



THE PROACTIVE MENTAL WELLNESS APPROACH AT WORK

Collection of workplace mental health articles
by the mental wellness pioneer

Dr. Helena Lass

#ProactiveMentalWellness

W E L L N E S S O R B I T

World's firsts fully digital mental wellness gym for teams

W E L L N E S S O R B I T

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Intrapersonal skills as a proactive way to personal sustainability

Dr. Helena Lass, Publisher: HR Magazine (UK), Published: May 17, 2018



The business costs of poor mental health are increasing, and we can't afford to ignore the problem

Fatigue, boredom, lack of engagement, absenteeism and presenteeism are all symptoms of internal mental malfunctioning. As any HR manager or team leader will know, stress, burnout and depression can affect team relationship dynamics and individual mental health and cause loss of revenue and other costs.

The Centre for Mental Health 2006/07 report, *Mental health at work: developing the business case*, found that the overall cost to British employers of stress, anxiety and depression amounted to £1,035 per employee per year. Of this, £335 was due to absenteeism, £605 lost through presenteeism, and £95 was down to staff turnover.

Ten years on, the Centre for Mental Health has provided an update for the financial year 2016/17, and its findings show that the same overall costs increased to £1,300 per employee per year, reflecting a significant 25.6% rise. Absenteeism increased to £395 (up 17.9%), presenteeism is now at £790 (a 30.5% increase) and staff turnover at £115 (up some 21%). Overall costing the UK economy

£34.9 billion, this shows a 34.7% increase from £25.9 billion in 2006/07. Based on these figures we can only surmise that over the next 10 years we will see a similar pattern. Can we really afford to just ignore this problem?

New approach – proactive mental wellness

Because of the nature of office work, we can assume that the proportions of demand placed upon employees are approximately 10% physical and 90% mental. However, employees who do such mental work are rarely offered skills on how to protect their mental health properly.

In my scientific article, *Developing Intra-Personal Skills as a Proactive Way to Personal Sustainability - The Preventative Side of the Mental Health Equation*, I put forward the need for a proactive approach to mental health, which can be particularly applicable to workplace environments.

This article outlines a new approach to mental health as something that everyone should actively strive towards. It also shifts the focus from external, reactive, problem-solving approaches, (the commonplace solutions of today such as medical leave, prescription drugs and psychiatric therapy), towards a more proactive education on mental wellness. This approach sees people who are still well learn new skills to prevent further escalation of negative states into potential illness.

Intrapersonal skills formulate the cornerstone of self-leadership

Early proactive intervention in the form of structured awareness-based intrapersonal skills education increases quality of life and decreases the chances of stress, burnout, depression, anxiety and so forth, all of which have become epidemic and have serious consequences for individuals, companies and economies alike.

The term intrapersonal - '*intra*' meaning inside - separates our inner functions and processes from the physiological functions of the body. Learning intrapersonal skills opens up other skills; much like when we learn to read, many other skills and competencies can be developed. In this sense, intrapersonal skills form the foundation of any successful career, yet are lacking in workplaces and the wider business world because of their absence in current educational curricula.

The need for a mental wellness gym

When mental wellness is approached proactively, it can be likened to going to the gym. We all know that going to the gym is good for our physical health and overall wellbeing. Workplaces therefore need 'mental wellness gyms' where employees can train their knowledge tools and practice directing their inner functions whenever they need to.

There is strong and repeated evidence that intrapersonal events have a direct effect on the function and structure of the brain. Therefore, skills to direct these events can lead to changes in wiring and neurotransmitter activity in the human brain.

Until people are educated to exercise methods of conscious control over their emotional activation, it is only a matter of time before the destructive automatic emotional-mental complexes get triggered and initiate a cascade of problematic events, including irrational or destructive behaviour. When people learn and realise how their inner domain functions, a more sustainable way of handling - as well as preventing - problems can emerge.

Link to the original article in HR Magazine UK: <https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/intrapersonal-skills-as-a-proactive-way-to-personal-sustainability>

High performance is the result of mental wellness

Dr. Helena Lass, Publisher: Human Resources Magazine (New Zealand), Published: June, 2018



Although we work with the “head”, relying predominantly on our inner mental functions to get work done, the commonplace workplace approach to mental wellness has been of a reactive type, only becoming highlighted when serious problems begin to emerge. Mental wellness needs a more systemic pro-active approach. People need to learn practical skills so that they can effectively deal with daily work challenges and perform well when life and work demands more from them.

Employees often look to employers for a solution for their rising mental health issues, but they don't have one. According to an online survey by Wrike, 87 percent of people admit to overworking, with only 29 percent of employees satisfied with their work-life balance compared to managers (37%) and team members (51%). Overworking without the ability to lead our inner processes is a road to mental health problems, it is little wonder then that stress, burnout and depression affects one in every four people around the world.

Flexible working arrangements, taking a vacation and breathing exercises are often seen as solutions, but in the absence of sound 'intra-personal skills', results from such surface level measures remain short lived and compensative in nature. Most mental health problems form over a period of time and are based on our inability to understand what part inside us is the leader and what parts in us can be lead. Lack of education on how our mind really functions can have a dramatic affect on employers:

> In Europe, a company on average loses 700-1000 € / per employee every year because of stress

and mental ill-health related absences. That is no small price to pay; and could easily become a significant cost that can could mean the difference between profitability and loss making.

> According to Gallup studies, globally, on average 80 percent of people are not engaged or passionate about what they do for work. Sometimes motivational trainings are seen as an obvious quick fix solution. However, when people are overwhelmed with stress, or on the verge of burnout or otherwise mentally exhausted, emotional motivation training that preaches positivity is not helpful as emotions aren't constant and can quickly change. Strong positive emotions often just hide previous negative emotions. Practical proactive intrapersonal skills stop stress from escalating. The problem is that those skills are not taught in schools or universities, therefore it's up to employers to provide such education.

> The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work points out in "Calculating the cost of work-related stress and psychosocial risks" the costs of presentism, showing up to work but unable to perform at an optimal level, are higher (58%) than those of absentism (33%) or workforce turnover (9%). Whilst physical illness is often quite obvious, mental health problems go unnoticed and remain invisible until illness forces people to take time off from work.

> According to the 2012/13 New Zealand Health Survey found that mental disorders as a group are the third leading cause of health loss for New Zealanders. It is a very similar story for inhabitants in northern Europe.

> The study by Killingsworth & Gilbert highlights that 50 percent of the time our mind is wandering, and 90 percent of people attending meetings admit to daydreaming. Since awareness is the tool everyone uses for concentration and time-management, education about its practical application through training of intrapersonal skills is a must for everyone, enabling people to restore their productivity independently.

Mental wellness and mental illness

Too often 'mental health' gets confused with 'mental illness'. The two couldn't be more different. Mental health is something that everyone has when their inner functions operate in the most optimal manner. Mental illness is lack of health, and is the result of not dealing with problematic ways of functioning due to the absence of specific education, most notably, intrapersonal skills. Mental illness is the direct result of neglecting the need for proactive education, favouring prioritising firefighting problems and their subsequent consequences instead.

As the topic of mental illness is often stigmatised, people postpone speaking up and seeking help. There have been lot of promotional campaigns that encourage a wider dialogue about mental health and encourage people with mental illness to seek professional help. Although this is welcomed, many professionals feel that simply highlighting the issue in the mainstream spotlight every now and then is far from a sustainable solution. If employers don't pay more attention to normal mental functions and wellness, and continue to not seek the skills to sustain it, then the escalation of mental illness into a global epidemic cannot be stopped.

What is mental wellness?

Good mental health equals wellness. Mental wellness is a optimum inner functioning and effective use of our innate potentials: purposeful attention, embracing change and the unknown, initiative, creativity, inner motivation, having insights, awareness of emotions, self-management and more. These are all specific inner capabilities that can be developed into individual skills with their own well-crafted curriculum. When mental wellness is a considered in a proactive approach, it can be likened to going to the gym. We all know that going to the gym is good for our physical health and overall well-being. What workplaces need in this sense is a mental wellness gym where employees

can train their knowledge tools and practice directing their own inner functions whenever they want or need to.



*Proactive intrapersonal skills
are not taught in schools;
therefore it's up to employers
to provide such education*



Companies can compensate the national shortcomings by becoming educators

It is a fact that people spend most of their waking hours at work and employers need people who are mentally well who are capable to perform their tasks consistently at a high level. Although personal responsibility over one's own mental state is elementary, it would be naïve to expect people to be able to apply skills that they have not yet learnt. Mental Wellness falls into no-man's-land. Today there is almost no practical education about mental wellness in schools and the wellness-centered proactive education is not in focus for medicine and health-care institutions. This means it is down to companies and organisations to fill in this major gap in skills education.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is about humans, our inner selves

The next revolutionary development is neither a new technology nor a new rocket type. Instead we need to fundamentally change the way we understand the human 'mind'. 'Mind' because even the word is too general a term and needs to be properly understood. We need very practical skills for leading all our inner functions – including thinking, emotions and our own awareness. To the surprise of most people, the solution is not something waiting on the shelf, ready to be used.

Employers have equally limited knowledge about inner functions and what makes them operate in non-optimal way. Apart from myself and a handful of others who are actively trying to reinvent a new and systematic approach to proactive mental wellness, mental health professionals have been more focused on diagnosing and treating illnesses rather than advocating proactive well-being. This needs to change.

Routledge published my scientific paper about this topic, 'Developing Intra-Personal Skills as a Proactive Way to Personal Sustainability - The Preventative Side of the Mental Health Equation'. We need to bring practical intrapersonal skills that lead to mental wellness in to our offices and workplaces. Focusing on mental wellness is an opportunity to positively influence the lives of all employees, entrepreneurs and achievers. I see that everyone can have mental superpowers like the ability to differentiate and focus, have access to insights, intuition and creativity. This is what the mental wellness discussion should be about! That's why every HR manager, company owner and leader of any team should be interested in investing in learning intrapersonal skills.

Link to the original article in New Zealand's Human Resources Magazine:

<https://www.wellnessorbit.com/files/filemanager/files/Human Resources Winter Issue 2018 Page 24-25 Dr Helena Lass.pdf>

New Path Towards Mental Wellness

How learning intrapersonal skills is the opener of all other skills

Dr. Helena Lass, Publisher: Thrive Global (USA), Published: June 25, 2018



THRIVE  GLOBAL

Our contemporary society is underpinned by a sense of lack. We feel as though we are always lacking something. We lack motivation; we lack happiness, health, joy, time, money, love, the list never ends. We might catch ourselves saying, *'if only I had more (insert your choice of desire) ... then I would be (insert your choice of the desired outcome)...'*. We seem to always choose to see ourselves as though we are lacking something.

Why do we think and act in certain ways? There are instruments that allow us to understand ourselves in a deeper way and set us on a path to mental wellness. Using certain other instruments allows us to unlock hidden potential and gain a deeper level of understanding. But first, let us gain an understanding of the systems that make up our inner domains before looking at how we can identify and use our innate instruments and turn those into intrapersonal skills. To understand the complexity of how we are built I rely on the fresh and functional framework outlined by [Ingvar Villido](#) – master teacher of awareness.

UNDERSTANDING OUR INNER SYSTEMS – ALL SYSTEMS GO!

An analogy I often use is a car. There are the chassis and suspension, the engine, the electrical and fuel systems, the climate control, and the interior. All of those sub-systems function in full synchronicity when you drive a car. When a problem appears you have to understand which system is at fault. For example, fixing the body of the car does not fix the cars electric system, etc. It's the same case with us. Our internal functioning cannot be fixed solely by dealing with our body alone.

No car moves without a command from the driver (the same goes for autonomous/self-driving cars). Whether that command comes in the form of a very simple command like changing gears or

pressing a pre-programmed button, it's the same case with us. According to Villido, we have five main systems or 'levels'.

The first is the **physical body** level that concerns all our physiology, anatomy, biochemistry and so on. Thanks to modern science and medicine we have a very good understanding of how we function on a physical level. The next internal level is the **emotional level** that is connected with our energy, i.e. how we feel and this very much dictates how we behave. For example, by feeling angry will decide or determine a certain level of energy, behavior, and thoughts.

Then there is the **mental level**. Information is stored in our memory and reproduced in all sorts of ways. Whether it is recalling information, imagining the future, a thought process, or analysis. It's a completely different level than that of the emotions or physical level.

The forth is the **level of awareness**. That's our tool to notice and to explore. Villido says that your awareness can be best [described as the link between you – the one who notices – and the object of your observation](#). When you discover (as a witness) what it is, that you use to observe, you find your own awareness. When you discover this instrument and learn where your awareness is positioned, you can also learn to direct it. If you observe you will find that awareness is always in the present moment and is significantly faster than thinking – it moves ultra-fast. Do an experiment and listen to different sounds in your environment. Listen to them one by one as you begin to notice them. Notice how fast your awareness shifts from one sound to locating the next, changing direction and not being obstructed by physical barriers (walls, windows, etc.).

The final level is the most intrinsic or core part of us, the true commander, known as the **True 'Self'**. Unfortunately, in most people, this Self is "dormant" and a substitute has "taken" its place – the everyday autopilot, or the "ego".

INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS INSTEAD OF AUTOPILOT MODE

Our behavior can be attributed to automatic (meaning they are sub-conscious), complexes. According to this framework, complexes are made out of a mental and an emotional counterpart that gets automatically activated by a trigger. For example, when the sun comes out and we begin to think and feel a certain way, this is a complex. 95 percent of our lives run on autopilot and such automatic complexes.

Intrapersonal, 'intra' meaning inside, skills draw on awareness, the primary instrument that we can use to understand and regulate our internal functions. If we do not use awareness intentionally, our internal functions remain under the command of our subconscious mind – meaning they run on the 'autopilot' mode. This mode is **reactive** and doesn't leave room to be **proactive**, to discover new things or change the repetitive routine.

People react constantly to data presented in their daily lives with the activation of an automatic inner reaction, closely followed by a physical reaction, resulting in subsequent behavior. The dysfunctional and automatic complexes initiate behavior over which the person has only limited or no control at all, although one may well remain informed about the dysfunctional nature of the actions (i.e. bursts of rage). Automatic complexes equal a compulsion. Like a training pattern, a complex has a command value, but goes into operation without adequate assessment of the situation or intentional will of Self, hijacking the whole system.

Some level of automation can be very helpful in everyday life, but due to its compulsive nature, it leaves very little room for free choice. When allowed to dominate, this turns a human being into an automated being, sleepwalking through life, and ultimately results in us not really living our own lives, but instead a life dictated by the autopilot.

When most of our life is run by this automated ‘autopilot’, we call this the ego or the pseudo-self. This reaction-based self involves all of the inner reactions, positive and negative inner self-talk, for example, “I am Helena. I am a doctor. I’m a businesswoman. I’m an entrepreneur. I’m beautiful. I’m ugly. I’m fat. I’m thin. I’m productive. I’m lazy.” These are actually not our real identities. All of these “I’s” are not actually the real you. These are different kinds of descriptions of a situation, a complex, or something given to you by society. It’s not only genes that are passed down through the generations, but also all of these patterns, our reactions, beliefs and world view too. It’s one of the strangest paradoxes, that we know our reactions but not ourselves. That’s why Plato, Socrates, and most ancient wisdom traditions have highlighted the importance to “know thyself”.

Awareness forms the basis of all our intra-personal skills. Learning to use and lead our internal instruments includes knowing what our attention is focused upon. This is the prerequisite to effective self-leadership – being aware of the whereabouts of your attention – the most valuable asset of the 21st century. If it just continues to randomly fall on the most prominent stimuli, the “monkey-mind” process, we will remain under the influence of those stimuli, becoming dependent and powerless.

INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS = UNDERSTANDING = MENTAL WELLNESS

Intrapersonal skills are based on knowledge and understanding about what goes on inside of us and consist of three meta-systems as described in detail above; emotions, thoughts, and awareness. To create a meaningful life, enhance productivity and nurture happiness, these three systems need to seamlessly cooperate with each other and the physical body under the orchestration of the chief commander, the Self.

Learning intrapersonal skills is the opener of other skills, much like learning to read opens access to a lot of knowledge and therefore enables the development of new knowledge and understanding. In this sense, intrapersonal skills form the pathway for a successful career, yet people lack knowledge about these skills due to their absence in the current educational curriculum – we are not taught about how to be mentally fit.

Through learning intrapersonal skills people will gain a deeper understanding of themselves. Once we take the first step to begin to understand why we are the way we are, we can set forth a pathway towards better [mental wellness](#). When paying attention to the intra-personal, we will at some point find ourselves at the beginning of yet another developmental phase – how to effectively release and discontinue dysfunctional and harmful complexes altogether? According to the unique ‘Human 2.0’ program developed by Villido, this is not only possible but in fact normal for every human being.

Thrive Global has also published:



COMMUNITY // October 9, 2019
How to overcome stress and burnout?
 by Dr. Helena Lass



COMMUNITY // September 25, 2019
Intrapersonal skills – the most important skills in future
 by Dr. Helena Lass



COMMUNITY // July 9, 2018
Mental Wellness the most overlooked aspect of health
 by Dr. Helena Lass



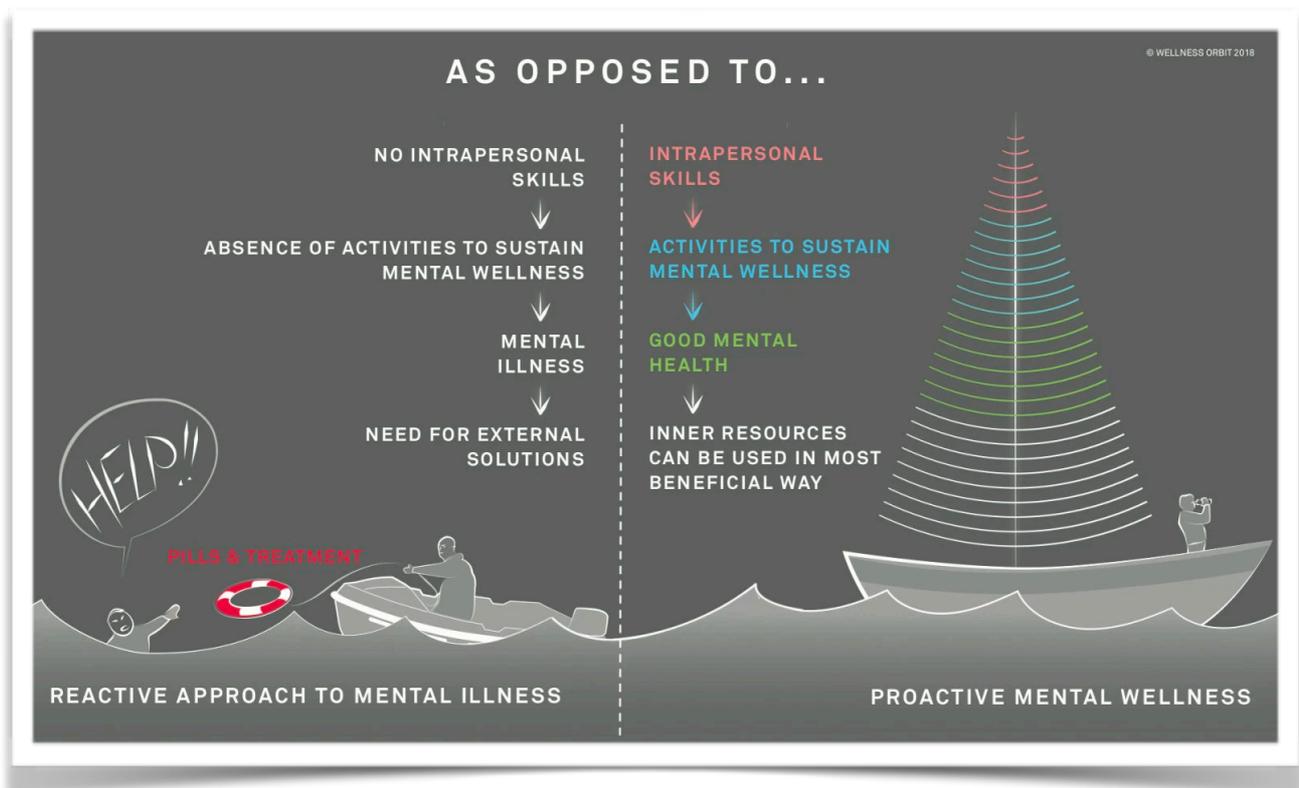
COMMUNITY // May 31, 2018
Burnout – I can Handle Everything!
 by Dr. Helena Lass

Link to the original article in Thrive Global: <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/a-lack-of-mental-wellness/>

How to overcome stress and burnout?

... and why lawyers, doctors, teachers, and other top experts need intrapersonal skills.

Dr. Helena Lass, Publisher: Thrive Global (USA), Published: October 9, 2019



Last year *Health and Safety Executive* in the UK reported that “Stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 57% of all working days lost due to ill health” in the United Kingdom.

This year’s [Cigna Report](#) stated: “In the workplace, 87% of workers are stressed, with 12% claiming it as unmanageable.” And that is not all, the same Cigna 360 Well-being survey continued: “**91% agree that colleagues’ stress impacts the workplace with a higher degree of negative impacts** such as a depressing atmosphere and lowering morale, and yet employers are not doing enough to address the issue. Furthermore, 45% agree that wellness programs focus more on physical rather than mental well-being and tend to be one size fits all when in fact, they need to be tailored specifically to their target staff. This gap should serve as a wake-up call for employers who wish to retain employees, boost morale and increase productivity.”

Looking at those numbers it is very clear that we need a change in all workplaces where people face pressure and stressful situations on a daily bases.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress can be defined as the adverse inner reaction that people experience when they come into contact with excessive pressures that they fail to handle. When there is too much outside triggers our own inadequate inner reactions can easily cause us emotional and mental overload. Experiencing this pressure is stress. Feeling it constantly is chronic stress.

No external stress trigger matters without that inner reactivity, as we would not experience it to be a problem. Do you remember any situation where one person has a huge problem and someone else can stay fully calm? The situation is the same, reactivity within two persons is different.

Stress often initiates the “fight or flight” response, a complex reaction of neurologic and endocrinologic systems. When we fight or run away, then we fail to face the actual situation in the present moment. Our response is not adequate and our work and family life both suffer.

WHY IS STRESS A HUGE PROBLEM?

Lets observe to whom stress is biggest problem?

Stress and burnout are the lifestyle choice of successful professionals, executives and entrepreneurs – when you work intensively you come in contact with pressure to perform well on a daily bases. Often those high performing employees and business owners put themselves on the frontline for the success of the organization. Instead of an adequate response, everything turns into a battle. The problem is that those **A-team players are not easily replaceable due to their elite practical know-how** and therefore cannot give their task to others very easily even if they want to. In practice, several B-level players can never replace a single A-level player fully. At least not right away. It is not only the know-how that matters, but it is also practical experience and personal trust. So, it is natural that such A-players have difficulty to take time off and sleep 8 hours every night. Their work time is booked advance for moths and free time is often extremely limited, so they are the ones who fall into the trap of increasing stress levels and experience burnout more often than others.

Let’s take a practical example. [Dan Lukasik](#) wrote here in [Thrive Global a while ago](#) that “The ABA study showed that 28% of lawyers had struggled with some kind of depression in the past 12 months of the survey. That is four times the rate found in the general population.” He continued “Even more troubling was the fact that **61% of attorneys surveyed had struggled with depression** at some point in their legal careers. That is almost ten times the rate found in the general population.” Similarly medical personnel, teachers and all those who face constant deadlines, work open offices or need to perform difficult tasks are more prone to burnout than those who work in a relaxed atmosphere without strict deadlines and huge workloads.

But is it really because of a lack of time? We all have 24 hours each day, what matters is how we deal with our own inner processes during that 24 h. **The lack of time has never been a real problem. The real fundamental problem is our total lack of intrapersonal skills that does not allow us to respond adequately to external situations under pressure.**

WHAT ARE INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS?

Intrapersonal skills are based on knowledge and understanding about what goes on inside of us, ‘intra’ meaning inside. [Awareness-based intrapersonal skills](#) enable us to lead our three subsystems in an optimal manner: emotions, thoughts, and awareness. Those skills enable us to replace ‘automatic’ subconscious inner reactivity with an adequate and aware response.

WHAT IS MENTAL WELLNESS?

Mental wellness is a level of psychological well-being that secures you a peaceful mind.

Mental wellness is a proactive approach to mental health. **Mental wellness at work secures good work results.** Mental wellness is related to the quality of life and should not be associated with mental illnesses at all. The most common work-related mental health problems are the result of not having good mental wellness.

Our current education system neglects **mental wellness** lessons in the educational curricula, so none of us have had proper education about **how our inner domain functions** and thus we fail to deal with our own inner reactivity. And **it is our inner reactivity that causes stress.**

Stress is again the main pathway to burnout and burnout again has a huge overlap with depression. We never realize that there is a slow downward spiral as we fail to notice the early **warning signs of burnout.** And once we reach burnout, depression is often the next phase.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

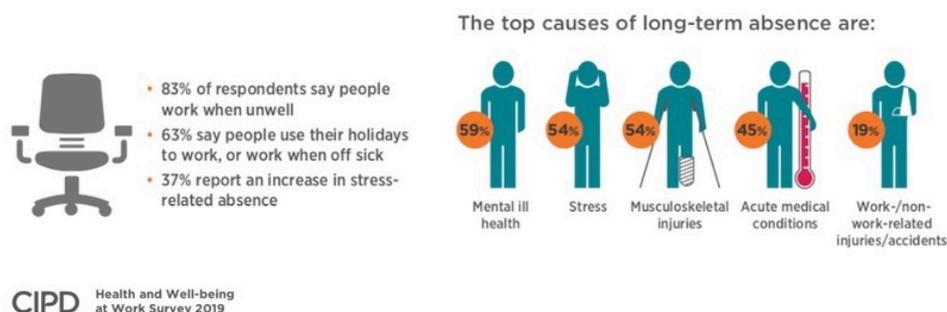
Until we lack intrapersonal skills, stress will continue to create automatic inner reactivity that can cause severe physical and mental health problems, affecting the quality of our personal and work relations.

While stress and burnout are not mental illnesses, but both those mental health-related issues can easily escalate into mental illnesses. Stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression can also increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases, muscle tension, gastrointestinal illnesses, obesity or bad skin conditions, etc.

Your mental wellness and physical fitness are directly interconnected. **When you lose your mental fitness, you become open to many health problems.** So learning intrapersonal skills helps you to stay well and avoid all kinds of health problems.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EMPLOYERS?

When we look at it from an employer's standpoint, then stress and burnout can affect the health of staff, lead to absenteeism and sick leaves, reduce productivity and work engagement, and lead to performance, quality and client relationship problems. Yet many employers do nothing as they lack an efficient proactive approach towards mental wellness at work.



The *CIPD* Survey Report 'Health and Wellbeing at Work' from April 2019 stated "Despite the increased focus on mental health, for example, there is still a lack of preventative measures being taken and despite employers' efforts we are still seeing a worrying increase in poor mental health and work-related stress. This indicates that the steps taken by employers are falling short of what's needed. **Overall, organisations still tend to take a reactive approach to well-being, rather than a**

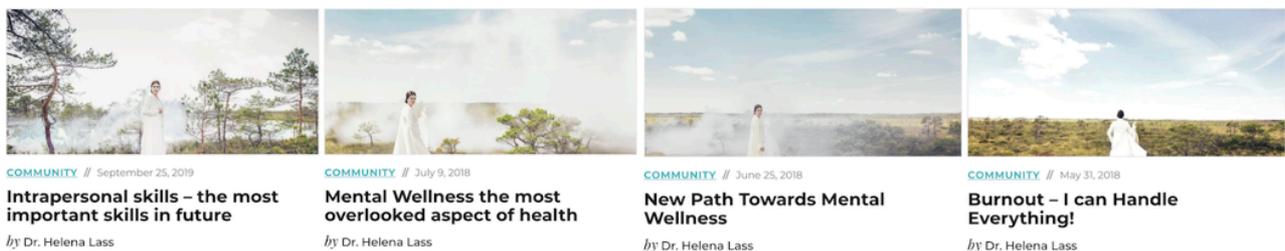
pre-emptive one that aims to create the kind of working environment that supports good well-being and helps to prevent poor health where possible.” It is the proactive/preventative mental wellness approach that distinguishes my practical approach from what others are offering. And I dream that every employer can give their employees access to mental wellness gym training so that people can learn intrapersonal skills and work well without sacrificing their wellbeing and health. [You are welcome to test my approach here for free.](#)

WHY WORKPLACES NEED TO FOCUS ON WELLNESS?

As we look for ways to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness and mental health problems in our workplace, the approach needs to be comprehensive and proactive as **there is no stigma attached to mental wellness**. It's important that employees feel comfortable talking about their mental health at work and seek professional help as soon as they notice the problem. Talking about [mental wellness](#) and mental fitness matters as much as daring to address any mental health problems very early on.

I see that digital intrapersonal education and at workplaces has the potential to reduce the number of people who feel mentally unwell.

Thrive Global has also published:



Link to the original article in Thrive Global: <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/how-to-overcome-stress-and-burnout/>

Balancing act to integrate work and life

Dr. Helena Lass, Publisher: Personnel Today (UK), Published: March 1, 2019



 PERSONNEL TODAY

In our connected, “always on” age it is increasingly difficult to separate work and personal life, to create genuine work-life balance. But learning “intra-personal” skills enables us to better understand how our physical bodies react to external stressors, argues Dr Helena Lass.

The concept of the work-life *balance* has always been false and is a long-outdated approach. The use of technology means there is no longer a clear distinction between work and life. Offices are no longer confined to a permanent location. Working from home, remotely, as “gig economy” or contract workers has become the new norm. If we have our devices, we can be at work – in the car, at the shops, on our bikes, when with friends, at the gym; wherever we go, we are always at work.

Being more connected and constantly online has caused a shift in the way we conduct our lives and business. It is one of the reasons people feel increasingly stressed and one of the main contributing factors in why we find ourselves in the midst of an unfolding mental health crisis.

The days of going home to relax and spend quality time with loved ones without any work distractions seems a concept from a bygone era. Finding a way to better integrate aspects of our work and life will serve us well in preventing fatigue, stress and ultimately burnout and depression, which directly and indirectly affect all aspects of our lives, none more so than our places of work.

Stressed nation

It is very often the case that companies, organisations and business owners themselves bear the brunt in terms of the costs relating to workplace-related mental health problems. Work-related stress, burnout, depression and anxiety all have major effects on businesses.

Presenteeism and absenteeism result in employee sick leave and unfinished work-related tasks at critical moments and cost businesses dearly. The Centre for Mental Health a report entitled [Mental health at work: developing the business case](#) in 2017 which showed the cost to British employers of stress, anxiety and depression to be £1,300 per employee per year.

This reflects a significant 25.6% rise compared to the exact same study carried out by the centre (then The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health) [10 years previously](#). Absenteeism increased 17.9% and presenteeism 30.5% when compared to the 2006 report. The overall cost of mental health problems to the UK economy was £34.9 billion in 2016, a 34.7 percent increase from £25.9 billion in 2006.

To coincide with last year's [Mental Health Awareness Week](#), [Cascade HR conducted a survey](#) among UK workforce to assess the extent in which stress plays a role in the UK workforce. This found that four out of five people felt that stress had become a “way of life” for them and that, in the past 12 months, 62% of respondents found they had been stressed at work for a period of one week or more, with 20% so stressed that they had to take time off work as a result.

The report, quite rightly, pointed out that, although the number of people with mental health problems may not have significantly changed in recent years, worries about things like money and job security and so on are making it increasingly harder for people to cope.

Using awareness as a tool

Stress is an emotional experience often linked with nervousness, tension and strain, triggered by internal or external factors. We experience workplace stress when the demands and pressures put upon us outweigh our skills, experience and time limits.

Because of this shortage we are likely to feel overwhelmed and therefore unable to cope. But what tools do we have at our disposal to effectively deal with the pressure?

The first and most important notion is, that one feels this pressure always internally. Be it nervousness, fear or guilt – these are not felt “out there”, but “in here”. So, regardless the trigger, what really makes us suffer is our own inner reaction. These reactions appear when a trigger hits our inner “button”, an inner complex.

Awareness is our intimate contact with everything and connects us to objects around us and within us. It is a practical tool we can train to be used and directed at will. Awareness is the only tool that enables us to become aware that we indeed do have reactions to various situations. Also, what are the components of that “button”.

This new, emerging field in psychology goes beyond mindfulness and in addition to becoming aware of reactions, helps to identify and eliminate the “buttons”. These are totally new skills that have been unknown to humanity and are accessible through active use of awareness. So, the fundamental solution lies in practical skills to extinguish “buttons”, not in dealing with triggers or reactions, as has been the focus so far.

By training our awareness, we are more careful about where we choose to place our attention or focus. According to a study by Thompson and Gauntlett-Gilbert (2008), applied awareness creates potential for greater self-awareness, improved impulse control, and decreased emotional reactivity to challenging events.

When untrained, our awareness is at risk of being caught by random objects, including irrelevant thoughts. This wandering awareness regime can be called “monkey mind”, preventing us from concentrating, learning as well as from switching off. Untamed awareness is constantly after new stimuli and is the main reason we struggle to be “in tune” or relax.

The fact that most people don't know how to discontinue their train of thought at will only adds to the problem. Constant thinking is one of the main cause of our worries. It is the reason we wake at

3am wandering if that email included the correct attachment or if we sent it to the correct person. The constant never-ending thinking doesn't actually help us and is often totally counterproductive.

The irony of thinking about home when at work and of work when at home is a modern-day paradox and is something we likely do unintentionally, subconsciously. By learning to use and direct our awareness, we can focus on the actual task at hand. Meaning when we are at work we can be totally focused on our work tasks, when we are at home, we enjoy our home environment and time with our loved ones.

Once we are able to identify where our awareness is, we increase the potential to notice our reactions, automatic thoughts and feelings. We can now begin to tame our monkey mind and free ourselves from the autopilot mode that we have started to rely on too excessively.

Intrapersonal skills as practical tools

Noticing where our awareness is gives us the freedom to discern what is important in any given moment, be it related to work or our personal life. Directing of our own awareness is the most fundamental intrapersonal skill. The term intrapersonal, "intra" meaning inside, separates our inner functions and processes from the physiological functions of our physical body.

Intrapersonal skills are the foundation of work-life integration and formulate a strong base for professional skills.

Active use of awareness and learning intrapersonal skills enables us to overcome the current limitations seen in mindfulness and meditation practices. By learning, training and directing intrapersonal skills we can open our inner potential and lead ourselves towards better mental wellness. If we are mentally well, then we work well and live well.

Common examples of intrapersonal skills

- Being able to control and lead your emotions at will. For example: Knowing what drives you to anger, frustration, inspiration or calmness.
- Keeping your focus on task at hand as long as needed.
- Understanding your strengths and limitations.
- Understanding the pros and cons of taking risks or responsibilities.
- Learning to stay calm in pressured, stressful situations.
- Knowing how to relax.

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Wellness Orbit: an e-training platform for mental wellness

Sarah Adamson, Publisher: Celsius Healthcare / Start From Here Magazine by Connected Health (EST), Published: June, 2018



Wellness Orbit's online training platform introduces an exciting new dimension to mental health, shifting the focus to proactive mental wellness and keeping healthy people in good mental shape, thus representing a departure from the regular disorder- and disease-based approach.

All Wellness Orbit e-trainings are in English and enable companies and organizations to train their teams. The trainings are designed to help employees learn how their inner domain functions and teach awareness based intrapersonal skills for better self-management. “We see wellness as the foundation for purposeful action. If you are mentally well, you work well, you are engaged with your work and function optimally in every way,” says [Dr. Helena Lass](#), the founder of Wellness Orbit, psychiatrist specialised in mental wellness, and the mastermind behind developing the content of the e-trainings videos.

Mental health problems can be prevented and kept from escalating into disorders

Wellness Orbit has developed training programmes “[Performing Under Pressure](#)”, “[Well Fit for Work](#)” and “[Getting Things Done](#)”, addressing people's every-day needs in regard to how to concentrate, change habits, relieve stress and practice self-control and -motivation.

The backbone of all training practices is the video sessions with guided exercises by Dr. Lass. The training practice is open for participating and re-participating for three months to allow people to check and reinforce their progress and ultimately change their habits. All signature trainings come with a workbook and thorough self-evaluation quiz so that all participants can get personalized, honest feedback about their status and progress. Based on the self-evaluation results, each trainee gets individual recommendations on what to focus on next in order to keep improving his or her results. "The feedback shows trainees whether they are applying what they learned providing a sort of an "alarm bell" that prevents them reverting "back to usual". Thus, they can immediately take action to make sure that the new skills do indeed integrate into their lives," says Dr. Lass.

As a result of the acquired intrapersonal skills, employees are more aware of their life, work and relationships and can actively take steps towards their own well-being and work satisfaction.

As this is a digital platform, employees can access Wellness Orbit trainings online. They can participate at a pace suitable for them, and there is no limit on revisiting training segments during the training period. People, who suffer a professional setback, face stress or are on the verge of burnout, can access the training when they feel like it, meaning they don't have to wait or look for advice before it is too late. Besides employee stress, as a preventive measure, a lot of emphasis is placed on how people can use their inner resources more skilfully and develop potentials.

Today one out of every four people suffers from a mental health disorder at some point in their lives and currently there aren't enough healthcare professionals to help. Dr. Lass knows first hand that basic ability to orientate in one's internal functions alongside with the knowledge to manage them skilfully is the cornerstone for mental wellness and the key to prevent many mental health issues. Intrapersonal education means gaining resilience, a certain immunity against mental disorders.

A proactive approach to mental wellness is such a new view on the inner sphere that no competitors have addressed it and scientific research on the possibility of the concept is in it's infancy. Dr. Lass is one of the first pioneers in the mental wellness arena to address the issue of proactive mental health.

An idea long in the making

The idea to develop an e-training platform to improve mental wellness came into existence almost five years ago. The idea evolved out of Dr. Lass's vast experience as a psychiatrist, which convinced her of the importance of developing a new proactive, wellbeing-centred psychological approach. "If people know what is going on in their inner domain, they can address the problems early on, so that those ways of reacting do not escalate into an illness," says Dr. Lass.

Wellness Orbit's team includes four shareholding partners: Dr. Lass develops the trainings and acts as Development Director and her husband Kaur Lass, is in charge of daily business and managing the company; the third co-owner is a film studio that provides high quality audio and videos; and the fourth partner is an IT company, responsible for programming the solution and ensuring that the videos are accessible worldwide and stream smoothly. To ensure world class branding a renowned branding guru Jürgen Salenbacher, who has previously worked with Paulo Coelho, Nike and the Kingdom of Bhutan, was involved in developing the visual identity for Wellness Orbit.

The trainings have been available for slightly over a year. Even in the absence of direct advertising and marketing effort, customer interest has been high. A majority of the clients have been from

Estonia – current clients include the University of Tartu, Danske Bank, Fortumo and Nortal. The solution is rapidly gaining international interest – for example Hurtigruten and Abbvie have already trained their staff online with Wellness Orbit.

A unique solution

Wellness Orbit stands apart from competitors as it offers video sessions with more personal face-to-face training feeling which trumps most live trainings. The self-evaluation options, quiz between training sessions and workbooks provide more than any live trainings could. “It’s important for people to see and feel that I am talking to them alone, so that they do not feel like a passive viewer or fly on a wall,” says Dr. Lass. Today, most mental wellness, self-control and motivational trainings are conducted either face-to-face or in very small groups, but Wellness Orbit can reach thousands of people, remaining personal at the same time.

The true uniqueness of the mental wellness approach lies in collaboration with the new and unique educational program Human 2.0, which emphasises a new paradigm based on the primacy of awareness. “Active application of awareness, the cornerstone of Human 2.0 program, is the next step from mindfulness and I feel extremely honoured to have the opportunity to include some of those core principles into [Wellness Orbit trainings](#). This approach opens new avenues to dealing with things that hinder or block individual progress,” says Dr. Lass.

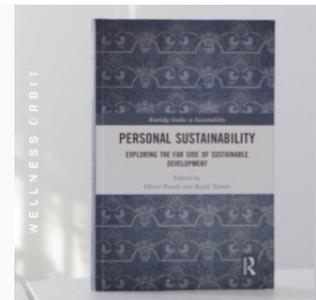
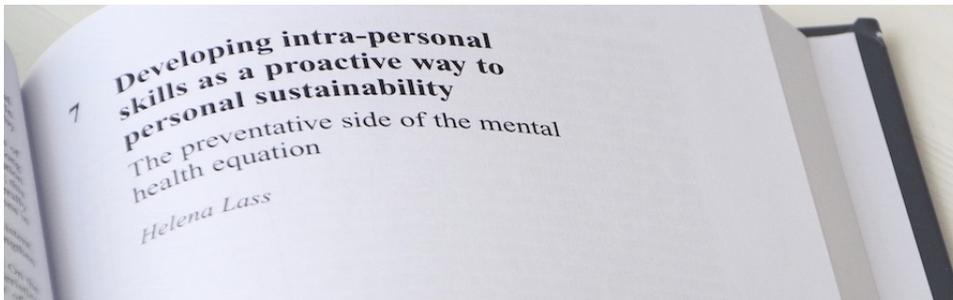
The company’s plans are aimed at providing the service at English-speaking markets, current main targets being the UK, New Zealand and Australia.

<p>Wellness Orbit</p> <p>wellnessorbit.com</p>	<p><u>Established:</u> 2015</p> <p><u>Employees:</u> 8</p> <p><u>Location:</u> Tallinn</p> <p><u>Distinctiveness:</u> Wellness Orbit e-training courses introduce a hybrid understanding on mental wellness and human capacity, bridging together competencies from medicine, awareness and entrepreneurship. The first</p>	<p>to offer a broad-spectrum approach to mental wellness. A comprehensive solution consisting of video sessions, illustrations, workbooks, consolidation boosters, personalized metrics and feedback.</p> <p><u>Areas of activity:</u> Digital training courses on intra-personal skills and pro-active mental wellness.</p>	<p><u>Services:</u> B2B e-training courses on human capacity in English available over the Internet around the globe 24/7.</p> <p><u>Target groups:</u> Companies where work is mentally and emotionally demanding and service providers who want to offer pro-active mental wellness programs for their clients.</p> <p><u>Major clients:</u> University of Tartu, Danske Bank, Nortal, Hurtigruten, Abbvie, Fortumo, FCR Media</p>
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Link to the original article in Start From Here Magazine: <https://www.wellnessorbit.com/files/filemanager/files/Start From Here 2018.PDF>

DR HELENA LASS - EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL BACKGROUND:

- Graduation from **Tallinn English College** 1998;
 - **Obtained Medical Degree** (1998-2004 - [University of Tartu](#));
 - **Residency in Psychiatry** (conducted at **The Psychiatry Clinic** - part of [The North Estonia Medical Centre](#) 2004-2013);
 - Specialist Diploma in **psychiatry** ([University of Tartu](#) 2013);
 - Specialist registration in **psychiatry** (Registered in [Estonian Health Board](#), EU 2013);
 - Practicing **psychiatrist at her own private clinic Unego** (2013 - ongoing);
 - **Founder**, Development Director & Management Board member at **Conscious Initiative PLC** (owner of **Wellness Orbit**) (2015 - ongoing).
- + **Awareness studies:**
- [The Art of Conscious Change™ Courses I-V](#) and practices by awareness teacher [Ingvar Villido](#) (2001 - ongoing);
 - Hundreds of mindfulness-related scientific papers and books.



SCIENTIFIC PAPER:

- *'Developing Intra-Personal Skills as a Proactive Way to Personal Sustainability - The Preventative Side of the Mental Health Equation'*; Dr Helena Lass (Author); published in the book *'Personal Sustainability. Exploring the Far Side of Sustainable Development'* (Edited by Oliver Parodi, Kaidi Tamm); Routledge, London & New York 2018.

WELLNESS ORBIT AND DR. HELENA LASS ARE FEATURED IN:



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