

Person-centred approaches to mental health - adding to a Career Practitioner's Toolbox.

Linda Kearley¹

¹Swinburne University of Technology, ²Lifeline

Biography:

Linda is a qualified career practitioner who has worked in the VET sector for nearly 20 years. She currently manages Swinburne's Skills and Job Centres - an initiative of the Victorian government. A series of events in Linda's life led her to become a Lifeline volunteer. The hands-on experience at Lifeline inspired her to study a Master of Counselling. Linda is a past member of the CDAA Learning and Development (e-learning) committee. Currently, Linda is an active participant in the local community as a board member of the OELLEN in Melbourne and a member of the City of Maroondah Business Advisory Committee.

Career guidance assists individuals to reduce stress-related and anxiety provoking effects associated with job loss, career transition, career uncertainty or unsatisfying work that may challenge their mental wellness.

Mission Australia conducts Australia's largest annual survey of young people (15–19) to understand the issues that most concern them. In 2018, mental health was listed as the number one issue in every Australian state and territory. The % of young people identifying mental health as an issue of national importance has doubled in the past three years rising to 43% in 2018.

One in five (20%) Australians aged 16-85 experience a mental illness in any year. There are more than eight deaths by suicide in Australia each day and it is estimated that as many as 30 people attempt to end their lives. How equipped are we as Career Practitioners to work with our younger clients when almost half of them have concerns about their mental health or our older clients, where 20% may be living with a mental illness?

Clients present “all of themselves” for career guidance. A qualified practitioner uses a range of vocational assessment tools that consider an individual's values, strengths, talents, and passions to integrate career with the “whole person”, however understanding how to approach clients' mental health is not generally part of a Career Practitioner's training.

At the conclusion of this presentation Career Practitioners will be able to:

- Integrate existing narrative career counselling skills to start conversations about mental health
- Recognise signs and symptoms of commonly diagnosed mental health problems
- Identify professional development opportunities
- Leave the presentation with ideas, tools and strategies that are “real and ready” for use
- Understand the importance of early intervention