

TOP TIPS FOR WELLBEING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Before the pandemic, the single largest cause of absence from work was stress. Since Covid-19 struck, we have all become aware of increased levels of fear and anxiety.

We are now in the second spike, with new lockdowns, redundancies, social division, uncertainty. Disruption to “normal” living is universal and many of the things we used to do to maintain a healthy balance in life are not widely available to us.

Based on client research and expert insights, here are eight top tips for looking after the wellbeing of you and your team during these uniquely challenging times. Many can be implemented at no cost.

1. Communication: *working remotely, cut off from our normal activities* makes it even more important to hear from others, to know what’s going on, to share concerns and new ideas. Some people are experiencing feelings of isolation, so will need particular encouragement

- Set up different ways for people to engage with the organisation, to connect with colleagues, to feel included (not just Zoom!). Consider small groups and one to ones
- An on-going plan instils confidence, making a big difference to wellbeing & performance
- Continue doing some of what you used to do, such as “show and tell” sessions, but introduce new ideas – invite staff to suggest ideas
- Communicate with compassion, these are troubling times and some struggle more than others, many suffer in silence

2. Mental stimulation: *with wall to wall bad news and many restrictions* to things that provide good mental stimulation, it’s beneficial to participate in (online) activities that can be done either individually or as a shared team experience. Compile a weekly/monthly list of suggestions that will positively affect mood, stress, sleep and creativity, for example

- Games and quizzes
- Wine tasting and cookery
- Company-wide gathering
- Creative play – writing, drawing
- Training/education – draw up a list of free online courses or inspiring TED Talks
- Meditation/mindfulness – offer a list of websites/apps or [invite a teacher](#) to run sessions

3. Physical fitness: *desk-based staff are now experiencing more back and neck pain* and headaches. Many people live in just one room so can be considerably less mobile and active

- Provide a (freely available online) guide to ergonomic do’s/don’ts about home working
- Promote the benefits of weekly/daily exercise
- Invite staff to set up running or other exercise clubs
- Provide a list of exercise websites
- Try out a fitness, pilates or [yoga teacher](#) to run classes

4. Emotional health: *the increase in demand for mental health services has been matched by a decrease in their availability. It's harder to keep an eye on the emotional wellbeing of your colleagues when you are not working face to face, which means that all the usual measures need to remain in place, and added to. These might include*

- Conversations with line manager, department head, HR, Mental Health First Aider
- Provide links to relevant websites
- Bring in a motivational speaker
- Give access to counselling or EAP services
- Meditation/mindfulness – offer a list websites/apps or try a teacher to run sessions

5. Nutrition: *what we eat affects both our physical and mental health, to maintain a strong immune system. But not everybody has the time, skill or inclination to cook at home to ensure a healthy, balanced diet*

- Direct people to freely available online advice, hints and tips
- Bring in a nutrition expert to bring the facts to life
- Participate in an online cookery course – can be a fun, shared experience

6. Sleep: *getting a good night's sleep is key to both physical and mental health. It affects our cognitive abilities, levels of concentration, energy, mood, stress and our immune system*

- Take advantage of free online advice, hints and tips
- Specific apps are available
- Bring in a sleep expert to explain, answer questions and provide solutions
- Particular meditations are proven to improve sleep – [ask an expert!](#)

7. Finances: *alongside job security, family and health, financial worry can be overwhelming and is a common cause of severe stress. It is a factor in a significant proportion of suicides*

- Money is a difficult subject for many people to discuss, so simply acknowledging an understanding of its particular importance at this time is a positive starting point
- Free online advice is available on sites including the NHS and the government, then there are commercial organisations to approach
- A financial adviser can offer practical advice in groups or one to one

8. Help others: *research has found that acts of kindness towards others are beneficial to our own wellbeing, improving mood, reducing stress and strengthening the immune system*

- Volunteer to help a local community organisation
- Donate things you no longer need to a charitable cause
- Offer a sandwich to a rough sleeper, food to a food bank or money to a charity
- Give blood

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