Book: *Creating Mental Health across Cultures: Coaching and Training for Managers*
Editors: Claude-Hélène Mayer and Christian Martin Boness
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This publication is a training handbook for managers to develop their proficiency in intercultural communication with regard to employee health and wellness in organizations. This book however also extends beyond this targeted group as it can also be used as a training manual by coaches, mentors, facilitators, counsellors, and consultants. It provides theoretical paradigms and associated methodologies to develop managerial practices in the intercultural realm that can promote health and well-being in culturally diverse and challenging work situations.

The book is based on the salutogenic approach of Antonovsky (1979, 1987). Training manuals on how to develop salutogenesis and sense of coherence as health-promoting resources have been published before with regard to different target groups, such as patients and individuals with chronic diseases (Franke & Witte, 2009), and educational settings (Krause & Mayer, 2012). However, none of these training manuals has focused on the intercultural and/or transcultural dimension of health and well-being and on the managerial and organizational realm of (international) organizations.

The aim of the book is to draw the reader’s attention to the need to develop intercultural leadership competencies and skills to manage conflict. The reader is presented with four modules, each comprising of a discussion of theory and accompanying exercises to put the theory presented into practice. The methodologies used in these exercises include reflection, practice, case studies, completing questionnaires, role-playing and relaxation techniques. This variety constitutes a key strength as it caters to the many different learning styles of managers using it either as a personal training handbook or by trainers facilitating a group of managers with diverse learning preferences.

The book provides insights on various levels. Firstly, it is the first of its kind, combining theoretical aspects of transcultural communication and conflict management, as well as the literature on health and well-being. Secondly, the book is developed on the basis of a three year research study on the promotion of mental health in transcultural and international organizations and is therefore strongly scientifically based (Mayer, 2011). Thirdly, it provides practical approaches to developing health and well-being within individuals and organizations across cultures and discusses and moves beyond the scope of cultural training books to develop intercultural understanding and communication skills (e.g. Samovar, Porter & Jain, 1981) or conflict management skills development across cultures (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 1981). Due to its focus it extends more than recent books that focus on cross-cultural communication and training concepts which are also written for trainers and facilitators, while only highlighting...
the cross-cultural perspective (Cutler, 2005). Fourthly, it uses a systemic approach which is usually used in systemic coaching and therapy (Von Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2007) and applies it practically on an individual and an organizational base. Finally, it provides a combined and in-depth insight into the theoretical backgrounds of transcultural communication, mental health and in particular salutogenesis and sense of coherence, and systemic theoretical approaches which are applied in exercises, reflections, case studies and other methods. Theoretical, empirical and practical approaches are combined in this book.

Chapter one provides the reader with an introduction to the book, as well as to the concepts of health and well-being. It introduces MEHTO (Managing Mental Health in Transcultural Organisations), a coaching and training model to create mental health in organizations across cultures. Chapter two gives a broad introduction to health and well-being concepts, particularly salutogenesis and sense of coherence. Chapter three gives insight into the concepts and theoretical background of transcultural competencies and the development of identities in culturally mixed settings. This chapter also refers to the concepts of values and spirituality within the identity development process. This is followed by Chapter four which emphasises the need of developing transcultural conflict management competencies to stay healthy in demanding work and organizational contexts. Finally the fifth Chapter mentions the systemic impacts on health and well-being in transcultural organizational settings and thereby highlights systemic qualities such as resource-and-growth orientation. The book concludes with a sixth and very short chapter on conclusions and provides an outlook.

The writers present the concept MEHTO to underpin the theoretical perspective presented in this book. The limitations to successfully implementing MEHTO in organisations are highlighted early in the first chapter to ensure that the reader is made aware of critical contextual considerations. As a personal training handbook the user will require commitment, discipline and time to systematically work through all four modules. As a training manual, facilitators, coaches or mentors are provided with an excellent resource with which to effectively facilitate learning in pairs or groups of managers. As the training material is divided into systematic modules, this book is a treat for trainers as it easily allows them to roll-out each module over a designated period of time, which is more often than not needed to accommodate the busy schedules of managers. This can only secure great commitment and buy-in from the latter.

With demands being increasingly placed on organizations to build a diverse but cohesive workforce to ensure sustainability and increase the bottom line, this book should be included in the collection of every manager and human capital specialist entrusted to meet these two objectives.
References


Reviewer Note

The reviewer, Dr. Sabie Surtee, completed her Bachelor of Arts and Honours degrees in applied psychology and industrial sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. She received her Masters degree in sociology at Toronto University in Canada. She graduated with a doctorate in Sociology from Witwatersrand University in 1998.

She has gained extensive knowledge on South African labour legislation and its implementation through her employment at the Department of Labour from 1999-2003. Sabie was appointed as the Employment Equity (EE) Manager at the University of Cape Town in 2003. She left UCT as a permanent member of staff in April 2009, to use pursue her passion to independently conduct social science and organisational forms of research and to offer coaching services and consultancy advice in the areas of equity and diversity in organisations. As the lead researcher of a team, during 2009 she conducted EE research in the Western Cape for Business Unity SA (BUSA), where the EE practices of 13 organisations based in the Western Cape were reviewed and evaluated to identify barriers to EE that are being encountered by these businesses. Sabie was appointed as the Director of HERS SA on 1st April 2010. HERS-SA is a non-profit organisation which advocates for the representation of more women in senior positions in higher education, and it offers development programmes for women working in this sector. Two of her main objectives have been to position HERS-SA to adopt a more research focussed approach on gender equity and to provide ongoing support and professional and leadership development to women and alumnae working in Higher Education.