

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING - WHAT CAN WORKPLACES BE DOING?

As leaders and managers, it is our responsibility to create and foster a physically and mentally healthy working environment. As well as this 'just being the right thing to do,' we know that happy people perform better and are less likely to take sick leave.

In this cheat sheet we will learn about the things that we can do to lead the way, in promoting good mental health and wellbeing.



GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

For many of our colleagues, talking about their mental health can be much harder than talking about their physical health. So, what can we do to remove the stigma?

Firstly, it helps to bring discussions about mental health into the open. This can be done by explaining to our team that mental health difficulties will be treated in the same way as physical difficulties and illness.

Just as you would make workplace adjustments for someone with a broken leg, consider what you can do to help someone with a mental health problem. This might be through flexible working, or short-notice leave to attend appointments.

The importance of a leader modelling good habits should not be underestimated. This includes taking a full lunch break and clocking off at a reasonable hour, and doing this visibly.

THINKING CREATIVELY

It's not rocket science – great communication and having positive relationships are the key to ensuring everyone feels as valued and well as possible.

When things aren't communicated well it can lead to stress and anxiety. When there are factions within the team, it can lead to isolation and loneliness.

Alongside mental health and wellbeing policies (which should be regularly reviewed), it helps to talk to our teams and encourage creative thinking. What could we be doing even better to reduce stress and anxiety; to increase happiness and good mental wellbeing? Ideas might include setting up an online yoga club at lunchtime, having access to a 24 hour helpline, a free online mental health assessment, or counselling services for staff and their families.

Most people tend to be wary of change, and change can cause some people to wobble. If you know that change is on the horizon, consider how and what you are communicating, as you aim to take people on the journey with you.

Ask yourself, and the team, if there is any additional support that can be offered to prevent people finding themselves struggling to cope in challenging situations, e.g. personal financial management sessions, practical support for a potential redundancy.

PROVIDING SUPPORT

By educating ourselves about mental health difficulties, we will be better able to spot the signs and provide support. An excellent website to learn more is: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

By knowing which services our organisation and the local community have available, we are better able to signpost. Has our workplace got Mental Health First Aiders, who are they and what are their phone numbers?

By providing mental health and wellbeing training for all members of staff we will ensure that people are using appropriate language, developing empathy for others and, hopefully, following any mental health and happiness top tips that they are given. Laughology provides a range of sessions, which you might like to consider:

<http://www.laughology.co.uk>