



Work Relevant Symptomology & Vocational Rehabilitation

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2019 Consensus Statement on Health & Work

- The relationship between employment and health is close, complex and enduring.
- **Being in work, staying in work and returning to work are associated with improved mental and physical health, provided that work has security, realistic demands and a level of personal control – known collectively as ‘good work’.**
- Working can give an individual a sense of fulfilment and purpose and can be paid or voluntary.
- **Working in itself can have therapeutic benefits. Conversely, being unemployed can have negative impacts on health and wellbeing.**

What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

- **VR is about overcoming obstacles**
- Any process that enables people to overcome obstacles to accessing, maintaining or returning to employment or other useful occupation
- May be a stand-alone activity or carried out as part of a wider role or rehabilitation program
- **Essentially, VR helps people to REMAIN in, RECOVER in, RETURN to or REACH for work**

Disorders or Symptoms?



- A health problem is not necessarily a medical matter!

(Hadler 1999)

No Symptoms

all people
some of the
time

Symptoms

most people
some of the
time

Work- relevant symptoms

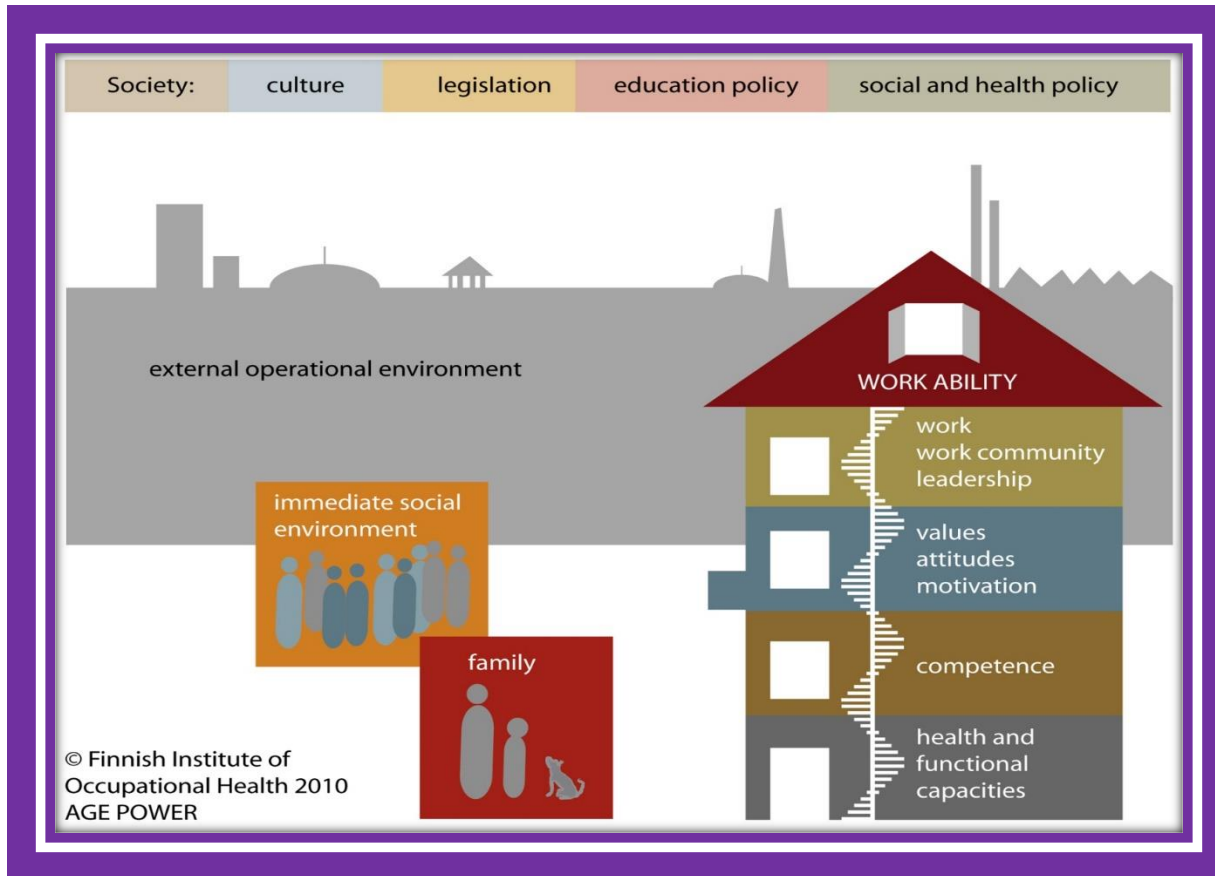
fewer
people less
of the time

→ **GP or
absence**

fewer still

→ Work
disability

Work ability model



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Work ability screening

Helps to detect possible work-relevant health problems

| | Items | Range |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Current work ability compared with the lifetime best | 0–10 |
| 2 | Work ability in relation to the demands of the job | 2–10 |
| 3 | Number of current diseases diagnosed by a physician | 1–7 |
| 4 | Estimated work impairment due to diseases | 1–6 |
| 5 | Sick leave during the past year (12 months) | 1–5 |
| 6 | Own prognosis of work ability 2 years from now | 1–7 |
| 7 | Mental resources | 1–4 |

***Work ability index* - a measure of how people feel they are coping with work & health.**

Principles and Process

PRINCIPLES (CONCEPTS)

- Work is an important health outcome
- Physical and mental symptoms common
- Work often not the culprit
- Treatment not always needed
- Most **people** can stay at work
- Some will struggle with work tasks or environment
absence appropriate if work intolerable
- Early return to work beneficial to avoiding disability

PROCESS (DELIVERABLES)

- A can-do philosophy
- Accurate consistent information/advice
- Use stepped care principles - **just what's needed when its needed**
- Work focused healthcare
- Workplace action
 - identify obstacles to work ability
 - **temporary** work modifications

Principles and Process

PRINCIPLES (CONCEPTS)

- Work is an important health outcome

Ensure all players onside

work often not the culprit

- Treatment not always needed
- Most
- Some absence appropriate if work intolerable
- Early return to work beneficial to avoiding disability

High fidelity to the principles is crucial

work ability

- **temporary** work modifications

PROCESS (DELIVERABLES)

- A can-do philosophy
- Accurate consistent information/advice
- Use stepped care principles - **just what's needed when its needed**
- Work focused healthcare

Trained competent providers coordinating between workplace, healthcare and society



Thank you!

*And with special thanks to **Professor Kim Burton** for his support in presenting this concept to you today.*