

The Advisor

Resources for Supervisors, Managers, and Human Resources Personnel

1-800-367-7474

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Promoting Wellness in the Workplace

We all hear about the importance of wellness in the workplace. But are you doing what you can to promote it?

Wellness is more than eating well and exercising. Looking at wellness in broader terms provides leaders with an opportunity to take an active role in promoting a healthy and productive workplace. Some common components of wellness include:

- Physical health
- Social connections
- Work
- Community
- Finances

Creating workplace conditions that are favorable to wellness is not only good for morale, but can lead to decreased absenteeism and increased productivity. Some ways that you can promote wellness in the workplace include:

Physical Health

- **Support your organization's wellness program.** Many organizations have formal programs or initiatives to promote better health. By reminding employees of what is available, you send the message that you care about them and want them to take advantage of the company's benefit.
- **Role model healthy behaviors.** The first person you lead is yourself — and your behavior impacts others. Are you getting your preventative checkups? Are you looking for ways to build physical activity into your day?



Do you support those who are taking steps to improve their overall health?

- **Serve water at meetings and training sessions.** Chances are many of your employees have been drinking caffeinated beverages throughout the day — and caffeine can lead to dehydration, especially for people who work outdoors. Drinking water helps people to slow down and focus, while also reminding them that even simple things can have a positive impact on health and productivity.
- **Hold “walk and talk” meetings.** Getting your team outside for a stroll in nice weather will not only be a change of pace, but could result in fresh ideas. Recent research shows that standing during meetings promotes creative thinking.

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- **Support your organization's flu shot initiative or recommendations.** If your organization provides flu shots for free, allow time for everyone to get vaccinated. Encourage people who are visibly ill to stay home if at all possible to avoid spreading the virus throughout your workplace. Research shows that one sick employee can infect up to 50% of co-workers in her or his office area within two hours.

Social Connections

- **Give staff members time to connect in meetings.** Allow a few minutes at the start of every meeting for people to engage in casual chitchat. In Monday meetings, take a minute to ask about weekend activities, or share weekend plans during late-week meetings. These moments of informal bonding may do wonders for helping your team to work

How Do I Say That

If an employee is frequently late, consider these tips:

- **Document.** Record those dates when the employee did not arrive on time and note how late he or she was each time.
- **Consult with Human Resources.** Talk to HR about how to address the concern and familiarize yourself with any relevant policies. You may also want to consult with the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service.
- **Schedule a private meeting.** Discuss your concerns with the employee and outline the impact his or her behavior is having on individual co-workers and the team. For example: *"When you are late, it forces your co-workers to cover for you."*
- **Listen to the employee's response.** Allow the employee to give her or his perspective on the tardiness. In some instances, the employee may reveal that the late arrival is the result of logistical issues, such as using public transportation, school or childcare schedules, or working multiple jobs. If this is the case, you may want to consider adjusting the employee's schedule so that she or he can more easily arrive on time.
- **Make a referral to LifeMatters® by Empathia.** In addition to addressing performance issues, LifeMatters can help the employee examine his or her schedule and find ways to better manage time. If the employee is working multiple jobs because of financial issues, the LifeMatters Financial Consultation Service can provide assistance with budgeting and debt management.
- **Follow up.** Meet with the employee at a later date to see if the pattern of tardiness has decreased. If the employee is still not meeting performance expectations, consult with HR about next steps. Do not take any disciplinary action without speaking with HR.

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can provide coaching and assistance with a variety of management-related concerns. Call anytime.

together and go a long way toward maintaining good morale.

- **Get teams together for local charity events.** Most communities sponsor events to raise money for various causes that your employees care about. Find out what they are and post a sign-up sheet. Working together to help others builds relationships and feeds the spirit, while also boosting morale and fostering teamwork and camaraderie.

Work

- **Encourage employees to take their lunch hours and other breaks.** Remember that people who take short, periodic breaks are generally more alert and effective than those who try to work through without a respite.
- **Establish healthy boundaries between work and home.** Do your best to respect people's private time. If extra hours are necessary, acknowledge employee efforts and be sure to show a connection between the extra work and meeting the organization's goals. You may get better buy in if employees understand the timeline and the reasons for their efforts.
- **Encourage people to use their allotted vacation time.** One of the best ways to do this is to talk about your plans for your own vacation. Others will follow your lead. If one of your employees rarely uses his or her personal time, a one-on-one conversation may be all the permission she or he needs to schedule time off.
- **Remain calm in the face of a setback or crisis.** Encourage people to take a breath when they are under pressure and stay focused on the task at hand. Emphasize the importance of doing a job well the first time around rather than rushing and risking mistakes, and use humor to help staffers ease tension and blow off steam.



Remember, you set the example for how to handle stress in your workplace.

- **Remind employees about LifeMatters® by Empathia.** When an employee is having personal issues, remind him or her that LifeMatters is available to provide 24/7 assistance. LifeMatters can also provide consultation and assistance for managers and HR when dealing with employees who are having performance issues.

Community

- **Encourage employees to participate in activities that are offered by the organization.** Brown bag lunch presentations, in-services, and other events create opportunities to connect with others. When an employee is pursuing

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educational efforts outside the workplace, do your best to provide reasonable work schedule accommodations as necessary.

- **Address team issues early.** Maintaining a culture of trust and safety has a direct impact on health and productivity. If you become aware of harassment or bullying behaviors, consult with HR and the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service on how to address it. Problems left to fester often lead to turnover and morale issues.

Finances

- **Encourage employees to take advantage of retirement savings programs.** If you have younger employees who may not understand the importance of starting early in these programs, talk to HR about setting up a meeting that will show them the long-term benefits of participation.
- **Refer to the LifeMatters Financial Consultation Service.** If an employee

Language assistance services in your preferred spoken and written languages are available at no cost by calling 1-800-367-7474.

self-discloses that he or she is having issues with money, make him or her aware that LifeMatters can provide help with budgeting, debt management, and many other issues. In addition, refer the employee to HR to find out what discounts and services may be available as part of his or her workplace benefits package.

Finally, don't overdo it. While emphasizing wellness is important, keep in mind that employees have a right to eat what they want or engage in other behaviors that you might consider unhealthy. Leading by example is important, but avoid becoming the "wellness police."

If you want more ideas on how to promote wellness in your workplace, contact the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service. In addition, the following books may be of help:

Wellness Leadership: Creating Supportive Environments For Healthier And More Productive Employees by Judd Allen, Ph.D., Healthyculture.com, 2008

The Corporate Wellness Bible: Your guide to keeping happy, healthy and wise in the workplace by Kate Cook, Infinite Ideas, 2013

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