Wellness – Mental Health at Work Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

First and foremost, neglecting mental health in the workplace can lead to a decline in individual wellbeing. This can manifest as increased stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, and a general decrease in life satisfaction for employees. These issues not only affect their personal lives but also significantly impact their ability to function effectively at work.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

When we really look at what can go wrong if we don't pay attention to mental health at work, it goes way beyond just feeling a bit off. There can be some serious ripple effects that touch everyone and the whole company. Let's dig into some of those dangers.

Burnout: The Cost of Chronic Stress: Prolonged and excessive workplace stress can lead to burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. This manifests as cynicism, detachment from work, reduced feelings of accomplishment, and overall decreased wellbeing, significantly impacting productivity and retention.

Increased Prevalence of Mental Health Conditions: A negative or unsupportive work environment can exacerbate existing mental health conditions like anxiety and depression or even trigger their onset in previously healthy individuals. These conditions can severely impair focus, productivity, and overall quality of life.

Toxic Work Environment and Negative Culture: Neglecting mental wellbeing can contribute to a negative and toxic workplace culture characterized by poor communication, increased interpersonal conflict, low morale, lack of trust, and decreased collaboration, further stressing employees.

Impaired Cognitive Function and Increased Errors: Stress, anxiety, and depression can significantly impact cognitive functions such as concentration, memory, and decision-making. This can lead to increased errors, reduced quality of work, and potential safety incidents, depending on the industry.

Increased Risk of Substance Abuse: In some cases, individuals struggling with unaddressed mental health issues in the workplace may turn to substance abuse as a coping mechanism, leading to further health problems, decreased productivity, and

safety risks.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

We've covered a lot of ground on the potential challenges to our mental well-being at work. Now, let's shift gears and talk about what we can actually do to build resilience and foster a healthier relationship with our work and our minds.

Self-Awareness and Monitoring Your Wellbeing:

It's essential to develop the practice of regularly checking in with your emotional state. Pay attention to subtle shifts in your mood, energy levels, and overall wellbeing. Recognizing early signs of stress or fatigue can allow for proactive intervention.

Prioritizing Self-Care Practices:

Actively scheduling and engaging in self-care activities outside of work is a crucial element of maintaining mental health. This includes ensuring sufficient sleep, regular exercise, a balanced diet, and dedicating time to hobbies and interests that promote relaxation and rejuvenation.

Establishing and Maintaining Professional Boundaries:

Setting clear boundaries between work responsibilities and personal time is vital for preventing burnout. This may involve defining limits on availability outside of work hours and learning to manage workload by appropriately delegating or declining additional tasks when necessary.

Utilizing Stress Management Techniques:

Developing and consistently practicing effective stress management techniques can enhance resilience. This could include incorporating mindfulness exercises, deep breathing practices, or engaging in calming activities to mitigate the impact of workplace stressors.

What to Do in the Moment – Quick Wins for Tough Times:

When those tough feelings hit – whether it's that wave of overwhelm or that dip in your mood – remember you've got options, even if they feel small. Try taking a few deep breaths – seriously, it can reset things a little. Step away from what's stressing you out if you can, even for just five minutes to grab a drink or look out a window. Reach out to someone you trust with a quick text or call – just hearing a friendly voice can help. Focus on one small, manageable task to give yourself a sense of accomplishment. And be kind to yourself, okay? Remind yourself that this feeling won't last forever, and it's okay to not be at 100% all the time. You've got this.

Seeking Professional Mental Health Support:

If you experience persistent difficulties or feel that your mental health is significantly impacting your wellbeing and functioning, seeking guidance from a qualified mental health professional is a proactive step towards recovery and improved coping strategies.

FINAL WORD

Looking after our mental wellbeing at work isn't just about avoiding the bad stuff;

it’s about building a life that feels sustainable and fulfilling.
