MONSELLIER
LAW EMPLOYMENT

Mental Health Awareness Week

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What is 'Mental Health'?

According to the **World Health Organisation** (WHO), mental health is defined as being:

*"a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, **can cope with the normal stresses of life**, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."*

In simple terms, a person has good mental health if they can deal with the everyday stresses of life and can continue with life in a constructive manner. Other **public health authorities** have defined mental health as being:

"an individual's capacity to feel, think, and act in ways to achieve a better quality of life whilst respecting the personal, social, and the cultural boundaries of others."

Wellness in the Workplace

Mental health in the workplace is becoming an increasingly improtant topic and an employer needs to assist employees suffering with poor mental health. Simply listening to staff about their wellbeing concerns can go along way in absolving the negative stigma associated

What is 'Mental Health Awareness Week'?

The event began in 1993 and has been held every year since. It is organised by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) and is marked in over 150 countries. This week New Zealand is running Mental Health Awareness Week and the purpose is to encourage conversations amongst people about mental health and wellbeing. Worryingly, 1 in 4 New Zealanders (aged 18 or over) are experiencing poor mental health (such as stress, anxiety, unhappiness with life) and teenage depression rates have more than doubled in the last four decades *(University of Otago study).* The MHF statistics indicate that approximately 700 New Zealanders each year die by suicide and the rates seem to be increasing. During Awareness Week, there are a number of events and workshops scheduled throughout the country from wellbeing walks to online yoga. For more information visit www.mhaw.nz.

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with the topic. Signs of poor mental health can be evidenced in work performance, inability to make decisions, poor relationships with colleagues, inability to prioritise or time-manage and absenteeism. If an employer sees any of these signs in an employee, the first step would be to take that employee for a coffee and ask how they are feeling, encourage the employee to chat and be sure to listen. Offer support if this will help such as EAP services, time-off, propose flexible or remote working. There could be a personal issue that the employee simply needs time to address, or it could be a bigger underlying workplace issue such as bullying or burnout. Watch for the sign!