PEOPLE MATTERS SPECIAL:
MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust

Mental Health Foundation

10 Tips for Improving Your Mental Health at Work

We can all take steps to improve our own mental health and to build our resilience – our ability to cope with challenges.

Here's 10 evidence based ways to improve your mental health from the Mental Health Foundation:

Talk about your feelings

They say "a problem shared is a problem halved", so why not talk about your feelings to a colleague you trust or a line manager during your 1-2-1. This isn't a sign of weakness but a positive way of taking charge of your well-being. If you are open about how you feel, it might encourage others to do the same.

If you don't feel able to speak to people at work, use family or friends as a sounding board.

Alternatively, there's access to 24/7 confidential counselling via Perkbox's Employee Support Hub – go to https://whmat.perkbox.com/search/perks?=CIC and click on redeem perk or via the Education Support Partnership Charity on 08000 562 561.

Your GP may also be able to advise on the best course of action and may suggest talking therapies like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Keep active

Keeping active through exercise is vital for maintaining mental fitness and it can reduce stress. Exercise releases a happy chemical called serotonin in your brain. Try to make physical activity that you enjoy a part of your day, even if it's just a 15-minute walk. Free badminton clubs take place at WHA on a Monday and at Saltley on a Wednesday or suggest a Walking Meeting with your team or line manager to get some fresh air!

Fuel your body

I'm the first to comfort eat when feeling stressed or low on energy. However, fuelling your body with a diet that is good for your physical health is also good for your mental health. Even if you are busy, try not to skip lunch and try and

What is mental health?

Put simply, it's the way we think and feel and our ability to deal with the ups and downs that life throws at us. It determines how we act, how we relate to others and the decisions and choices that we make.

Mental health is something we all have.

When we enjoy good mental health, we have a sense of purpose and direction, the energy to do the things we want to do, and the ability to deal with the challenges of life!

Our mental health doesn't always stay the same. It can fluctuate as our experiences at work and in our personal lives change.

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drink water regularly. Get away from your desk if at all possible. If you are feeling stressed or low, try reducing caffeine and refined sugar. Try and plan your work lunches and snacks in advance to include fruit, vegetables and nuts that   provide ready nutrients.

Sleep well

Try to sleep well, as lack of good quality sleep can affect your memory, judgment and mood. Aim for 7-8 hours each night. Tips for sleeping better include: 1) Establish a set routine; 2) Keep your bedroom airy; 3) Avoid tech immediately before bed; 4) Avoid stimulants before bed; 5) Use mindfulness to help you relax.

Drink sensibly

For some of us, it can be tempting to drink more alcohol at the weekend or in the evenings when work is tough and/or we are feeling stressed. However, too much alcohol can lead to low mood and make us less motivated both inside and outside of work, so try to drink sensibly.

Keep in touch

Positive relationships are key to our mental health, so keep in touch. It can be helpful to find a mentor or reflection partner to discuss work issues and to sense check. Try and maintain friendships and family relationships outside of work even if work is feeling intense. Experts now believe that loneliness may be as bad for our health as smoking and obesity.

Ask for help

None of us are superhuman, so don't be afraid to ask for help. We can all sometimes feel overwhelmed by how we feel, or when things don't go to plan. Access your EAP or visit your GP, who may refer you to a specialist or another part of the health service such as a counsellor.

Take a break

A change of scene or a change of pace can be good for your mental health.

It could be a lunch break spent somewhere new, a podcast on your way into work or a weekend exploring a new hobby or location. When you are on leave or at home, resist the temptation to check work emails. If you can't, it could be a sign you are stressed and need to discuss your workload with your line manager

Let the laughter in

Laughter has many health benefits. It can decrease stress hormones and increase immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies. It also triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Even when work is tough, try and see the funny side of situations.

health problems?

We all have times when we feel down, stressed or frightened. Most of the time those feelings pass, but sometimes they develop into a problem like anxiety or depression, which can impact on our daily lives and require support and treatment.

What factors can contribute to them?

Mental health problems can happen to anybody but factors like poverty, genetics, childhood trauma, discrimination, lifestyle or overexposure to prolonged bouts of stress can make us more likely to develop them.

How do we recognise a mental health problem?

When we experience challenges at home, at work, or both, the chances are that this will impact on our mental health. The signs and symptoms of mental health problems can vary.

At work, we may notice:

- that our energy levels are lower than normal;

- that we are making uncharacteristic

Help others

By helping or caring for hers at work can help you feel more connected, provide you with a sense of meaning and help boost self-esteem. This can be positive for your own mental health. Can you be there for somebody you line manage or for a team mate. Can you coach or mentor a colleague who is more junior to you? Can you offer to volunteer on a governing body or local club. WHMAT recognises that caring responsibilities at home can be rewarding but also a source of stress.

For questions or feedback, please contact Michelle Gabriel, Director of HR.

mistakes;

- that we are finding it hard to motivate ourselves or to complete tasks;

- that we are short tempered and/or want to isolate ourselves;

- that we are; having sleepless nights or panic attacks;

- that we isolate ourselves or appear distracted;

- that we are reliant on unhealthy coping mechanisms e.g. alcohol, drugs or junk food.

As a rule, seek help from your GP if you:

- Have feelings that are affecting your mood over several weeks or are causing you to have suicidal thoughts,

- Are feeling unable to progress with your life and this is having a negative impact on the people you live or work with

Good mental health at work and good management go hand in hand and there is evidence that workplaces with high levels of mental well-being are mre productive.

Ten useful websites

1. www.time-to-change.org.uk
2. www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists
3. www.mentalhealth.org.uk
4. www.rethink.org
5. www.headstogether.org.uk
6. www.samaritans.org
7. www.actionforhappiness.org
8. www.mind.org.uk
9. www.together-uk.org
10. www.mentalhealth-uk.org