



LEARNING DOMAINS

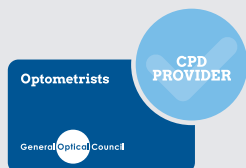


CLINICAL
PRACTICE



PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSIONAL GROUPS



CPD CODE: C-106040

MCQs AVAILABLE ONLINE:

1 September 2023

CLOSING DATE: 8 December 2023

ANSWERS PUBLISHED: January 2024

This CPD session is open to all FBDO members and associate member optometrists. Successful completion of this CPD session will provide you with a certificate of completion of one non-interactive CPD point. The multiple-choice questions (MCQs) are available online only from Friday 1 September 2023. Visit www.abdo.org.uk After member login, scroll down and you will find CPD Online within your personalised dashboard. Six questions will be presented in a random order. Please ensure that your email address and GOC number are up-to-date. The pass mark is 60 per cent.

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Your wellbeing matters

By Sheena Tanna-Shah BScOptom

Wellbeing is essential in allowing us to live our very best lives mentally and physically. The Oxford English Dictionary defines wellbeing as the 'state of being healthy, happy or comfortable'¹. Many things contribute to our wellbeing, including looking after our physical health, checking in on our emotional health, assessing our financial situation, exploring our social wellbeing and how we feel in our place of work. This article will explore some of these areas but primarily focus on workplace wellbeing.

A big part of our life as eyecare professionals is dedicated to delivering excellent service, supporting patients with their needs, making a difference to their daily lives, and working with our colleagues to ensure that best practice and care is given. Eyecare practitioners work in a variety of settings – including High Street practice, hospitals, mobile practices, academic settings and so on. How you feel in your current role, your workplace setting and your relationships with colleagues, will impact on your wellbeing and, as a result, your productivity, motivation and purpose.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently stated in an article that poor working environments, including work overload, long hours, and limited support from colleagues, posed a risk to mental health². The WHO also asserts³ that, globally, an estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year due to depression and anxiety. In the UK alone,

17 million working days were lost in 2021/22 due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety³. In 2021/22, depression or anxiety accounted for 51 per cent of all work-related ill health cases³.

The General Optical Council (GOC) Registrant Workforce and Perceptions Survey 2022⁴ found that 51 per cent of respondents were not satisfied in their role; various factors contributed to this, including not coping with workload and providing patients with a sufficient level of care.

As a profession, it is essential that we look at causes of stress in the workplace. It is also vital for individuals to acknowledge their wellbeing, get support and take steps to ensure their mental wellness is at the forefront.

We will now look at some of the areas to consider when looking at workplace wellbeing.

PURPOSE IN THE WORKPLACE

It's always important to question your workplace purpose to ensure you are still enjoying it and giving it 100 per cent. Very often, when we do the same thing for a number of years, it can feel sedentary and routine. Boredom can set in as we begin to see going to work as a necessity to 'pay the bills' rather a place that fulfils a passion and brings us joy. If you notice yourself feeling a lack of joy at work, it is important to question why that might be – and see what steps you can take to get you to a place of motivation again.

SOME OF THE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- *Am I happy in my role?*
- *What do I enjoy about my current role?*
- *What could I do to challenge myself further?*
- *Is there any further training I can undertake?*
- *What areas would I like to progress to?*
- *Is there something different I am interested in doing?*

It's important to consider the above questions to ensure what you are doing is still right for you. If you are doing a job that you don't enjoy and that you don't look forward to then this will reflect on your performance, your relationships with your colleagues and ultimately your patients even if this isn't intentional.

Go back to your why. Why did you choose this career pathway, this role that you are currently in? Your 'why' is always going to be your driver and motivator. What interested you in this role and how

did you think you could make a difference? We may have the same reason as we started out or we may change our thoughts and interests over time and that's okay. If it does change, it is important to acknowledge this.

CONTINUED LEARNING

All GOC-registered eyecare practitioners must undertake continued professional development, however, it is important to really utilise all the amazing information and resources available to you. Really take a look at where you are now, and which areas you would like to work on to enhance your knowledge. You may be really good at something, but what can you do to become *great* at it?

When you work with other people, it is a good idea to get a 360° feedback form: ask others to tell you your strengths and areas you might improve on. This might not always make easy reading, but is a great way to gain a different perspective. There may be times when you are aware you need to enhance your skills but

because of limiting beliefs, such as not feeling confident to ask questions, feeling like you may be the only one not knowing something, or not even knowing where to get support from, could all hold you back.

This may lead to further loss of confidence, lack of motivation and enjoying your role even less. Remember: if you are thinking or feeling unsure about something, there is a very high chance you are not the only one. Keep asking questions, keep learning and keep going.

There is a wide range of learning available, with in-person and remote webinars, workshops and peer discussions available. Explore what is on offer, and remember that everyone starts from somewhere, no-one is an expert overnight – and even then, learning is continuous. Information, guidelines, technology and equipment is always changing and therefore we must do everything we can to stay on top of the very best knowledge to be able to deliver the very best care.

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Working with colleagues isn't always easy and it can impact your wellbeing and your day. Every individual is different with their own thoughts and ways of working, and sometimes these will be different to your own.

Communication is vital when you feel a relationship with a team member is impacting your work and wellbeing. Instead of ignoring it, hoping things get better, feeling frustrated or unhappy, take time out with the individual and communicate how their actions may be making you feel. Talking and listening are important here, as they may not have any idea that this was how they were making you feel. Give examples of where their actions may have impacted you, listen to their side and see what steps you could both take in moving forward more positively.

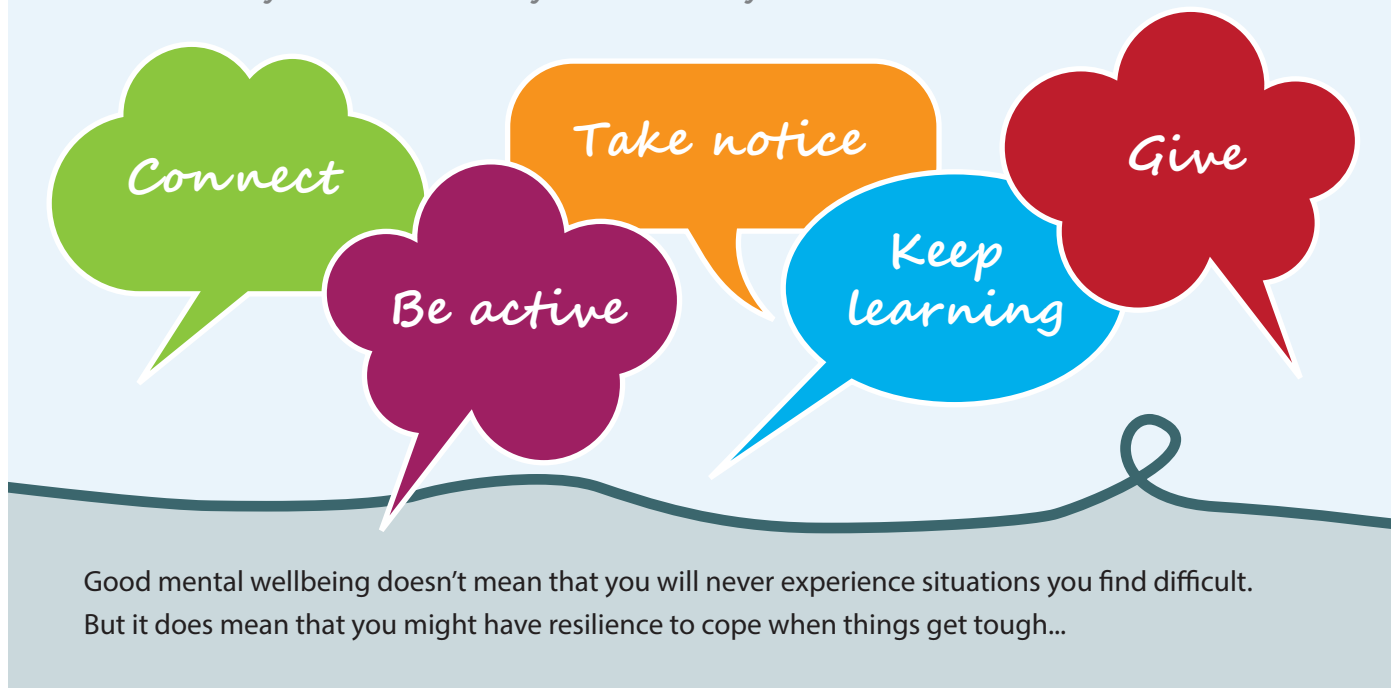
It may not always be easy to approach someone to communicate your feelings; you may want to have someone else present, talk to a line manager first or seek support from someone higher up. Take the support you require but it is important to have the conversation. There may not always be straightforward solutions, but working on doing everything you can for your own wellbeing is important.



The five ways to wellbeing

Evidence says there are five ways to look after your mind...

FIGURE 1: The five ways to wellbeing
(source: MIND)



APPRECIATION AT WORK

It is a natural expectation to feel valued and appreciated by the work you put in from time to time. When you feel valued as part of the team, for the service you provide, for the care and support you give every day despite the chaos, it gives you the lift to carry on. A simple 'thank you', 'well done', or acknowledgement of any sort can make you feel positive, motivated and supported.

Seeing patients back-to-back, ensuring each one has the best consultation and examination, keeping on top of referrals, training, change in products and technology, and often not even having time to sip water or take a rest break, can become very stressful leading to burnout. If we don't feel supported at work then the day feels even more challenging and we may begin to have negative perceptions of our role and workplace.

If you feel you are not being valued then, again, communication is vital in letting team members know how you feel. It may feel uncomfortable but something that needs to be addressed, otherwise the issue will never be resolved. Consider ways in which you would like to feel valued or supported and give suggestions as part of an action plan.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS WE CAN ALL DO TO SUPPORT OUR WELLBEING AT WORK INCLUDING:

- **BEING PUNCTUAL.** Getting to work on time means you have time to set up, check in with the team, look at your diary, etc. Going to work late, or being rushed, means the chances are you will begin the day flustered, stressed and overwhelmed.
- **STAYING HYDRATED.** It's easy to see patients back-to-back and forget to drink water. To stay focused and energised, drinking fluids is a must.
- **TAKING A LUNCH BREAK AND SWITCHING OFF.** Lunch breaks can sometimes be seen as a time for catching up on referrals, or finishing off other work, but use this time to step away from the role, have a mental break and a change of scenery. Go for a walk, listen to a podcast or music, read a magazine or book, and eat some nourishing food. A good quality break can leave you feeling refreshed and ready to take on the afternoon.

- **GET TO KNOW YOUR TEAM.** How often do you interact with your team, check in on them, ask how their weekend was, or value their work? Developing good relationships with colleagues can really make your day feel more positive.

As much as various factors in the workplace can impact on our wellbeing, there are lots of things we can also do outside of work for our own mental and physical health and wellbeing. The mental health charity MIND has developed 'five ways to wellbeing'⁵, which may be a helpful place to start managing your wellbeing (**Figure 1 - above**).

1. Connect

Speak to and meet up with friends and family, share your thoughts and ask them about their day. Do an activity together, go for a walk or meet for a coffee. Connecting in person can really support wellbeing by giving us that sense of comfort and belonging.

2. Be Active

Keep exercise simple, do-able and fun. A five-minute stretch in the morning, a walk during your lunch, an online workout video, to organising a sporting event with

your work team or friends can all help support you being active, fitter and healthier.

3. Take notice

Being mindful of your present moment and enjoying it. In your practice, maybe you can get a small plant to enjoy, enjoy a cup of tea without checking emails, or have a walk in nature distraction free by turning your phone off. Notice people around you, look at their body language and tone, does it align with their words? Do you notice anything different with your colleagues? Are they quieter than usual? Seem distracted? By noticing our own wellbeing, we can be more empathetic towards other people's wellbeing.

4. Keep learning

This can really help boost your confidence and self-esteem. Learning new skills at work through CPD, taking on a new hobby, doing puzzles and reading books can really help you feel good. When you achieve or accomplish something big or small, it releases dopamine which helps you feel inspired and motivated.

5. Give

Research showed that doing an act of kindness once a week for six weeks increased wellbeing⁶. Whenever we can, giving to others in various ways can help make us feel good, knowing we are making a small difference to someone else. Buying a cup of coffee for someone, opening a door, smiling, checking in your neighbour, sending a text to check in with someone to sharing your favourite book can all help in the art of giving.

Working on your mental and physical health is important in allowing you to live your very best life and give your best to your patients and team. If you are struggling with your emotions, going through stressful situations, not feeling energetic or have physical health issues, it will impact your working day. You may dread going into work, you may not be in the right frame of mind to make clear decisions, your relationships with colleagues may become strained, and this will escalate if not acknowledged and supported.

RESOURCES

Mental health resources if you would like support:

- **NHS website:** www.nhs.uk/mental-health
- **IAPT self-referral via NHS website:** www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/nhs-talking-therapies
- **Samaritans:** Telephone 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/
- **MIND charity:** www.mind.org.uk
- **ABDO Health and Wellbeing Hub:** www.abdobenefits.co.uk/a_/Wellbeing.htm
- **Association of Optometrists peer support line:** www.aop.org.uk/advice-and-support/health-and-wellbeing/peer-support-line

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LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS CPD ARTICLE

DOMAIN: Professionalism

13.5: *Reflect of your personal wellbeing and how this may influence your professional performance and behaviour.*

13.7: *Understand the need for professional colleagues to foster a supportive work environment in the best interests of patients.*

DOMAIN: Clinical Practice

5.2: *Effectively plan to undertake continuing professional development that is inspiring and relevant to your personal practice and supports development of your scope in areas of interest.*

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