



Presentation

Kristen Hamling: Saturday 6th June

Title of Presentation: Emergency Wellbeing: The impact of wellbeing in the emergency services.

Presenter Name: Kristen Hamling

Abstract:

We introduce the idea that it is better to enhance the positive wellbeing of emergency service workers (Police Officers, Firefighters and Paramedics) than it is to prevent their illhealth. Currently the prevailing 'wellbeing' programs in the emergency services aim to prevent illness and injury associated with trauma exposure (Stinchcomb, 2004). This despite evidence that improving positive wellbeing yields additional health benefits beyond what can be achieved by the prevention of illness or injury (Keyes, 2002).

Presently there is a gap between the emergency services approach to wellbeing, which is pathogenic focused (i.e., prevention of illhealth) and salutogenic models (i.e., promotion of good health), which are recommended and used by health agencies and governments internationally.

This presentation discusses the need for a shift in focus of health and wellbeing in the emergency services. The presenter provides a brief overview of how the Design Thinking process will be used to understand and promote wellbeing in emergency service workers.

Presenter Biography:

Kristen Hamling has worked as a Trauma Psychologist for 15 years, with a range of organisations, including the emergency services and Australian Defence Force. A general theme that emerged for her during her work was that the severity of trauma exposure did not always directly correlate with how adverse a person's trauma symptoms were. A range of other unrelated factors (e.g., supportive workplace practices) appeared to impact the trauma response as well. Kristen knew that if workplaces behaved differently then people would not be as affected by trauma or stress. Frustrated in treating symptoms, illness, and injuries she decided to stop work and pursue a PhD. Kristen is currently investigating more proactive and strategic ways to buffer people against stress and trauma to reduce the impact of trauma exposure when it does occur.

<http://www.positivepsychology.org.nz/conference-2015.html>