

The Importance of Mental Health in the Work Place



The demands of the job in the American workforce are unlike any other in the world. For salaried employees this is especially true. Long hours, weekends and constantly being available are the norm. The truth is that most of us are “at work” even when we’re not at work. In order to function at full capacity, it’s vitally important that you are healthy not just physically but mentally as well. While employers have increasingly made physical well-being a top priority through initiatives like step programs and on-site gyms, not enough is being done to ensure mental and emotional well-being for employees. In order to reach your maximum potential, it’s paramount that mental and emotional well-being are a top priority. Identifying needs and having the appropriate resources available is crucial to the success of you, your team and the entire organization.

Recognizing and Identifying a Problem

Some [44 million Americans](#) suffer from a mental health condition. Though sometimes tricky, identifying mental health concerns upfront is integral for not only your ability to do your job, but your overall well-being. Symptoms of poor mental health can be subtle, but knowing what to look for upfront goes a long way. If you notice yourself being withdrawn, complacent, having an inability to focus or seem unmotivated, there is a good chance that something extraneous is affecting your performance.

Addressing Mental and Emotional Health

If you've identified symptoms and suspect that you might not be in a healthy mental or emotional state, it's something that certainly needs to be addressed. Finding a safe and confidential space to have a one-on-one conversation with someone you trust is the first step. When the time is right, schedule a meeting with your manager or supervisor to have a conversation. Communicating your concerns will not only lift a weight off your shoulders, but allow you to collaborate and plan a healthy course of action.

Caring for Mental and Emotional Health

In order to lead a productive and fruitful existence both at and away from the workplace, it's imperative that you take care of yourself.

1. Journaling

We all have days that are better than others. Sometimes the roller coaster of work and life can seem overwhelming. Setting aside a few minutes each day to simply write your thoughts down can go a long way in putting your mind at ease. Even if it is for five or 10 minutes before bed, putting your thoughts on paper not only provides an immediate outlet, but creates room for reflection down the road when times are difficult. It can provide a window into how far you've come in recent months, or highlight an area that maybe you haven't fully addressed and remind you there may still be some work to do.

2. Practice Gratitude

It's all too easy for us to focus on everything we don't have. Maybe your colleague got the promotion, was awarded that dream trip for sales performance or bought a new car. We find ourselves feeling jealous, inadequate and wondering why it wasn't us that was rewarded for our hard work. Comparing ourselves to others does little good. Instead, make it a point to recognize all that you have to be thankful for and write it down. Much like journaling, making a short list of people and things you are thankful for helps you focus and stay centered.

3. Exercise

Too many of us find ourselves stuck at our desk staring at a computer screen for countless hours every day. This is not only detrimental to our physical well-being, but our mental and emotional well-being as well. When we are physically active, our brain **releases endorphins** which improve our mood and increase our productivity. Even if it's simply going for a short walk at lunch, making exercise a part of your routine is essential for maintaining a positive frame of mind.

4. Get Enough Sleep

Getting enough sleep is important for your overall health. Continual sleep deprivation is proven to cause anxiety, depression and a host of other problems. Making sure that you get to bed on time and sleep soundly for seven to nine hours is directly linked to happiness and productivity. If you have problems sleeping, consult with your doctor to see what options you might have, and check with your employer to see what health resources are available to address the problem.

5. Be in Nature

We all long to be outside as much as possible. Wouldn't it be great to take that two week-long camping trip at a moment's notice? Unfortunately, for most of us that is simply not realistic. However, finding ways to spend even a little time outside on a regular basis is proven to increase self-esteem, stave off depression and increase creativity. Even if it's going for a short walk or making time to work in your yard or garden, being in nature can go a long way in caring for your mental health.

Meditation

Even though it sounds a bit goofy, the benefits of meditation are countless. From promoting sleep to improving memory, meditation plays a key part in helping you be at our best. Though it can be done at any time, setting aside just ten minutes to meditate in the morning or evening is enough to improve your state of mind. With so many types of meditation available, there is sure to be one that works for you.

The fact remains that most of us are going to spend a large part of our lives working. In order to be at your best, self-care is essential to the process. While physical health is highly important for us to do our jobs, mental and emotional

well-being must be looked after as well. By taking even a few small measures to look after yourself in this regard, you're sure to perform at your potential and further enjoy the process.