

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

The pressures of working in a fast-paced environment can have significant impacts on an individual's wellbeing, often leading to physical and mental health problems, resulting in increased absenteeism and lost productivity. Thus, companies need to work to promote mental health in the workplace through reducing stress at work and having clear policies in place to support any mental health issues.

WHY PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE?

- Enhances productivity and motivation - healthy employees can physically perform better because they have more energy.
- More efficient and focused employees.
- Builds morale across the team - when teams engage in wellness initiatives together they have a sense of a shared purpose which builds relationships.
- Prevents work-related stress and increases resilience - this can improve thinking, decision making, and relationships at work.
- Increases productivity and engagement
- Ensures the company maintains a positive brand image through employees providing high quality customer service

WORK RELATED RISK FACTORS

- Poor communication and management practices
- Low levels of support
- Inflexible working hours
- Unclear tasks or objectives
- Lack of participation in decision making
- Workload pressures caused by excessive demands, deadlines, task complexity etc.
- Difficulty coping with change
- Workplace relationships, bullying or harassment by colleagues
- Lack of work-life balance
- An unhealthy organisational culture
- Lack of diversity and inclusion / stigma and discrimination
- Limited availability for growth and development
- Lack of recognition and reward
- Substance use and misuse at work

IMPACT OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH

These factors outline the effects of poor mental health for an individual, as well as how to spot signs of poor mental health in the workplace:

- Inability to sleep and exhaustion
- Weight loss
- Avoiding work
- Absenteeism
- Resignations
- Conflict with colleagues and management
- Poor customer service
- Increased mistakes and errors
- Grievance and disciplinary incidents
- Low morale and negative atmosphere
- Disengagement and reduced productivity
- Lack of energy, and motivation and/or
- Development of substance dependency

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), an estimated 264 million people worldwide suffer from depression, with many of these individuals also suffering from anxiety. A recent study by WHO also found that depression and anxiety cost the global economy \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity.



WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

TAKE THESE ACTIONS TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

- First, ensure you have a clear wellbeing strategy in place, which can be easily accessed by all employees.
- Develop systems to monitor and measure wellbeing and identify the causes of stress in the workplace in order to reduce them.
- Employ a simple and effective management structure - this enables better communication and relationships.
- Promote a positive work culture with a clear vision and purpose
- Assure employees that it is okay to admit feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Develop line managers to have the right skills to provide support
- Encourage teamwork and building positive workplace relationships
- Ensure all employees are given training and development programmes - this helps employees feel valued and their skills can be maximised
- Make sure employees are being given fair pay and remuneration
- Reassure staff of their job security through appraisals, if change is going to happen then ensure there is open communication and that staff are well prepared for change.
- Promote a good work-life balance - encourage employees to take time off after working long periods etc.

HOW TO TACKLE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

If someone is displaying signs of stress or poor mental health quickly identify the problem and work with them to develop a plan to address the underlying causes.

Questions about *why* there is a problem can elicit a defensive or accusatory response, resulting in a biased view of the problem and a potential skewing of the facts. Start with the least emotionally charged questions, such as *what*, *where*, and *when*. This will allow the conversation to flow and encourage the individual to open up and give a more accurate account of the problems they are facing.

To help people feel they can open up, ask:

- **What is the problem?** Encourage them to describe their experience with a genuine intent to learn. Avoid questions about fault or blame as this will exacerbate stress. Explore whether external/outside of work factors are also playing a part.
- **What feelings are you experiencing?** Show empathy when asking this question, it will help when an individual feels acknowledged and recognised.
- **What are your motivations?** It is important to try and understand what is influencing how the person is feeling. There are six main motivators which could influence the individual's feelings: autonomy, affiliation, appreciation, role, status, and fairness.

INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

Research shows that exercise, nutrition and positive social environments have a significant benefit on an individual's mental health. Thus, employing simple initiatives such as these can help promote a positive mental health and wellbeing in the workplace:

- Promote opportunities for exercise during the day, walk or bike to work challenges, walking meetings, etc;
- On-site yoga classes or stretch sessions for stress relief and to improve posture. Such sessions have been shown to increase job satisfaction and energy levels;
- Provide healthy office snacks or "Free Fruit Friday";
- Flexible working hours to respond to various demands;
- Monthly pot-luck lunch - gives employees time to interact with colleagues;
- Volunteering with a community organisation - found to decrease chances of depression and lower blood pressure;
- Mindfulness training to reduce stress and foster positive emotions;
- Use healthcare providers to do in-house checks; and/or
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) - counselling, financial and legal services to support employees.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- Mind Jersey provides information, training and support for those suffering from mental health issues.
- Mental Health First Aid qualifications
- Jersey Recovery college run free courses for those experiencing mental health difficulties as well as for supporting professionals and managers.
- Jersey talking therapies - a free service that has low wait times once referred by your GP.

For further details call
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