



PHOENIX TRANSFORMATIONAL SERVICES

A Work Health and Well-Being Toolkit

Surviving and Thriving
at Work

By Dr Rachel Perkins OBE



Forward

‘Paul Dorrington (Phoenix Transformational Services Founder) was one of the first members of my team who, in early 2000, implemented and pioneered the IPS model of evidence based vocational rehabilitation into NHS acute adult psychiatric services in London. He was not just professional, he helped create the profession that is now universally recognised as the most effective model of its kind. Paul worked with people with severe and enduring mental health conditions and other complex needs including people with dual diagnosis of addictions, proving time and time again that helping people to get a job, build a career or set up a business helps people rebuild lives of meaning beyond adversity. I am very excited to see Paul expanding his knowledge, skills and services in his own business to serve people and businesses around the world. Added to his experience of overcoming the extreme adversity of his own mental health issues and addictions from a young age, Paul quite literally walks his talk and brings a passion to his work that cannot be quantified in words, but is repeatedly demonstrated with his results for his clients and the business with whom he works’



Dr Rachel E. Perkins
BA, MPhil (Clinical Psychology), PhD, OBE

Forward

By Paul Dorrington

In early 2000, I joined the UK National Health Service initiative to develop evidence-based, supported employment services in London. It was there that I met Dr Rachel Perkins OBE, and during this time I was deeply inspired by her openness in regards to disclosing her own mental health issues, her ground-breaking insights and activism for equality and human rights for people who experience mental ill health.

After directly experiencing the power of supported employment to overcome my own mental health condition, I was hooked. This in turn inspired me to devote my life to a profession that quite literally uses work to help people build and rebuild their working lives with meaning and purpose.

I spent the subsequent years working with organisations and businesses all over London, helping their employees to survive and thrive at work and to overcome or manage the adversity of experiencing severe and enduring mental ill health.

No longer were people too sick to work - they could manage their health and their work together.

The teams that I led went on to successfully support many hundreds of people back into the workplace, either by getting new jobs or starting businesses, or holding onto the jobs or businesses they already had.

Forward

By using Surviving and Thriving methodology and toolkits, we were able to help people take back control of their working lives, develop a healthy work-life balance and recognise unique self-management strategies, whilst at the same time work with their managers, occupational health and human resources. This in turn would encourage the integration of well-being strategies into their daily working lives and demands, while navigating the challenges associated with clinical and psychological support.

I have supported a wide variety of occupations from CEO's and construction workers, police officers, to doctors, nurses, accountants, administrators and all levels in between; time and time again people across all industries have demonstrated that with the right strategies and support, people can successfully gain, retain and sustain meaningful employment.

When I began using Dr Rachel Perkins' Surviving and Thriving and Going Back to Work After a Period of Absence toolkits, I quickly realised how universal these toolkits were. Not only were they applicable to people rebuilding their lives after mental ill health, they were applicable to anyone wanting to build a mentally healthy working life.

They provide a framework for integrated work-life balance strategies for anyone wanting to build a mentally healthy working life, while supporting managers and leaders to collaborate in creative ways to support their employees with a healthy working life and well-being, which naturally has a positive and creative impact on their performance.

My vision when building my own company, Phoenix Transformation Services, was to use what I have learned over the years to help integrate preventative strategies, tools and methods into workplace culture and staff across organisations, and preventatively rather than reactively support people in achieving a mentally healthy working life.

I am proud to launch Surviving and Thriving toolkits - which have proven successful in my public service - to now help businesses and organisations integrate these toolkits and strategies.

I want to thank the former Royal Association for Disability Rights for their permission to adapt and use these toolkits for the businesses and individuals I work with, in order to develop mentally healthy working practices and well-being strategies.

I also want to give a special thanks to their author for permission to use your toolkits in Phoenix Transformational Services, my long-time mentor and friend, Dr Rachel Perkins OBE. You believed in me when others didn't.

I will endeavour to use these toolkits with the people and businesses I work with. You have inspired thousands in the UK and beyond to understand that recovering from the most extreme adversity associated with mental ill health and building a meaningful working life is not only possible, it is a reality.

Paul Dorrington
Founder of Phoenix Transformational Services

A Work Health and Well-Being Toolkit

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About Phoenix Transformational Services

Phoenix Transformational Services (PTS) was founded by Paul Dorrington in 2014, and works with individuals and businesses to develop a mentally healthy culture and practice, so they can have a high performing and resilient workforce.

PTS provides:

- Professional personal performance and corporate coaching
- Specialist mental health vocational rehabilitation and recovery services
- Staff mental health 'Surviving and Thriving at Work' corporate workshops
- Business consultancy and mentoring to integrate bespoke vocational rehabilitation strategies and 'Surviving and Thriving at Work' toolkits

This often involves working with businesses and employers to empower them to support and help employee's recovery by developing vocational rehabilitation plans. This helps managers and internal support structures become confident in supporting people to successfully sustain and retain work, by developing surviving and thriving plans and toolkits tailored to the needs of both employee and employer.

At PTS we believe including and supporting managers and leaders in this process, as it greatly increases success in helping employees survive and thrive in work, often transforming the way people manage and empower employees to self-manage and use support structures with transparency, compassion and authenticity.

About the Author

Dr Rachel Perkins OBE pioneered successful programmes enabling people experiencing mental health problems to achieve sustainable employment, before applying that knowledge to everyone in the world of work. She led an Independent Review for Government into mental health and employment in 2009, was named Mind Champion of the Year in 2010, is a member of Equality 2025 (advising Government on disability issues) and has supported numerous health, voluntary and housing services to enable people facing multiple disadvantage to lead fulfilling lives. She has written many books, articles and chapters and spoken nationally and internationally on health, employment, recovery and participation. Her work stems from her perspectives as a psychologist, an employer and someone living with a mental health condition.

Introduction

Work can be satisfying and rewarding, and appropriate employment is good for you, but we also know that it can be stressful. Promoting health and well-being at work is good for the individual and good for business. It is a responsibility shared between employees and their managers, but there are no set formulas. Everyone is different, and this toolkit offers an easy framework to devise individual plans to survive and thrive at work.

Why it matters to employees

Feeling in control of your working life, building strategies for fulfillment both at work and beyond work, make life better. By devising your own plan to survive working life and to thrive in your career, you can gain satisfaction from work and beat the negative side of stress. You can also prevent – or manage – the difficulties that occur in all our working lives, whether that is about workload, tricky work relationships, or difficult customers! You can do this on your own, but you can also involve your line manager in the process so that they know the best ways of assisting you to make the most of your job.

Why it matters to employers

This toolkit can help improve morale and well-being, increase high performance working and may reduce sickness absence. Developed in the demanding context of health services, it enables individuals to increase control over their working lives. This can reduce stress – because a factor consistently predictive of stress at work is a lack of control. This tool places employees in the driving seat. Active employee involvement also contributes to high performance working – closing the gap between people’s skills and their actual motivation and use of those skills in practice. It also enables employees facing particular challenges – like caring responsibilities, health issues or physical impairments – to plan the best way to manage these in a work context. And uniquely it enables employees to discuss their strategies with their line manager – thus opening up conversations that may be difficult for either party to initiate. The toolkit provides a structured, straightforward way of enabling both employees and managers to communicate and plan for well-being and success.

Origins and Context

Where the ideas come from

Over the decades, many initiatives have started out with a specific target of people with particular health or disability-related needs – and then gone mainstream, as we found they were useful for everyone. In 1899 HG Wells imagined a strange future where doors would open automatically as you approached them. Seventy years later automatic doors were introduced as a disability access feature – yet now we experience them as a convenience to us all, as we move in and out of buildings and transport hubs with luggage, buggies and more. More recently Microsoft chief Bill Gates stated that voice recognition software, pioneered to help blind people access computers, was easier for most people than typing. Text messaging, so helpful to deaf people, has totally changed the way young – and many older – people communicate.

The ‘surviving and thriving at work’ toolkit was first developed to enable people with health conditions (including stress and mental health problems) to prosper in their working lives – to manage the challenges they face and discuss with their manager how adjustments and supports from them could help. It then became obvious that we all feel and work better if we can agree adjustments at work – leaving early one night to attend a course or receiving regular feedback and encouragement – so we adapted the toolkit to be useful to everyone in the world of work.

The Context

Work flexibilities that make a difference are often very straightforward, routine measures – like line managers asking about any challenges and helping individuals to think through solutions. In some situations people may want formally to ‘request’ flexible working – and the Government plans to give all employees this right (rather than only parents of young or disabled children as originally passed into law).

This universal approach matches employer good practice: for instance, BT has found it most effective simply to ask all new recruits whether there is anything that would enable them to work to their best.

The Equality Act 2010 (like the Disability Discrimination Act before it) expects employers to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to enable ‘disabled people’ to work (that is, anyone with a long-term physical or mental impairment that has a substantial adverse impact on day to day activities). Employers only have to do what is ‘reasonable’: for instance, a small business would not be expected to put in costly equipment (and there may be government support available).

Other relevant legislation includes the Health and Safety at Work Act; and Dame Carol Black’s work on health, work and well-being has generated both policy and good practice materials.

How To Use This Toolkit

The toolkit contains a number of sections, but every one of us is different so all our plans need to be individual to us. You may wish to use a different format and/or only use some of the sections we have suggested – that is fine!

- Some people may prefer to develop a plan to manage the stresses and strains of work on their own. However, line managers share responsibility for the health and well-being of their staff. If you want help and support from your manager then it is important to discuss with them the ways in which they can best support your well-being and performance at work.
- If you do create a plan with your manager then it should be confidential between the two of you and should not appear in your staff record.
- Prevention is better than cure - it is usually best to prepare plans in advance rather than wait until problems arise. However, these plans should be living documents that you review regularly and update in the light of experience. Supervision and appraisal meetings offer a good opportunity to develop and review plans.
- In general the more specific you can be about what you will do and what your manager can do to help the more likely your plan is to be successful.

- If you are a business owner or entrepreneur, how could you adapt this toolkit to your lifestyle? And if so and you are your own manager, could you use the managers section in this toolkit to manage yourself with the same care and compassion that you expect others to have with you?

Think creatively in the modern age

- Could you include plans for working from home and remote working?
- Could you include time to touch base with colleagues via Skype, Zoom or phone?
- If you are working remotely, could you include end of day catch ups with your manager or colleagues to offload and reflect on the challenges of the day?
- If you are working remotely, could you schedule down time, rest or take exercise breaks and get some fresh air?
- If you are receiving therapy or treatments in relation to mental or physical ill health, can you include specific advice from your clinicians or schedule time for therapy or medical appointments or picking up prescriptions.

Part 1: A Work Health And Well-Being Promotion Plan

It is not easy to juggle the demands of your job and the demands of other things outside work that are important to you. A health and well-being promotion plan helps you to strike a balance and remain on an even keel at work.

It might be useful to think about:

1 The things that are important to you in your life outside work (like sports, hobbies and spending time with your partner or children) and when you are going to make time for them.

2 Things you need to do every day or week to keep yourself feeling on top of things

For example:

- Get up in time to have a proper breakfast.
- Have a lie in at least once a week
- Take a lunch break out of the workplace
- Get some exercise every day
- Allot a set time to answer e-mails and write up notes each day at work
- Have a 'treat' – something to look forward to – every day/week

3 Things your manager can do to help you stay on an even keel at work

For example:

- Let me have Wednesday evenings off for my yoga class
- Help me to prioritise when I have too much to do
- Say 'thank you' when I have done something he/she asked
- Encourage me to tell him/her when I am having difficulties
- Recognise my need to pray
- Make any adjustments I need because of a health condition, impairment or responsibilities outside work

My Work Health And Well-Being Promotion Plan

**The things that are important to me in my life outside work
(and when I will do them)**

**The things I need to do every day or
week to keep myself on an even keel**

**The things that my manager can do to
help me stay on an even keel at work**

Part 2: A Work Health And Well-Being First Aid Kit

It is almost inevitable that we will sometimes feel upset, discouraged, hopeless, angry, worried or stressed out at work. We have first aid boxes for minor physical cuts and bruises - this is a first aid kit for the emotional cuts and bruises.

It might be useful to think about:

1 Things you can do while you are actually at work when you feel upset, discouraged, hopeless, angry, anxious or stressed out

For example:

- Have a cup of coffee or tea
- Talk to a friend on the phone at lunch-time
- Get out of the situation for a while (maybe by going out for a break or even just going to the toilet for a bit of peace and quiet)
- Think about something you are looking forward to

2 Things you can do after work so that you don't take the troubles of the day home with you

For example:

- Talk through the events of the day with colleagues before you go home
- Take a walk – get some fresh air
- Go to the gym - get some exercise
- Listen to music
- Read a book or newspaper
- Play your favourite computer game
- Have a long hot bath

My Work Health And Well-Being First Aid Kit

Things I can do to get myself back on an even keel if I feel upset, discouraged, hopeless, angry, worried or stressed out at work

Things I can do after work so that I don't take the troubles of the day home with me

Part 3: Plan For Managing Things That Get To You At Work

There will always be things that happen at work that knock us off balance and wear us down at work: things that make us feel angry, hurt, upset, discouraged, anxious, stressed out. If we can identify these, we can work out how to stop them getting to us too much.

1 They might be things relating to your job and things your colleagues and managers do like:

- A customer gets angry when we are busting a gut to help them
- Someone complains about our work
- A colleague promises to do something and fails to do it
- We do something we have been asked to do and no-one says 'thank you'
- Colleagues or managers act in a way that seems unfair

2 They might be things that happen outside work which have a detrimental impact on you at work like:

- Having a row with our partner
- Money problems
- A loved pet getting sick or dying

For each thing that knocks you off balance, it might be useful to think about:

1 Things that you can do for yourself that help stop what has happened getting to you too much. There may be things in your 'first aid kit' that would help.

For example:

- Tell myself that the person was cross because of what had happened to them and that they did not really mean to upset me
- Talk to my colleagues or my manager about how I am feeling
- Do some breathing exercises
- Arrange a treat for myself after work

2 Things you can ask your manager to do to help you to get back on an even keel

For example:

- Ask me how things are going when he/she notices I am not looking myself (remember to say how they will know)
- In one to one meetings, ask me about jobs I am finding challenging, empathise with the difficulties I am having and help me to think of ways forward
- Make a point of congratulating me for work I have done well

Plan For Managing Things That Get To Me At Work

| Things that make me feel angry, hurt, upset, discouraged, anxious, stressed out at work | What I will do to stop it getting to me too much when these things happen | What my manager can do to help me |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
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| | | |

Part 4: Plan For What To Do When You Are Not Feeling 100% - Having an Off Day

Everyone has their off days - if we can spot that it is a bad day and nip things in the bud then we can stop everything from escalating and going from bad to worse.

First, it is helpful to think about how you will spot when you are having an off day – those tell-tale signs – thoughts, feelings and behaviours – that you are not feeling 100%.

For example:

- Ruminating on something that has happened – going over and over it
- Finding it unusually hard to get up and get going in the morning
- Feeling agitated and unable to relax
- Getting irritable and oversensitive
- Feeling restless and unable to relax

Then it might be useful to think about:

1 Things you can do to help you cope and get back on an even keel.

There may be things in your 'first aid kit' that would help'.

For example:

- Plan something nice for the evening – this might be something small like a long hot bath, or my favourite TV programme
- Talk to a close friend or colleague
- Do something I love – walking in nature, gardening, seeing a great film...
- Plan my next holiday

2 Things that your manager can do to help you get back on top of things

For example:

- Try to notice when I am not my usual self and ask if there is anything they can do to help
- Encourage me to approach him/her when I am having problems ... and respond to my requests for help
- Help me prioritise what really needs to be done today
- Encourage me to leave work on time

My Plan For What To Do When I Am Having an Off Day - Not Feeling 100%

| How I will know that I am not 100% - the tell-tale signs that all is not well | Things I will do to help me get back on top of things | What my manager can do to help me |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| | | |

Part 5: Plan For What To Do When Everything Is Getting Too Much For You

No matter how much we try to keep on an even keel, all of us get to the point at some time when we have had enough and just want to jack it all in - when everything is getting too much for us and we cannot see a way through. Asking for help can be hard!

First, it is helpful to think about how you will spot when things are not going right for you – those signs – thoughts, feelings and behaviours – that things really are getting too much

For example:

- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Thinking that there is no point in what we are doing
- Getting all sorts of colds and minor infections
- Not hungry - or over-eating to comfort ourselves
- Drinking too much
- Bursting into tears or flying off the handle at the slightest provocation
- Letting responsibilities slip

Then it might be useful to think about:

1 Things you can do to start putting things right. There may be things in your 'first aid kit' that would help.

For example:

- Confide in my family and friends and ask for help
- Cut down on social activities
- Try to get some regular exercise – even just a bit
- Talk to my manager about how I am feeling and ask for relief of some responsibilities
- Ask for some leave so I can get away for a bit
- Go and see my GP

2 Things that your manager can do to help

For example:

- Make time for me to talk about the difficulties I am having
- Arrange for me to take a few days off
- Help me to reduce my workload while at home some of the time
- Make sure that I only work my set hours
- Remind me of all the good work I have done/that I am a valued member of the team

My Plan For What To Do When Everything Is Getting Too Much For Me

| How I can tell when things really are getting too much for me | Things I will do to help me cope and get back on top of things | What my manager can do to help me |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | |



Surviving and Thriving at Work
A Work Health and Well-Being Toolkit

To find out more about working with the Phoenix Transformational Services Team, contact us by phone, email, or visit our website for more about our services and to apply to work with us

✉ **Email:** info@phoenixtransforms.com

☎ **Phone:** 0208 943 2637

 **Facebook:** @phoenixtransforms

 **LinkedIn:** <http://linkedin.com/in/phoenixtransforms>



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