



INTERACTION

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WELLBEING: DOESN'T ANYONE CARE ANYMORE?

Interaction Opinion – Brigid Hardy

Life can be complex, uncertain and sometimes, just damn scary. The dynamic hustle of our corporate lives, while at times deeply satisfying, can also mean that our mental, physical, and emotional health take a back seat to the relentless pursuit of success, achievement and material wealth. But does this mean that nobody cares about wellbeing anymore? The answer is more complex than a simple "yes" or "no."

The Wellbeing Paradox

The paradox of our time is that, while many of us are more informed about wellbeing than ever before, there is also an undeniable imbalance in how this knowledge is put into practice. We have an abundance of information on healthy living, mindfulness, exercise, and self-care at our fingertips, yet many people still struggle to prioritise their wellbeing.

While we are successfully breaking down some unhelpful paradigms, many people still feel the pressure to keep up appearances at the expense of their own mental and physical health. This can lead to a sense of isolation and the belief that they are the only ones who are not "living their best lives." In reality, they might be sacrificing their wellbeing in the pursuit of a curated image.

Why Wellbeing Matters

Wellbeing encompasses not only physical health but also mental and emotional health. It involves finding a balance between work and leisure, connecting with others, managing stress, and nurturing a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Neglecting one's wellbeing can lead to burnout, anxiety, depression, and various physical health issues. Thus, caring for our wellbeing is not a luxury but a necessity for leading a meaningful and sustainable life.

Society's Role

The responsibility for promoting wellbeing does not fall solely on the individual. Society and its various institutions also play a crucial role in creating an environment that supports wellbeing. Governments, corporations, schools, and communities have a part to play in fostering a culture that values and prioritizes the wellbeing of its citizens.

1. Workplace Wellbeing: Employers can create workplaces that encourage work-life balance, provide mental health resources, and offer flexible schedules. A healthy work environment not only benefits employees but also leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

2. Education: Schools can incorporate programs that teach students about emotional intelligence, stress management, and healthy living. Educating the younger generation about the importance of wellbeing will help them develop lifelong habits that prioritise self-care.

3. Government Policies: Governments can implement policies that support the physical and mental health of their citizens, such as ensuring access to affordable healthcare and promoting green spaces and physical activity.

4. Community Support: Communities can provide spaces and opportunities for people to connect and socialise, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

Individual Responsibility.

While external factors play a significant role in promoting wellbeing, individuals themselves must also take responsibility for their own health and happiness. It's essential to be mindful of the choices we make in our daily lives and how they impact our overall wellbeing. Here are a few steps individuals can take to prioritise their own wellbeing:

Self-awareness: Reflect on your values, needs, and priorities. What truly matters to you? Identifying these can help you make choices that align with your wellbeing.

Self-care: Make time for activities that nourish your body, mind, and soul. Whether it's exercise, meditation, surfing or spending time with loved ones, self-care is not selfish but essential.

Boundaries: Learn to set boundaries in both your personal and professional life. Saying "no" when necessary and protecting your time and energy is crucial for your wellbeing.

Seek help: If you're struggling with your mental or physical health, don't hesitate to seek professional help. There's no shame in asking for support when needed.

Leadership and Wellbeing: Setting the Standard

Leaders, whether in corporate boardrooms, community organisations, or within a family, have a profound impact on the wellbeing of those they lead. As a leader, your responsibilities extend beyond

the typical concerns of achieving goals, making decisions, and guiding your team. They also encompass the welfare of the individuals under your leadership.

1. Setting the Tone: Leaders serve as role models, and their behaviours and attitudes significantly influence those around them. When leaders prioritise their wellbeing, they send a clear message that taking care of one's mental and physical health is not just acceptable but encouraged. By demonstrating a commitment to self-care, leaders can inspire their teams to do the same.

2. Creating a Supportive Environment: Leaders are responsible for fostering a workplace or community environment that is conducive to wellbeing. This means recognising the signs of burnout, stress, or mental health challenges among team members and addressing them proactively. Encouraging open communication and providing resources for mental health support can make a substantial difference.

3. Work-Life Balance: Leaders can influence the work culture by promoting a healthy work-life balance. This may include allowing flexible work arrangements, encouraging employees to take leave, and setting reasonable expectations for workload and deadlines. A focus on balance rather than constant productivity can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the team.

4. Empathy and Support: Leaders must be empathetic and supportive of their team members' individual needs and challenges. Taking the time to understand the personal situations and struggles of those under your leadership is a critical aspect of promoting wellbeing. This support can make a significant difference in reducing stress and promoting a positive atmosphere.

5. Growth and Development: Leaders should provide opportunities for personal and professional growth. Encouraging team members to pursue further education, develop new skills, and set personal goals can contribute to their overall sense of wellbeing. When people feel that they are growing and advancing, it can boost their self-esteem and motivation.

6. Recognition and Appreciation: Leaders should also remember the importance of recognising and appreciating the efforts of their team. Regular acknowledgment of achievements, no matter how small, can boost morale and contribute to a positive atmosphere. Feeling valued and appreciated is an essential aspect of wellbeing.

7. Conflict Resolution: Addressing conflicts and challenges within the team promptly and constructively is another critical responsibility of leaders. Unresolved disputes can lead to stress and tension, which can negatively impact the wellbeing of team members. Leaders should mediate conflicts and create an atmosphere where open dialogue is encouraged.

8. Wellbeing Programs: Many organisations now offer wellbeing programs to support their employees' physical and mental health. As a leader, you can champion these initiatives and ensure they are integrated into the organisation's culture. This might include offering resilience workshops, team building, appreciation of diversity, coaching and development programs, access to mental health resources, or promoting physical fitness programs.

In conclusion, the question of whether anyone cares about wellbeing anymore is not about the existence of care but the balance of attention and action. Wellbeing is a collective responsibility that involves individuals, leaders and society at large. It's not a trend or a passing fad but a fundamental aspect of a healthy and meaningful life. So, let's not lose sight of our wellbeing amidst the noise of our busy lives and the allure of external expectations. It's high time we all care, act, and prioritise our wellbeing for the sake of a healthier, happier, and more fulfilling life. Leaders, too, play a crucial role in this endeavour, as they are responsible not only for achieving results but also for the welfare of those they lead. By prioritising wellbeing, creating a supportive environment, and setting the standard for self-care, leaders can contribute to the overall health and happiness of their teams. Remember, leadership that cares about wellbeing not only achieves success but also fosters a culture of thriving and fulfillment.