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## Navigating the path to workplace well-being: A blueprint for change



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*Leading Wellbeing*

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# Navigating the path to workplace well-being: A blueprint for change



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The traditional boundaries that once separated our personal lives from our professional ones have blurred, and in their place, a new awareness has emerged.

Fleur Heazlewood, a visionary leader in the realms of workplace well-being, mental health and leadership, recognises the seismic shifts that have reshaped our world.

In the wake of relentless external pressures, including the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters and economic uncertainty, the well-being of individuals in the workplace faces unprecedented challenges. Chronic stress and burnout have become pervasive, despite heightened awareness of mental health issues and the availability of support systems.

**The stark reality is that our mental well-being isn't improving.**

Fleur Heazlewood, founder of the Blueberry Institute and author of the transformative book "Leading Wellbeing," offers a beacon of hope. Her work embodies a powerful message: it's time to redefine how we approach mental health in the workplace.

Heazlewood's framework transcends mere theory. It is a tangible guide to recognising the signs of mental health struggles and, more importantly, to creating a psychologically safe environment within organisations.

But the pressing question remains: **How can leaders and colleagues effectively engage in these vital conversations?**

As Heazlewood asserts, the key lies in breaking down the barriers of stigma.

"As leaders and colleagues, we can reduce the influence of stigma by recognizing that it is natural for people to experience mental health ups and downs – to make it okay for people in our teams to share when they are not okay," says Heazlewood.

The days of generic, passive statements like "My door is always open if you need anything" are fading away. "We don't have to be experts in mental health to have a caring conversation that connects someone who needs help to support," Heazlewood points out. She believes that empathy and mental health conversation competence can be learned and developed by anyone.

"When we notice a colleague struggling with mental health challenges our role is as simple as providing a safe and confidential space to share how they are feeling," she explains. Empathetic listening, characterised by validation and non-judgmental responses, builds trust and rapport, fostering psychological safety. These are the building blocks for authentic conversations.

Simple phrases like "How can I help?" can be transformative.

Or you can start the conversation with a simple, genuine expression of concern.

*'I have noticed that you seem tired lately. This isn't like your usual bubbly self. I am concerned about you. How are things with you at the moment?'*

Looking to the horizon, Heazlewood envisions a transformed landscape of mental health conversations in workplaces.

In a world where stress, burnout and mental illness are on the rise, “mental health conversation skills are no longer a nice-to-have, but necessary,” she asserts.

Legislative changes in April 2023 underscore this imperative, highlighting the need for psychologically safe working environments and proactive management of psychosocial hazards.

Practical resources like “Leading Wellbeing” are pivotal in advancing mental health literacy in the workplace. This blueprint provides a clear, actionable framework for recognising signs of struggle, creating psychological safety, conducting check-ins, offering appropriate support, and balancing care with performance.

Fleur Heazlewood's impassioned message resounds: the time for mental health conversations in the workplace is now.

Through better conversations, we can chart a course towards a healthier, more resilient and more productive future in the world of work. It's a journey that begins with understanding, empathy and a shared commitment to fostering workplace well-being for all.