

Mental health and wellbeing for PGR supervisors



Objectives

- A reminder about what supports wellbeing and steps every individual can take
- Review what a supervisor can do to support their PGRs during Coronavirus and beyond



A photograph of a stack of five smooth, grey stones balanced on a rocky shore. The stones are stacked vertically, with the largest at the bottom and the smallest at the top. The background shows a calm sea, a rocky coastline, and a sunset sky with soft, golden light. The text "What is wellbeing?" is overlaid in white in the upper right corner.

What is wellbeing?

WHO: *‘where each individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community’.*

New Economics Foundation: *‘feeling good and functioning well.’*

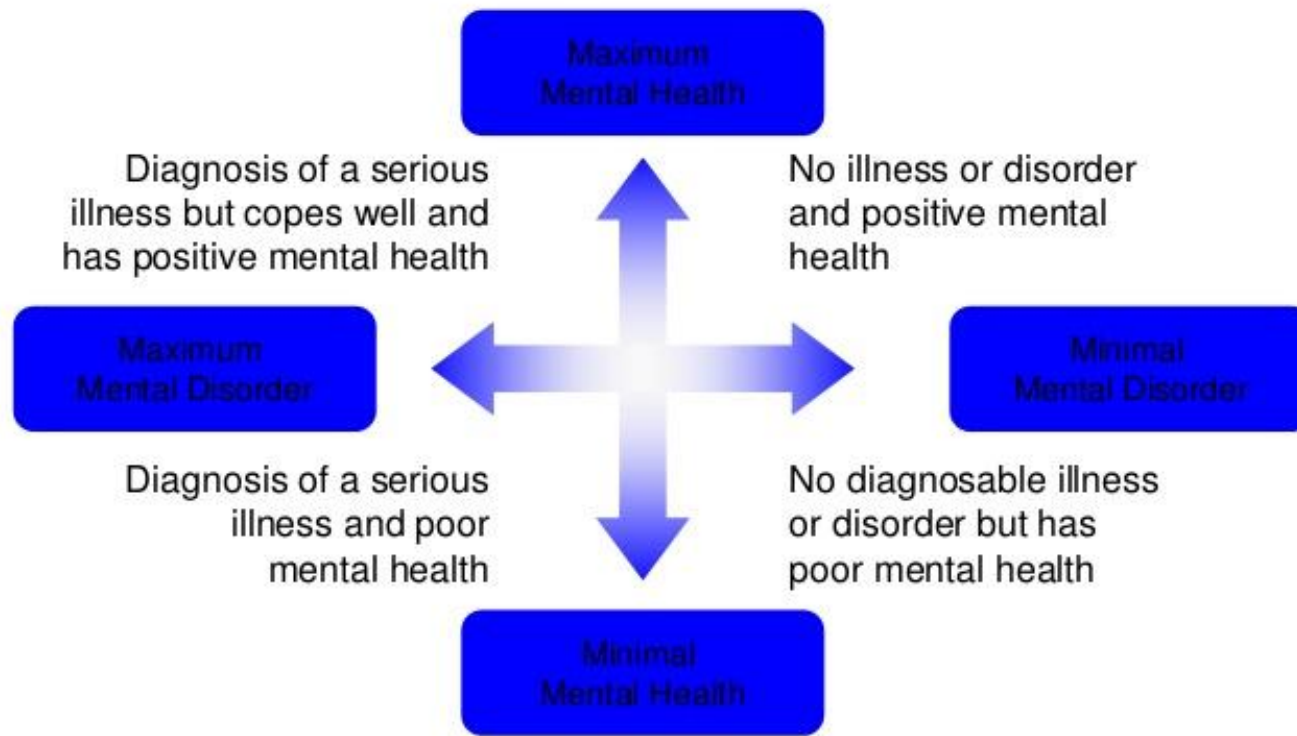
Prof. Sir Cary Cooper: *‘life satisfaction based on an individual’s perception of their health, happiness and sense of purpose.’*

CIPD: *A healthy workplace is one that helps people to flourish and reach their potential’*

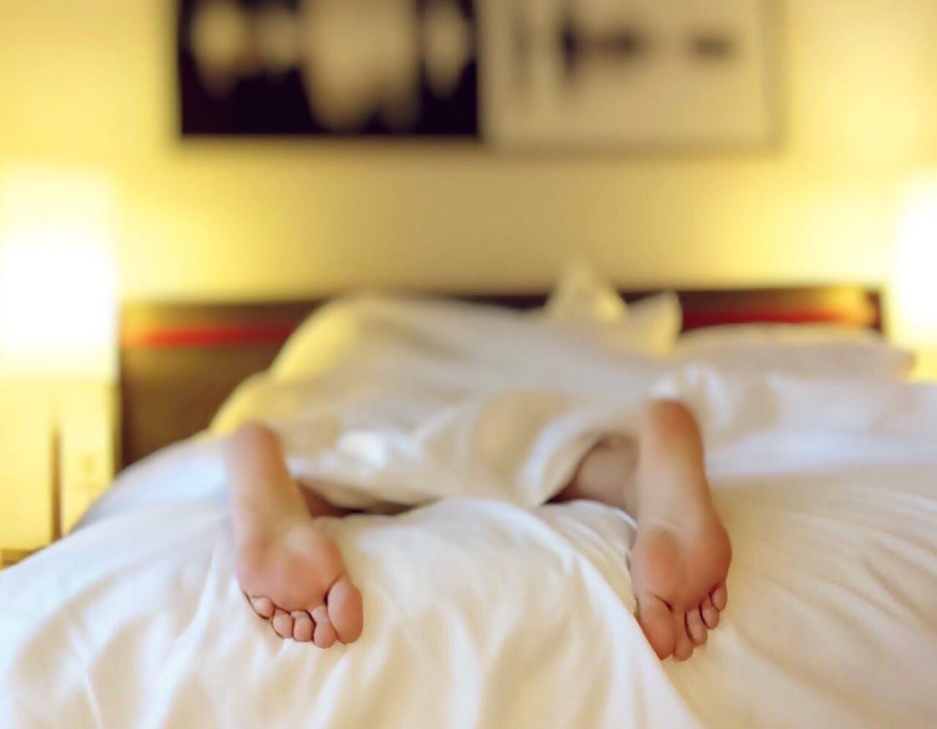
Mind Charity – wellbeing is a dynamic mental state. Individuals with good mental wellbeing are able to:

- *Feel and express a range of emotions*
- *Feel engaged with the work in general*
- *Feel relatively confident in themselves and positive self esteem*
- *Live and work productively*
- *Cope with the stresses of every day life*
- *Adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty*

The Mental Health Continuum









Stress at Work



Definition of work related stress: the adverse reaction that people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work. (HSE)

It is a state characterised by high levels of arousal and distress and often by feelings of not coping (Levi, 1999)

Indicators of poor mental health

Physical	Psychological	Behavioural
Fatigue Headaches Change in sleep pattern Sweating / constantly feeling cold Appetite or weight changes Digestive problems Rapid heart rate.	Anxiety or distress Mood changes Feeling low Indecision Loss of motivation Distraction or confusion Irritability Loss of humour Increased sensitivity Tearfulness Lapses in memory Difficulty relaxing Feelings of not coping.	Increased smoking and drinking Substance misuse Withdrawal Resigned attitudes Restlessness Increased sickness absence Uncharacteristic errors Intense or obsessive activity Risk taking Working longer hours Disruptive or anti-social behaviour Irritability, anger or aggression. Inconsistent or impaired performance

Wellbeing and health implications of COVID-19

- Overwhelm / burnout
- Anxiety / stress
- Low mood
- Depression
- Poor sleep / fatigue
- Anger / irritability
- Distraction
- Poor diet / reduced exercise
- Substance misuse
- Loss of purpose





Causes of poor wellbeing amongst PGRs

- Workload
- Supervisor relationship
- Work life balance
- Loneliness and isolation
- Perfectionism and expectations of high achievement
- Imposter syndrome
- Establishing an academic identity
- Financial pressures (FTC)
- Employment post PhD

Spotting the Signs

- Ongoing delays in getting started on papers and other projects
- Expressing a lack of confidence in the quality of their work
- Worrying about their progress,
- Lack of response to emails, and missing appointments and meetings
- Repeated absence on campus when it is required: failure to attend lab or training sessions
- A clear lack of motivation or energy
- Self-blame for things that are not their fault



Supervisors and Wellbeing

The role of the Supervisor

- Promotion of wellbeing
- Role modelling good behaviour
- Supporting workload management
- Referrals to counselling / MH services / DASS
- Support following ill-health
- Supervising style – supervising with wellbeing in mind

Stepped Care Model



Useful Questions

- I have noticed.....
- How are you?
- How is your work going?
- How is your workload?
- What do you need from me right now?
- What can I do to help you with anything?
- How would you like to keep in touch?

LEAP approach

L – Listen

E – Empathise

A – Agree

P - Partner

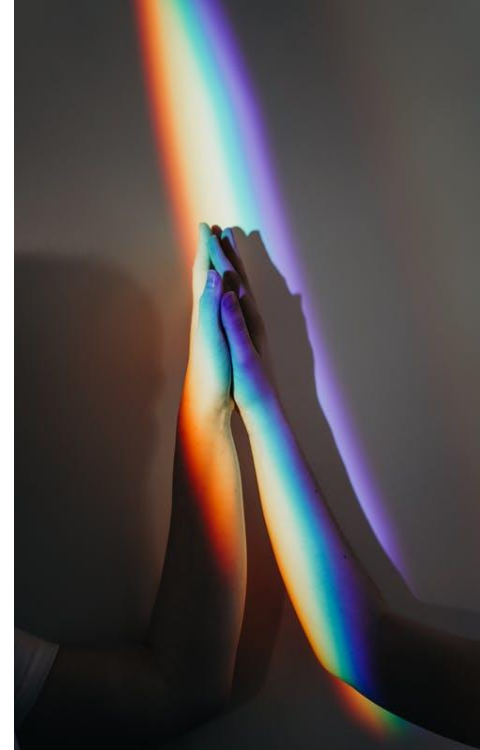


Responding to a mental health disclosure

- Avoid making assumptions
- Maintain confidentiality
- Ask
- Develop an action plan
- Encourage them to seek support
- Signpost
- Reassure

UoM Support Services

- Counselling Service
- Togetherall
- DASS
- 247 helpline
- UoM Sport
- Staffnet Wellbeing pages and events
- SLD self-directed materials
- PGR Code of Practice Supporting Wellbeing and Mental Health
- Online Modules for PGR Supervisors on Supporting Wellbeing and Mental Health



Thank you for attending