

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

How to create a psychologically safe workplace

Today's employers feature physically safe environments because significant attention and priority have been given to ensuring the workplace will not put employees at risk.

As the emotional and financial burden associated with mental illness become an increasing focus for employers, it is important to create and contribute to a psychologically safe working environment.

Steps to creating a mentally healthy workplace

Pay attention. Keep an eye on your team members' workload and signs of stress. Do they seem overburdened? Are you noticing a shift in their personality? Take the time to sit down with them, and try to adjust their workload if they seem unfairly burdened.

Be flexible. Work commitments and home life challenges can collide to create the perfect storm for employees. However, flexible hours, telecommuting policies and compressed work weeks can be effective ways to boost employee job satisfaction and productivity while reducing stress.

Empower and challenge. Give employees the appropriate authority to do their job and make decisions that are logically within their scope. Offer challenging and rewarding work that will allow them to grow and stretch professionally, while providing job satisfaction.

Recognize. Take the time to acknowledge a job well done whenever possible. In other words, catch people doing things right. When employees feel acknowledged and appreciated, it can make a big difference to their state of mind at work.

Set team members up for success. Ensure your team members have what they need to succeed – whether it is access to information, more training or personal direction, and/or coaching from you.

Be fair. Remember that as a people leader you need to exercise fairness in all aspects of leadership. Preferential treatment, inequitable distribution of work and inconsistent expectations can cause resentment and stress within the team.

Promote respect in the workplace. Implement a zero tolerance philosophy (or promote your organization's policy if you have one) for bullying, gossiping and sabotage. Every employee deserves the right to be respected in the workplace and should feel respected on the job.

Be supportive. Has an employee come to you with issues they're experiencing on the job? Or are you aware of an employee who is experiencing a mental health concern? If so, be responsive and supportive. Additionally, make sure they are aware of the resources available to them – such as their Employee Assistance Program.

Evaluate. Take a good, objective look at the culture of your organization and department – is it conducive to good mental health, or are there easily identified issues that need to be addressed? Be proactive and take the steps necessary to create a positive, healthy working environment that benefits everyone.

Protecting the mental well-being of employees on the job is a fundamental component of being a responsible employer – it's good for employees and it's good for business. To learn more about creating and fostering mentally healthy workplaces, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

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