The paradox of progress

All indicators show that New Zealanders’ material wealth, standard of living and life expectancy are increasing. And yet our levels of psychological distress remain disturbingly high.

Statistics reveal what the World Health Organisation describes as ‘a hidden burden’ facing countries like New Zealand:

- A 2011 study of 10 wealthy nations showed New Zealand had some of the highest rates of depression
- 47% of New Zealanders are likely to experience mental illness in their lifetime
- 6% of New Zealanders experience high or very high levels of psychological distress
- Between 2008 - 2013, the number of New Zealanders using anti-depressants increased by nearly 23% from 348,000 to 428,000.

Mental Health 2.0 – Let’s move the whole population towards greater mental health

Mental health is not just the absence of mental illness. Positive mental health is all about creating communities and workplaces where people can flourish psychologically.

Stress levels on the rise – contributing factors

Studies show that stress in countries such as New Zealand is on the rise.

Some of the reasons for our increasing levels of social and emotional pain are:

- Loneliness and isolation
- Financial stress
- Workplace pressures
- Unrealistic expectations / aspirations
- Poor sleep habits
- Sedentary lifestyles and lack of exercise
- Increased exposure to negative media
- Family pressures – domestic and sexual violence
- Social inequality and exclusion

What can we do?

Mental Health 2.0 means:

- Transforming our approach to mental health as a society
- Adopting a population-wide approach
- Focusing on communities and workplaces, not just individuals
- Treating mental health as a public health issue and measuring progress
- Promoting improved mental wellbeing as a goal for all New Zealanders, not just some

Taking the lead

The Mental Health Foundation:

- Advocates for policy change in mental health and wellbeing
- Supports equitable health outcomes for Māori
- Organises programmes that socialise the habits of healthy thinking and wellbeing
- Works in partnership with others to extend its range of influence.

Time for action

It’s time to change the way we think about mental health. Too often in the past we’ve seen it as a liability, whereas in fact mental wellbeing is one of New Zealand’s greatest resources. All New Zealanders stand to benefit from a new approach to reducing mental illnesses and improving wellbeing across the whole population.

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