



HYGEIA: A CONFERENCE ON MENTAL WELLNESS



WHAT'S INSIDE

**A FULL SUMMARY OF #HYGEIA2023
FROM ALL SESSIONS AND
THE NEXT STEPS FOR YOU
TO KICK-START YOUR MENTAL
WELLNESS AT WORK PRACTICES.**



FIRST OF ALL, THANK YOU!

You made **#Hygeia2023** a great success, and we are compiling all the evidence of that success in this succinct, informative summary. There were so many pearls of wisdom, that we wanted to ensure you remembered the key take-aways from every session.

OUR PARTNERS

#Hygeia2023 would not have been possible if it weren't for all those entities and individuals involved. We want to recognise these from the beginning, as without them we would have not been able to bring you the content we did.

Event hosts WorkingTown | UP Your Level

Partners WeConnect | HealthMark limited

Our Sponsors GVZH Advocates | Enemed | ZeroBubble | PKF | Garnish | Iris Thaumass.

Our contributors Colin Fitz | Martin Richards | Dr Paulann Grech | Daniela Calleja Bitar | Domenic Degiorgio | Racheal Hollwey | Mariella Porter | Dr Andrew Zammit | Julianne Grima | Josh O'Cock | Charlotte Sant Portanier | John Mallia | Dr Ann Bugeja | Julian Azzopardi | Simone Borg | Josef Gafa | Erica Micallef Filletti | Mary Cassar Torreggiani | Daphne Grech Cumbo | David Borg | Bryn Kennard | Lara Buttigieg | Dr Edward Curmi | Morgan Parnis | Jasmine Borg | Dr Rachel Taylor-East | Antonello Gauci | Dr Ovid Tierean | Dr Sabine Cabourdin | Mark Azzopardi.

CONTENTS

WHAT IS HYGEIA?

An introduction to Hygeia 2023,
a conference on mental health in the workplace

07

SETTING THE SCENE

Dr. Paulann Grech

Mental health is a universal human right

08

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Starting from the top

Led by Dr Andrew Zammit

A discussion on psychological safety in the workplace and its key benefits

10

Sandwiched

Led by Julian Azzopardi

The importance of clear purpose and roles in decision-making

13

Mind Over Chatter

Led by David Borg

How to spot the signs of a mental health crisis in yourself and others

16

Continued



Continued

CONTENTS

KEYNOTES

**What do hostage negotiations
and office quibbles have in common?**

Martin Richards

How to manage conflicts effectively from the perspective
of a hostage negotiator and crisis management expert

18

Look, you have a monkey on your shoulder

Edward Curmi

Identifying risk factors in your own mental health

21

WORKSHOPS

The 8 dimensions of wellness

Daphne Grech Cumbo

Effective methods for championing your own wellness

23

A mental health policy for your business

Dr Ann Bugeja

How to create a mental health policy for your business

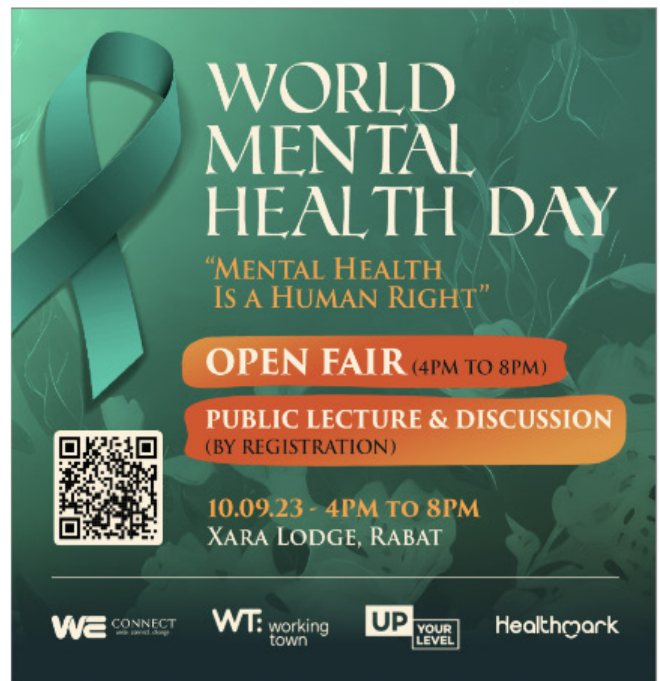
26

CONCLUSION

28

LIST OF EXHIBITORS & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT LINES

30



WHAT IS HYGEIA?

AN INTRODUCTION TO HYGEIA 2023, A CONFERENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

#Hygeia2023 ran under the headline “Mental Health is a Universal Human Right”, in line with the World Health Organisation’s activities around the globe.

The focus was predominantly workplace-related, with conversations addressing the three key levels in any organisation: leadership, management and front liners.

Over 200 participants joined the conference. Leaders from the private sector, the voluntary sector and even state entities participated in an interactive conference where they shared their experiences for the creation of practical resources that can be used to improve personal and corporate mental wellness.

A fair for all participants was set-up throughout the conference for attendees to engage with corporate sponsors and both non-governmental and governmental organisations providing mental health services to help increase awareness of what is available to them in the space of mental healthcare.



SETTING THE SCENE

MENTAL HEALTH IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT

A PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

LED BY DR. PAULANN GRECH UOM

We have all heard the Peter Drucker saying “culture eats strategy for breakfast”, which in a business context elevates the importance of a good corporate culture as the foundation for a successful business.

The same applies for mental wellness.

If there is no culture where mental wellness is given priority, then screaming and shouting about it will only fall on deaf ears.

We need a holistic approach to dealing with mental health, not as a reaction to a problem, but rather in a preventive manner that creates safe spaces for people and industry to address mental health issues as an integral part of their business processes.

There is no silver bullet, we all know that.

There is no single assessment or diagnosis for the damages poor mental health can inflict on people and communities.

There is no one-stop-shop service to cater for all demands.

There is, though, one first step that we can all take towards normalising conversations (and dealing with) mental health issues in our homes, schools, communities, and businesses.

How we speak to our children will influence how they speak to their friends, how they will speak to their families, how they will speak to their social networks, how they will speak to their colleagues, and how they will speak with their leaders.

We are all part of this chain reaction.

We are all responsible for how we address mental health concerns.

Why do we speak “freely” about physical ailments but not about how much our brain hurts?

Our Mediterranean, predominantly paternalistic culture dictates that any form of ailment is a weakness and should be kept under wraps and powered through. This is most prevalent in men. For women it has become a deciding factor with regards to building a career and proving their worth in the face of the ‘family rearing’ stigma - which is possibly one of the reasons why so few women are directors, partners in firms or business owners in Malta.

Within the context of business, mental health and mental wellness are considered a priority, but this seems to be more on paper than it is in practice. Unfortunately, initiatives that support mental wellness are part of the wider human resources domain and considered more as a cost factor than a productivity or growth one. What's worse is that when in times of trouble these expenses are among the first to be listed for cutting, similar to training and marketing.

However, things are changing, and more companies are starting to have wellness days activities.

We are still far from seeing wellness as an integrated part of an organisation's culture across the board, but in this case, if we scream and shout loud enough, maybe we will see this sooner rather than later.



WHAT CAN WE DO FURTHER?

- Educate about normalising discussions around mental health issues
- Mental Health First Aid in schools, businesses, communities

STARTING FROM THE TOP

A DISCUSSION ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE AND ITS KEY BENEFITS

LED BY DR ANDREW ZAMMIT MANAGING PARTNER AT GVZH ADVOCATES

Mental Wellness is a collective effort, but like with everything else in an organisation it is leadership that sets the tempo of things to come in an organisation.

Whether we like it or not, mental wellness is a leadership issue.

While each individual is responsible for their own roles, their own behaviour, their own decisions, and the consequences of their own actions, the leaders set the tempo of what matters within the business.

During the discussion, various business leaders and owners spoke about how they coped with their own mental health battles, which led to

a much more understanding culture being built within their organisations.

For mental health to be normalised within a corporate environment there has to be a prevalent sense of psychological safety – the feeling that no matter how ‘dumb’ one may feel to express their feelings about an issue, including their own mental health, there is no fear of retribution or reprimand from the employer, manager, or colleague.

Psychological safety is imperative for organisations to foster a culture that takes care of their people. It has to be done intentionally, with clear (as much as certain things can be clear) guidelines and appropriate support structures – both internal and external – to address issues with the necessary competence and in full confidence where required.



How does one create psychological safety in a workplace?

There are four levels to creating psychological safety in an organisation and avoiding exclusion or isolation.

- 1 The first level is **inclusion safety**. An organisation needs to ensure all are included in the processes that are relevant to the individual, department, etc.
- 2 **Learner safety** is the second level. This is where people feel they can make mistakes and learn from these without feeling conditioned in a way that will not dissuade them from taking the leap.
- 3 Level three is about achieving **contributor safety** where everyone feels free to pitch in a conversation without the fear of being ridiculed, reprimanded, or bullied.
- 4 The final level is that of **challenger safety**. Here employees feel they can challenge the status quo, including the CEO or direct manager, in an attempt at improving the current situation.

The ability of a leader and an organisation to enable psychological safety will result in enhanced employee loyalty, innovation, staff retention, well-being, performance, productivity, and client satisfaction.



From an individual's point of view, contributions towards developing psychological safety is also in how we build relationships at work, how we speak to our stakeholders, how authentic we are and how responsible we are in our roles. The benefits are greater job satisfaction, self-fulfilment, safety, relatedness, and, potentially, wealth.

It is not just a 'one-way' street.
Everyone plays a critical role in this

WHAT CAN WE DO FURTHER?

- Ensure ALL organisations have a mental wellness/mental health policy.
- Leaders get trained in Mental Health First Aid and more advanced courses.
- Set-up competent, relevant internal support structures, and link with external professional service providers.
- Leaders need to avoid 'hogging the limelight' and create space for others to lead and contribute meaningfully.
- Set boundaries and create a culture of accountability, transparency, and openness.
- Create clearly defined career progression pathways.
- Determine overall corporate culture, values, and mission statement.
- Join professional peer-advisory networks.





SANDWICHED

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR PURPOSE AND ROLES IN DECISION-MAKING

LED BY JULIAN AZZOPARDI CEO AT UP YOUR LEVEL

Ever felt like you're "Malcolm in the Middle" or found yourself "between a rock and a hard place"?

To that question everyone at the conference responded a resounding YES!

How do we find ourselves in this situation over and over again? Is there something fundamentally wrong?

Decision-making is a constant assessment between what one believes is right and wrong. Given the context, the situation differs and the gravity or importance of the decision differs, but in essence the process is the same: which road do I take?

The answer that resonated the most with everyone was that of purpose. Having a clear

sense of purpose helps, albeit doesn't solve, the decision-making dilemma.

What does purpose do for your decision-making and dealing with being sandwiched?

First of all, having a clear sense of purpose allows that all those around you have a clearer understanding of the basis for your own thought process. When your purpose is known, it becomes easier for your employees to see what matters to you and the potential reasoning used in a conversation.

A clear purpose also allows you to be more assertive in the direction chosen. It may not always deliver the right result, but it allows you to say I did the right thing at that specific time with the information I had at hand. It also allows you to self-correct when you may sway or feel a little uncertain. It becomes a moral and decision-making compass you can use when in doubt.

It also becomes a benchmark for you against which to assess your personal/professional performance, and hold yourself accountable to your own actions.

Everyone should have a purpose. Whether it is a one-line statement or something more complex, if you cannot define what you stand for, how will you know you are taking the right decisions?

The next most important element in addressing being sandwiched, occurs as a result of the sense of psychological safety one feels within the organisation, the relationship, or social environment. Once you are clear on your purpose, how are you communicating this?

Communication, speaking up, having a voice, is as important as defining what you stand for.

Many people find getting stuck in the middle a result of poorly communicated objectives, mixed messages, determining veracity from wrong sources, and other communication related aspects.

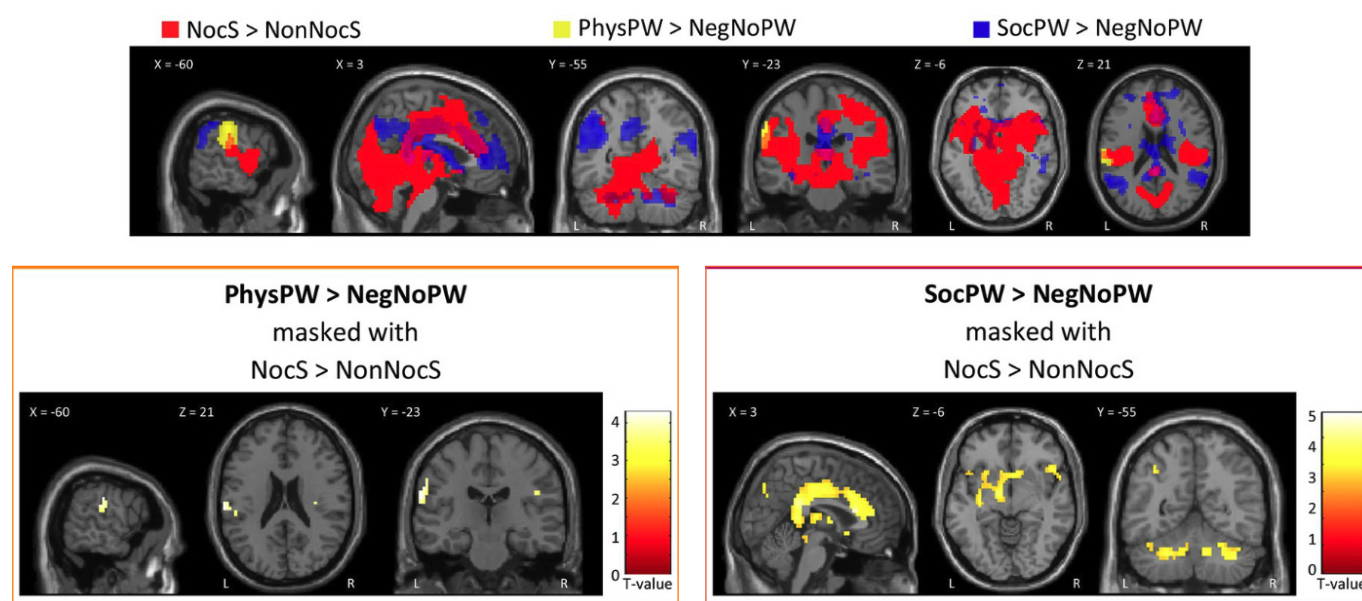
We need to remember one thing, words (as a collectivism for communication) matter!

Research tells us that while sticks and stones break bones, words hurt your brain!

Contrary to what G.F. Northall intended in his collection of **Folk-Phrases of Four Counties** (1894), MRI scans reveal that derogatory words in social contexts engage the same parts of the brain that react to physical pain. Moreover, the memory of such experiences create neural pathways in our hippocampus (where deep memory is stored) that condition how we are to react to similar situations/words in the future.

Therefore, how we speak to our people is creating a sort of 'highway code' for them to interpret how they should act, behave, and manage their relations with us. We are also doing the same to ourselves!

What we think forms the foundation for how we feel in certain situations and conversations, how we behave, act and the results we achieve. If we are self-conditioning ourselves by over burdening ourselves with roles and responsibilities we cannot manage, accountabilities we deem not owned by us, or engage in toxic relationships, we are eventually setting ourselves up for failure.



Note: Screenshot from the Frontiers research showing overlap of brain activity in response to negative words, words evoking physical pain, and social pain words.

Northall wasn't completely wrong though. We can build our tolerance and resilience to painful words. Just like our biceps, we can train our brain to not feel pain when faced by derogatory words, social exclusion, or bad intent against us.

The trick is to remain present and focussed on what our main objective is: what is our commitment?

What is our purpose here? And building resilience is also a decision we take. From setting the alarm at the crack of dawn to go to the gym, to putting in the effort to detach emotion from complex situations.

Of course we are not emotionless robots, and emotional influence will always be present, and this is where Emotional Intelligence (EQ) comes to play. So how do we avoid getting stuck in the middle by enhancing our EQ?

First, **self-awareness**. Leadership and getting unstuck is all about self-awareness and being present. We have to take stock of what our mind is telling us and not power through like a bull in a china shop. Self-awareness is about reading the room, sticking to the facts, and not letting your ego take over your decision-making.

Secondly, **empathy**, one of the most important and required skillsets in today's workplace. Empathy allows you to take care of yourself and of others. With empathy we create trust and a foundation for deeper understanding of how things are affecting us and others.

Thirdly, **self-regulation**. Being self-aware is 'useless' if you do nothing about it. If you know you get angry when people speak over you. It's useless shouting louder and working yourself up in the process. Take cognitive action to work on what is causing irritation and concern.

Fourthly, we need to assure ourselves we are **self-regulating** for the right reasons. This is where motivation comes in. Your motivation to make positive change has to have a deep sense of purpose and meaning to you and those you are working with. The absence of this leads to a temporary stop-gap that will quickly fail and degenerate back into a troubling situation.

Finally, how well you can communicate this is all about your ability to **self-express**. Your social skills are as important as your self-reflection to convey the right message, that evokes the right emotional connection, to bring about the appropriate behavioural change.

WHAT CAN WE DO FURTHER?

- Define your own mission statement or value proposition that guide you in your day-to-day.
- Set boundaries.
- Watch the words you use; be conscious that words can hurt.
- Work on your empathy and EQ. Try to understand before pitching in.
- Engage in active listening.
- Disagree and commit. This is not like agree to disagree. Ultimately even though you disagree, you need to find a workable solution to achieving the objective.
- Determine what matters most for the organisation, team, etc, and focus on that.
- Clarify what you signed-up for.
- Get coaching or find a mentor.

MIND OVER CHATTER

HOW TO SPOT THE SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

LED BY **DAVID BORG** FOUNDER OF BIG WIG HEADHUNTERS



No matter how tough you think you are, you all have limits.

In a no-frills conversation, David 'Ozi' Borg tackles the trials and tribulations of mental health issues with triathlete and XTERRA coach, Lara Buttigieg and Osteopath and Body Control Pilates instructor, Bryn Kennard.

Mental health problems can be a silent killer. You may not realise you are afflicted by it, but slowly and surely it starts to deprive you of many essentials and replaces them with addictions, harmful thoughts, noxious vices and potentially death.

To the survivors in the room, it was and still is a life-changing learning experience. To those who weren't so lucky it spelled out a sudden death.

It is not always obvious that someone is suffering from mental health issues. The most extrovert, social, outgoing, and bubbly individual could be suffering. It is all the more important to ensure we control our behaviour, action, and words when addressing others as we never know what could be the definitive trigger that 'pushes someone over the edge'.

A poignant [video](#) created by Norwich Football Club in the UK to mark World Mental Health Awareness day highlights this point very well.

Control, or the lack thereof, is what spirals one into a state of mental 'unhealth'.

The brain is wired to want constant control as a safe space against all it is not used to or unsure of. The absence of control or certainty gives room to doubt and vulnerability to those things or those people, who provide us with a 'fake' or temporary sense of control.

These can include addictions to narcotics, alcohol, unhealthy food or binge activities, promiscuous behaviour, crime, nihilistic behaviour, rebelliousness, and self-isolation, to mention a few. Left to our own devices, we become subject to predatory actions from those around us, including the voices in our head.

The doubt creates a void filled by self-criticism, a lack of self-respect and a lack of confidence to do anything that matters. Our self-limiting beliefs take over to keep us in a seemingly 'safe space' that in reality is far from safe.

It requires courage and a positive environment to nurture our way out of such situations. It requires resilience and emotional intelligence to understand that the past is no guarantee for the future, and that bad experiences are there to learn from, not to live by.

The ability to get up when knocked down is what makes everything worthwhile.

BELOW ARE SOME
OF BRYN'S AND LARA'S
INSIGHTS INTO
**HOW THEY WORKED
THEIR WAY OUT OF THEIR
MENTAL UNHEALTH**, THE
SUPPORT THEY GOT AND
HOW THEY ARE TURNING
TRAUMA INTO STRENGTH.

- Speak-up at the first signs. There is no shame in admitting you are hurting or need help.
- **Don't hold on to resentful emotions.**
- It may be painful, but train yourself to do things that are going to stretch your limits and build your resilience.
- **Join a support group.**
- Focus on what you are passionate about.
- **Learn to trust others even when it is hard.**
- Use your experience to help others.
- **It may be a long-term challenge, so make sure you surround yourself with people that are willing to go the distance with you.**
- Do not seek quick-fix solutions or short-cuts.
- Offer **individual career coaching** to employees to help with the identification of career objectives, competencies, and doubts.



WHAT DO HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS AND OFFICE QUIBBLES HAVE IN COMMON?

HOW TO MANAGE CONFLICTS EFFECTIVELY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT EXPERT

MARTIN RICHARDS

Even though many may think there is very little in common between a hostage negotiation and an office spat, there are, in fact, many similarities between the two.

In a hostage situation, like in an office spat, the root cause of the situation is a difference in what people want or believe.

In a hostage situation, just like in an office confrontation, one party wants to 'win' over the other.

In a hostage situation, similar to an office dispute, the consequences could also be life threatening.

How so?

If we take Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a basis for individual motivation to behave and act, whether we are involved in a hostage situation or a rift with our boss at work, we are doing so to achieve a higher level of Maslow's hierarchy.



We therefore need to consider these elements when involved in dispute resolution and develop a strategy that will enable us to overcome these initial contrasting differences and achieve a common objective.

The common objective, in this context, is what matters most. And this is not necessarily your point of view or your opinion or your ego. What matters most is the resolution of the situation in a way that does not cause harm to either party.

Like a check-box exercise, when we strategise our conflict resolution roadmap, we need to be sure we are addressing each of Maslow's levels. We miss one, we miss an important stepping stone to access the next level. We have to ensure there is enough trust between the parties to want to progress in conversations with each other. Like in a video game, we need to build the necessary resources to progress to next levels in the game. The same applies to humans, trust is an essential resource that needs constant nurturing.

We all have differing levels of initial trust. Our current state (or experience) is going to influence that and determine how willing one is to listen. Ensuring the basic needs are seen to, will allow us to move up the ranks and uncover deeper rooted emotions and causality for such behaviour and actions.

In a hostage situation more so than in an office spat, time may be of essence, so skills and competencies are critical. As leaders we sometimes think we should or have to be everything to everyone, and have all the answers and all the necessary skill sets to deal with whatever is thrown at us. That is not true.

If we are not competent, let's bring in the experts. It becomes futile struggling to resolve conflict when you do not have what is required to do so. From a cost point of view (one which reigns high in business as in a hostage situation) you cannot afford not to have the experts address the situation, as it could end up costing you much more.

A strategy around conflict resolution starts with an emotional detachment from the situation. An emotionally-involved individual may not be thinking very clearly or be biased in judgement and course of action.

“Listen, empathise, build rapport then gain cooperation”.

This is in line with the conversations held during the conference on the need for emotionally intelligent leaders and teams.

The Conflict Conversation Model thereafter follows a five-step process and can be utilised to take well-informed decisions in emotionally charged situations.



1 STEP 1 INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE

2 STEP 2 RISK ASSESSMENT

3 STEP 3 STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

4 STEP 4 IDENTIFY OPTIONS AND CONTINGENCIES

5 STEP 5 TAKE ACTIONS: MONITOR & REVIEW

WHAT CAN WE DO FURTHER?

- Ensure you have the right people addressing the right issues.
- Be willing to walk away and let the experts take over.
- Allow the other party a sense of control. You take away control, you take away trust, confidence, and willingness to cooperate.
- Confidence is no excuse for arrogance, and humility can save lives.
- Develop a strategy to deal with uncomfortable situations. You can plan for the future with what you know today, so regular training and development is important.
- Engage in active listening. Read between the lines, watch-out for non-verbals.
- Work on empathy.
- Team coaching helps build trust, accountability, and the ability to have tough conversations where needed.



LOOK, YOU **HAVE A MONKEY** ON YOUR SHOULDER

IDENTIFYING RISK FACTORS IN YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

DR EDWARD CURMI CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Ever heard voices in your head?

Well, you're not alone.

The work on Positive Intelligence calls these voices saboteurs who influence your thoughts, judgement, and behaviour based on a series of vertical and horizontal domains, such as security, acceptance, independence, avoidance, assertiveness, and earning. Much like Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, they work on creating a sense of control and order in our lives that makes sense to us.

But it doesn't mean they are right or good for us.

In fact, oftentimes, these voices hold us back rather than propel us forward. It is again the element of safety and security that give wind to these voices, in that they work on our self-limiting beliefs to not stress ourselves more than what we feel comfortable doing.

These voices are regurgitating what we would have digested during the course of our day - just like a cow does when it eats. This regurgitation is how we 'process' the data gathered during the day. The problem is that oftentimes they are predominantly negative.

Why did we mention Monkeys? Well monkeys keep coming back when they have food to feed on. The monkeys on your shoulders appear

when we feed them with thoughts. There are two predominant ones, the Preacher and the Prosecutor. The former is telling you off for what you did or failed to do. The latter is judging you and criticising your behaviour.

This develops that negative bias that is strong enough to cause permanent damage. Just like a physical scratch, this mental scratch gets worse and worse, turning into a full-blown trauma. What's worse, this is an invisible scratch because it lies in our head where no one can see it and we do our best to hide it because of those Monkeys on our shoulders.

How can we identify that there is a scratch?

Some tell tale signs do exist.



First, lack of sleep - insomnia. Sleep is used to file the day away, lack of sleep causes chaos in our head, and starts the process of the mental scratch



Secondly, Eating. How we eat can tell we have the start of a mental scratch. Cognitive eating is a sign of mental peace, because you can focus and concentrate on the eating experience. Discarding the enjoyment of eating, by scrolling on your phone, eating while running around, eating fatty, heavy foods, are signs that there may be something happening deeper within.



Finally, exercise. The lack of exercise contributes to furthering the mental scratch, because you deprive the mind from critical dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin that are realised during and after exercise and are so important for us to deal with the stress induced cortisol.

Dr Curmi parted with a simple test for each to conduct as a way of figuring out whether or not there may be a mental scratch in the making; What word would you associate with work on Sunday night at 8pm or Monday morning - is it positive, hopeful and realistic? Or is it negative, heavy, scary, that brings on anxiety? Depending on your answer, you can proceed with fervour or caution.





THE 8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR CHAMPIONING YOUR OWN WELLNESS

DAPHNE GRECH CUMBO WELLNESS COACH AT UP YOUR LEVEL

This workshop allowed for all to take an internal, personal focus by linking the various domains that complete our life with the 8 dimensions of wellness.

As echoed throughout the conference, well-being is neither straightforward nor one-dimensional. It is different to everyone at varying points in our life and we all have specific needs that need to be addressed holistically to make a significant impact.

Participants had the opportunity to go on a well-being journey, exploring each dimension from a personal point of view, and in a manner that reflected their current state. During the exercise, everyone was asked to identify the most important aspects of their life and locate this aspect within one of the 8 dimensions of

wellness so that they could visualise how these areas relate to wellness in a much more visible manner.

This gave all the opportunity to reflect on how satisfied they are in each area, and more importantly what needed more attention to elevate their overall mental health and well-being.

The purpose of the exercise was to grasp the practical side of wellness and understand where we are really standing, at each level before taking the next step. This was done by highlighting the FIRE ethos at the heart of Up Your Level's performance coaching methodology.

The model enables us to perform better every day by unlocking more flow, leaving a positive impact, living up to our roles and responsibilities without burning out and **enjoying the journey of consistent excellence.**





SOME OF THE **PREVENTIVE MEASURES** OUTLINED INCLUDED:

- Checking in with our well-being regularly .
- Prioritising the important elements in our life.
- Understanding where we are standing.
- Accepting our current situation with kindness.
- Seeking solutions that suit our identity and complement our purpose.
- Finding which level/s will help us elevate the rest.
- Act on the smallest of symptoms/signs related to any area.
- Favour positivity over goals and balance over perfection.
- Focus on the journey, rather than the destination.
- Well-being precedes performance - look after yourself and your employees.

WHAT CAN WE DO FURTHER?

- Drive holistic performance through well-being with corporate wellness
- Find a coach to guide you on your well-being journey
- Implement the FIRE ethos into your professional and personal life



A MENTAL HEALTH POLICY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

HOW TO CREATE A MENTAL HEALTH POLICY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

DR ANN BUGEJA

Of the participants present during the conference 66% said they did not have a mental health policy at work and a further 17% said they did not know. Only 17% said their organisation had a policy that guides how employee mental health is addressed.

The workshop took participants through a process that helps define the most important aspects of mental health in a workplace, and provided an outline for a policy that is both practical yet provides the necessary protection for the interests of the business.

While giving guidance, the workshop allowed for participants to share their thoughts and highlight important features for them to include in such a policy. Different industries

and companies would have a different requirement in terms of the policy at the respective place of work.

An all-inclusive policy allows for the development of a diverse culture, while also bringing to the fore differences in how people envisage mental health and the support they require.

Dr Bugeja presented all attendees with a basic template to work on which covered the policy statement of commitment, scope, and objectives. It provided a series of key considerations for preventive measures, disclosure obligations, and a review process to ensure the policy remains abreast of times and reflects the organisation's current state.



SOME OF THE **PREVENTIVE MEASURES** OUTLINED INCLUDED:

- Positivity in recruitment.
- Awareness.
- Job security and flexibility.
- Support.
- Training.
- Protection from harm.
- Connection and community.
- Work-Life harmony.
- Mattering at the workplace.
- Opportunity for growth and equality.

- Get experts to review your policy to ensure this is inline with legal parameters.
- Embed mental wellness as part of corporate culture in practice not just on paper.
- Have regular mental health check-ins.
- Include corporate wellness programmes as part of your staff's learning and development plan.
- Have fun.
- Ensure professional advice is sought when managing volatile situations.

CONCLUSION

IN ONE WEEKEND DURING THE SUMMER IN MALTA, 4 MEN AND 1 WOMAN COMMITTED SUICIDE. AMONG MEN, THE RATE OF SUICIDE IDEATION AND ACTS OF SELF-HARM HAVE DOUBLED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. MOST GO SILENTLY AND UNREPORTED. MENTAL HEALTH IS NOT SOMETHING TO KEEP UNDER WRAPS IF WE WANT TO CHANGE THE TREND.

Speaking about mental health issues has to become commonplace, not to dramatise, but to ensure the necessary precautions and support services are available to those that need it, including the families of those suffering directly. When mental health issues come to the surface, it is not just one individual that suffers, but all those around that individual.

As individuals in leadership positions (not just business owners or CEOs) we have to take care of ourselves first before we can take care of others. If we lose sight of our own mental, physical, emotional, and intellectual wellness, it will become very difficult for us to lead as our people deserve us to. Whether we like it or not, often, team performance wanes when leadership wanes. It is a bitter pill to swallow, but nonetheless a pill we need to take. Self-awareness is required to lead healthy lives and businesses. But alone, self-awareness is worth nothing unless we do something about it.

Needless to say, there is no easy solution, and it is very likely that the more one digs into the subject matter, the more painful it will be, at least initially. There is no glory without pain. In order to improve, we first have to admit we can do better. This does not mean what we are doing is bad or wrong. It is not easy for many to admit they are works in progress, but we are all works in progress. Accepting that is the first step towards self-development, growth and moving up the hierarchy of needs ladder.

We can point fingers at others as much as we want, and at times it will be true that external influences are commanding factors in our limitations, faults and pain, but we also need to understand that we all have the ability to overcome these obstacles.

There is a process we can all adopt to help us on this journey. As one of the oldest resources known to humans and an enabler to nourishment, safety, and warmth, FIRE has been used for millennia to improve individuals' and communities status.



Today we use **FIRE** as an enabler to enhance our mental operating system.

FLOW

Understanding where we are vulnerable and working on it to improve our ability to deal with struggles, build resilience, and be more creative.

IMPACT

Embracing the fact that whatever we do has an impact on others around us. We reap what we sow, and what we sow is our legacy, so let's care about it.

ROLES (and Responsibilities and Relationships)

We wear many hats during the course of a day and even more over a lifetime. If we commit to these roles, we also commit to the responsibilities that come with them and the relationships we build as a result thereof. These all have the potential to define what we stand for and who follows us.

EXCELLENCE

Through the sharpening of our tools, we perform tasks better. Today's skills will be 'useless' in a couple of years' time, so in order to keep afloat and abreast of things, we need to be constantly working on improving our skill sets and building our tool kit to deal with what life has in store for us.

We can talk as much as we want, but the truth is it is time to take some serious steps forward.

Hygeia 2023 is the first of such steps.

Over the next few months, the team that brought Hygeia 2023 to you will start its work on Hygeia 2024 which will be bigger, bring more people together, and offer more solutions to leaders, businesses, and individuals. If you want to start making inroads into the mental wellness of your people and contribute to developing a safe environment for others to seek the necessary help in Malta, contact us to put your name forward for Hygeia 2024.

LIST OF EXHIBITORS

ORGANISERS

- [UP Your Level](#)
- [WorkingTown](#)

PARTNERS

- [WeConnect - FIDEM foundation](#)
- [HealthMark](#)

SPONSORS

- [GVZH Advocates](#)
 - [Enemed](#)
- [Iris Thaumass](#)
 - [PKE](#)
- [ZeroBubble](#)
- [Garnish](#)

NGOS

- [Connecting Colleagues](#)
 - [MSPCA](#)
- [RISe Foundation](#)
 - [AWAS](#)
- [Fondazzjoni Sebh](#)
- [Mental Health Association of Malta](#)
 - [Richmond Foundation](#)
 - [Walk and Talk](#)
- [Foundation For Social Welfare Services](#)
 - [Dar Hosea](#)
- [Crisis Resolution Malta](#)

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT LINES

Emergency Helpline 112
(24/7)

Richmond Foundation Helpline 1770
(Monday to Saturday from 8am to 8pm)
or www.oli.chat

Mental Health Services Helpline 1579

Crisis Line 9933 9966

Sedqa Support Line 179



UP
**YOUR
LEVEL**