

Managing your mental health at work



Work
Life
Tools



How to look after your mental wellbeing to help you get the most from your working life.

Managing your mental health at work

Looking after your mental health at work is very important and will help you get the most from your working life. Our guide looks at some key aspects of managing your mental wellbeing.



Settling into a new job: the first three months

Starting a new job can be exciting but it may also put a strain on your mental wellbeing as you adjust to the challenges that come with a new job.

Try not to put too much pressure on yourself. It's quite normal and, while you may feel everyone else is adapting well, most new starters will be feeling the same as you. Here's what you can do to help:

- Try to get involved – whether that's taking on a new project or attending a work social event. Getting to know your colleagues will help you to feel more settled.
- Be prepared to adapt and learn – don't be afraid to ask if you are unsure about something. Speak to your line manager or your mentor if you've been assigned one. Remember that everyone was in your position once.
- Be patient and kind to yourself – it may take time to feel like you're settling in. Try to avoid comparing yourself to friends in other jobs who started at the same time.
- Find ways to settle into your new routine – working full-time hours for five days a week can be tiring. Find a way to switch off from work in the evenings and at the weekend, for example by starting or resuming a hobby. It's a good way to set up healthy habits for a work-life balance, and may lead to new friendships outside the workplace.

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Working from home

As working from home has become a normal part of many jobs, it's important to learn how to stay mentally well. Here are some strategies to help with that.

1. Think about what will help you stay mentally healthy, for example taking regular breaks, having a designated workspace, exercising.
2. Break up your working day with movement. This can be a quick burst of movement (like jumping jacks or lifting kettle bells) or some lower impact movement like a walk.
3. Get a routine and stick to it. This doesn't necessarily mean the traditional 9-5 office hours and only taking downtime in the evening. It simply means having a system for waking up on time, getting ready, feeling confident and getting your work done in a timely manner.
4. Don't be tempted to regularly work beyond your contracted hours. Once you sign off for the day, make it clear that you've finished working.
5. Find ways to focus. Write down your priorities at the beginning of each day and give yourself mini goals. Resources like the Pomodoro app are great for giving you a structure for focusing and taking breaks.

Don't beat yourself up if you're not focused all of the time. In the office you'll take breaks for tea and to talk to colleagues. Taking breaks away from the screen is just as important when you're working from home.

6. Look after your mental wellbeing:
 - Unwind – it's important to allow yourself time to relax and take breaks when working at home. Practice relaxation techniques or mindfulness. Make the effort to keep your work and non-work life separate.
 - Attend to your digital wellbeing. Turn off pop-up notifications and alerts on your computer and phone. Make use of 'do not disturb' or 'sleep' functions while you're working on tasks that require concentration.



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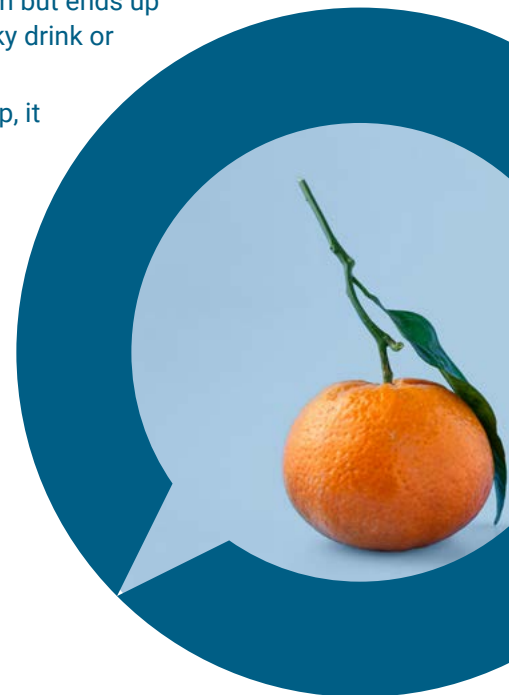
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Getting a good night's sleep

Starting a new job can be stressful, which may make it hard to get a good night's sleep, no matter how much you try. Lack of sleep makes us more prone to developing physical and mental health problems, so it's important to make sure you get the sleep your body needs. Here's how to get into a good sleep pattern:

1. Keep to regular sleep times. Humans are designed to be awake during the day and asleep at night. If you start to mess with this, it can have a profound impact on your mental and physical wellbeing.
2. Increase your exposure to natural sunlight or bright lights during the day, which can help your body wake up and be alert.
3. Where possible, keep your bedroom as a place for sleep. Things like a comfortable mattress and bedding can make a difference.
4. Reduce blue light exposure (from electronic devices and screens) at least an hour before you plan to go to sleep.
5. Don't look at screens in bed – this will wake your brain up and make it harder to switch off. Put your devices into sleep mode and/or in another room.
6. Take steps to calm your mind during the day. Meditation, guided relaxation or visualisations (creating calming images in your mind) can help you unwind. This is also helpful if you wake in the night and find it hard to get back to sleep.
7. Get regular exercise to help reduce any tensions that have built up during the day (but avoid excessive exercise just before bedtime).
8. Think about your diet. Avoid rich, heavy or spicy food before bedtime. Eating lots of sugar and refined carbs such as white bread and pasta during the day can trigger wakefulness at night and pull you out of the deep, restorative stages of sleep.
9. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine for several hours before you go to bed. Alcohol may help you drop off in the short term but ends up interfering with your sleep cycle. Try a hot milky drink or camomile tea instead.
10. Write down your worries before you go to sleep, it can really help.

If you wake up at night and can't get back to sleep, avoid checking the time. Try not to stress about it and focus instead on your breathing or practice visualisation. If that still doesn't work, try doing some non-stimulating activity like reading a book. Keep the lights dim and avoid screens or anything that might tell your brain it's time to wake up.



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Building your self-belief

Self-belief is having confidence in your ability to cope with the ups and downs of life. Self-belief can be learnt and here are some tips to help you strengthen yours:

1. Research shows that following the Five Ways to Wellbeing every day will have a positive effect on your confidence and self-belief. You can read more about how to integrate them into your life [here](#).
2. Know and acknowledge your strengths. Make lists of your positive qualities, the challenges you've faced in your life and successfully overcome, and your achievements. Look at these lists often and add to them. These lists will also be useful for compiling a CV and preparing for interviews.
3. Practice positive thinking. Focus on things that have gone well rather than dwelling on what has gone wrong. If you make a mistake, identify what you could have done differently and learn from it, but don't endlessly blame yourself. Notice and regulate your own self-talk. Constantly putting yourself down will keep your confidence low and prevent you from building self-belief. Counteract negative thoughts by reminding yourself of something positive about you.
4. Set yourself manageable goals. If you are faced with a task you find daunting, break it down into small interim goals. Practice each step several times before moving to the next one, that way your confidence will build. Acknowledge your successes and don't let negative thoughts discourage you.

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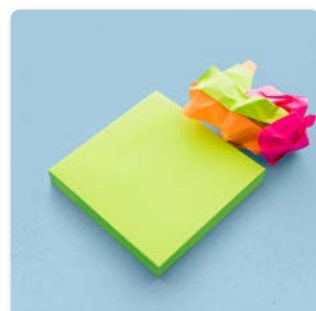
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