



WELLBEING, TEAM
BUILDING AND
PERFORMANCE IN NHS
NURSES

Overview:

AQR Ltd was approached by an NHS Trust to do some work with a team of nurses who cared for terminally ill children. The team had recently experienced a challenging time, with a high number of deaths in a short space of time. The management felt that the nurses were struggling to cope with some of the issues relating to their work, and as a result were stressed and not functioning well as a team.

The Relevance of Mental Toughness:

Mental Toughness is a concept which explains in part how individuals cope with stress, pressure and challenge. It consists of 4 key components: Control, Challenge, Commitment and Confidence. Mentally tough individuals are better able to cope with stressors and are more resilient. This is shown to impact on individual well-being and organisational effectiveness. Mental toughness is something that we know can be developed in individuals, using a number of simple techniques.

The role of a nurse caring for terminally ill children is fraught with pressure and challenge. It is important to address how employees working within this environment cope with the challenges they face.

The Process:

All of the nurses completed the online Mental Toughness Measure (MTQ48). They then attended a two-day teambuilding workshop together, facilitated by occupational psychologists. During the workshop, the concept of mental toughness was explored, and individuals were given feedback on their mental toughness scores, and development suggestions for how to increase their mental toughness. In addition, a number of exercises for developing mental toughness were introduced, in order to help the nurses increase their resilience. These included: visualisation and guided imagery, increasing team communication and support, and the re-focusing of goals. It was discovered that one of the reasons that mental toughness scores were low was due to the nurses focusing more on the outcome of patients' deaths than on the rewarding process of providing a caring and dignified environment for patients. Once this had been addressed, nurses felt more positive about being able to cope with the situation they faced. In addition, strategies were proposed for increasing the social support between the team.

Outcomes:

- The MTQ48 highlighted the need for increasing the Mental Toughness of the nurses, and provided explanations for the high level of stress experienced;
- The process of a workshop addressed the issues at an individual and a team level;
- Practical exercises demonstrated tools and techniques that the nurses could incorporate into their routines to help increase mental toughness;
- As a result, the nurses felt better able to cope with the challenges in their role and felt more productive as a team.