



# Environmental

Some people cannot work or work part-time, and indeed, it's not the intent of this piece to make anyone feel excluded. However, the majority of us spend about a third of our day at work. And when combined with the time we spend sleeping, preparing and travelling to our workplace, and the whole work experience forms a significant part of who we are.

Therefore when you experience mental health problems strong enough to prevent you from being unable to function at work, there's a considerable risk of thinking and feeling that you've lost a massive part of your identity. Perhaps you might feel that you might not get that 'you' back, leading to further cycles of negative thoughts and emotions. So what can be done?

## Physical Factors

**Physical environmental factors** are 'hard' factors that come from noise, temperatures, pollutants, etc.

**Sleep deprivation** or an unhealthy sleep cycle is known to be bad for your mental health. There are plenty of environmental factors which could affect sleep cycles – not all of which are within our control. Noisy neighbours, a loud road nearby, nights that are too hot or too cold...all of these and more could contribute to poor sleep and a downturn in mental health.



**Hazardous working conditions.** 'Hazardous' can refer not just to physical danger where work is concerned. It refers to any working condition which can put significant strain on the body or mind. For example, if your work environment is stressful, your mental health can suffer.

**Environmental pollution.** Growing up around 'dirty air' quadruples a child's chance of developing depression later in life. This may be related to other environmental factors (polluted areas typically combine more of the factors on this list than just air pollution), but the risk is still worth noting.

**Inaccessible architecture.** Being unable to move quickly around your environment is very frustrating. Suppose you're excluded from certain areas or activities (perhaps due to being physically unable to do things like climb stairs or cross busy roads). In that case, the frustration and isolation of this can contribute to mental illness.

**Environmental factors** which affect your mental health may well be bound up in other factors. For example, depression or substance abuse can lead to unemployment, leading poverty, poor nutrition, and associated environmental troubles. Similarly, mental health conditions like hoarding can result in environmental problems. Often, environmental and other factors end up complementing one another in a vicious cycle.

However, the good news is that getting help for one aspect often helps the other along. For example, finding a counsellor who can help you come to terms with mental health problems or affected by (and affecting) your environment can enable you to make the positive changes needed to improve your mental health and break out of a toxic space.

## What can employers do

As described by McKinsey and Company, workplace civility is “the accumulation of thoughtless actions that leave employees feeling disrespected—intentionally ignored, undermined by colleagues, or publicly belittled by an insensitive manager.” The indirect effects of workplace incivility on insomnia symptoms and thus overall health, the determining mechanism was negative rumination or the mentally replaying of an event or disturbing interaction with a co-worker long after the workday.

Workplace toxicity leads to adverse effects in part by stimulating people to ruminate on their negative work experiences.

The good news is that sufficient recovery or coping techniques may mitigate the adverse effects of a toxic work environment on employee well-being. In particular, relaxation and psychological detachment. The ability to psychologically detach from work during non-work hours and relaxation were shown to be the two mitigating factors that determined how workers were affected or not by a negative work environment.

The following interventions can address workplace environmental stress, anxiety, and depression:

- Raise awareness
- Ensure protection for employees
- Ensure accountability
- Train and model appropriate behaviour
- Train supervisors on aggression-prevention behaviours
- Improve emotional resilience skills
- Offer training on recovery from work, mindfulness practices, emotional/social intelligence skills



## In Eight Dimensions

IHRs can provide coaching and training for managers to assist them in supporting employees struggling in the workplace. IHRs can also provide resilience training for employees and offer practical activities to address damaging workplace environments.

We have been assisting our clients with their health care and well-being, introducing well-being benefits such as employee assistance programmes, private medical insurance, personal health funds and therapies cover.

The positive impact of updating benefits programmes (which can be done at differing parts way through a year) helps retain talent and is an attraction point for future talent. We are also seeing a more significant shift in the market for companies to broaden benefits offering in light of the pandemic and focus on what is important to them. In partnership with our colleagues at Adler Fairways, IHRs can introduce new benefits and some significant enhancements to existing benefits often at no extra cost or administration burden.

Get in touch with the team today at [HRhelp@ihrsolutions.co.uk](mailto:HRhelp@ihrsolutions.co.uk) and let them help navigate you through the market trends on benefit offerings.

## Contact

 [hrhelp@ihrsolutions.co.uk](mailto:hrhelp@ihrsolutions.co.uk)

 [www.insurancehrsolutions.co.uk](http://www.insurancehrsolutions.co.uk)