survey conducted at Stellenbosch University. The survey aims to gather insights from staff regarding the institutional culture, climate, and overall wellbeing. Initiated in 2017, this survey is part of the University's strategic plan to become an employer of choice. The survey process and its outcomes, including subsequent interventions, are critical for continuous improvement in these areas.

Survey initiation and development

The Wellbeing Culture and Climate Survey at Stellenbosch University began in 2017. The Rectorate's determination to evaluate the staff's perspective of the institutional culture, climate, and wellbeing prompted the project. The objective was to communicate strategic priorities and secure the University's reputation as a preferred employer. In order to fully comprehend the significance of staff experiences, the University aimed to introduce specific interventions and enable line management to make suitable decisions.

At first, independent consultants were hired to carry out the survey. Subsequently, a determination was made that an internally created survey would more effectively fulfil the university's requirements. As a result, the Human Resources (HR) department and the Division for Strategic Initiatives and Information Governance worked together to develop a tailored survey. The development procedure was comprehensive, necessitating substantial time and effort.

Survey implementation

The surveys were carried out in 2019, 2021, and 2023. The procedure for each iteration commenced with developing a core group consisting of representatives from the HR and Information Governance departments. The core group consisted of essential professionals, including Jan Knight, the Chief Director of HR, Miriam Hoosain, and representatives from Information Governance, including Alten du Plessis and Karla Kroon. In conjunction with Vice-Rector Prof. Nico Koopman, this group examined previous surveys and strategised for upcoming versions.

The survey entailed the participation of various groups, including the steering committee, which comprised deans and academic administrators who represented the University. The steering committee's ultimate proposition was presented to the rectorate for endorsement. After getting approval, a specialised working group

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focused on survey development made adjustments to the survey, integrating feedback from other departments such as transformation, wellbeing, and HR.

Survey distribution and data collection

The survey was translated into Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa to provide widespread accessibility. Before its launch in November, the survey system underwent thorough and meticulous testing. A comprehensive communication campaign involving emails and statements during staff assemblies promoted active involvement. The rectorate also had a crucial influence in motivating personnel to submit the survey.

Data analysis and feedback

The data analysis process began in early January, and the findings were shared with other university entities, such as the Rectorate, Council, and the Remuneration Committee. Comprehensive feedback was given to all heads of Responsibility Centres (RC), faculties, and other pertinent bodies. This feedback loop was expanded to individual situations, promoting a more profound comprehension of the survey findings.

Interventions and actions

The survey results guided the creation of focused initiatives and measures. The entire strategy was achieved by collaboration with specialists and a thorough analysis of previous actions. The emphasis was placed on the outcomes of the 2023 study and the patterns observed in previous surveys. This comprehensive study enabled the identification of areas that need improvement and the continuation or enhancement of initiatives that have proven helpful.

Future plans and continuous improvement

The survey process is specifically designed to facilitate ongoing enhancement. From 2025 forward, the latter part of the year will be focused on executing measures and interventions while maintaining continuous involvement with personnel and surroundings. Each environment is advised to select treatments applicable to their circumstances, utilising the resources provided by different university departments, such as transformation, wellbeing, and employment equity.

Future surveys will be conducted based on continuous reviews. Possible alternatives include administering the survey every two years, carrying out interim polls, or concentrating on certain regions highlighted in earlier surveys. The primary objective is to guarantee that survey results produce concrete enhancements in the University's culture, climate, and personnel welfare.

Conclusion

The wellness culture and climate survey conducted at Stellenbosch University demonstrates a substantial dedication to comprehending and improving the personnel's experiences. The university's commitment to becoming an employer of choice is highlighted by the thorough process, which includes survey formulation, data analysis, and intervention implementation. The survey procedure undergoes continuous examination and customisation to achieve quantifiable enhancements to promote a favourable and encouraging work atmosphere.

Dr Alten du Plessis: Survey on Wellbeing Culture and Climate at Stellenbosch University: Methodology and Content Analysis

Introduction

This report details the administration and analysis of the Wellbeing Culture and Climate Survey at Stellenbosch University, managed by the Division of Strategic Initiatives and Information Governance. The main goal is to offer a comprehensive summary of the survey's content, methodology, and how it relates to broader institutional objectives, specifically focusing on the insights provided by Prof. Seedat.

Survey administration

The survey was conducted in the years 2019, 2021, and 2023. The 2023 survey consisted of five mandatory items and three optional sections. The survey process consisted of multiple iterations, each adhering to a well-defined procedure. A core team composed of members from human resources (HR) and information governance and the RC head provided strategic supervision throughout the process. An essential aspect of comprehending and enhancing the institutional atmosphere and staff wellness is examining and distributing the survey findings.

Compulsory sections of the survey

1. PERMA-H profiler

The initial segment utilises the PERMA-H Profiler, an unverified survey on workplace wellness created by Margaret Kern from the University of Pennsylvania. Based on positive psychology principles, the profiler assesses human wellbeing in six dimensions: Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and health. This test is designed to evaluate employees' overall wellbeing, aiming to promote a thriving work environment.

2. Workplace happiness factors

The second section examines evidence-based elements that contribute to either a happy or unpleasant work environment, drawing from the research of Onno Hamburger from the Netherlands. While this poll has not been officially confirmed, it compares the PERMA-H dimensions with issues such as inadequate compensation, social connections, and the perceived value of one's employment. This part also has a metric for adverse emotions, emphasising concerns such as worry, empathy, and solitude among personnel.

3. Culture and climate

The third portion examines institutional culture and climate using 58 to 78 items, which may vary based on the respondent's job. Important concerns encompass transformation, bullying, supervision, and acknowledgement. Significantly, bullying consistently emerged as a prominent issue in all rounds of the survey, leading to the incorporation of an official definition provided by the Equality Centre in the 2023 poll.

4. Employee wellness awareness

The fourth element assesses the level of knowledge regarding employee wellness programs, particularly those offered by the Human Resources department. This section aims to evaluate the extent and efficacy of wellness programmes.

5. Biographical information

The last section gathers biographical information to analyse and categorise survey findings thoroughly. This facilitates a sophisticated comprehension of wellbeing among various demographic groups.

Optional sections of the survey

1. Workload and burnout:

Approximately 60% of respondents in 2023 completed the initial optional component, which addressed workload and stress. This section was designed for individuals facing excessive work demands and experiencing burnout, offering specific and focused information on these matters.

2. Flexible working environments:

A section dedicated to flexible working conditions was included in the survey, allowing participants to share their opinions on the growing importance of work flexibility in contemporary workplaces.

3. General issues:

The last discretionary part requested respondents to provide feedback on any overarching matters, providing qualitative data for a thorough examination.

Data analysis and dissemination

The survey data is analysed using Power BI, which enables comprehensive visualisation and segmentation. Findings are shared with management teams at responsibility centres (RCs) and faculties responsible for distributing the results within their communities. The researchers from the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science, and Technology (CREST) analysed the qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions to detect any links with the quantitative results.

Conclusion

The Wellbeing Culture and Climate Survey conducted at Stellenbosch University offers valuable insights into the welfare of the workers and the overall atmosphere within the institution. The Division of Strategic Initiatives and Information Governance conducts a thorough analysis to guarantee that the survey results can be used effectively. This analysis helps guide specific initiatives and promotes a supportive work climate. The University's dedication to continual improvement and alignment with strategic aims is demonstrated by this ongoing process, as emphasised in Prof. Seedat's talk.

Shibu Mamabolo: Journey of Health and Wellbeing Initiatives at Stellenbosch University

Introduction

This paper provides a detailed overview of the 17-year evolution of health and wellbeing activities at Stellenbosch University, starting from the early awareness campaigns and progressing towards implementing comprehensive, institution-wide programmes. The projects have developed via careful planning, involving relevant parties, and making ongoing enhancements to meet the welfare requirements of both staff and students effectively.

Early stages (2007-2017)

The journey began in 2007 to increase knowledge about health and wellness through teaching and supporting activities that improve physical wellbeing. The primary objective of these initial initiatives was to establish a culture of health consciousness among the members of the academic community.

In 2017, a Human services (HR) review suggested increasing and improving health and wellness services. This review served as a pivotal moment, prompting the adoption of a more organised strategy in addressing health and wellness, acknowledging it as a top priority inside the organisation.

Strategic planning and institutional commitment (2019)

In 2019, health and mental wellbeing were recognised as threats within the institution, which led to the need for the creation of a comprehensive Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan. A comparative colloquium evaluated performance against other institutions and corporate entities, aiming to improve current programmes and implement new initiatives based on proven methods.

The Institutional Planning Forum emphasised the significance of health and wellbeing for staff and students, leading the rectorate to assign a specialised task team to create a health and wellbeing strategy. The proposal was completed and submitted to the rectorate in November 2019.

Implementation and adaptation (2020-2021)

In 2020, the draft plan underwent refinement in response to comments from several university contexts, thus assuring its alignment with the requirements of the personnel. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, hiring an external service provider to improve the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for employees and their immediate families was necessary. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) emerged as an essential instrument for assessing and promoting physical and mental health.

The Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan was officially adopted in February 2021. Subsequently, the Institutional Committee on Staff Health and Wellbeing was established. The committee, consisting of representatives from 10 faculties and six responsibility centres, was assigned to direct and assist in executing interventions.

Ongoing implementation (2022-2024)

Between 2022 and 2024, the primary objective has been to integrate health and wellbeing activities within every faculty and responsibility centre. This strategy prioritises collective accountability, including consistent reporting and synchronising health and wellness objectives with the university's strategic aims.

Important assessment instruments comprise the Maroon Health Passport, the Staff Culture and Climate Survey, the Discovery Wellness Clinic reports, and the Resilience Index. These technologies offer data to guide specific treatments and training programmes, guaranteeing that they are adaptable to the needs indicated through thorough assessments.

Programmes and initiatives

The health and wellbeing initiatives consist of a diverse array of programs, which include:

- The occupational health programme conducts risk assessments and promotes baseline screening for new and current employees.

- The Discovery Wellness Screening offers specific health statistics to guide targeted interventions.
- Training programmes: provided by SUN-HR, these programmes target specific requirements discovered through various assessment methodologies.
- Health awareness days: Collaborations with stakeholders such as Maties Sport, the Equality Unit, and the Transformation Office to enhance health awareness.
- Coaching programmes: executive coaches offer organisational and individual coaching to enhance personal wellbeing.
- The Wellbeing Ambassador Programme is designed to promote health and wellbeing by appointing ambassadors, taking inspiration from practices observed at UK universities.
- Physical activity initiatives: Collaborating with Maties Sport and RALU to improve physical well-being.

Conclusion

The health and welfare activities at Stellenbosch University have greatly developed during the past 17 years. The dedication to ongoing enhancement, strategy coherence, and involvement of all parties has cultivated a strong structure for promoting the welfare of both staff and students. The institution is committed to fostering a robust, caring, and flourishing community as these projects progress.

Katlego Letlonkane: Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion at Stellenbosch University

Introduction

This paper elucidates the correlation between employee welfare and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion at Stellenbosch University. The primary objective is to promote a culture inside the institution that prioritises care by implementing comprehensive measures to enhance diverse capacity. The correlation between diversity initiatives and wellness is essential for establishing a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere for employees and students.

Integration of wellbeing and diversity efforts

Employee wellbeing is intricately connected to developing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Bullying and prejudice are not simply matters of diversity but also substantial concerns for wellness. Wellbeing should be integrated at the core of effective diversity capacity-building methods. Advancing diversity and inclusion fosters a culture of care throughout the school, leading to a more empathetic and supportive academic environment.

Cultivating an inclusive institutional culture

Stellenbosch University prioritises inclusivity and deeply regards the dignity and worth of every individual, promoting a culture that emphasises empathy and concern. Inclusivity is being mindful of the circumstances of colleagues and pupils, such as the responsibility of caring for ageing parents and demonstrating compassion via meaningful interaction and conversation. This method is in line with the knowledge presented by Prof. Seedat regarding the influence of workplace depression and the significance of empathy in professional connections.

Importance of dialogue

Engaging in dialogue plays a crucial role in fostering diversity and inclusion. Fear frequently perpetuates systems of discrimination and power disparities. Strengthening the ability to engage in conversation aids in conquering fear and promotes the development of shared comprehension. The objective is to establish a culture of discussion through seminars and interactions, intending to question previous beliefs and assumptions and welcome new perspectives. This is in accordance with Paolo Freire's notion that discourse connects persons via affection, optimism, and reciprocal confidence, promoting a cooperative pursuit of resolutions.

Building capacity for dialogue

Developing the ability to engage in dialogue entails establishing environments conducive to substantive discussions that result in collaborative resolution of issues. A culture that lacks open and constructive communication, marked by suspicion and self-importance, obstructs the capacity to discover resolutions and establish an atmosphere that embraces diversity. Developing the ability to engage in discourse is crucial for fostering trust and cooperation among line managers, coworkers, and team members.

African intelligence and Ubuntu

Stellenbosch University's approach to diversity and welfare is rooted in Ubuntu, an African philosophy. Ubuntu prioritises principles of fairness, justice, equity, equality, generosity, hospitality, caring, compassion, love, and forgiveness. This philosophy is in accordance with the institution's principles and acts as a guiding principle for promoting a supportive and inclusive community. Ubuntu can be seen as the pivotal factor that unlocks various opportunities, embodying the core principles of employee welfare and community involvement.

Siyakhula Workshops

The Siyakhula diversity capacity-building workshops aim to improve employee communication and comprehension. These seminars are designed to be participatory and captivating, offering a platform for staff members to acquire knowledge and develop collectively. Attendance at these seminars is strongly encouraged to establish the fundamental elements of discourse and inclusivity inside the institution. Notifications for these sessions will be distributed through many platforms, and employees are urged to participate and endorse these workshops within their respective settings.

Conclusion

The Siyakhula diversity capacity-building workshops aim to enhance employee communication and understanding. These seminars are designed to be interactive and engaging, providing a platform for staff members to gain information and grow together. Attending these seminars is highly recommended to develop the essential aspects of communication and inclusiveness inside the institution. Notifications for these sessions will be disseminated through various platforms, and staff are encouraged to actively engage and support these workshops within their individual environments.

Joanne Williams: University's Wellbeing Ambassador Programme

Introduction

This report details the progress and upcoming introduction of Stellenbosch University's Wellbeing Ambassador Programme. The programme, authorised in 2021 as part of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan, seeks to improve peer-to-peer education and assistance as a crucial element of the University's health and wellbeing strategy.

Background and development

Approximately one year ago, the core team for health and wellbeing began a tour of four universities in the United Kingdom: the University of Bath, Coventry University, the University of Aberdeen, and the University of St. Andrews. This trip offered invaluable knowledge on the wellbeing measures implemented at these institutions. It is worth mentioning that all four universities have implemented Wellbeing Champion Programmes. The panel reached a unanimous consensus that implementing a comparable program at Stellenbosch University would provide substantial benefits.

Proposal and approval

After the UK visit, a proposal for the Wellbeing Ambassador Programme was prepared and submitted to the Institutional Committee for Staff Health and Wellbeing. The Committee officially supported and approved the programme, as well as the selected name, Wellbeing Ambassadors. The suggestion was later introduced to the General Managers Meeting, which comprises delegates from all faculties and administrative sectors. The programme garnered extensive support, resulting in the enlistment of 45 dedicated Wellbeing Ambassadors.

Ambassador composition

The Wellbeing Ambassadors group is characterised by its diversity, consisting of 36 ladies and nine males. It encompasses individuals from different age ranges and includes representation from the PASS (Professional Administrative Support Services) and faculty contexts. Ambassadors hold various career levels, including administrative assistants, associate professors, and full professors, representing diverse positions within the university community.

Role and responsibilities

The main purpose of the Wellbeing Ambassadors is to enhance the University's wellbeing efforts. Ambassadors are not required to conduct counselling but to listen attentively, display concern and understanding, and direct persons to suitable information and services. In addition, ambassadors will advocate for university wellbeing activities, including the SU Sports Day, wellbeing screenings, the Staff Culture and Climate Survey, and the Maroon Health Passport, in their various settings. In addition, they will notify the wellbeing team of any areas of concern or concerns within their surroundings, enabling prompt and proactive solutions.

Training and launch

At first, the University collaborated with Higher Health to provide online educational training for the ambassadors. Despite encountering difficulties during the implementation of this training, it is important to note that participation in Higher Health training is optional and not compulsory. Ambassadors can either complete the entire training programme to obtain a certificate at NQF Level 5, or they can choose to concentrate on select parts that are important to their role. The internal training for the ambassadors will begin at the same time as the programme's official

launch. The orientation session, originally delayed owing to a level nine weather advisory, is now planned for May. Additional information will be provided in the near future.

Conclusion

Implementing the Wellbeing Ambassador Programme at Stellenbosch University marks a notable advancement in promoting health and wellbeing. The programme seeks to cultivate peer support and increase knowledge of wellbeing activities in order to establish a campus atmosphere that is more supportive and compassionate. The university anticipates partnering with the Wellbeing Ambassadors to enhance wellbeing practices and provide support within the institution.

Cuan McNab-Holding: Advancing Health and Wellbeing at Stellenbosch University

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the recent advancements and upcoming strategies aimed at improving the physical and mental health of the employees at Stellenbosch University. This study highlights the interdependence of staff and student welfare and discusses recent endeavours, such as a partnership with Neurozone, a company specialising in people analytics, systems thinking, and applied neuroscience. The primary objective is to enhance the university community's health and wellbeing by emphasising the development of resilience as a fundamental component.

Context and background

When considering personal experiences, it is crucial to recognise the mutual connection between the welfare of staff and students. As emphasised by Prof. Seedat, the well-being system of an institution is interrelated, meaning that the well-being of personnel directly affects their capacity to assist students effectively. Mental health conditions, in contrast to physical ailments, sometimes go unnoticed and widespread, posing substantial difficulties within the academic environment.

Current challenges

There is an increasing occurrence of mental health issues and exhaustion among the staff. This increase could be attributed to elevated reporting rates and the actual prevalence. Conventional remedies, such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), are inadequate on their own. An imperative change is required, prioritising interventions that can avoid the emergence of severe mental health problems.

Insights from Neurozone

Neurozone, a company with more than ten years of experience, has created a resilience scale that is both valid and dependable. Resilience is the ability of the brain to overcome difficulties and gain knowledge from them. It is essential for succeeding in a complicated and ever-changing environment. The increase in job-related stress, developments in technology, and external circumstances like power outages emphasise the importance of resilience in preserving one's well-being.

Programme implementation

Neurozone and Stellenbosch University worked together to carry out a 'Resilience Pulse Journey' between September and October of the previous year. The campaign was initiated by having the workers complete a three-minute resilience index to evaluate their levels of resilience. The program consisted of micro-learning modules that spanned two months, followed by an evaluation of progress. Dr. Etienne van der Walt, co-founder of Neurozone, delivered important knowledge during tutorials, which helped foster employee engagement.

Quantitative and qualitative findings

The findings were statistically significant. The staff's resilience significantly improved, with the average score increasing from 70 to 76, or a 9% gain. An additional qualitative survey indicated that 87% of participants saw a favourable effect on their resilience due to the micro-learning modules, while 77% reported a good influence from the tutorials. In general, 84% of the participants indicated contentment with the program.

Predictive value of increased resilience

Additional research conducted by Neurozone suggests that a 10% augmentation in resilience can result in significant decreases in mental health problems. More precisely, there is a direct relationship between a 10% increase in resilience and the following reductions: 11.4% in burnout signs, 9.7% in depression symptoms, 8.1% in sleeplessness symptoms, and 7.2% in anxiety symptoms. These findings indicate that strengthening resilience can effectively reduce the severity of mental health problems.

In closing

Resilience plays a crucial role in promoting wellness at Stellenbosch University. The 'Resilience Pulse Journey' pilot study showcases the capacity of resilience training to enhance staff wellbeing and mitigate the severity of mental health issues. The University's objective is to cultivate resilience to establish a nurturing atmosphere that enables staff members to prosper, ultimately leading to the advancement of society.

The continuous dedication to incorporating resilience into the University's wellbeing strategy emphasises the significance of assisting workers in reaching their full potential. As the university strives to foster a culture of caring, these activities will be crucial in improving general health and wellness.

Conclusion

The symposium aims to develop actionable insights. Issues such as bullying are prioritised, and efforts are underway to analyse qualitative data for more effective interventions. Continuous engagement and structured follow-ups are necessary to ensure progress and real change.

Discussion and Feedback

1. Debbie Lake, Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering

The dichotomy between increasing employee resilience and the challenging work environment with high workloads and sociopolitical-economic factors is a concern.

Given that our staff are high achievers and inherently resilient but are pushed beyond their limits, how do we address this environment?

Answer:

Addressing systemic issues within the work environment requires examining the job demand-resources model. Systemic challenges like those highlighted in a senior association conference need ongoing discussion to identify and tackle barriers. Collective resilience is crucial as individual resilience alone is no longer sufficient. Faculty management teams must use available datasets to discuss structural issues specific to their environments.

Follow-up comment:

Members of faculty management teams often lack the training to interpret data and recommend interventions. Human resources professionals are needed to guide these discussions.

Response:

Visits to faculty management teams are meant to provide data and discuss structural issues supported by trained professionals to recommend appropriate interventions.

2. Anonymous

I am frustrated by the systemic bullying at Stellenbosch University. Bullying is pervasive and deeply ingrained. Even hotlines are ineffective if they do not connect to meaningful action within the University. What systemic intervention can address this issue comprehensively?

Answer:

A systemic intervention involving all layers of the university, up to the Council, is necessary. Without real action, we will continue discussing bullying for years to come.

3. Sean, Maties Sport:

Is resilience a coping mechanism or part of mental health? Also, how many staff completed the staff survey?

Answer:

1 038 staff members completed the survey, representing approximately 25% participation over three years.

Follow-up Comment:

Surveys should be sent to specific environments to increase response rates.

Response:

Surveys are monitored, and participation rates are communicated to RC heads to encourage higher completion rates.

4. Leanne, IT:

As a wellbeing ambassador diagnosed with depression and burnout, why are we still focusing on resilience instead of addressing the psychological safety of our organisation?

Answer:

Psychological safety is crucial for high performance and should be a priority. While resilience is important, systemic issues like bullying and a lack of psychological safety need direct addressing.

5. Selwyn Mapolie, Science Faculty:

Can survey results be drilled down to the departmental level? Our internal departmental surveys yield different results from the university-wide survey.

Answer:

Due to anonymity and the risk of identifying individuals, results are only broken down to the faculty and responsibility centre levels.

Follow-up Comment:

Internal surveys with higher participation rates can accurately reflect specific environments.

Response:

Encouraging environments to conduct their own shorter, more focused surveys can complement university-wide surveys.

6. Anonymous

The focus on resilience seems like a reaction to a problematic system that disenfranchises and dehumanises people. Why are we not addressing the root causes of these issues?

Answer:

Values such as respect should be the first priority. An emphasis on university values could drive solutions to these systemic issues, although this is a simplistic approach.

7. Anonymous

Survey responses should be dissected by the duration of staff tenure, as experiences differ significantly based on how long individuals have been at the university. Additionally, are we training staff to recognise mental health issues in their colleagues?

Answer:

Staff tenure categories can analyse survey results. Training for line managers to identify and support troubled employees is available through the SUN-HR platform and is conducted in various environments.

Follow-up Comment:

Building a culture of talking and listening is essential. Fear of speaking up and making mistakes inhibits addressing issues. A long-term strategy to embed this culture is crucial.

8. Carina Venter, Chair of the Transformation Committee, Arts and Social Sciences:

How do we move from data collection to actionable interventions? Can you share examples where data has led to effective interventions?

Answer:

Student Affairs has established a wellness and recognition committee to implement recommendations from survey data. This committee provides support and resources, utilising feedback and research to guide their actions.

Closing comment

The question-and-answer session highlighted the critical need for systemic interventions to address wellbeing issues at Stellenbosch University. Emphasising psychological safety, fostering a culture of dialogue, and implementing evidence-based strategies were key themes. The university remains committed to developing and enacting effective solutions to enhance the overall wellbeing of its community.

Advancing Institutional Culture and Wellbeing at Stellenbosch University

Prof Kopano Ratele

Summary

The article focuses on transforming the University's institutional culture and enhancing staff and student wellbeing. The presentation highlighted the mandate of the Committee for the Institutional Response to the Khampepe Commission Recommendations (CIRCoRe), which addresses issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Key definitions of institutional culture were provided, emphasising its implicit and explicit elements.

The connection between institutional culture and wellbeing was explored, noting that a supportive culture can enhance mental health and engagement, while a discriminatory culture can lead to negative outcomes. Strategies for transforming institutional culture include promoting inclusivity, engaging in continuous dialogue, implementing evidence-based interventions, and regularly evaluating progress.

The article also summarised the question-and-answer session, addressing concerns about the process and the need for immediate, tangible actions to demonstrate commitment and intentionality in addressing systemic issues. The symposium underscored the importance of integrating resilience into the University's wellbeing strategy and fostering a culture of care and inclusivity.

About

Professor Kopano Ratele is a Professor in the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University. He is a decolonial psychologist and men and masculinities scholar. He is known for his work on Africa-centring psychology, masculinity, fatherhood, culture, sexuality, and violence.

He is the former Director of the South African Medical Research Council's Men, Injury and Violence Research Unit and Professor at the University of South Africa, where he ran the Transdisciplinary African Psychologies Programme. His work focuses on men and masculinities in intersection with violence, race, income, sexuality, and culture. He is past president of the Psychological Society of South Africa and a member of a number of editorial boards, including *Feminism & Psychology*, *NORMA: the International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, and *Psychology in Society*. His books include *There Was This Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (with Antjie Krog and Nosisi Mpolweni), and *Liberating Masculinities, and Engaging Youth in Activism, Research and Pedagogical Praxis: Transnational and Intersectional Perspectives on Gender, Sex, and Race* (co-edited with Jeff Hearn, Tammy Shefer, and Floretta Boonzaier).

He chaired the board of Sonke Gender Justice, a South African nongovernmental organisation working across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. He is a regular contributor in the media on matters related to boys, men and masculinity, violence, and fatherhood.

Introduction

This presentation focused on the crucial issue of institutional culture at Stellenbosch University. The presentation, enriched by extensive background in human development and involvement in various committees, provided insights into the University's efforts to address institutional culture, systemic racism, and the overall wellbeing of its staff and students.

The presentation began with a reference to Lou Gerstner, former chairman of IBM, who stated, "Culture isn't just one aspect of the game; it is the game." This quote underscores the centrality of institutional culture in shaping organisational success and is particularly relevant to the context of Stellenbosch University.

The presentation aimed to cover three primary areas: the mandate of CIRCoRe, key definitions related to institutional culture, and the connection between institutional culture and wellbeing.

Mandate of CIRCoRe

CIRCoRe was established to address the issues identified in the Khampepe report, particularly those related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. The committee's mandate includes developing and implementing an institutional response to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment at Stellenbosch University. CIRCoRe's work is organised into several workstreams, including student life, curriculum, race and human categorisation, policies and regulations, and institutional culture.

The committee's objectives are to address systemic racism and enhance equity and inclusion across the university. This involves examining the University's policies, practices, and culture to identify areas that require change and implementing strategies to foster a more inclusive environment.

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture refers to the established patterns and practices consistently followed inside an organization. It includes explicit and implicit components, such as beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, practices, and traditions. Over time, these aspects gradually become integrated into the institution, often without express intention.

Two significant incidents that led to the establishment of the Khampepe Commission were highlighted: the Huis Marais incident and the Faculty of Law's dance incident. These events underscored the need for a thorough examination and transformation of the university's institutional culture, particularly regarding issues of racism and inclusivity.

Key definitions and frameworks for understanding institutional culture were provided:

- Sally Matthews: Institutional culture includes values, attitudes, perceptions, practices, and ways of doing things that become embedded in an institution, even if they are not explicitly part of university policy.
- Lionel Thaver: The idea of 'home' lies at the heart of institutional culture, determining who feels at home within the institution.
- John Higgins: Institutional culture involves the perceived whiteness of academic culture and the contestation of power and authority between administrators and academics.

The Khampepe report characterizes institutional culture as a persistent historical framework that influences the human environment and relationships within the University. This portrayal emphasizes the interaction between the physical surroundings and the feelings of insecurity and exclusion felt by specific groups.

Connection between institutional culture and wellbeing

A significant realisation emerged regarding the connection between institutional culture and wellbeing. This connection underscores the institutional environment's impact on the mental and emotional health of staff and students. It was highlighted that institutional culture could influence various aspects of wellbeing, including happiness, engagement, and a sense of belonging.

Research indicates that institutional culture can significantly impact wellbeing. For example, a culture that promotes inclusivity and respect can enhance staff and students' mental health and overall satisfaction. Conversely, a culture that tolerates discrimination and exclusion can lead to negative outcomes, such as increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation.

The need for further empirical research to understand these connections better and develop effective interventions was emphasised. This includes examining the relationships between institutional culture and various aspects of wellbeing, such as happiness, engagement, and a sense of belonging.

Strategies for transforming institutional culture

Transforming institutional culture requires a multi-faceted approach. Key strategies include:

- 1. Promoting inclusivity and respect:** Efforts should focus on creating a welcoming environment for all members of the university community. This involves implementing policies and practices that promote inclusivity and respect for diversity.
- 2. Engaging in continuous dialogue:** Ongoing dialogue is essential for understanding the experiences and perspectives of different groups within the University. This can help identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to address them.
- 3. Implementing evidence-based interventions:** Developing and implementing interventions based on empirical research can help address institutional culture and wellbeing issues. This includes training programmes, support services, and initiatives that promote mental health and inclusivity.
- 4. Evaluating progress and making adjustments:** Regular evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions is crucial. This allows for adjustments to ensure the strategies remain relevant and effective in promoting a positive institutional culture.

Conclusion

The presentation emphasised the intricate and interconnected relationship between institutional culture and wellness at Stellenbosch University. The University's dedication to establishing a more inclusive and supportive workplace is shown by its focus on empirical research, ongoing dialogue, and effective actions. The participation and input received during the question-and-answer session further highlight the significance of tackling systemic problems to promote a culture characterised by compassion and adaptability. It is crucial to continuously include resilience into the University's wellbeing strategy to cultivate a caring and inclusive community that enables all members to flourish.

Discussion and Feedback

Question: Could you discuss the limitations posed by the time constraints and the changes within the workstream? What is the way forward, and what are the plans?

Answer: The recommendations to the University include integrating the work of changing culture within the Vice-Rector and the Responsibility Centre for Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel to ensure no division holds institutional culture. This involves scholarly work that examines transforming institutional culture, focusing outward and inwardly. A group of people would focus on surveys and cultural change, bringing the latest ideas to help the University change. These are two of about ten ideas being proposed.

Prof Koopman's Remarks: Critical recommendations from CIRCoRe to the Rectorate and related structures of the Senate and Council will include short-term and medium-term interventions and medium to long-term transformations of institutional culture. The first set of recommendations will be tabled at a Rectorate meeting on the 30th of April. Transformation of institutional culture is distinguished between quantitative (diversity statistics) and qualitative (cultural transformation) aspects, with a focus on strengthening the latter.

Comment: Considering the immediate need for action, how can we demonstrate intentionality in addressing issues without waiting for recommendations from task teams? While research and recommendations are important, certain actions can and should be taken immediately to show humanity and intentionality. This involves tangible actions and physical presence to demonstrate commitment and seriousness. The frustration stems from the lack of protection, safety, and intentionality felt by staff, which impacts their wellbeing and dedication to their work.

Question: The process is supposed to conclude in March, coinciding with the end of the Rector's term. How will momentum be maintained to ensure continuity with the new rector?

Answer: Maintaining momentum requires embedding the recommendations and initiatives within the institutional framework, ensuring they are not dependent on individual leadership. Institutional ownership of CIRCoRe's recommendations will help sustain progress regardless of leadership changes.


Comment: What steps can be taken to balance the need for decisive leadership with the conservative nature of the University, especially concerning external perceptions and relationships? Decisive leadership should prioritise the values and responsibilities of the institution as a publicly funded higher education institution. While corporate relationships are important, external pressures should not influence decisions. Addressing concerns about staff safety and support requires a shift in approach to ensure staff are not presumed guilty when issues arise and to provide adequate institutional support.

Question:

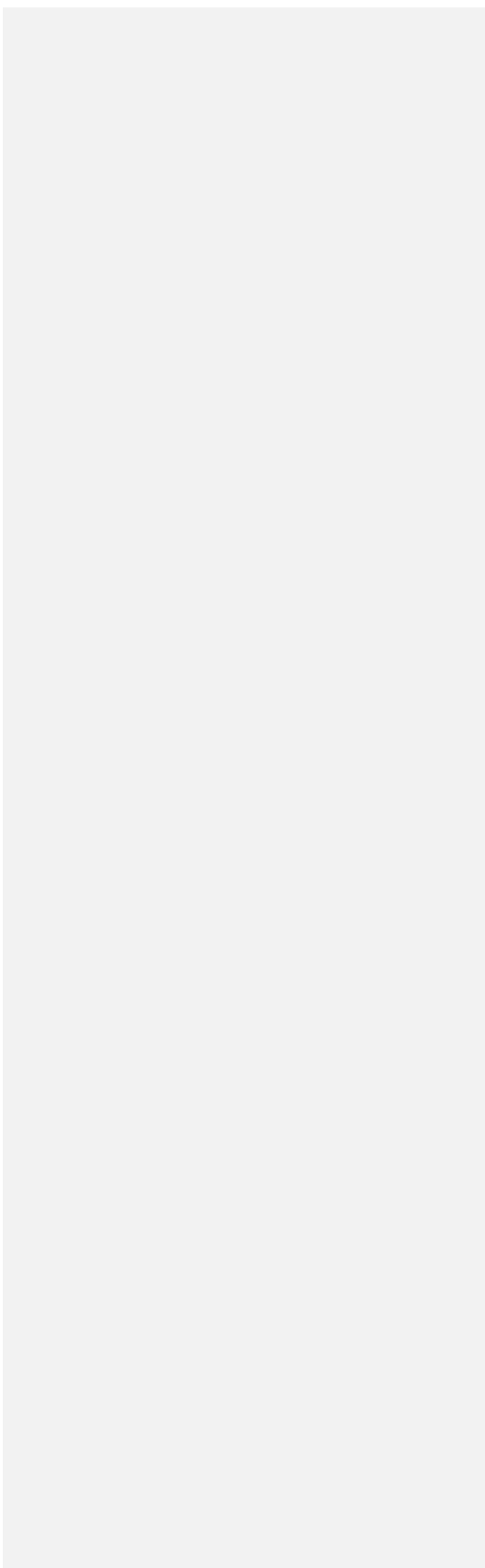
The concept of a singular institutional culture is challenged by the existence of multiple sub-cultures within the University. How can these be reconciled?

Answer:

While recognising the dominant culture, it is important to identify and understand the different sub-cultures within the University. Mapping these sub-cultures into a comprehensive understanding of the overall institutional culture is crucial.



Addressing the historical context of Stellenbosch, particularly issues of race and discrimination, remains a central part of this process.



Enhancing Employee Wellbeing in Higher Education: Insights from the Symposium

Bonita Maboeta

Summary

This report highlights the importance of employee wellbeing in higher education.

It explores the role of organisational culture, job resources, and leadership in fostering a healthy work environment. Key points include the subjective nature of wellbeing – that wellbeing varies among individuals is influenced by personal resources like cognitive abilities, beliefs, and personality traits; The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model – a model that explains how job demands (e.g., workload) and job resources (e.g., supportive management) interact to affect employee wellbeing; the impact of job resources – the quality of job resources mitigate the negative effects of high job demands, enhancing resilience and job performance; challenges and strategies – addressing issues like bullying and fostering trust through practical interventions and ethical leadership are essential; research and practical implications – organisational interventions, including investing in quality job resources and promoting inclusivity, are crucial for improving employee wellbeing.

The session emphasised the need for a collective effort to promote wellbeing, involving all organisational members, particularly leadership. The importance of ethical and authentic leadership and creating a supportive and inclusive environment was highlighted as key to achieving sustainable wellbeing outcomes.

About

Bonita Maboeta completed a degree in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch in 2000. In 2001, she began working at Child Welfare South Africa as a social worker. After a number of years, she moved on to the South African Police Services (SAPS) in 2002, serving as a social worker in the Employee Health and Wellness Programme. In 2004, she was employed by the Department of Education as an Employee Assistance Practitioner, a role held for approximately ten years.

During her tenures at SAPS and the Department of Education, she was responsible for a range of duties, including counselling, HIV & AIDS management, health and productivity programme implementation, the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), policy writing, mental health programme implementation, suicide prevention, and trauma debriefing.

In 2014, she was appointed as the Manager of Wellness at North-West University, serving the Potchefstroom, Mafikeng, and Vaal Triangle campuses. In 2018, she was elected Chairperson of the National Employee Health and Wellness Forum within Higher Education.

Currently, she is in the final stages of completing a Master's in Social Work, with a focus on the wellbeing of female academics within southern African universities.

Introduction

This presentation provides profound insights into the importance of employee wellbeing in higher education. The session focused on the critical role of organisational culture, job resources, and leadership in fostering a healthy and productive work environment. Drawing from extensive experience in diverse

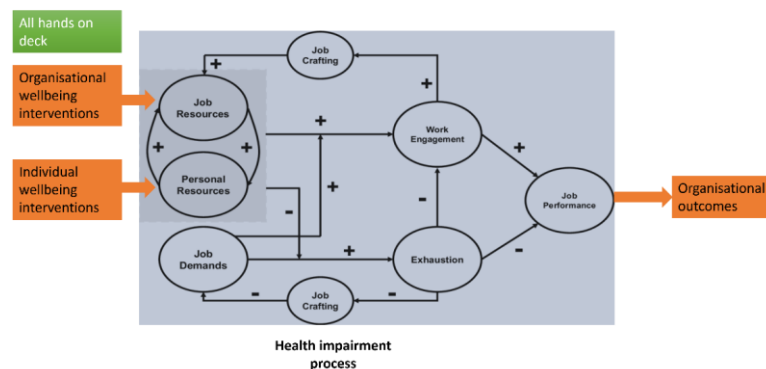
settings, the presentation highlighted the multifaceted nature of wellbeing and the strategies required to enhance it within university environments.

Defining wellbeing in the workplace

Wellbeing in the workplace is a subjective and multifaceted concept. It varies significantly among individuals, as each person brings unique personal resources, such as cognitive capabilities, personality traits, beliefs, and diverse perspectives to their work. These personal resources contribute to creativity and innovation, essential in higher education.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model was discussed as a framework to understand the interaction between job demands, job resources, and personal resources. Job demands, such as workload and emotional load, can lead to stress and burnout if not adequately managed. Conversely, job resources, including a supportive workplace climate, effective management, and clear communication, can enhance employees' ability to cope with job demands and thrive.

Workplace wellbeing: Job demands-resources model



Bakker & Demerouti, 2014

Impact of job resources on wellbeing

Research has demonstrated that the most effective interventions to improve workplace wellbeing focus on enhancing job resources. Quality job resources can mitigate the negative impact of high job demands, improving resilience and overall job performance. Conversely, poor quality job resources can lead to a health impairment process, resulting in fatigue, burnout, anxiety, and other negative outcomes.

Key job resources include:

- **Management and leadership:** Effective and supportive management is crucial. Managers who align with the institution's values and foster a positive work environment can significantly enhance employee wellbeing.
- **Workplace climate:** A positive workplace climate, free from discrimination and bullying, supports mental and emotional health.
- **Communication:** Clear and respectful communication within the workplace is essential for maintaining a supportive environment.
- **Employee growth and development:** Opportunities for professional development and career advancement contribute to job satisfaction and personal growth.

- **Physical resources:** Adequate physical resources, such as technology and workspace, are necessary for employees to perform their tasks effectively.

Challenges and strategies for improvement

Despite the availability of job resources, challenges such as bullying and lack of trust can undermine employee wellbeing. Immediate and practical interventions are necessary to address these issues. For example, strategies to combat workplace bullying should be based on existing legal frameworks and best practices rather than prolonged committee discussions.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organisational culture. Recruitment processes should prioritise candidates who possess technical skills, align with the institution's values, and demonstrate a commitment to ethical leadership. Sustaining ethical leadership involves continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that leaders' actions align with their stated values.

Research and practical implications

The session emphasised the importance of moving beyond individualistic interventions, such as counselling and medical attention, to organisational interventions that address systemic issues. Research indicates that improving workplace climate and job resources leads to better organisational outcomes, including higher research output, innovation, and teaching effectiveness.

Practical steps for enhancing employee wellbeing include:

- **Investing in quality job resources:** Ensuring job resources are high quality and aligned with employees' needs.
- **Fostering ethical and authentic leadership:** Developing leaders committed to ethical practices and authentic interactions.
- **Promoting inclusivity and diversity:** Creating an inclusive environment that respects all aspects of diversity, including race, gender, religion, and sexuality.
- **Building trust:** Building trust through consistent actions reflecting the institution's values and commitments.

Conclusion

The symposium session underscored the critical role of job resources, leadership, and organisational culture in enhancing employee wellbeing in higher education. By focusing on these areas, institutions can create a supportive and thriving work environment that benefits both employees and the organisation. Continuous efforts to align practices with values, foster ethical leadership, and invest in quality job resources are essential for achieving sustainable wellbeing outcomes.

Discussion and Feedback

Comment:

A participant highlighted the importance of recruiting leaders who align with the institution's values, rather than focusing solely on technical skills. The selection process should emphasise strategic intent and leadership qualities to ensure effective management.

Comment:

Another participant noted the significance of having leaders with strategic intent and the ability to guide the institution towards its goals. The lack of such leadership can lead to organisational challenges and undermine the institution's objectives.

Conclusion

The session concluded with an acknowledgement of the need for collective effort in promoting employee wellbeing, involving all members of the organisation, especially leadership. An emotionally healthy work environment is key to achieving true employee wellbeing and organisational success.

Growing older while staying younger without Botox, Prozac or Viagra.

Dr Wayne Derman

Summary

The symposium session by Professor Wayne Derman provided an in-depth exploration of natural methods to enhance longevity and maintain health.

Professor Derman, a leading authority in sports and exercise medicine, emphasised the significant role of lifestyle choices, particularly physical activity, in promoting a high quality of life as one ages.

About

Wayne Derman is a distinguished academic and practitioner in the field of sports medicine. He serves as Professor and Director of the Institute of Sport and Exercise Medicine at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Additionally, he holds the position of Co-Director at the IOC Research Centre of South Africa, which is dedicated to injury prevention and the protection of athletes' health.

With extensive experience in sports medicine, Professor Derman has provided specialist consulting services to a wide range of South African sports teams, including rugby, soccer, and cricket, as well as to the national Commonwealth and Olympic teams. His expertise has been instrumental in offering clinical support to South Africa's athletes on the international stage. Notably, he has served as Chief Medical Officer for the South African Team at the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Olympic Games, and as Medical Officer for the South African Paralympic Team at the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Games.

Professor Derman's career also includes unique experiences such as serving as Flight Surgeon to Cosmonaut Mark Shuttleworth during the "First African in Space" mission in Russia from December 2001 to May 2002. He was also the Medical Officer for Cape Town during the FIFA 2010 World Cup.

Throughout his career, Professor Derman has received numerous accolades, including a Fellowship of the American College of Sports Medicine and the Val Schreire Award for Outstanding Investigator in the Cardiovascular Field in Southern Africa. He has been honoured with the Paul Harris Award from Rotary International for his community contributions and received a Mondi Award nomination for journalism. In December 2004, he was awarded the Department of Health and Health Professionals Council award for Excellence in Health Care in South Africa.

A prolific author and speaker, Professor Derman has published extensively and presented at international conferences. He is renowned for his engaging and humorous style, making significant contributions as an educational and motivational speaker.

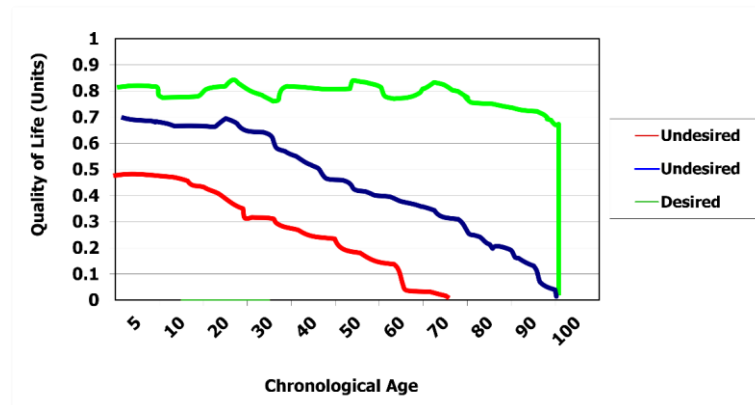
Introduction

This session delved into natural approaches to maintaining youthfulness and health as one ages. This discussion centres on the significance of lifestyle choices in enhancing longevity and quality of life, drawing from recent scientific research.

Overview of longevity models

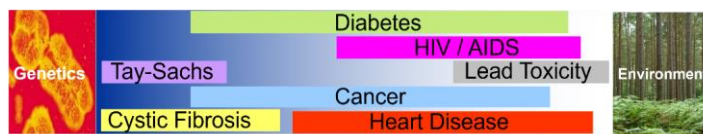
Three models of longevity were presented to illustrate different life trajectories. The first model depicts a poor quality of life leading to early death, which is undesirable. The second model shows a high quality of life that deteriorates rapidly from middle age, resulting in a prolonged period of poor health before death. The third and most

desirable model maintains a high quality of life until a sudden death, thus maximising the period of health and vitality, referred to as "healthspan".



Determinants of longevity

Longevity is influenced by a combination of genetics and environmental factors. Genetic predispositions, such as those for Tay-Sachs disease or cystic fibrosis, are largely unavoidable. Environmental factors, such as exposure to toxins, also play a critical role. However, the interplay between genetics and environment, including lifestyle choices like exercise, diet, and stress management, significantly impacts the development of major diseases such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and neurodegenerative disorders.



Key lifestyle choices

Three daily choices are highlighted as crucial predictors of health outcomes:

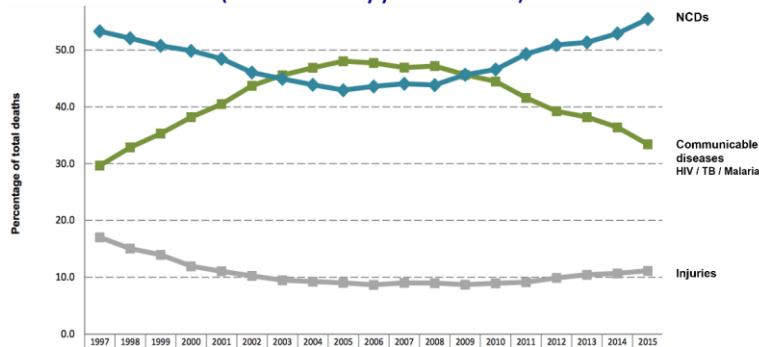
1. Smoking: The decision to smoke has a profound impact on health.
2. Diet: Nutritional choices affect overall health, although accessibility to healthy food is a barrier among a big part of the South African population.
3. Exercise: Regular physical activity is essential for maintaining health.

Psychosocial stress influences these choices, often leading to poor habits such as sedentary behaviour, unhealthy eating, and substance abuse.

Major health risks

The presentation identified four major diseases—heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and neurodegenerative diseases—as the primary causes of mortality. These "diseases of the horsemen" account for 70% of deaths globally. Despite advancements in understanding and managing these diseases, their prevalence continues to rise.

What causes deaths in South Africans? (% total deaths by year: 1997-2015)



STATS SA: Mortality and causes of death in South Africa, 2015: Findings from death notification – Released 28 February 2017

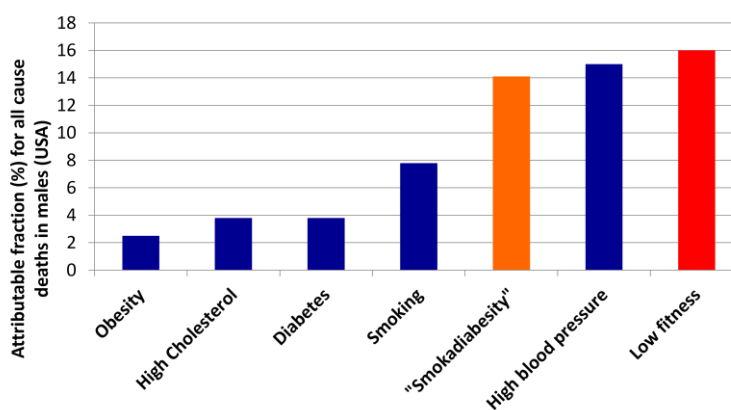
Impact of non-communicable diseases in South Africa

Data from Statistics South Africa indicate that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as those mentioned above are surpassing communicable diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria as leading causes of death. This trend underscores the growing importance of addressing lifestyle-related health risks.

Risk factors and physical fitness

Participants were asked to vote on what they perceived as the most dangerous risk factors among smoking, unfitness, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and high cholesterol. Data from a study by Steven Blair in the British Journal of Sports Medicine revealed that low physical fitness is a more significant risk factor for all-cause mortality than obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and hypertension. This finding highlights the critical role of maintaining physical fitness in reducing health risks.

But which of these NCD risk factors is the most important killer in males? Males in the USA

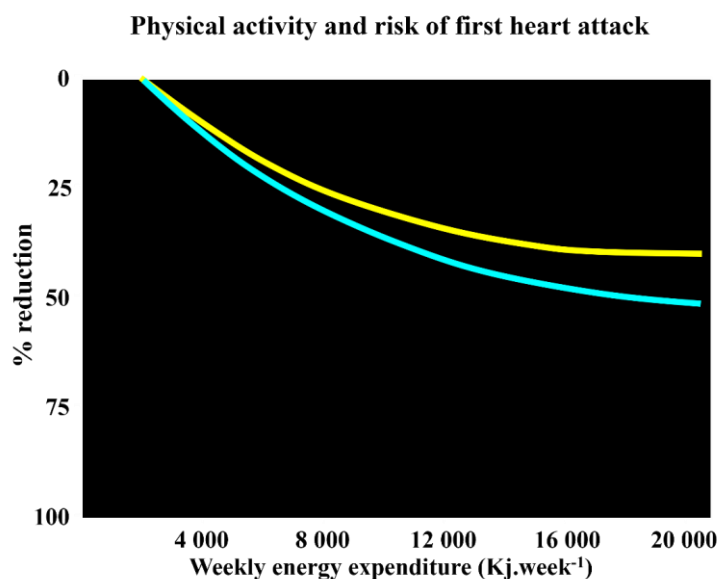


Blair, S. Br J Sports Med, January 2009 (43) 1

The impact of physical activity on health: Evidence and mechanisms

Reduction in heart attack risk

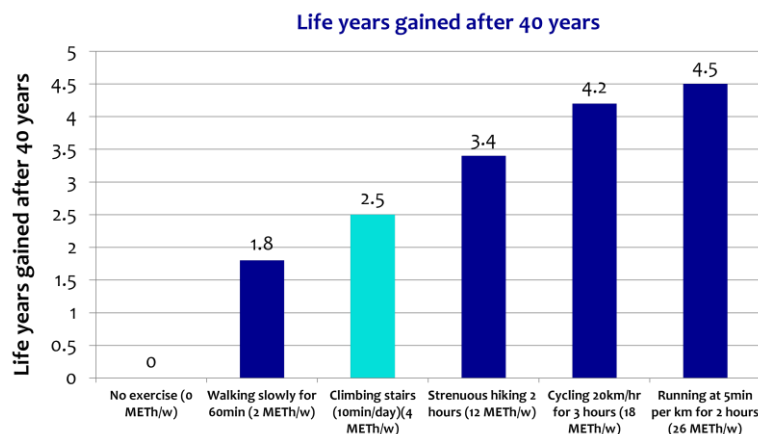
A pivotal study by Ralph Paffenbarger highlights the reduction in the risk of a first heart attack through physical activity. The study illustrates that individuals who engage in regular physical activity experience a substantial 30% reduction in the risk of their first heart attack. This significant finding underscores the critical role of even moderate exercise in promoting cardiovascular health. The study's data shows a clear correlation between increased physical activity and reduced heart attack risk, emphasising that exercise is a cost-effective and accessible intervention.



R. Paffenbarger et al. American Journal of Epidemiology 108; 61-75, 1978.

Life years gained through exercise

The benefits of physical activity extend beyond cardiovascular health to overall longevity. Data on life years gained after age 40 reveals that various forms of exercise can significantly extend lifespan. For instance, running at a moderate pace for two hours per week can add approximately 4.5 years to one's life. Even minimal activity, like walking for 60 minutes per week, can contribute an additional 1.8 years. Notably, climbing stairs for just 10 minutes a day provides the most substantial benefit, highlighting the importance of incorporating simple, daily activities into one's routine.



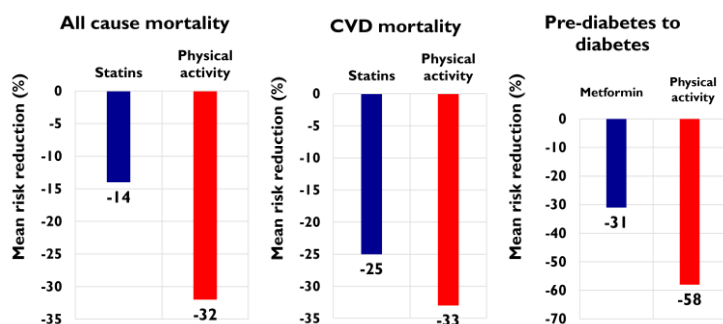
Moore S, et al.: PLoS One; 2012; 9, 11

Broad health benefits of exercise

The advantages of regular physical activity are vast and well-documented. Engaging in consistent exercise reduces the risk of early death by 30-45%, coronary artery disease by 30%, and type 2 diabetes by 50%. Furthermore, physical activity lowers the risk of colon cancer by 50%, breast cancer by 20%, osteoarthritis by 83%, and hip fractures by 68%. Additionally, exercise decreases the likelihood of falls among older individuals and lowers the risk of depression and dementia by 30%.

Comparison with medications

Physical activity has been shown to be as effective as, or even more effective than, certain medications in reducing mortality and managing diseases. For instance, exercise outperforms statins in reducing all-cause mortality and cardiovascular mortality. Similarly, physical activity is more effective than metformin in preventing the progression from pre-diabetes to diabetes. While medications remain necessary for many conditions, these findings highlight the importance of incorporating exercise into treatment and prevention strategies.

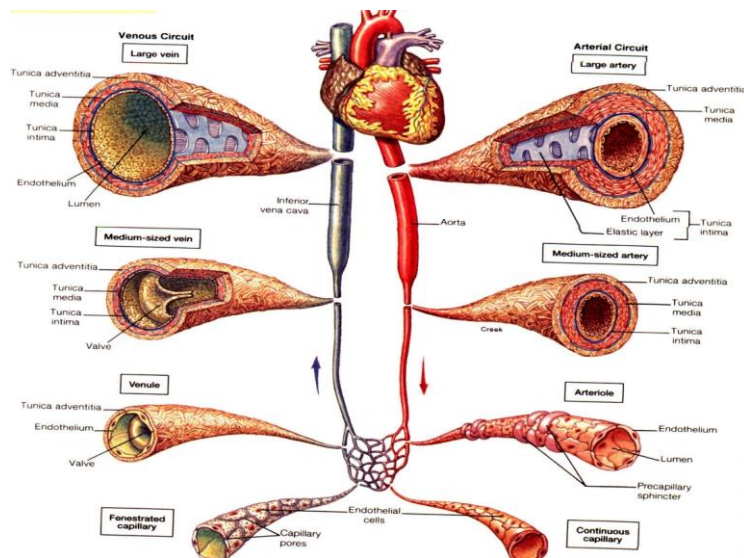


McKinney J, et al.: BC Med J; 58(3), 2016

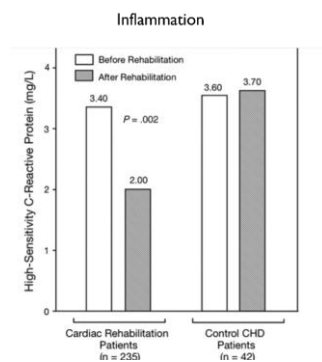
Mechanisms of action

The physiological mechanisms through which exercise exerts its benefits are multifaceted. One primary mechanism involves the vascular system. Exercise stimulates the endothelium, the lining of blood vessels, to release dilating factors,

leading to vasodilation and reduced blood pressure. This natural antihypertensive effect underscores the role of exercise as a critical component of cardiovascular health.



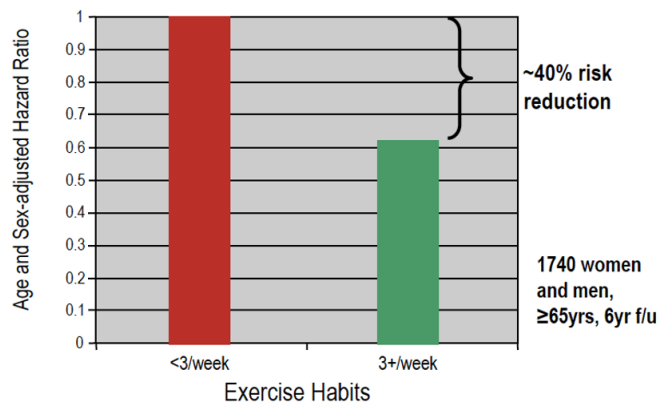
Additionally, exercise has profound anti-inflammatory effects. Studies show that regular physical activity significantly reduces markers of inflammation, such as C-reactive protein, in individuals with heart disease. This reduction in inflammation is crucial for preventing age-related diseases and maintaining overall health.



Milani et al. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 43: 1056-1061, 2004

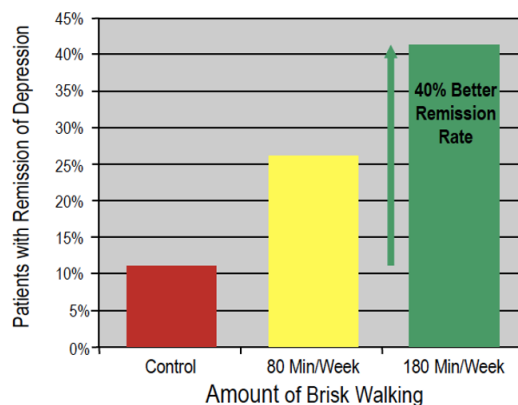
Exercise also promotes brain health. Physical activity triggers the release of insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1) in muscles, which is then converted to brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF). BDNF acts like a "miracle growth" for the brain, enhancing neuronal connections and plasticity. Empirical data indicates that regular exercise reduces the risk of dementia by 40% and improves depression remission rates by 40%, demonstrating the substantial mental health benefits of physical activity.

Exercise and dementia



Larsen EB et al. *Ann Int Med* 2006; 144:73-81

Exercise and treatment of depression



Dunn A et al. *Am J Prev Med* 2005

Prescribing exercise for health and longevity

Exercise prescription as the fourth vital sign

The concept of exercise prescription is gaining traction in medical training. It involves healthcare providers assessing patients' physical activity levels as a routine part of medical evaluations. This practice, termed the "fourth vital sign," is as essential as measuring temperature, blood pressure, and respiratory rate. Doctors are encouraged to engage patients in brief conversations about their exercise habits and provide tailored advice on incorporating physical activity into their lives.

Recommended physical activity

The core recommendation is achieving 150 minutes of moderate to high-intensity endurance per week. This equates to about 30 minutes of exercise most days of

the week. Simple activities such as walking for 30 minutes or climbing stairs for 10 minutes can lay a solid foundation for overall health. While gym memberships can offer additional benefits, they are not necessary. Resistance training, involving pushing, pulling, or lifting, should be performed two to three times per week. Balance training, which can be as simple as standing on one leg, is crucial for maintaining stability and preventing falls.

Optimising exercise programmes

A comprehensive exercise programme includes:

- **Endurance activity:** Walking for 150 minutes per week or jogging for 70-80 minutes per week.
- **Flexibility training:** Particularly important for older adults to maintain muscle elasticity and joint mobility.
- **Resistance training:** Using body weight, elastic bands, or small dumbbells to build muscle strength.
- **Core stability exercises:** Essential for preventing lower back pain and enhancing overall stability.
- **Balance training:** A key predictor of longevity and fall prevention.

Recent studies, such as a Brazilian study involving thousands of participants, have shown that the ability to balance on one leg for 10 seconds is a significant predictor of lifespan. This simple test can be easily integrated into daily routines and offers substantial health benefits.

Additional health benefits of exercise

Physical activity reduces the risk of various health conditions by significant margins:

- 30-45% lower risk of early death and coronary artery diseases
- 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes and colon cancer
- 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- 68% lower risk of hip fractures
- 30% lower risk of depression and dementia

These statistics underscore regular exercise's profound impact on physical and mental health.

Comparative effectiveness of exercise and medication

Studies have demonstrated that exercise can be as effective as, or more effective than, certain medications in managing health conditions. For example:

- Exercise outperforms statins in reducing all-cause mortality and cardiovascular mortality.
- Physical activity is more effective than metformin in preventing the progression from pre-diabetes to diabetes.

While medications are necessary for many conditions, incorporating exercise into treatment plans can significantly enhance health outcomes.

Mechanisms of exercise at the cellular level

The benefits of exercise extend to cellular and molecular levels:

- **Vascular health:** Exercise stimulates the endothelium (lining of blood vessels) to release dilating factors, reducing blood pressure and enhancing blood flow. This natural antihypertensive effect is a key reason why exercise benefits cardiovascular health.

- **Anti-inflammatory effects:** Regular physical activity reduces inflammation markers, such as C-reactive protein, associated with ageing and chronic diseases.
- **Brain health:** Exercise promotes the release of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), enhancing neuronal connections and plasticity. This effect reduces the risk of neurodegenerative diseases and improves mental health.

Guidelines for physical activity

To maximise health benefits, individuals should aim for:

- Thirty minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week: This can be monitored using the talk test—being able to talk but not sing during exercise.
- 10 000 steps per day: Using fitness trackers to monitor daily activity.
- Adequate sleep: Following updated sleep guidelines of 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Reducing exposure to blue light before bedtime can improve sleep quality.

Conclusion

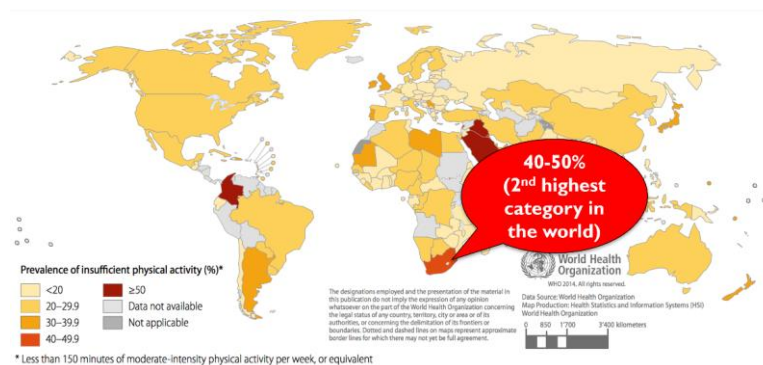
Incorporating exercise into daily routines is a powerful strategy for enhancing health and longevity. The practice of prescribing exercise alongside traditional medications reflects its critical role in preventive healthcare. By adopting these recommendations, individuals can significantly improve their quality of life, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and ensure better health outcomes. The emphasis on simple, accessible activities makes it feasible for everyone to integrate physical activity into their lives, thereby promoting a healthier and longer life.

Challenges and solutions in promoting physical activity

Global and local physical activity levels

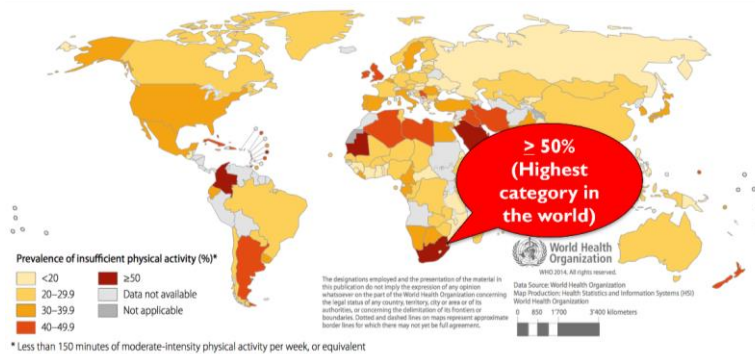
Data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) paints a concerning picture of physical activity levels worldwide. In South Africa, males over 18 fall into the second highest category of insufficient physical activity, marked in red on WHO maps. The situation is even more dire for females, with the country ranking in the highest category globally, indicated by a dark red or maroon colour. This highlights a significant public health issue that needs urgent attention.

Insufficient physical activity in South African males > 18 years (% population)



WHO Global Status Report on NCDs – January 2015

Insufficient physical activity in South African females > 18 years (% population)



WHO Global Status Report on NCDs – January 2015

Barriers to physical activity

Common excuses for not engaging in physical activity include age and weight concerns. However, research disproves these excuses:

- **Age:** Studies show that even individuals aged 60 to 79 who start exercising can experience brain growth, as evidenced by MRI scans. This indicates that it is never too late to benefit from physical activity.
- **Weight:** Data suggests that it is better to be overweight and fit than thin and unfit. Exercise offers health benefits irrespective of body weight.

Effective behavioural interventions

Traditional approaches like scare tactics and penalties have proven ineffective in promoting physical activity. Instead, positive reinforcement through reward incentives shows promise. Health insurers are increasingly exploring various incentive-based programmes to encourage healthier lifestyles. Effective strategies include:

- **Micro gains:** Small behavioural changes can lead to significant health benefits over time. Examples include standing at a desk instead of sitting, taking stairs instead of escalators, shopping in a mall instead of online, and walking to a colleague's office instead of emailing.
- **Innovative initiatives:** Creative solutions, such as the [piano stairs](#) in Sweden, have successfully increased physical activity. By making the stairs fun, the intervention led to a 66% increase in stair use over the escalator.

Medical training and community engagement

Modern medical education now incorporates exercise prescriptions, encouraging doctors to discuss physical activity with patients. This approach, referred to as the "fourth vital sign," involves assessing and advising on physical activity during medical consultations. Young doctors are being trained to engage patients in conversations about their exercise habits and provide practical advice.

Community-based initiatives also play a crucial role. For instance, in Khayelitsha, church-based programmes encourage local residents to engage in physical activity through fun and safe exercises, fostering a positive and supportive environment.

Promoting lifelong physical activity

The overarching message is clear: regular physical activity is crucial for a long and healthy life. This includes:

- Daily movement: Encouraging simple activities like walking 10 000 steps a day or using stairs.
- Inclusivity: Emphasising that everyone, regardless of physical ability, can engage in some form of exercise. Para-athletes serve as inspiring examples of overcoming physical limitations to stay active.

Addressing skin health

While physical activity offers numerous health benefits, protecting the skin from sun damage is important, which can affect facial appearance. Preliminary evidence suggests that exercise may enhance skin elasticity and improve sweating efficiency, contributing to better skin health.

In closing

Promoting physical activity is essential for enhancing healthspan and overall wellbeing. By adopting innovative and inclusive strategies, it is possible to overcome barriers and encourage more people to lead active lives. The key takeaway is to move as much as possible, safely and effectively, to improve health and longevity. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of major diseases and enhances mental health and overall quality of life, proving to be as effective as some medications. The holistic benefits of exercise underscore its importance as a fundamental component of a healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

Professor Wayne Derman's presentation underscores the critical importance of lifestyle choices, particularly physical activity, in enhancing longevity and maintaining a high quality of life. By presenting comprehensive scientific evidence, he demonstrated that regular exercise reduces the risk of major diseases and promotes mental wellbeing and overall vitality.

The concept of healthspan, as opposed to mere lifespan, emerged as a central theme, highlighting the goal of living a life marked by prolonged health and vitality rather than extended years of poor health. The benefits of physical activity were shown to be multifaceted, impacting cardiovascular health, reducing inflammation, and improving brain function, thus offering a natural and effective means of achieving better health outcomes.

Professor Derman's practical recommendations provided actionable insights for integrating physical activity into daily routines. By promoting exercise as a fundamental component of healthcare, akin to a vital sign, he advocated for a shift in medical practice towards a more holistic approach to health management.

In conclusion, the talk emphasised that regular physical activity and other healthy lifestyle choices are essential for achieving a longer, healthier, and more fulfilling life. The evidence presented supports the notion that simple, accessible interventions can have profound impacts on individual and public health, making exercise a cornerstone of preventive healthcare.

Questions and Responses

The Q&A session allowed attendees to seek further clarification and share personal experiences. This section summarises the questions posed and the detailed responses provided, highlighting practical advice and reinforcing the key messages of the talk.

Question on low blood pressure and exercise

Question:

How does one manage very low blood pressure while engaging in physical activity?

Response:

Low blood pressure can be quite debilitating, leading to feelings of fatigue and lethargy. Exercise helps regulate blood pressure through baroreceptors, which adjust blood pressure levels as physical fitness improves. For those with very low blood pressure, exercise can help normalise these levels. Additionally, nutritional supplements, such as liquorice, can assist in raising blood pressure when necessary. During exercise, it is normal for blood pressure to increase, sometimes reaching 160 to 200 mmHg, which is a healthy response.

Comment on personal experience with fitness

A participant shared a personal journey of weight loss and improved mental wellbeing through regular exercise. Initially weighing 104 kg, the participant joined a gym to manage stress while preparing a master's thesis. Regular gym sessions helped manage stress and improve mental clarity and resulted in a significant weight loss to 88 kg. The experience underscored the holistic benefits of physical fitness.

Comment on exercise and hormonal changes

Approaching age 50, a participant discussed the impact of cortisol levels on exercise efficacy, especially in women. They found that certain types of exercise, such as aerobics, were exhausting and counterproductive, while yoga and walking felt more beneficial.

Response:

Exercise needs vary throughout different life stages. While younger individuals benefit from less resistance work, older adults require strength and balance training. Aerobic exercise serves as a foundational activity throughout life. For women around 50, incorporating lifting, pulling, and pushing exercises helps maintain bone density and muscle mass, countering sarcopenia and bone loss. Yoga, incorporating body weight resistance, also provides significant benefits.

Question on exercise for students

Question:

As an academic advisor, what type of exercise should be recommended to students, as those already exercising are mostly focused on bodybuilding?

Response:

Encouraging students to engage in a balanced exercise regimen is essential. The general guidelines provided—150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week, supplemented with resistance training—apply universally. It is important to consider individual preferences to ensure adherence. Social activities like rugby or soccer can enhance the enjoyment of exercise while promoting mental wellbeing through social interaction.

Question on sleep and exercise

Question:

Is sleep medication a viable option to establish a healthy sleep pattern, particularly when combined with exercise?

Response:

Exercise should be performed in the morning to facilitate better sleep. Exposure to natural, narrow-angle light in the morning and evening helps regulate circadian

rhythms, improving sleep quality. Avoiding blue light from screens before bedtime is also crucial. If conservative measures fail, short-term use of sleep medication might be necessary to re-establish a healthy sleep pattern under medical supervision.

Maroon Health Passport initiative

The Maroon Health Passport project, initiated eight years ago, aims to track lifestyle factors such as physical activity and sleep among students and staff. The online tool provides personalised feedback and identifies individuals needing additional support. Although manpower limitations currently restrict the programme, ongoing data collection and small group discussions aim to refine and expand its impact.

Question on integration with other initiatives

Question:

Would it be beneficial to integrate the Maroon Health Passport with initiatives at Tygerberg campus and Maties Sport to enhance exercise promotion?

Comment:

The suggestion of linking the Maroon Health Passport with existing campus initiatives is valuable. An audit of current interventions across faculties could identify potential collaborations. Engaging with physiotherapy and sports programmes can facilitate practical, community-based activities like the walk-and-talk test, promoting both physical activity and dialogue.

The leader as coach

Janine Ahlers

Summary

Janine Ahlers' talk on integral coaching comprehensively explores how this methodology can influence and understand human behaviour, especially in complex and diverse environments. Integral coaching, developed through global experiences, combines philosophical insights and scientific perspectives to address organisational behavioural dynamics. The Centre for Coaching's international work highlights the versatility and effectiveness of this approach across various cultural and professional contexts.

She emphasized the importance of soft skills, particularly in fields where their relevance is often questioned. Effective communication and relationship-building are identified as critical components for fostering engagement and achieving sustainable change. The talk underscores the necessity of self-reflection and understanding one's behavioural patterns to influence others effectively. It introduces the concept of 'structure of interpretation,' which explains how personal history, societal influences, and education shape behaviour.

A significant portion of the presentation focused on the practical application of integral coaching principles, including the importance of active listening and the role of consistent practice in achieving behavioural change. By integrating these practices into daily interactions, individuals can foster a culture of empathy, understanding, and sustainable personal and professional growth.

About

Janine Ahlers is a certified Integral Coach® and Academic Director of the Centre for Coaching situated at the UCT GSB. She also holds the position of Senior Lecturer at the UCT GSB, where she lectures and does research in Coaching and Leadership Development. She leads or co-leads all the New Ventures West courses in South Africa. She consults to and runs in-house coaching workshops, Coaching Circles and leadership development interventions nationally and internationally for global blue-chip clients.

She spent more than ten years working in the corporate, manufacturing and business environment, where she held positions as Director, Exco member, Head of HR, and also handled marketing, production & start-up operations. She has been coaching since 2002, primarily to senior executives who are often working on strategic, leadership and relationship challenges. She has a BA and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management (Human Resources) from Wits University, a Licentiate from the Royal Schools of Music (Violin Teaching), and an MBA from the UCT GSB. She has done group facilitation and in-depth consulting as well as Enneagram training.

Introduction

Integral coaching offers a unique and holistic approach to understanding and influencing human behaviour, particularly within complex and diverse environments. Developed through extensive global experiences, this methodology addresses the often-frustrating gap between expected and actual behaviours by delving into philosophical and scientific perspectives. Integral coaching seeks to unravel the mysteries of human behaviour, providing tools and insights that facilitate positive change.

Introduction to integral coaching

Integral coaching offers a unique approach to understanding and influencing human behaviour, particularly within complex and diverse environments. This coaching methodology, developed and refined through global experiences, addresses the frustration often experienced when individuals do not behave as expected. Integral coaching aims to unravel the mystery of human behaviour from both philosophical and scientific perspectives.

Global reach and applicability

The Centre for Coaching has conducted its work internationally, engaging with various sectors ranging from blue-collar factory environments to senior executives in the first world. The challenges and complexities faced by leaders in South Africa are notably intense, often surpassing those encountered by leaders in other parts of the world. This experience provides a rich foundation for understanding and managing complex and difficult situations.

Integral coaching resonates universally due to its underlying philosophy, which delves into the intricate nature of human behaviour. The focus is on understanding why individuals act the way they do and how to facilitate positive change. This approach has proven effective across different cultures and contexts, demonstrating its versatility and applicability.

Addressing the relevance of soft skills

A common question posed by academics and professionals, particularly in fields like engineering and actuarial science, is the relevance and business case for soft skills. Integral coaching addresses this by highlighting the significant impact of effective interpersonal interactions. The investment in processes aimed at innovation, culture change, and sustainability often overlooks the critical role of human engagement. No matter how sophisticated or well-funded a process is, its success ultimately depends on the people involved.

Importance of effective communication

Effective communication and relationship-building are fundamental to integral coaching. When individuals feel seen and heard, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to contribute. This human connection is essential for fostering a productive and positive environment.

Consistency in engagement is crucial for achieving desired outcomes. Neuroscience research indicates that behavioural change requires the formation of new neural pathways, which must be reinforced through practice. An initial insight or willingness to change must be acted upon within four hours to prevent it from fading. Merely talking to someone or providing instructions is insufficient for lasting change. Instead, integral coaching emphasizes the importance of practical application and consistent reinforcement.

Framework for sustainable change

By integrating these insights, integral coaching provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and influencing human behaviour, fostering a culture of engagement, and driving sustainable change within organisations.

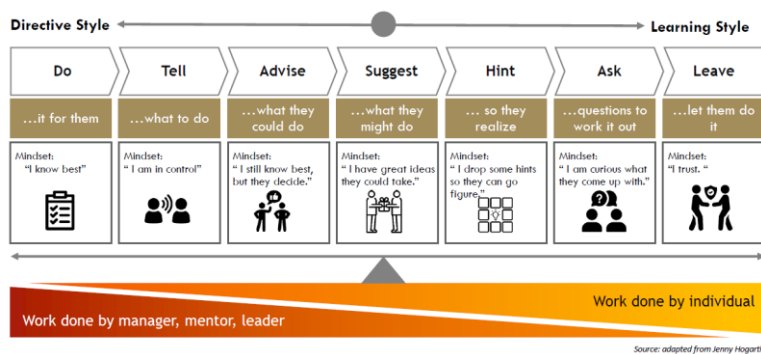
Exploring behavioural patterns: An integral approach

Understanding one's own behavioural patterns is crucial before attempting to influence the behaviour of others. This self-reflection serves as the foundation for effective engagement and leadership. Many academics and staff members often experience overload, which a directive work style can exacerbate. While common in teaching environments, this style can lead to an unsustainable workload as it

involves making decisions and controlling outcomes based on the belief that one knows best.

Shifting from a directive mindset

The challenge lies in shifting from a directive mindset to one that sparks from a place of curiosity and collaboration. Rather than dictating actions, fostering an environment where individuals are guided to explore and contribute their ideas can significantly reduce the burden on a single person and promote a more inclusive and dynamic work culture.



Self-reflection and self-awareness

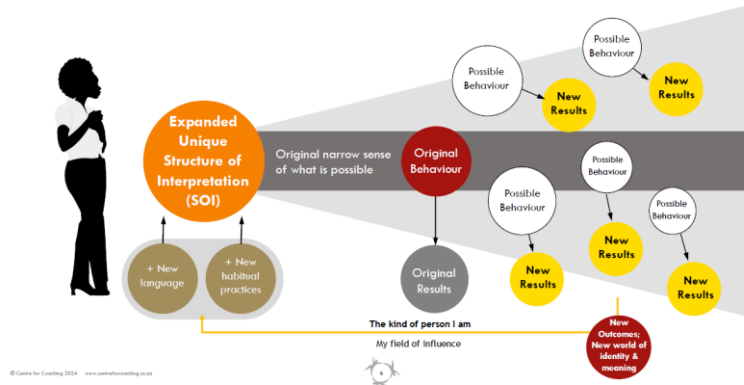
Reflecting on one's own patterns of behaviour is essential. Lao Tzu's wisdom, "Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is enlightenment," underscores the importance of self-awareness. Understanding how personal habits and tendencies contribute to the dynamics of a situation is the first step toward effective interaction with others.

Structure of interpretation

The underlying philosophy of integral coaching involves understanding the 'structure of interpretation.' This concept, influenced by philosophical thought and supported by neuroscience, explains how past experiences, beliefs, and societal influences shape an individual's perception and behaviour. The outcomes we achieve are directly linked to our behaviour, which in turn is influenced by our unique structure of interpretation.

Factors such as fear, responsibilities, upbringing, societal norms, education, and trauma all contribute to this structure. Our values and beliefs, often instilled by family, religion, and cultural background, significantly shape how we interact with the world. Moreover, our physical bodies and genetic predispositions also influence our behaviour and reactions.

The importance of non-judgement - Each of us is unique & equally valid



Education and environment

Education and environment further mould our structure of interpretation. The knowledge and experiences we accumulate influence what we notice and how we react. For instance, someone deeply involved in a particular field will see the world through the lens of that discipline, noticing details and connections that others might miss.

Subjectivity and empathy

The key insight from this discussion is that our perception of the world is subjective and shaped by our experiences. No two individuals have the same structure of interpretation, making each person's view of the world unique and valid. This realisation is crucial for fostering empathy and understanding in interactions with others.

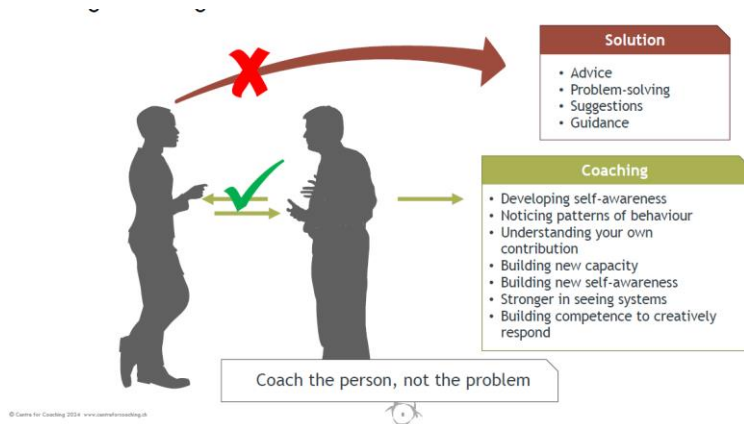
Expanding understanding

Recognising the limitations of our perspective allows us to expand our understanding and consider new possibilities. This expansion can occur through education, self-reflection, and exposure to different experiences. By acknowledging that our world is not the only valid one, we open ourselves to growth and change.

An example is the habitual pattern of taking on too much work, driven by the belief that one can do everything. This pattern, reinforced by past successes, can lead to burnout when the demands exceed personal capacity. Recognising this pattern and allowing oneself to delegate or rest can lead to healthier behaviour and better outcomes.

Promoting growth through integral coaching

Integral coaching encourages this shift in perspective, enabling individuals to see beyond their habitual patterns and explore new ways of thinking and behaving. Doing so promotes personal and professional growth, ultimately leading to more effective and compassionate leadership. This approach highlights the importance of understanding and addressing the underlying factors that shape behaviour, paving the way for meaningful and sustainable change.



The importance of activating lived experience and integrating coaching into daily practice

Adopting new values and principles is only effective when individuals' lived experiences are activated and aligned with these values. Despite good intentions, without activation, behavioural changes may not manifest. This misalignment often results in unintended behaviours, such as bullying, despite an individual's best intentions to avoid such actions.

Examining behavioural patterns

To initiate meaningful change, it is essential to examine one's patterns of behaviour, including unconscious habits and language choices. Identifying these patterns is challenging because they often operate subconsciously. Most individuals spend significant portions of their lives on autopilot, unaware of these ingrained behaviours.

An anecdote illustrates this point: during a wilderness walking safari, the guide demonstrated an extraordinary ability to read and listen to the environment. Initially, the guide's insights were incomprehensible, but with practice, the observer began to discern the subtle cues in nature. Similarly, new behavioural patterns can be learned and internalised through practice, revealing a new world of identity and meaning.

Focusing on new possibilities

As previously discussed, changing one's behaviour is challenging, particularly in areas like exercise. Coaching focuses on identifying new possibilities and outcomes rather than dwelling on therapeutic explanations of past behaviours. This approach is particularly useful for individuals who are not deeply entrenched in trauma but seek to develop new habits and improve their lives.

For instance, some executives inadvertently exhibit bullying behaviour without realising it. By examining their actions, they discover minor but impactful behaviours, such as finger-banging on desks or raising their voices, which can be perceived as intimidating. Recognising these behaviours and making conscious changes can significantly alter how others perceive them.

The role of practice in behavioural change

Aristotle's quote, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit," underscores the importance of practice in achieving excellence. Behavioural change requires consistent practice of new behaviours. Insights alone are insufficient; they must be translated into action within a specific timeframe to be effective.

The transformative power of active listening

Listening is a powerful skill that can facilitate behavioural change. Active listening, characterised by genuine curiosity, probing deeper, and summarising what has been heard, allows individuals to explore their own structure of interpretation. This approach helps them discover new possibilities and develop meaningful and sustainable habits.

An anecdote illustrates the transformative power of listening: an executive initially intended to terminate an employee who had been underperforming. However, through active listening, he discovered that the employee had been struggling with personal grief. This understanding led to a renewed commitment from the employee and significantly improved performance.

Positional listening

- We stop listening when we feel we have a solution
- More interested in promoting own point of view vs. understanding or exploring someone's view
- Distracted by own thoughts, opinions, concerns
- Listen for weak point to 'attack' / interrupt / justify
- Pretend to pay attention whilst waiting for opening
- Internally formulating rebuttal & planning devastating comeback
- We're not listening to the person; we're listening to our judgement of them



Source: Listening.com

Active listening

Three key areas:

Genuine interest	Genuinely interested in understanding what person is thinking, feeling, wanting
Probe deeper	Active in deepening our understanding before we respond with our new message: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "How could you describe that another way?"• "Give me an example?"• "Could you just repeat what you said?"
Repeat back	Restate or mirror back our understanding using their language & send it back to check if it is right <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "So what you said was..."• "What I heard you say was..."• "Let me just play this back to see that I heard you right..."



Important: Listen until they are finished. You can think about what YOU will say or ask after they have finished speaking

Source: Listening.com

Practising active listening

Active listening can transform relationships and foster a deeper understanding of others. By focusing solely on what the other person is saying, without judgment or preparing responses, listeners create a space for genuine connection and insight. This approach requires practice and a conscious effort to overcome habitual patterns.



Active listening practice:

Consider this question: *What blocks you from being the person you want to be? (eg with the relationships you seek)*

HEAD: What beliefs do you hold that might be blocking you?

HEART: What is your capacity to deal with different emotions – your own and others?

BODY: How is your current level of energy?
How do you take care of your energy levels?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Speaker: Reflect out loud to your partner on all three questions above:

Listener: Listen ACTIVELY – i.e. Stay curious, explore deeper, repeat back, ask questions. Give NO advice.

Debrief: How did that feel? What insights are you getting about yourself? About listening?

Conclusion

In conclusion, activating lived experiences and integrating coaching practices, such as active listening, into daily interactions can lead to meaningful behavioural changes. By examining and understanding one's behaviour patterns, fostering curiosity, and practising new habits, individuals can positively impact their personal and professional lives. This approach, rooted in ancient wisdom and supported by modern neuroscience, offers a pathway to more effective and compassionate engagement with others.

Questions and Responses

Question on internal/external coaches

Question:

Is coaching with responsibility within an organisation? Can someone outside your own organisation coach you?

Response:

It is often very helpful to be coached by somebody outside the organisation. The advantage of external coaching is the coach's curiosity about the coachee's structure of interpretation. This curiosity helps uncover why the coachee behaves in certain ways. As a coach, it's about being so curious that you don't need the technical knowledge that the coachee possesses. The coachee understands their technical field but often misses the connection between their technical knowledge and their behaviours, relationships, or feelings. External coaches can be more effective because they have no vested interest in the outcome, making it easier for them to avoid giving advice and instead focus on understanding and guiding the coachee.

Comment on change

Comment:

I realised that in the institution, people who must start this process often use it not to achieve the desired result. Whenever I discuss something and feel like I'm being heard, a crisis comes, and people claim they weren't informed, despite previous discussions.

Response:

Thank you for that. Often, the most powerful teachers are those who lead you to work and learn, allowing you to walk out with everything you brought into the discussion. However, change is hard because people prefer their familiar structures, even if they involve suffering. The value of a supportive relationship, such as coaching, lies in providing consistent support and encouraging new behaviours. Profound change requires someone interested in your progress to consistently follow up and support you.

Question about dealing with guilt

Question:

In engineering education, we try to encourage educators to make time for exercise, sleep, social life, and family. However, the system doesn't support these practices, making it difficult for individuals to balance their responsibilities without feeling guilty. How do you deal with that guilt?

Response:

Beautiful question. The system often reinforces the narrow band of overworking because hard work is highly valued. When coaching individuals with similar concerns, the focus is on communicating needs and making requests within their system. Overcoming the guilt associated with self-care requires consistent practice and support. Changing one's orientation towards self-care takes time and the support of a coach to navigate these deep-seated feelings and behaviours.

Comment on the culture of support

Comment:

The institution often rewards high achievers but does not support wellness. There is a need to create a culture of support within smaller environments, demonstrating that wellness and support are possible even within a toxic institutional culture.

Response:

Thank you for that. The devil is in the details. Start where you are and do what you can within your environment. The key to shifting culture lies in micro-practices and daily interactions. Small actions, like greeting each other or checking in at the beginning of meetings, can significantly impact the overall culture. It's about becoming aware of micro-behaviours and fostering a supportive environment through consistent, small changes.