

# Mental Wellbeing

An Element of Supportive Cultures



A high-performing and flourishing organisation ensures that the psychological wellbeing of its people is supported.

Workplaces can have a positive influence on mental health by providing benefits such as opportunities for achievement, connection and financial security.<sup>1</sup> Alarming, about only a third of workers report that their work has a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

## Mental wellbeing has important business outcomes:

**8x** ↑  
**Engagement**

Employees experiencing mental ill-health take

**Lost productivity** due to mental health conditions cost businesses approximately

**4x** ↓  
**Likelihood of turnover**

In workplaces that prioritise wellbeing<sup>3</sup>

**6x** ↑  
**sickness absences**<sup>4</sup>

**Costing businesses approximately**

**\$3,200**

per year/per employee due to absenteeism and presenteeism<sup>5</sup>

**\$10.9b**

each year in Australia<sup>6</sup>

## Ensuring you can bring your best self to work

To be effective in supporting others, it is first important to 'fill your own cup'. This is particularly important for leaders, who are simultaneously trying to improve employee wellbeing, whilst often experiencing similar (or higher) levels of exhaustion, stress and negative emotions than employees. This could explain why the majority of leaders are not supporting their employees wellbeing through actions such as modelling healthy behaviours, ensuring workloads are reasonable and promoting regular work breaks, despite understanding their importance.<sup>7</sup>



A culture that supports mental wellbeing can promote behaviours that proactively address mental health challenges, to decrease stress and ensure people are able to recover from daily challenges to bring their best selves to work each day.

## Small changes can make a big difference

Taking short breaks throughout the workday can be beneficial for both wellbeing and work performance. Short or 'micro' breaks can take many forms, including looking into the distance, standing to stretch, or a quick chat with a colleague. What is most effective can differ between individuals, however research has suggested some criteria:

- they should be voluntary
- short breaks in the morning, longer breaks better in the afternoon
- Opt for breaks away from screens in green spaces, engaging in some relaxation or physical activity<sup>8,9</sup>

Short breaks throughout the day can boost subsequent performance due to improvements in mood, concentration and reductions in stress following the break.<sup>10</sup>

# Tips for Supporting Mental Wellbeing

## Prioritise mental wellbeing

### Organisational-level decisions to support

- Make sure employees have the resources they need to be successful at work (e.g., time, equipment)
- Ensure workloads and task requirements are reasonable and not outside employees' abilities
- Include wellbeing as a strategic objective to maintain accountability

## Communicate

### Regular trusting and open conversations

- Set regular check-ins with all employees to listen to their challenges and ask how they can best support
- Offer support for colleagues when noticing changes (e.g., stress) in others
- Ensure people feel safe speaking up

## Make work meaningful

### Purposeful and fulfilling work

- Connect employees to a higher purpose to make work more engaging
- Provide feedback for work completed to improve likelihood of success
- Recognise people's efforts through regular acknowledgements (e.g., team call-outs)

## Promote proactive wellbeing behaviours

### Role-model healthy balance

- Show commitment of leaders to wellbeing by maintaining their own work-life balance; limit long working hours, asking for support and taking breaks.
- Promote collective office behaviours to encourage proactive wellbeing, e.g., going for walks, relaxation activities and healthy eating

## Reference List

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