

Workplace Strategies for Positive Mental Health

1st January 2020

Increasing workloads, rapid technological change, shifting market demands, and a lack of work-life balance. As a manager, you're probably more aware than ever of the impact of employee mental health, including stress and overload, on your team's success. Employee stress and burnout not only results in increased absenteeism and disability leaves, but also increased errors, accidents, interpersonal conflicts, and decreased productivity. But what can you do to support the psychological health of your people while keeping up with the demands of business?

Creating a psychologically healthy workplace

A psychologically healthy workplace has many components that fall under communication, workload, and trust. Some signs of a psychologically healthy workplace include:

- trust in managers, supervisors, and senior management
- a clear understanding of the organisation's vision and strategy for all employees at all levels
- clearly defined individual duties and responsibilities
- a safe environment where employees feel they can voice their opinions
- recognition for good work and service
- well-managed workload
- work-life balance
- respectful behaviour to all employees regardless of level
- established conflict resolution practices
- professional training and learning opportunities
- programmes in place to help reduce the stigma of mental health issues
- resources, such as an assistance programme, for those seeking help

Supporting employees

There is no blueprint for creating a psychologically healthy workplace because every workplace is different. As a manager, your first step is to understand your team—the demographics, job demands, and professional and personal stresses—and find unique and innovative ways to support them. You may provide new parents with excellent parental leave or flexible working hours. If physical well-being is a concern on your team, you might

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look at free or discounted gym memberships. Even small initiatives such as remote working can demonstrate an organisation's concern for the well-being of its people.

However, while workplace programmes are important, managers who know what to do when employees are in distress are the real key to any successful workplace mental health strategy. Knowing how to work with your human resources (HR) department or your assistance programme to make referrals for employees who are struggling is key.

Remember that maintaining a psychologically healthy workplace means being adaptable and flexible, so don't forget to take a step back and assess the needs of your team on a regular basis.