



**LIKE MINDS, LIKE MINE**  
Whakaitia te Whakawhiu i te Tangata



COUNTERING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION ASSOCIATED WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

# EMPLOYMENT

## what you do makes the difference

**Work is an activity central to the lives and wellbeing of most of us. Unfortunately, for people with experience of mental illness, enjoying the benefits of work can be undermined by stigma and discrimination.**

### **Mental health is everybody's business**

Any one of us can experience mental illness at some time in our lives. This could include yourself, your staff, your customers or clients. Most people who experience a mental illness recover

and it is discrimination, rather than mental illness that is likely to affect productivity and staff morale.

### **Discrimination has damaging results**

Discrimination in the workplace can negatively impact on a person's life and can take many forms, from stereotyping to being treated differently or unfairly. It can result in exclusion from jobs, loss of promotion or poor remuneration. It can also restrict access to certain occupations and to training. It may also mean that employers miss out on or lose trained, skilled and valuable staff.

### **Diversity brings benefits**

Looking beyond a person's mental illness makes good business sense – increasing the diversity and skill of your staff pool means improved service and satisfied customers. It enables you to employ the best person for the job and develop flexible employment policies for everyone.





“Aubrey challenged us all the time to think about how we could help others and having someone with a mental illness in your workplace teaches you a whole lot of things you don’t learn in any university, or learn from any books. It teaches you about tolerance, patience and empathy and support – and about looking after people, and at the end of the day I believe the greatest resource in any organisation is its people”.

Dame Susan Devoy, Like Minds, Like Mine television campaign

Remember, some of the most inspirational people in the world have experienced mental illness including John Cleese, Albert Einstein, Audrey Hepburn and New Zealanders Denise L’Estrange Corbet, Mahinarangi Tocker and John Kirwan.

The best person for the job might just have a mental illness.

## We all have rights and responsibilities

Under the Human Rights Act, employers are obliged by law to make reasonable accommodations for employees in regards to any illness or disability.

This is not special treatment. In fact many employees need some changes at

work to help them perform to their full potential.

A parent who works full time may need time off to collect a sick child from school; an office worker with lower back pain may need changes to their workstation.

Likewise, changes such as flexible working hours, may be required for people who have experience of mental illness.

## A workplace that doesn’t discriminate

Providing an inclusive workplace will benefit you and your employees. Some of the actions employers can take include:

- Not discriminating due to illness or disability.
- Providing disability awareness training in the workplace.
- Understanding that taking an anti-discrimination stand does not mean you cannot be honest and direct with employees about their performance.
- Taking a flexible but consistent approach to staff illness. Recognising that arrangements that suit one person may not necessarily suit another.
- Having a workplace plan for all types of health emergencies, including mental health.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This resource was produced by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand on behalf of the Ministry of Health’s Like Minds, Like Mine programme.

For more information on countering stigma and discrimination, or the Like Minds, Like Mine programme, visit – [www.likeminds.org.nz](http://www.likeminds.org.nz)

For information about mental health and mental illness:

### MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION RESOURCE AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Tel: 09 300 7010 Fax: 09 300 7020  
Email: [resource@mentalhealth.org.nz](mailto:resource@mentalhealth.org.nz)  
Website: [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/likemindslikemine](https://www.facebook.com/likemindslikemine)

## GOOD WORKPLACE POLICY AND PRACTICE

If you would like more information, advice or resources on good workplace policy and practice and the benefits of a mentally healthy workplace, contact –

### WORKING WELL

Information and training on how to create and maintain workplaces that support the mental health and wellbeing of employees and their families.

Website: [www.workingwell.co.nz](http://www.workingwell.co.nz)

### EEO TRUST - Equal Employment Opportunities

Tel: 09 525 3023 Fax: 09 525 7076

Email: [library@eeotrust.org.nz](mailto:library@eeotrust.org.nz)

Website: [www.eeotrust.org.nz](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz)

### WORKWISE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

Employment services connecting people with

experience of mental illness and employers

Website: [www.workwisetrust.co.nz](http://www.workwisetrust.co.nz)

### THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Tel: 09 309 0874 Fax: 09 377 3593

Freephone: 0800 496 877

Website: [www.hrc.co.nz](http://www.hrc.co.nz)

#### Local Like Minds, Like Mine contact details:

