

# Mental wellness in the Performing Arts

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Mental wellness or mental health has been an issue of recent concern and discussion in New Zealand performing arts sectors. Awareness has been raised through events such as The Black Dog Relief Cabaret for actor Robbie Tripe. The March PANNZ performing arts market in Auckland presented the issue as a keynote and in an industry seminar.

As part of the keynote introduction at PANNZ, Director Mark Westerby presented US research on stressful jobs. This was based on research by CareerCast, employment specialists, who listed the top ten most stressful jobs based on a selected group of criteria such as deadlines, competitiveness, hazard, risk, growth potential, environmental conditions etc. A firefighter came out as the most stressful job but surprisingly or maybe not, actor was the 6th most stressful occupation and event coordinator the 8th.

We know that dance people can suffer from overload, various types of stress and depression. This can affect all areas of our profession from studio and community teachers to dancers, choreographers and producers. Like actors, dance people can experience the uncertainty of

work, lack of career or direction clarity, tiredness or injury. Mental wellness, a more positive approach than “mental health” is the key to enjoyable, creative, balanced lives. The NZ Mental Health Foundation’s (MHF) recent research shows that there are five aspects to wellbeing - areas that need to be in balance for us to have good mental wellness and healthy lives. These are **GIVING** – your time, your words, your presence; **BE ACTIVE** – do what you can, enjoy what you do, move your mood; **KEEP LEARNING** – embrace new experiences, see opportunities, surprise yourself; **CONNECT** – talk and listen, be there, feel connected; **TAKE NOTICE** – remember the simple things that give you joy.

Dance as a recreational and creative activity is a great contributor to mental and physical wellness. Many of our dance people are providing this through their work with our public and communities. We hope our dance practitioners also take the opportunity to enjoy the many strengths and gifts dance can give to their own wellbeing, as well as the work they dedicatedly give to the sector.

MHF advice sounds practical and sensible. Let’s follow it and help each other live balanced and supported lives within our often pressured and complicated world.

The MHF has an excellent website with resources, advice and information.

Go to [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)  
[www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing/](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing/)



DANZ LEOTC provides workshops for primary and secondary schools using a variety of tutors and covering a range of dance styles. Book a workshop today and set their imagination free.

Visit the DANZ website for programme details: [danz.org.nz/Dance+in+Schools/LEOTC](http://danz.org.nz/Dance+in+Schools/LEOTC)

To book a workshop or for further information contact DANZ.  
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