



How learning can benefit your team's mental health.

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Workplace
Health and Wellbeing **Academy**

Introduction.

In this issue, we'll look at how creating a learning culture within your organisation can boost mental health as well as work productivity.



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Mental health

Five ways to wellbeing

Learning



Mental health in the workplace

Around one in four adults in the UK will experience a mental health problem, like anxiety or depression, each year. Struggling with a mental health condition can negatively affect someone's quality of life, their relationship with friends and family, and also their performance and productivity in the workplace.

Recognising the importance of mental health in the workplace is key to looking after your team. As employers have a legal obligation to help, working to improve wellbeing and mental health should be a priority in all companies and for all managers. One way to achieve this is to create an inclusive learning culture within your team.

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problem, each year.**



Mind, 2020.

Mental health
in the workplace

The importance of
wellbeing in the workplace

Learning new skills
for mental health





The importance of wellbeing in the workplace

Mental health problems can seriously affect a person's wellbeing and may lead to physical illness and problems with relationships and work. Stress, depression or anxiety accounts for approximately half of all work-related ill health in the UK. People with mental health problems may be discriminated at work and are more at risk of losing their job.

It's estimated that around the world, 12 billion working days are lost each year due to depression and anxiety. This not only causes financial loss to a company but has wider implications for the economy. Poor mental health costs the UK economy between £74 billion and £99 billion a year.

Globally, around 12 billion working days are estimated to be lost each year due to depression and anxiety.

World Health Organization,
September 2022.



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Mind, 2022.





Learning new skills for mental health

Learning new skills, in whatever form, can be useful. They help us achieve things, become better at a task or open doors to new possibilities. But research shows that learning and education can also improve our mental wellbeing. Learning new skills can help boost confidence and self-esteem and give a sense of achievement.

For some people, learning a new skill could be associated with getting a qualification to improve and enhance their career. You may have team members who are keen to increase their skill set in the workplace. But there are lots of different ways to incorporate learning into daily life to achieve a positive impact on wellbeing.

Creating a psychologically safe environment where your employees have the option to learn will not only benefit them personally, but will also benefit your team.

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Five ways to wellbeing.

1 Learning

has been classed in government-commissioned research as one of five key ways to improve your wellbeing

Many people think of learning as school, university or college, and throughout childhood as we are taught new skills.

Continued learning throughout life can:

- enhance self-esteem
- encourage social interaction
- encourage a more active life

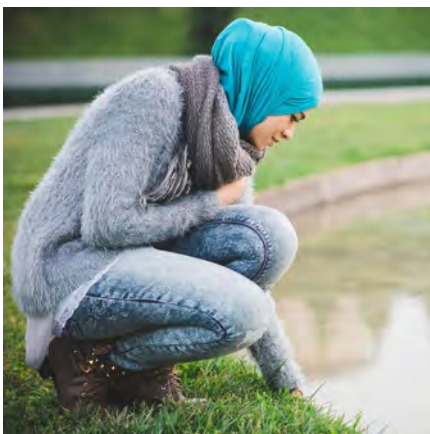
Adult learning often involves setting goals and reaching milestones, which is associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

2 Connect

Build relationships, make new connections and talk.

3 Be active

Stay physically active and reduce time being sedentary.



4 Take notice

Be present, notice what's around you and how you're feeling.

5 Give

Give back to the community, help others and be kind.



Implementing learning opportunities in your team

Learning isn't just courses and qualifications. Increasingly, large-scale employers make learning an integral part of their working culture and talent management systems. Businesses need structures and systems in place to support learning, and a shared vision for learning and transformation.

Even if your business isn't large, there are things you can implement to create a learning culture in the workplace to develop your team. Here are some ideas.

Create time for your employees to learn

It's hard to find both time and space at work to learn when there's deadlines and projects to deliver. If a team member expresses the desire to learn a new skill, give them some time to do so. Let them know that you see this time as valuable work (ie, not separate to their work, but part of it).

Give regular feedback

Positive and critical feedback are equally important. Critical (or negative) feedback may feel hard to give, but it's important to remember that without it, your team member won't learn and grow. With the right training, it can be delivered well to give the recipient the confidence they need to work on the feedback effectively.

Encourage mentorship

Having a mentor at work can help develop professional skills and navigate certain challenges. A mentor can also be a great point of contact to discuss career opportunities. Encourage your employees to have a mentor or help them identify a suitable individual.

Lead by example

As a manager or leader, you set an example to your team. Make sure you explore your own growth and learning opportunities and share these with your team.



Informal versus formal learning

A good way to view learning in the work place is as formal or informal.

Formal learning

Formal learning encompasses organised and structured learning. Examples of formal learning include having access to training courses, development days or workshops. Encourage all employees to take part in these where possible.

Informal learning

Informal learning involves developing knowledge and skill sets away from organised learning. This usually happens during standard work hours and while working on current projects. Examples of informal learning in the workplace include:

- problem-solving meetings
- sharing resources
- talking to team members and building relationships
- asking for help or advice

There are easy ways to encourage informal learning

- If a team member is working on a certain stand-alone project, ask them to share it with the rest of the team
- Hold regular team meetings that have flexible agendas and encourage informal conversation
- Invite people from other teams to share what they do
- Ask employees to work together on projects in small team
- Subscribe your team to relevant magazines, newsletters and bulletins to encourage self-initiated reading



Creating a learning culture

Creating a learning culture within a team, workforce or organisation isn't easy. It requires a mindset shift from both employees and management. A key ingredient is for leaders to allow time for learning and to invest in learning opportunities, whether they're formal or informal. This will not only benefit the mental health of your team, but also the quality of work and company productivity.

When creating learning opportunities, it's important to create an environment that encourages inclusive learning and accessibility. Not everybody learns in the same way. And since around 10 per cent of the UK population is neurodivergent, you may need to take different approaches. Neurodiversity describes alternative thinking styles, including dyslexia, autism, and dyspraxia.

On a practical level, consider accessibility to learning for disabled or neurodiverse employees. Factor in everything from external locations and settings to travel, to ensure every employee can maximise the benefits of learning opportunities.

Businesses need structures and systems in place to support learning, and a shared vision for learning and transformation.

CIPD, 2020



A key ingredient to creating a learning culture is for leaders to allow time for learning, and to invest in learning opportunities.



Resources.

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