

From Stress to Strength Workshop May 2023

Bel Macfie, NEA Secretary and Te Manawa Taki Regional Lead

Dr Georgi Toma (Heart and Brain Works/University of Auckland) facilitated this inspirational full day virtual workshop attended by around 50 NEA members. As we emerge from the pandemic to rediscover and reframe nursing and health, this workshop was a timely reminder about the importance of the focus on psychological wellbeing and resilience needed to heal ourselves and our teams as we navigate and succeed in our new context.

The day was divided into 4 sessions covering the topics of

- reducing burnout
- reducing and responding differently to stress,
- staff wellbeing and psychosocial hazards,
- addressing negativity bias
- promoting positive mindsets,
- redefining self-care.

Georgi delivered this in a way that provided scientific rationale and research as the foundation for practical actions that can be easily implemented.

Feedback from the day included:

*I recently attended the Workshop with Georgi. It was the first workshop I have attended in a long time that was absolutely engaging for the full day. It was set out in "do-able chunks" which provided education and tips for putting what we have learned into action. The day was an open and relatable, and the tone was set for it to be supportive so any question could be asked. I particularly enjoyed the feeling of fully understanding the neuroscience behind why we perceive things the way we do, and what we can do to feel much more in control. A particularly helpful part was learning how we can be compassionate and support our colleagues who are feeling the strain. I fully recommend investing the time in attending this, the differences it has made already have meant I am in less of a panic at work, and a better mum at home! **Heather Chase, Nurse Director, Lakes DHB***

Firstly, I must commend Georgi on her excellent facilitation style, especially considering that the workshop was conducted online. The workshop had a well-structured format, and Georgi actively encouraged us to engage in the topics through the chat section. What I appreciated the most was that she took the time to respond to every piece of feedback in the chat, creating a truly interactive experience. Georgi also incorporated moments for reflection throughout the workshop, which I found extremely valuable. The topics covered in the workshop were highly relevant to both my personal and professional life. I gained knowledge and practical skills that will help me better support my team members and colleagues in recognising and managing stress triggers. Georgi effectively connected the content to current scientific research and explained it in an easily understandable manner. Her use of analogies and real-life examples was particularly effective in conveying the information. One concept that stood out to me was the brain's default negative bias and how we can retrain our brains to perceive situations from a more positive perspective. This insight has had a significant impact on how I approach discussions of concerns and issues with my colleagues. Additionally, the discussion on the default mode network was particularly relevant, as I often find myself getting lost in daydreaming. Georgi's session made me aware of the impact of excessive rumination and motivated me to focus more on the present moment, incorporating mindfulness into my work activities. Georgi's session on cognitive bias highlighted

*the importance of distinguishing between factual information and perceptions when it comes to stress-inducing thoughts. Her practical advice on utilising deep breathing techniques and the STOPP framework to reduce stress responses has provided me with actionable strategies that I can easily share with my team. **Jean-Michel Burgess, Nurse Manager, Professional Development Unit, Te Whatu Ora Waikato.***

*I thought the Stress to Strength workshop provided by Georgi was excellent. Over this period, when we are all talking about staff wellbeing, and remaining resilient post the pandemic and climate change issues, it was very timely. I am preparing a presentation for my quarterly Nursing Advisory group meeting at NZBS on the subject and following it through with Civility, which Georgi touched on. I believe the senior nurses will find it useful as we prepare our Nursing Strategy and start looking at how we can support each other and staff Wellbeing. I love that Georgi has provided strategies for us to manage ourselves through stressful times. A very positive approach and I think the nurses here will find it as helpful as I did. **Jacqui Wynne-Jones, Chief Nurse, New Zealand Blood Service***

For a short time NEA members can watch the training replay here

<https://www.heartbrainworks.org/From-Stress-to-Strength-The-New-Science-of-Stress-and-Its-Impacts>

For anyone who would like to connect with Georgi directly, please see this information below.

Dr Georgi Toma

Dr. Georgi Toma is an expert in stress, burnout, and workplace mental health. She is the founder of Heart and Brain Works, a consultancy that helps business identify and reduce hazards to employee mental health. She is also a research fellow at the University of Auckland.

She has worked with organisations such as *PepsiCo*, *Korn Ferry*, *APM Workcare*, *Environment Canterbury* or *RMIT University* to create healthy work environments and equip their staff with the skills required to thrive.

She is the creator of **The Wellbeing Protocol**, the only scientifically validated program in New Zealand and Australia to reduce burnout and improve mental wellbeing in the workplace. Research studies show that the Wellbeing Protocol can help employees reduce stress by up to 58%, burnout by up to 60% and improve mental wellbeing by up to 103%.



Connect with Georgi:

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