What's hot in leadership?
Emergency Services Foundation Literature digest #1

Amy Edmondson (2018), 'How Fearless Organisations Succeed', https://www.strategy-business.com/article/How-Fearless-Organizations-Succeed?gko=63131

This article describes three steps leaders can take to create psychological safety. These steps are embedded in a matrix titled "The Leader's Tool Kit for Building Psychological Safety" which is broken down into tasks and what they accomplish.
Feeling safe is framed as the very basis of innovation and growth. After all, when workers lack fear, they are more likely to take risks (which is one factor for maximising performance.

DEFINITION: Psychological safety is defined as when "People feel able to speak up when needed — with relevant ideas, questions, or concerns — without being shut down in a gratuitous way". To be clear, it does "not mean that people always agree with one another for the sake of being nice. It also does not mean that people offer unequivocal praise or unconditional support for everything you have to say".

Step one: Setting the Stage: In essence this is trying to get people on the same page, with common goals and a shared appreciation for what they're up against. Setting the stage involves setting direction for the work, inviting relevant input to clarify and improve on the general direction that has been set, and to create conditions for continued learning to achieve excellence. When the stage is set – all people are framed as valued contributors; assumptions are considered, and failure becomes continuous learning.
Step two: Inviting Participation: People are driven by self-protection so need a compelling, clear and genuine invitation to participate. Two ways such an invitation can be achieved is through adopting a mindset of situational humility and having a learning mindset which recognises that there is always more to learn. Humility is the simple recognition that you don't have all the answers, and you certainly don't have a crystal ball. Research shows that when leaders express humility, teams engage in more learning behaviour.
Step three: Responding Productively: To reinforce a climate of psychological safety, leaders need to respond productively to people's participation and the risks they take. Productive responses are characterized by three elements:
- expressions of appreciation
- destigmatizing failure
- sanctioning clear violations

Australian Government Comcare, Middle Manager - Leadership, health and safety culture: what part do managers play?
https://www.comcare.gov.au/promoting/roles_and_responsibilities/middle_managers/leadership

This page outlines what roles middle managers should play to optimise the mental health of the people they lead.

Specifically, it outlines:
- Legislated situations when consultation is required
- What consultation is
- Steps to effective consultation: (broken down into information on informing; instruction and training; Health and Safety Representatives; Teamwork; Consulting; Joint Problem Solving).

This article also gives tips on:
- essential leadership principles
- the managers role in health and safety
- leadership style and attitude
- good consultation and effective communication.

Some tips to make workers feel their ideas are valued include:
- Engage people on an emotional level.

- Provide clear messages with concrete examples to help people focus their energies.
- Think about what you say and how you say it (is what you are saying aligned with what you're are feeling and thinking?)
- Written material should be backed up by verbal communication.
- Check the tone of the communication (edit, edit and edit again).
- Some news is better than no news.
- Let people know the status of what is happening, you are the key in communicating change, workers look to you to see if there is real acceptance.
- Managers can use the following suggestions as ways to ensure they are promoting and contributing to effective communication:
- encourage worker contribution at meetings
- access and seek information from your intranet and raise awareness on matters that may affect workers
- use emails to clarify, and provide a two-way communication approach
- establish an open and constructive approach to talking to your workers
- consider the barriers to communication in remote and isolated work locations (e.g shift work, working on your own, isolated by distance or team support, working from home) make daily contact with workers where possible.

To build their own resilience, individual employees should be encouraged to:
- **Incorporate strong lifestyle practices**: to be disciplined in establishing a daily habit of exercise, healthy nutrition, good sleep and meditation/relaxation. These practices all contribute to reducing the stress hormone cortisol (reduced distress) and increasing serotonin (mood).
- **Avoid confusion:** Be prepared to say no. Delete, delegate and prioritise. Confusion, intensity and overload are pre-conditions for mental distress
- **Practise situational agility:** Learn how to reframe challenges into opportunities rather than seeing adversities. With your thoughts and emotions, "catch, check and change" to encourage more positivity and realistic optimism.
- **Find your purpose:** Finding your purpose will improve your sleep, mental health, and cognitive function for the better. Be clear on "why" you get out of bed in the morning.

Sven Hansen 2019 Mental Health Leadership, https://resiliencei.com/2019/08/mental-health-leadership/

Mental illness is progressive: it starts in the mind, moves to emotion and only then presents as a diagnosis. Leaders who can recognise the process can intervene skillfully and prevent illness. This means being alert to overload, attention failure and withdrawal. The article offers two diagrams:

The progressive deterioration of resilience:

Confused — State of overload, agitation, mindless busyness
Disengaged — Loss of attention, boredom, worry
Withdrawn — Loss of energy, avoidance, isolated
Vulnerable — Indifference, self-neglect, fatigue
Distressed — Distress symptoms, sleep problems, illness
Depressed — Loss of interest, sadness, illness

Supporting Bounce: tiered advice for intervening in the deterioration of resilience (ie, prevent risk).

Three tips to help someone in your team struggling with a mental health issue:

1. Always be sincerely respectful. If you are concerned, reach out to someone in privacy and in a supportive environment. Sometimes simply showing your care can begin recovery.

2. Know your limits. Your job is not to be a psychologist. In conjunction with your people team make sure you work towards an appropriate referral.

3. Be present for the recovery process. Part of the leader or manager's job is to facilitate return to work. Let someone who needs help know that you expect them to recover and come back to work. Most people do.

Heads Up, Strategies for Healthy Workplaces, https://www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/strategies-for-healthy-workplaces

When developing strategies for a healthy workplace there are three critical success factors.

1. Commitment from Senior organisational Leaders and Business Owners
2. Employee Participation
3. Ongoing Communication

It is also important to implement relevant policies to lay the groundwork in ensuring the success of your strategy (including policies on mental health and wellbeing,: workplace bullying; career development; cultural awareness; discrimination; Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs); equal opportunity; fitness for work; harassment; health promotion; leave arrangements; people and performance management; recruitment; return to work; and work health and safety)

Should develop a mental health strategy via:

1. Gaining leadership support
2. Identifying needs
3. Developing a plan
4. Monitor, review and improve

Creating a Mentally healthy Workplace: A Guide for Managers (24 pages) brochure is available for download at: https://www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/400282_1217_bl1256_acc2.pdf?sfvrsn=ddcf264d_2

CEO Roundtable, American Heart Association (2019) "The Role of Leaders", excerpts from their report Mental Health: A Workforce Crises

This page cites data and research in support of good leadership, and Culture of Health (COH)[1] in general. For example:

- Studies show that behaviours of leaders and supervisors influence the actions and job performance of employees and that unsupportive managers are associated with poorer employee health and higher turnover.
- COH elements include: environmental supports, policy supports, programmatic supports, leadership support, co-worker support, employee engagement and strategic communications. More research is needed to evaluate which elements of workplace culture of health have the strongest effect on mental health outcome
- Perceptions of a "good" organisational climate were significantly associated with positive employee mental health outcomes such as lower levels of burnout, depression and anxiety.
- The practical implications for employers is that paying attention to positive leadership and management styles, and stimulating a supportive atmosphere among employees, are actionable strategies for addressing employee mental health.

Stuart Taylor 2018 5 steps leaders can take to create a mentally healthier workplace, https://www.insidehr.com.au/mental-health-onus-5-steps-mentally-healthier-workplace/

The key message of this article is that: "Positive mental health is best supported by a focus on proactive resilience initiatives that build health, happiness and performance at work, rather than the reactive treatment of illnesses"

The starting point for leaders to grapple the problem is to be clear on definitions. When the term 'mental health' is used, it is often thought of as a person's level of depression or anxiety and their ability to bounce back from these conditions. So, to broaden our approach to being more holistic and integral, useful definitions are:
- Mental health = calm, alert, focused, agile, decisive.
- Mental distress = distressed, anxious, depressed, hostile, withdrawn or delusional.
- Resilience = a learned ability to recognise risk, bounce back skilfully, and secure robust physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Proactive resilience initiatives (actions and activities to build health, happiness and performance at work) can be furthered by leaders through 5 practical steps:
　　1. Lead from the top: Leaders are responsible for organisational culture, therefore, it's vital that leaders dispel toxic workplace culture and invest in their own well-being by practising resilience strategies.
　　2. Encourage positive lifestyle habits: Be open to staff engaging in exercise while at work, provide healthier food options in the communal kitchen and encourage staff to take breaks.
　　3. Communicate purpose: Be clear on the organisational purpose and strategic direction and communicate well so employees feel invested and involved.
　　4. Allow employees to play to their strengths: Allow staff to grow in roles that play to their strengths.
　　5. Build a culture of trust: Leaders can build a trust-based culture rather than a fear-based culture through steadiness, integrity, compassion, connection and engagement.

---

[1] John Quelch from Harvard Business School has conceptualized Culture of Health (COH) as comprising four elements: healthy products, healthy employees, healthy community and healthy environment.

Shann, CB (2015), Workplace mental health and the role of organisational leaders: a training needs analysis and evaluation of an online program to reduce depression-related stigma, PhD Thesis Open Access, University of Tasmania, https://eprints.utas.edu.au/22959/

This thesis evaluated the degree of sustained change in the stigma and mental health literacy of organisational leaders in relation to managing depression in the workplace after completing an online workplace mental health program.

This study also examined whether change in stigma level and mental health literacy led to behavioural change, which would indicate the learning was transferred from the training environment to the workplace (i.e. as embedded in the organisational culture).

The promise of the online workplace mental health program was that, in contrast to Employee Assistance Programs, it could potentially change the culture of organisation. After all, leadership education and development programs shift the responsibility from individual employees (to track, monitor and report their mental health) to be shared with managers.

Conclusions: The online program was shown to be effective in reducing stigma. While this effect was sustained over time, the program did not improve knowledge about depression. However, there was evidence that leaders were using the material in the program to increase the mental health knowledge of others in their workplace and in other organisations. In addition, the evaluation study has shown that positive attitudes and high levels of knowledge are not in themselves sufficient to ensure leaders are able to apply program learning into their work environments. A range of contextual factors emerged as significantly influencing the extent to which new knowledge is applied in the workplace.

The evaluation has practical implications, particularly in relation to the targeting and tailoring of workplace mental health programs, in order to reach an identified priority group for stigma reduction initiatives. It also highlights the importance of harnessing the commitment of those leaders who are already motivated to act in this area (most likely due to a personal experience of depression) and engaging them as champions.