

Mental Health Awareness Week runs from Monday 10 May to Sunday 16 May 2021

During this pandemic, millions of us have experienced a mental health problem or seen a loved one or colleague struggle. We are also aware that there are ways to improve mental health and wellbeing. However, we are all different, and there is not a one-stop-shop to address these issues. Here are some practical tips, ideas, and practices for managers to help support employees in the workplace.



Lead by example

Wellbeing starts with you; if you **practice what you preach**, your employees will come along with you. You may have wellbeing strategies in place, but if you do not take advantage of the resources available, neither will your team, so make sure you look after your own wellbeing; use the resources available and be open with your team when you are struggling or when you need their help. **Vulnerability can be a strength**, and normalising talking about mental health and wellbeing in the workplace is important.

Work Life Balance

Many of us have our work emails on a mobile phone, and some of us sleep in the same room as the phone. As a result, it is easy to fall into the habit of working evenings and weekends to do more work the next day. If you check your work phone before saying good morning to your family, this is likely an early sign of an imbalance between your home and work life.

In 2019/20, there were an estimated **828,000 workers affected by work-related stress**, depression, or anxiety. This represents 2,440 per 100,000 workers and results in an estimated **17.9 million working days lost**. In 2019/20 work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 51% of all work-related ill health and 55% of all days lost due to work-related ill-health.

Work life balance is one of the most significant contributors to good mental health, and there are many ways you can support this. First, encourage your employees to **take proper breaks** throughout the year; if your company offered **flexible working** or **remote working** (before COVID-19), make sure your employees know this. Second, try to **avoid sending emails outside of regular working hours**. Finally, encourage your employees to **switch off**.

Talk more

A common problem in the workplace is we do not talk enough about mental health and wellbeing. As a result, managers are often unaware until it is past the breaking point.

Most people who have poor mental health want to be at work. However, when they are at work, they may have difficulty concentrating, communicating, and juggling tasks. They can become irritable with customers and colleagues, but they are reluctant to speak up to their manager.

So, what should managers do? Talking about mental health in the workplace allows employees to seek help sooner. Training managers to spot the signs and symptoms and help them know what to say and when to say it when somebody calls in sick.

Don't make assumptions

Ask your team how they want you to support them or if there is something you can do or change to enable them to look after their mental health and wellbeing better. By asking instead of assuming, it opens up the conversation and allows you to approach each team member in a way that suits them.

Review your policies, procedures, and benefits

Does your company provide physical health benefits or promote physical health through good rehabilitation practices? Do they include health checks, wellbeing benefits, health insurance protection, managing disability, occupational health support, or employee assistance programmes?

Do you have practices for stress management and risk assessments? Does your company offer conflict resolution training and training on how to have difficult conversations?

How far does your company assess your employees' financial wellbeing and implement fair pay and benefits policies? For example, providing employees with pay rates above the statutory National Minimum and flexible benefits schemes.

All of these management and human resources practices can assist employees with improving their overall health. However, you have to practice wellbeing if you genuinely want to make it part of your team's culture. So, keep the conversation about wellbeing going, and you will find what works. Happy and healthy employees are more productive, so there is a benefit to the company in making employee wellbeing a priority.

If you need help implementing Wellbeing processes and procedures, IHR is here to help.

For further information and assistance on updating your HR documentation please contact HRhelp@ihrsolutions.co.uk or call direct on **07874 860814** or call our helpline on **01604 709509** or visit our [website](#).

About the Author

LAURA FINDLAY

Laura is a HR professional with 18 years' experience with Financial Services, the majority of which has been within insurance.

In her role with UKGI Group, Laura works with Katherine Watkins, Head of HR Consultancy and provides objective support to firms on employment law and HR issues. She uses her interpersonal skills and knowledge to work with firms to help them develop strong and resilient HR strategies and establish healthy organisational cultures.

Laura is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). She holds a Diploma Professional Development Scheme.

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