



# resilience and wellbeing.

toolkit for health and social care workers



randstad  
health and  
social care.

human forward.

# in a nutshell.

Here you'll find guidance on how to look after your wellbeing, tackle stress and foster resilience, including:

- Guidance on choosing a supportive employer.
- How to boost resilience at work.
- The power of positive thinking.
- Tips on busting stress.
- Warnings signs to look out for.
- How to get help.



# why is resilience so critical?



There are countless definitions of resilience at work, but what it basically comes down to is the ability to deal confidently and capably with demands, stresses and changes. The key factors that make up resilience include:

- Your wellbeing.
- The power of positive thinking.
- Ability to bounce back and learn from adversity.
- Developing professionally and as a human being.
- Healthy work-life balance.
- Understanding and being supportive of colleagues and patients.
- The emotional insight to know when things are going right or going wrong.

Resilience is important for all workers, but for healthcare workers the emotional demands can be exceptionally intense. The need for resilience is therefore all the greater. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the potential strains, but also increased awareness of how to manage them as part of strengthening resilience within the workforce.

“a healthy outside  
starts from  
the inside.”



# learning from the COVID-19 emergency.



The Australian healthcare system has demonstrated its resilience in the face of the COVID-19 emergency. The key has been the professionalism and resilience of the healthcare workforce. Nonetheless stress levels have pushed many frontline workers to the limits.

A study published in *Australasian Psychiatry* reveals significant levels of anxiety (20% of participating healthcare workers), depression (21%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (29%)<sup>1</sup>. This not only reflects concerns about workloads, working conditions and infection risks, but also fears among staff that they could transmit the disease to families and colleagues.

## stress is manageable, and can even be positive

Healthcare can be exceptionally stressful. But this can be managed and even turned into a positive.

Poor management and lack of resources can turn an inherently stressful environment into a toxic one. However, if you and your colleagues feel that you have a clear sense of purpose, direction and support, stress can actually be affirming – positive. Think about how good you feel when you've been able to make a difference.

The need to manage stress has heightened the focus on workforce wellbeing and resilience. Your management, your colleagues and you as an individual worker can all play your part in fostering wellbeing and resilience.

# top ten stress busters.

1

Exercise reduces the emotional intensity of what you are feeling.

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6

Avoid unhealthy habits – drinking, smoking, caffeine, etc.

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2

Take control, there's a solution to every problem.

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7

Helping others also makes us happier and healthier too.

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3

Connect with people, build a support network, socialise.

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8

Work smarter, not harder. Use your time wisely and more effectively.

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4

Have some 'me time'.

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9

Try to be positive.

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5

Challenge yourself and set goals inside or outside work.

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10

Accept what you cannot change to maximise life satisfaction.

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# wellbeing and resilience: as a candidate.

A good employer will provide active support for wellbeing and resilience. How can you find this kind of organisation?

Look on job ratings sites and talk to people in your professional network to find out about the support available and levels of stress in the job you are applying for. Signs for concern in an employer that isn't supporting staff sufficiently include high rates of absenteeism and employee turnover.

At interview, ask whether there are programmes to support wellbeing and manage stress. These include support networks and opportunities to discuss issues with line managers.

Forward-looking employers have gone further through steps such as systematic tracking of stress and anxiety and developing proactive mechanisms for intervention. Other initiatives include peer supervision, where staff can share experiences with colleagues and freely discuss problems without management.

These are all signs that the employer cares about wellbeing and wants to build resilience.

## how to use job rating sites

- Start looking at the overall rating.
- Dig deeper, read the reviews and check who writes them.
- Use your findings when attending the interview.



“make happiness  
a habit.”



# wellbeing and resilience: in work.

Look for 'positive stress' – areas of your work that you find interesting and fulfilling. One of the areas of patient care that many healthcare workers found most difficult during the pandemic was the isolation of patients from loved ones to protect against infection. Supporting patients in areas such as setting up video calls with their families is an example of how workplace stress can be tackled and turned into a positive.

Bring up issues with line managers. This might be concerns about workload, isolation of working from home. Other examples include lack of tools and technology to make your work manageable.

Seek out training that would improve your ability to meet the demands of the job or move into a new area.

Seek out support networks. These can be daily dial-ins for people working from home or 'town hall' meetings with management to discuss issues. Virtual social events are also great in helping you to feel connected and share thoughts in an informal way. If this support isn't there, suggest it or set it up.

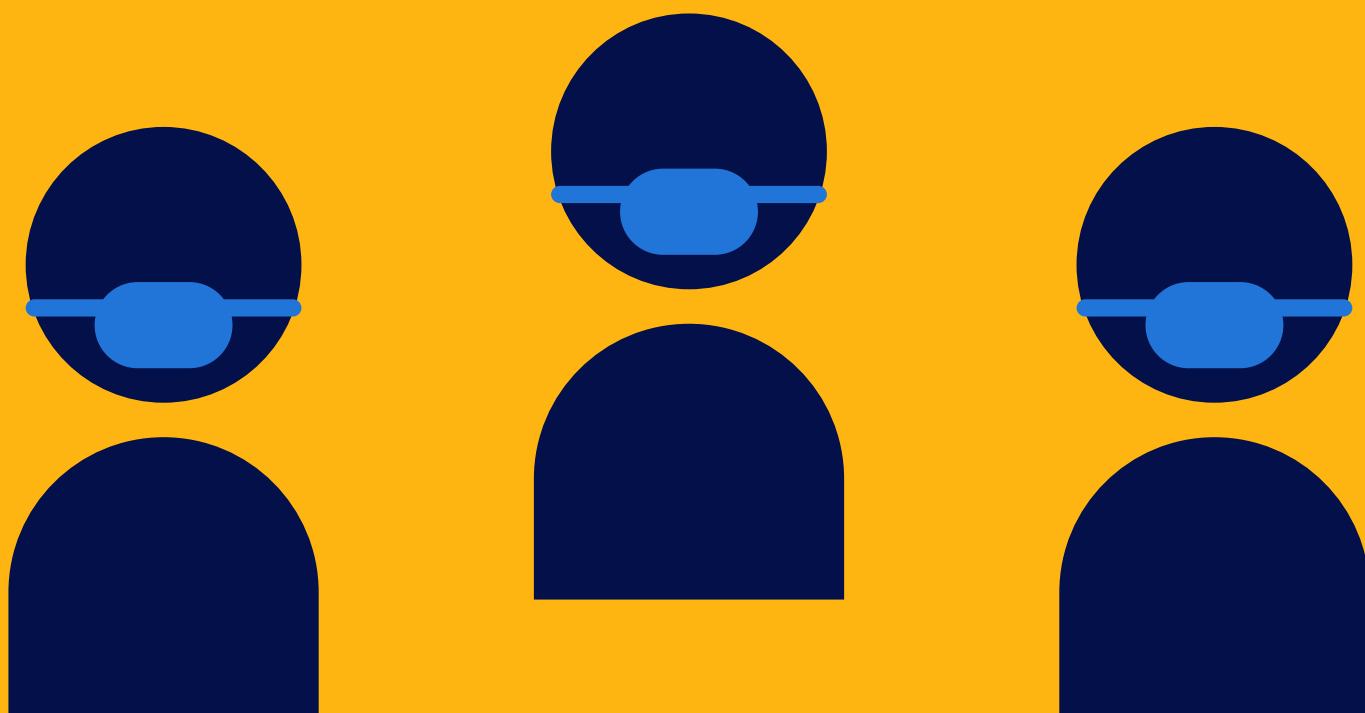


Make use of opportunities to have your say such as staff surveys and feedback to management. Check to see whether your feedback has been acted on and bring it up with line management if not.

Respond to any signs of undue pressure or bullying, either to you or a colleague. You may be concerned about speaking out, but most good organisations should have formal complaints procedures and whistleblowing mechanisms.

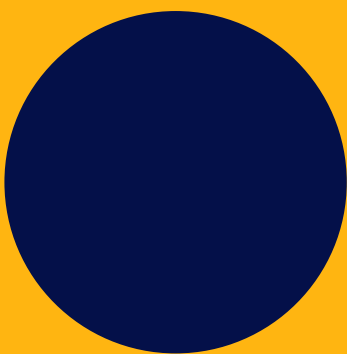
### support networks for healthcare workers

- Nurse and Midwife Support.
- RACGP – supporting wellbeing of GPs and medical students.
- Beyond Blue – for healthcare professionals.



## dealing with workplace bullying

- Check if your workplace has a bullying policy and reporting procedure you can follow. The policy should outline how your organisation will prevent and respond to workplace bullying.
- If you feel safe and comfortable doing this, calmly tell the other person that you object to their behaviour and ask them to stop it. They may not realise the effect their behaviour is having on you or others, and your feedback may give them the opportunity to change their actions.
- Seek advice from another person, for example a supervisor or manager, human resources officer or health and safety representative to help you work out if the behaviour you have been experiencing is workplace bullying, as early as possible.





“the greatest wealth  
is health.”



# wellbeing and resilience: self-care.



Monitor how you are feeling. Do you feel overworked or even overwhelmed? Do you feel that you're receiving sufficient support from management and colleagues? Warning signs include anxiety, difficulty sleeping, taking frustrations out on friends and family or harmful behaviour such as excessive drinking.

# how are you feeling?



1. Enjoying work  Yes  No

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2. Supported  Yes  No

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3. Overworked  Yes  No

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4. Anxious or stressed  Yes  No

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5. Getting the training you need  Yes  No

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6. Comfortable with colleagues  Yes  No

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7. Comfortable with line manager  Yes  No

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“the body achieves  
what the mind believes.”



## connecting physical and mental health

Studies show that the positive emotions that go with a resilient attitude can strengthen your immune system. A high-functioning immune system means the body can fight off infection more effectively, which leads to fewer instances of illness. The strong immune system also means the individual bounces back more quickly from illnesses<sup>4</sup>.

Find ways to unwind such as exercise and hobbies. Many healthcare workers have used COVID-19 to learn new skills and take up new hobbies.

Take your leave. You might think that you are letting your colleagues down. In fact, you need to get away and recharge.

## mental health advice and support

- [Smiling Minds](#) Mindfulness app to support and prevent stress with free content.
- [Health Direct](#): Mindfulness and mental health.
- [Black Dog Institute](#) – mindfulness in everyday life.
- [Reach Out Breathe](#).



# wellbeing and resilience: harness technology.



Work can be hard, but there is no need to make it any harder than it has to be. Technology can help.

Make use of tools and technology that can enhance communication and help take care of the routine work so you can concentrate on your patients.

Contribute to design and development to ensure that technology choices and roll out reflect the needs of you and your colleagues.

Make your voice heard. The COVID-19 outbreak has been marked out by the amount of political and media comment. What has often been missing from the public conversation are the perspectives of healthcare workers at the sharp end. But opportunities are opening up. Examples include the Health Worker Voices<sup>5</sup> channel, which encourages workers to record and share their thoughts, ideas and experiences.

# your next career step.

If you're looking for your dream job, the Randstad Healthcare team can support you in finding it. Our specialist team place professionals in the Health, Aged Care, Community Care & Support, Allied Health, Diagnostic, Government and Medical sectors across Australia. Go to [randstadhealthcare.com.au](https://randstadhealthcare.com.au) or call [1300 281 817](tel:1300281817) to discover the latest opportunities.



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