CIPD

Championing better work and working lives

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6 STEPS TO HELP YOUR TEAM THRIVE AT WORK

Six things every manager can do to make sure stress doesn't get in the way of success

When your team's happy, healthy and engaged in their work, they're more likely to meet their goals and help you to meet yours. More good days for your team lead to more good days for you, as well as a healthier, happier work environment.

On the other hand, when people are stressed or burned out, their performance and relationships with others will suffer.

So, what can you do to minimise some of the key triggers for workplace stress that could be holding you and your team back?

CIPD research shows that the most common causes of stress at work are heavy workloads and management style. And when you look at the other sources of workplace stress, such as organisational change, pressure to meet targets and lack of support from people managers, it's clear to see the important role you can play in reducing causes of stress.

Carving out time to consider these six simple steps will help you and your team to thrive:

1 Get to know your team better

- Give every member of your team a good induction when they start in a new role – it's a great way to get to know them and will help them settle in more quickly.
- If you inherit an existing team, avoid prioritising your own agenda from the get-go. Get to know the interpersonal dynamics, personalities and ways of working in the team before establishing your agenda.

- Have regular one-to-ones and put health and well-being on the agenda for every team meeting – it's an opportunity to discuss pressures and workloads, and work together to plan work effectively.
- Get to know what really matters to your team, remembering that everyone's different:
  • What motivates them? • What are their personal triggers for stress? • Do they feel resilient and able to manage their emotional needs? • Do they feel secure and supported in their job, and a sense of belonging and inclusion in the team? • Are they happy with their work–life balance? Are they aware of the role exercise and healthy eating plays in their well-being? • Would they feel comfortable raising any ongoing health concerns or personal issues with you?
- Make yourself personally available to talk; encourage your team to open up to you by showing empathy and really listening to people's concerns.

Read our top tips for having a conversation about stress:

peopleskillshub.cipd.co.uk/conversation-about-stress

2 Lead by example to promote healthy working habits

- Create time in your working day for exercise or other activities that can help reduce stress and burnout.
- Take time out to rest and recharge after busy periods – take regular lunch breaks and use your full annual leave entitlement.
- Take time off when you're unwell; don't struggle in to work or log on remotely. 'Presenteeism' (working when ill) is bad for health and bad for business.
- Avoid working excessive hours, emailing employees outside working hours or checking in with work when you're on holiday.
- If you need to do so, make it clear that you don't expect a reply immediately. A default email signature can communicate this in a succinct way.
- Take advantage of any flexible working opportunities your employer offers that might help you achieve a better work–life balance.

Take care of your own well-being, and do so visibly to show your team that it's okay for them to do the same.

3 Review workloads, duties and responsibilities

- Give everyone in your team all the information, training and development they need to perform their job to a good standard and understand how they contribute to wider organisational goals.
- Set clear and realistic deadlines and expectations.
- Watch out for people working excessive hours with no breaks – it could mean there's too much work to do, or your team might need support and development to work more effectively.
- Make sure everyone's roles and responsibilities are well matched with their skills, experience and career aspirations.
- Wherever possible, give your team a say over what they do and how they do it.
- Give people who work alone opportunities to form relationships with others and give those who work in busy teams the opportunity to work in a quieter environment from time to time.

Consider using an email signature such as the following to advocate your approach to flexible working:

'I work flexibly at the CIPD. If I'm sending this email outside of regular hours, it's because it suits my work pattern just now and, importantly, I don't expect you to read, respond or action it outside of your regular hours.'

4 Reflect on your own management style

- Does your team know where they stand with you? If you are fair, open and consistent, your team is more likely to cope well under pressure than if you are unpredictable or indecisive.
- How much positive and constructive feedback do you give your team?
- Are you open and approachable, and comfortable having sensitive conversations with people?
- How do you handle conflicts or cases of bullying or harassment? Do you sit on things and let them fester, or do you act decisively and rationally?
- Do you treat people as individuals and flex your management style to suit the needs of each team member?
- Do you give members of your team a good balance of autonomy and support?
- How do you communicate change and support your team through it?

Assess your management style with these free checklists:
hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.pdf

5 Discourage 'presenteeism' in your team

- If someone in your team is under the weather, make sure they stay home, recover, and return to work only once they're fit and healthy.
- Make clear that you don't expect anyone to work when ill. Recovering means switching off and ignoring emails altogether.
- Only contact the person to ask how they are; don't enquire about work.
- Look out for signs that someone in your team might be unwell or struggling to perform in their role due to ill health. These signs might be obvious (like the flu), or less visible (like ongoing stress and anxiety).
- Have regular catch-ups with your team where you ask after their health and well-being as a matter of course. It's easier to spot the signs of ill health if you know them on an individual level.
- Be prepared to have a sensitive, supportive conversation with a team member if you feel they shouldn't be at work – it's better for their (and their colleagues') health if they go home and get better.
- Some people feel under pressure to not take their annual leave, or to work while they're on holiday. This is counterproductive, as people need to have a break from work. As a manager, you're an important role model, so make sure you take your leave and resist checking in with your team while you're on holiday. Your team will in turn be more likely to do the same.
- Check workloads and schedules in advance to ensure your team has adequate time to take holiday and that they won't feel obligated to work over busy periods.

Learn how to manage annual leave and ensure your staff take the time off they need:
peopleskillshub.cipd. co.uk/managing-people-essentials/holidays-time-off

If presenteeism persists despite your best efforts, you might need to turn to your HR department for help.

6 Manage the mental health of your team while remote working

- An increasing number of people are now working from home, so pay particular attention to the support they need to stay connected.
- Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport, reduces feelings of isolation and eases communication between people working from home. You could set up a daily virtual huddle – essential for keeping connected as a team and checking in on each other's well-being.
- People can be more sensitive if they're feeling isolated or anxious, so tailor your feedback and communications. Communicate regularly and make sure you give constructive and positive feedback to help them feel engaged and valued.
- Listen closely and read between the lines. Working remotely means you won't always be able to gauge body language or tone to sense what people are thinking or feeling. Home in on what's not being said and ask questions to clarify your interpretation. Set up one-to-ones using videoconferencing so you can see someone's face and pick up on facial cues.
- Support a healthy work–life balance. Help your team avoid burnout and overworking by encouraging regular breaks and clear start and finish times for the working day. Encourage self-care and healthy habits, such as getting exercise, sleep and fresh air (if possible), and practising relaxation techniques like yoga and mindfulness.
- Remind your team of their existing health and well-being benefits (such as employee assistance programmes, counselling or occupational health), and how to access them when working remotely.
- Trust your team to get on with their work but provide them with support and supervision. Set clear expectations, focusing on results rather than monitoring hours worked. Without trust, working relationships can deteriorate and well-being will suffer.

Explore our series of top tips helping you and your team get the most out of homeworking:

cipd.co.uk/knowledge/ fundamentals/relations/ flexible-working/remote- working-top-tips

Build your confidence as a people manager

If you're really serious about helping your team succeed, why not ask your HR team to help you explore different types of people management, well-being and conflict management training?

No HR team? Then take your development into your own hands with this free online course for new and aspiring people managers: bit.ly/people-management-skills

Why this matters to the CIPD

The CIPD's purpose is to champion better work and working lives – we believe work can and should be a force for good. It should benefit workers, the organisations they work for, and the communities and societies they live in.

This starts with valuing people – both our contribution to business success and our fundamental right to lead a fulfilling and healthy working life.

Find out more at: cipd.co.uk/about

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