

Values and Stress Management

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Organisations would do well to pay attention to the rising levels of stress reported by so many people in their lives. Stress can and does have a direct impact on performance and experience levels within the work place. Stress is implicated in the development and progression of a broad array of mental and physical health.

Disorders

In New Zealand there are now legal responsibilities that organisations must adhere to in terms of managing the likelihood of stress in the workplace. New medical research suggests that personal values may have a key role in helping people manage their stress levels.

Research from the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Santa Barbara, has determined that self-affirming activities based on the individual's personal values may buffer the adverse effects of stress¹.

This study experimentally investigated whether affirmations of personal values influence physiological and psychological stress responses. Eighty-five participants completed either a value-affirmation task or a control task prior to participating in a laboratory stress challenge. Participants who affirmed their values had significantly lower cortisol responses to stress, compared with control participants. Dispositional self-resources (e.g. traits self esteem and optimism) moderated the relation between value affirmation and psychological stress responses, such that participants who had high self-resources and had affirmed personal values reported the least stress. These findings suggest that reflecting on personal values can keep neuroendocrine and psychological responses to stress at low levels.



To support your staff to identify their own personal values and learn how to affirm them as part of working day and life in general contact us:

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¹ Creswell, J. David, William T. Welch, Shelley E. Taylor, David K. Sherman, Tara L. Gruenewald, Traci Mann. *Affirmation of Personal Values Buffers Neuroendocrine and Psychological Stress Responses*. University of California, Los Angeles, and University of California, Santa Barbara.