

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 in any one year. Of these one in four adults, anxiety and depression is the most common. Poor mental health has personal implications for people, as well as impacting family and those around them. It also impacts businesses and has economic costs.

Looking after your team and working to improve wellbeing and mental health should be a priority in all companies and by all managers. One way this can be achieved is by creating a learning culture within your team.

1 in 4 adults
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Learning for Life. Adult learning, mental health and wellbeing. Mental Health Foundation, 2011.





The importance of wellbeing in the workplace

Mental health problems seriously affect a person's wellbeing and can lead to physical illness and problems with relationships and work. People may experience discrimination at work and are more at risk of losing their job.

It's estimated that 70 million sick days are lost each year due to mental health problems – that's 40 percent of the total number of days taken in a year.

This not only causes financial loss to a company but has wider implications to the economy.

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Mental health in the workplace.
Mental Health Foundation,
accessed June 2021.





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 at work. You may have team members who are keen to take any opportunity to increase their skill set in the workplace. But there are lots of different ways to incorporate learning into daily life, which can have a positive impact on wellbeing.

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

But continued learning throughout life can:

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

A key aspect to wellbeing associated with learning is goal setting. 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

Don't think of learning as just courses and qualifications. Large-scale employers, such as Google, make learning an integral part of their working culture and talent management systems.

Even though your business may not be as large (in scale and budget), there are things you can implement to create a learning culture to develop your team. Here's 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 and 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.

Encourage mentorship

Having a mentor at work can help develop professional skills and navigate certain challenges. They're also 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/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, as it suggests, encompasses organised and structured learning; so having access to training courses, development days or workshops. All employees should be encouraged 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. For example:

- through brainstorming or 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.

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Resources.

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