

balance

Balance your work, health, life with useful health and wellness information

Ten factors that impact psychological health in the workplace

The average adult spends about 1,900 hours per year at work. So, it's no wonder that our workplace environment and the people we work with can deeply affect how we feel. Factors such as deadlines, work pressure, professional relationships and our daily interactions can all impact our psychological response to work and affect our mental health. Experts in workplace mental health have identified factors that can influence our psychological health and well-being while on the job.

These include:

1. **Psychological support:** Organizations that are psychologically supportive take action to safeguard the mental well-being of employees and provide appropriate resources when employees need help. When employees feel they have psychological support at work, they are more loyal to the company, more satisfied with their job, more effective at what they do and happier to go to work.
2. **Organizational culture:** Trust, honesty and fairness are all trademarks of organizations with healthy corporate cultures. A positive culture can have a dramatic effect on the mental well-being of its employees and contributes significantly to workplace satisfaction.
3. **Clear leadership and expectations:** Effective leadership and clearly-defined expectations create an environment where employees know what it means to succeed. It also leads to high employee morale and organizational trust. Lack of leadership and unclear expectations can increase frustration and stress.
4. **Civility and respect:** Work cultures that are respectful and considerate foster good employee morale, excellent teamwork and high levels of perceived fairness. The result? A culture marked by positivity and widespread job satisfaction.
5. **Growth and development:** Employees that are given opportunities to grow and develop their professional and interpersonal skills creates a more committed workforce that performs better in current and future roles.
6. **Recognition and reward:** Organizations that are good at recognition and reward know how to appropriately appreciate the efforts of its employees in a timely way. Workforces that are recognized and rewarded are more motivated, confident and tend to exceed expectations.
7. **Involvement and influence:** Employees want to feel that they have a voice at work. When employees are engaged and empowered effectively, the result is higher morale, job satisfaction and a healthier corporate culture. When employees feel like their opinion doesn't matter or they aren't permitted to make decisions in areas that should logically be within their authority, stress builds and job satisfaction suffers.
8. **Workload management:** Environments that consistently overburden staff with an unreasonable workload can cause stress and emotional havoc. However, a challenging yet realistic workload creates job satisfaction and builds confidence.
9. **Balance:** Employers that recognize the importance of work-life balance and feature flexible policies that respect the demands of the individual's home life create a happier, less stressed and more productive employment culture.

Looking for additional support? Your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can help. You can receive support through a variety of resources. Call your EFAP at 1 800 387-4765 or visit workhealthlife.com.

10. **Psychological protection:** Employers that promote mental well-being at work and take proactive steps to prevent psychological harm create an environment of openness and trust – employees feel confident that they can speak up and voice their opinion or concern without fear of consequence.

A psychologically safe workplace benefits everyone by creating a productive, effective working environment that people enjoy and want to contribute to in a meaningful way.

On-the-job stress busters

Everyone is born with a capacity for natural resilience, but we can lose sight of this innate ability amongst workplace demands, deadlines and conflicting expectations of work and personal life. Effectively managing stress is an important part of building resiliency in the workplace, and means you'll be able to face challenges with confidence through improved problem-solving and strong working relationships with your team members.

Six tips to bust workplace stress

1. **Talk to your manager:** By consistently taking on more work without signaling that you're at or beyond capacity, may give the impression that you can handle it. Speaking to your manager will allow you to raise workload awareness, prioritize your work and possibly adjust deadlines.
2. **Talk to your colleagues:** If you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, talk to a trusted coworker. They may be able to help you resolve it or, at the very least, offer a sympathetic ear.
3. **Take breaks:** In today's fast-paced world, many people neglect to give themselves a mental break during the day. So grab a coffee, step away from your work station, get outside for a few minutes or simply take a short walk around the office – it'll help shift your thoughts to something less stressful, giving you a short mental break. Remember to actually take a proper lunch away from your desk as well.
4. **Seek out information or training:** If you find yourself stressed because you feel that you lack the information, resources or training to do your job well, talk to your manager. Be specific about what skills or information you require to do your job more effectively.
5. **Build relationships:** Take the time to connect with your colleagues socially. Go to lunch with your coworkers, catch up with them in the lunch room or simply take a moment to connect with them on a personal level. By forging relationships in the workplace, you will feel less isolated and more connected to your colleagues, which is good for your mental health.
6. **Contact your EFAP:** Your employer offers an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), so take advantage of professional and confidential support to learn more about effective stress management.

Looking for additional support? Your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can help. You can receive support through a variety of resources. Call your EFAP at 1 800 387-4765 or visit workhealthlife.com.

References:

http://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/info/risk_factors

<http://www.cos-mag.com/Health-Page/Health-Page-Stories/negative-workplace-vibe-triggers-mental-illness-study-says.html?print=1&tmpl=component>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/stressandmentalhealth.htm>

<http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/employees/faqs>

<http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/employees/what-i-wish-i-knew>

http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/what-is-mental-illness/#.URabfKX7KJ0

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/talk+about+mental+health/7954032/story.html>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/workplace-stress.aspx>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-tools/ten-ways-to-create-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/article4249099/>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201209/the-silent-tsunami-mental-health-in-the-workplace>

http://www.psychologicallysafeworkplace.ca/mental_health.html

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_much_time_do_people_spend_at_work_in_a_year

Looking for additional support? Your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can help. You can receive support through a variety of resources. Call your EFAP at 1 800 387-4765 or visit workhealthlife.com.

© 2013 Shepell-fgi. Material supplied by Shepell-fgi, the leading provider of integrated health and productivity solutions that address the mental, physical and social health issues affecting the workplace. This content is meant for informational purposes and may not represent the views of individual organizations. Please call your EFAP or consult with a professional for further guidance.