The Difference

a podcast by support workers, for support workers

Stories from the heart of mental health and addiction services in Aotearoa New Zealand.

🎙️ **Episode 2:** "You can't pour from an empty cup"

💬 **Topic:** Worker wellbeing and vicarious trauma

Guest speakers: Jonathan Miller (Pathways)

> Hey! We hope you enjoyed this episode of *The Difference*, a podcast by support workers, for support workers. It would really help us to know if we are making content that you find valuable. If you have a few minutes, please consider giving us some feedback via this short survey.
>
> Ngā mihi!

What is worker wellbeing?

"Wellbeing means we have the tools, support and environments we need to be who we are and to build and sustain lives worth living" – Mental Health Foundation.

Wellbeing encompasses several factors of working life, including the physical work environment, climate and structure of the organisation, how workers feel about their work, and how safe, healthy, satisfied and engaged they are at work.

International research shows that workers in the mental health and addiction sector have consistently high rates of burnout, stress, depression, and anxiety, resulting in lower worker wellbeing.[1]

Māori and other cultural models of health provide further perspectives on wellbeing that may apply to health workers. Other practice approaches such as sensory modulation can be applied to support worker wellbeing.

"Worker wellbeing initiatives need to be tailored and supported, so that the needs of individual workers are met, and the environmental context of the workplace is taken into account."[2]

What is vicarious trauma?

Kaimahi in mental health and addiction settings often support people who have experienced trauma in their lives. Kaimahi can be emotionally impacted through the nature of the job, such as hearing people's stories, reading clinical notes, and witnessing people's distress.

Vicarious trauma is the cumulative effect from prolonged exposure to the trauma of others. It involves harmful changes in an individual's personal beliefs, worldview, attitude, and sense of safety.[3]

Tips from the podcast

> Know your limits – both your professional and your personal limits. Have good boundaries.

> Call for help when you need it. Remember, you work as part of a team.

> Make sure you know how to use your lived experience safely. Personal experience can help you to relate and empathise with people, but it's important to prioritise your own wellbeing.

> Have a wellbeing action plan.

> Know what you can and cannot do, as a support worker. Work inside the scope of your role and don't take on the weight of peoples' lives.

> Notice when work is spilling over into your personal life and affecting your wellbeing.

Here is more information on this topic, including strategies to look after your wellbeing

> Resources to promote worker wellbeing are available on the Te Pou webpage.

> Learn more about the potential impacts of vicarious trauma on worker wellbeing and practice on the Te Pou webpage.

> Information about the signs and ways to protect from vicarious trauma is available on the Skylight Trust webpage.

> Resources and training package for sensory modulation can be accessed on the Te Pou webpage.

> Description about Te Whare Tapa Whā- a model of Māori health and wellbeing is available on the Mental Health Foundation website.

If this episode has brought up some issues for you and you need someone to talk to, you can contact a range of services for more information and support:

> Your GP clinic

> 1737, Need to Talk?

    Free call or text **1737** anytime to connect with a trained counsellor.
    Website: **www.1737.org.nz**

> Lifeline

    Call **0800 543 354** or text HELP (4357) for 24/7 confidential support.
    Website: **www.lifeline.org.nz**

❯ Tautoko: Suicide Crisis Helpline

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, call **0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)** for immediate support.

Website: **www.lifeline.org.nz/services/suicide-crisis-helpline**

❯ Depression Helpline

Call **0800 111 757** or text **4202** for support with depression-related concerns.

Website: **www.depression.org.nz**

❯ Youthline

Call **0800 376 633**, text **234** or email talk@youthline.co.nz for support.

Website: **www.youthline.co.nz**

❯ Samaritans 24/7 Crisis Helpline

Call **0800 72 66 66** to speak to a trained volunteer for confidential, non-judgemental and non-religious support.

Website: **www.samaritans.org.nz**

❯ Anxiety Helpline

Call **0800 ANXIETY (0800 269 438)** for 24/7 help and support.

❯ Alcohol and Drug Helpline

Call **0800 787 797** or visit the website 24/7 for confidential advice and support on alcohol and drug-related issues.

Website: **alcoholdrughelp.org.nz**

❯ The Lowdown

A space created with rangatahi, for rangatahi. Visit the website for support with hauora (wellbeing) and mental health.

Website: **thelowdown.co.nz**

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[1]   Foster, K., Cuzzillo, C., & Furness, T. (2018). Strengthening mental health nurses' resilience through a workplace resilience programme: A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 25*(5-6), 338-348. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12467

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[2]   Dapaanz. (2024). *Opportunities for growing and developing our addiction workforce.* https://dapaanz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Addiction-Resource-Snapshot-5_Final.pdf

[3]   Isobel, S., & Thomas, M. (2022). Vicarious trauma and nursing: An integrative review. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing, 31*(2), 247–259. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/inm.12953