



MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

**THE WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH
PROMOTION HANDBOOK**



MHP Hands Team



Mental Health Promotion

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PROMOTION HANDBOOK**

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Foreword

The issue of mental health is becoming increasingly important in modern society. Psychological problems and mental illness are becoming more prevalent across much of Europe and there is an emerging realisation that we must, as a society, promote good mental health and wellbeing, as well as improve mental health services.

We now know that good mental health and wellbeing is a function of the settings and environments that we interact with, the way in which we behave and the supports that are available to us. These settings include the schools that we attend, the workplaces we work in and the residences that we live in.

However, many people have difficulty understanding how an environment can promote mental wellbeing. These Mental Health Promotion Handbooks address that gap in knowledge. They provide users in the schools, workplace and older people's settings with a set of validated tools to promote mental health, as well as providing methods by which to implement actions to promote mental wellbeing.

The Manuals are targeted at people with responsibilities in each of these settings, for example, teachers and

educators; managers and health and safety staff; nurses and carers. No prior knowledge of mental health issues is assumed – you will find that all necessary materials are available through the manuals and that these are supplemented by mental health promotion tools and training that are available through the European Network for mental Health Promotion Network website¹.

These Manuals have been developed with the support of the European Commission's Public Health programme. The work has been done by leading experts from some of Europe's leading mental health promotion institutes. These include teams from the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, led by Jörg Michel; eWorx in Greece, led by Tilia Bousios; from the Austrian Research Institute of the Red Cross led by Almut Bachinger; from the Estonian-Swedish Institute Mental Health and Suicidology Institute led by Merike Sisask; the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare led by Pia Solin; the Polish NOFER Institute of Occupational Medicine led by Elżbieta Korzeniowska; and by our own team at the Work Research Centre in Ireland, led by Richard Wynne. The project has been evaluated by a team from Romtens in Romania led by Theodor Haratau. My sincerest thanks are due to all of the team.

Richard Wynne, Project Manager, January 2013.

¹ <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/>

Why managers should use this manual

In society at large, mental health problems are on the increase – rates of depression and anxiety are rising. About 25% of the population will experience a mental health problem at some point during their lifetime. Mental health is therefore an important issue for everyone.

The nature of work in Europe is changing – as economies become more knowledge intensive, the mental challenges of work become more apparent. Many people are currently working in precarious employment situations, which leaves employees even more vulnerable to experiencing mental health problems.

The mental health of employees influences the workplace in many ways – indicators include low morale in the workforce, strained team work, bullying and destruction of working relationships. Ultimately, this may lead to increased levels of absenteeism.

In the majority of EU countries, mental health problems are the biggest single cause of absence from work. In 2007, the total productivity costs of mental health disorders in the EU-25 (including Norway, Iceland and Switzerland) were estimated to be €136.3 billion – This

amounts to almost €600 per worker per year. In comparison, the productivity losses for cardiovascular disease were only €36.1 billion in the same year. Moreover, presenteeism may further increase these costs by between 50% and 500%.

However, work is generally good for the mental health of workers. Employment not only provides an income but also creates a sense of security and fulfilment, while promoting one's self-esteem. Work can encourage a sense of community among staff members and provides social support. It also contributes to the personal development of the individual employee.

This manual provides managers with a practical and effective set of tools for taking action to improving the wellbeing of their workers. It contains numerous beneficial techniques that help prevent problems from arising in the first instance and for promoting mental health. This unique resource allows managers to identify and address the expression of mental health problems in the workplace, to reduce the costs associated with these problems as well as improving the psychosocial climate at work.

Table of Contents

SECTION 0 | INTRODUCTION TO MHP-HANDBOOKS

12

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 0.1 | The importance of mental health and wellbeing | 12 |
| 0.2 | Settings and target groups | 12 |
| 0.3 | Who should use the manuals? | 12 |
| 0.4 | The content of the manuals | 12 |
| 0.5 | Field testing the manuals | 14 |
| 0.6 | Acknowledgements | 14 |

SECTION 1 | BASICS IN MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

16

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Understanding MHP – Concepts, Benefits, General Principles | 17 |
| 1.1 Positive Mental Health | 17 |
| 1.2 The Concept of MHP | 18 |
| 1.3 The Benefits of MHP | 18 |
| 1.4 Ethical Issues in MHP | 19 |
| 1.5 Needs of the population | 20 |
| 1.6 Factors for success: Evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence | 20 |
| 2. Implementing MHP Initiatives | 22 |
| 2.1 A MHP project: How to get started and how to run it | 23 |
| 2.2 MHP: Individual Skills and Organisational Influences | 25 |
| 2.3 Identifying Needs for MHP | 25 |
| 2.4 Getting Support for MHP | 26 |
| 2.5 Communicating and Promoting the Idea of MHP | 27 |
| 2.6 Personal and Social Skills | 28 |
| 2.7 Training for MHP | 28 |
| 2.8 Evaluating Success and Continuous Improvement | 29 |
| 3. Roles in MHP initiatives | 30 |
| 3.1 MHP as a Multidisciplinary Endeavour | 30 |
| 3.2 Key Roles in MHP | 30 |
| 3.3 Role Specific Knowledge and Skills | 31 |
| 4. Bibliography | 33 |

SECTION 2 | TOPICS, METHODS AND TOOLS FOR MHP IN THE WORKPLACE

36

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction: Key Areas/Topics for MHP Interventions in the Workplace | 37 |
| 1.1 Key Areas for MHP Interventions in the workplace | 37 |
| 1.2 Area 1: The impact of leadership | 38 |
| 1.3 Area 2: The role of communication | 38 |
| 1.4 Area 3: Understanding stress in the workplace | 39 |
| 1.5 Area 4: Dealing with work related stress | 39 |
| 1.6 Structure of the topics and how to work with them | 40 |
| 1.7 Topics for MHP Interventions | 40 |
| AREA 1: THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP | 42 |
| 1. Impact of one's own behaviour (the impact of the leadership role on one's mental health) | 42 |
| 2. Cohesion of teams | 44 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3. Identifying your own leadership style | 49 |
| 4. Encouraging others to participate | 52 |
| 5. Valuing staff | 55 |
| 6. Dealing with conflicts – responsibility for subordinates | 58 |
| 7. Dealing with Bullying or Harassment | 62 |
| 8. Advocating on behalf of your team | 66 |
| AREA 2: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE | 68 |
| 1. Organising Effective Communications | 68 |
| 2. Positive and Negative Communicating styles | 73 |
| 3. Reviewing your own Communication style | 76 |
| 4. What Managers can do to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace | 79 |
| AREA 3: UNDERSTANDING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE | 83 |
| Introduction | 83 |
| 1. The dynamics of workplace stress | 84 |
| 2. Understanding your workforce | 90 |
| AREA 4 DEALING WITH WORK RELATED STRESS | 95 |
| 1. Carrying out a stress risk analysis | 95 |
| 2. How to provide support and adapt the workplace to reduce the negative impact of stress | 95 |
| 3. Coping skills for workers | 102 |
| 4. Work-life-balance in your team | 105 |

SECTION 3 | EXERCISES

110

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1. 10 recommendations about mental health | 113 |
| 2. How you can really change your behaviour! | 115 |
| 3. Checklist: How stressed am I in my job? | 118 |
| 4. Exercise based on Theme-Centred Interaction (TCI) model | 120 |
| 5. Team clock | 126 |
| 6. Structured team meetings | 129 |
| 7. Feedback rules | 131 |
| 8. Occupational health surveys | 133 |
| 9. Health promotion circles | 135 |
| 10. Structured Idea Meetings – Group Brainstorming | 138 |
| 11. Four channels of communication | 140 |
| 12. Appreciative Inquiry – Positive Problem Solving | 144 |
| 13. Non-violent communication | 148 |
| 14. Target agreements on behalf of the team | 151 |
| 15. Inventory of Communication Functions and Methods | 152 |
| 16. Active Listening Exercise | 155 |
| 17. Preparing the Key Messages for making the Business Case for Mental Health Promotion | 158 |
| 18. Risk Management Standards | 161 |
| 19. Return to work interviews | 164 |
| 20. Glossary of the company health standards and experts | 168 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 21. Progressive Muscle Relaxation by Jacobson | 172 |
| 22. Hidden rules of your team | 174 |
| 23. Time Management Techniques | 176 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|------------------|--|----|
| TABLE 1: | ROLES IN IMPLEMENTING MHP | 31 |
| TABLE 2: | SKILLS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION | 33 |
| TABLE 3: | KEY AREAS, TOPICS, AND EXERCISES IN THIS HANDBOOK | 41 |
| TABLE 4: | HOW THE LEADER'S BEHAVIOUR CAN INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS | 45 |
| TABLE 5: | ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES | 50 |
| TABLE 6: | GUIDELINES FOR FOSTERING CHANGE | 72 |
| TABLE 7: | GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION | 74 |
| TABLE 8: | THE FIVE DOMAINS OF WORKPLACE WELLBEING | 80 |
| TABLE 9: | DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING AN AWARENESS PROGRAMME | 87 |
| TABLE 10: | RISKS, NEEDS AND PREFERENCES | 90 |
| TABLE 11: | WORKERS SUFFERING FROM WORK-RELATED STRESS, OVERALL FATIGUE, ANXIETY, IRRITABILITY, SLEEPING PROBLEMS BY ECONOMIC SECTOR (%) | 93 |
| TABLE 12: | PRIORITY TRAINING AREAS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RISK PREVENTION, ACCORDING TO EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS, SPAIN. | 97 |

Introduction to MHP-Handbooks

Section 0

0.1 The importance of mental health and wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing is increasingly recognised as an important component of health throughout the lifespan. Mental health is centrally concerned with positive mental health characteristics, as opposed to mental illness. The ability to function well at the emotional, cognitive and social levels are prerequisites for good health and wellbeing.

0.2 Settings and target groups

The settings in which we work and live play a major role in maintaining and boosting our mental wellbeing and preventing the development of mental health problems. These are the places where we spend our time and the health promoting features/ design of these environments strongly influences our mental health and wellbeing.

Of course, mental wellbeing is not only affected by the external environment, it is also associated with how we act, think and feel. Individuals can actively promote their own mental health and wellbeing.

There are a wide range of settings or environments in which we live and these manuals are concerned with three of the major settings across the lifecycle.

- **Schools** – this manual deals with young people who are in primary, secondary and tertiary level schools
- **Workplaces** – this manual deals with the workplace as a means of targeting working age adults
- **Older people's residences** – this manual is targeted at older people, who are resident either in their own homes or in residential settings.

This handbook is for managers and team leaders in the workplace who wish to improve and promote the mental health and wellbeing of their employees and co-workers.

0.3 Who should use the manuals?

While workers are the ultimate target groups for this handbook, it is not expected that employees will undertake mental health promoting interventions on their own. The direct target group for the workplace setting handbook are: Line managers, Human Resource Personnel and Health and Safety staff.

0.4 The content of the manuals

Each of the manuals aims to support changes in individual behaviour that will support and promote mental health. The user is expected to learn about and implement interventions that are designed to improve the wellbeing of workers. The manuals contain many suggestions for doing so and they provide a broad description of the tools and processes that need to be followed.

The manuals have four main sections:

- **A short introduction**
- **A description of the basics of mental health promotion**
- **The roles and skills needed for mental health promotion**
- **Topics, methods and tools for mental health promotion.**

Each manual has a number of specific topics that are relevant to that setting, for example, the older people's manual addresses 8 such topics including physical health and exercise, socialising and learning and studying.

Within each of these topics there is also a common structure. First, the topic is defined and described. Then it is discussed in terms of mental health promotion, followed by a description of how MHP may be implemented in relation to the topic. Each topic also has a set of associated exercises to support the user as well as some examples and suggestions for further reading.

Much of the supporting material that the user will need can be found on the MHP-Hands website:

<http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=handbook.en.resources>

Specifically information on tools, examples and exercises is contained on this site.

More generally, the website contains useful supplementary material for the user including the ProMen-Pol website, which contains more than 400 tools for MHP and the Mind-Health website which contains an online training course on mental health promotion. This training course should be seen as an adjunct to the handbooks. The handbooks focus particularly on interventions targeted at individuals, while the e-learning course targets the structural features of the settings.

0.5 Field testing the manuals

The MHP-Hands project has field trialled the manuals in each of the settings. You can find more information about this process on the project website:

<http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=handbook.en.contact>

0.6 Acknowledgements

The MHP-Hands Manuals have been produced by multinational team from Ireland (Work Research Centre Ltd.), Germany (Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Medizin (BAUA), Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health BAUA), Estonia (Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute ERSI), Austria (Forschungsinstitut des Roten Kreuzes, Research Institute of the Red Cross FRK), Finland (National Institute for Health and Welfare THL), Poland (NOFER Institute of Occupational Medicine), Romania (Fundatia Romtens) and Greece (EWORX S.A.).

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Basics in Mental Health Promotion

Section 1

1 Understanding MHP – Concepts, Benefits, General Principles

The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) definition of health is the best known and most practical definition available (1946):

- “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

This definition recognises the mental, physical and social dimensions of health. Moreover, it also recognises that health does not merely refer to the absence of disease or illness, but that health is a more positive state which involves wellness or wellbeing.

With regards to mental health, the WHO (2001) provides the following definition:

- “Mental health can be understood as a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community”.

1.1 Positive Mental Health

Mental health is a state of wellbeing that results in productivity and fulfilling relationships, as well as the ability to cope with the normal stresses of life. Mental health influences how people think, communicate, learn and grow. Perceived wellbeing strengthens resilience and self-esteem. These are the ingredients for successful involvement in the community, in society, in professional life, and in relationships.

Mental health and mental illness have often been described as points on a continuum. However, research on the dimensions of mental health suggests that there are two continuums to be considered and that the absence of mental illness may not always be reflective of genuine mental health (see figure 1). The continuum of ‘flourishing and languishing’ (Keyes, 2002) takes the positive approach to mental health and postulates that even in the absence of complete mental health, a person may be flourishing. It is important to take these dimensions into account, as they have been found to have an effect on health and wellbeing.

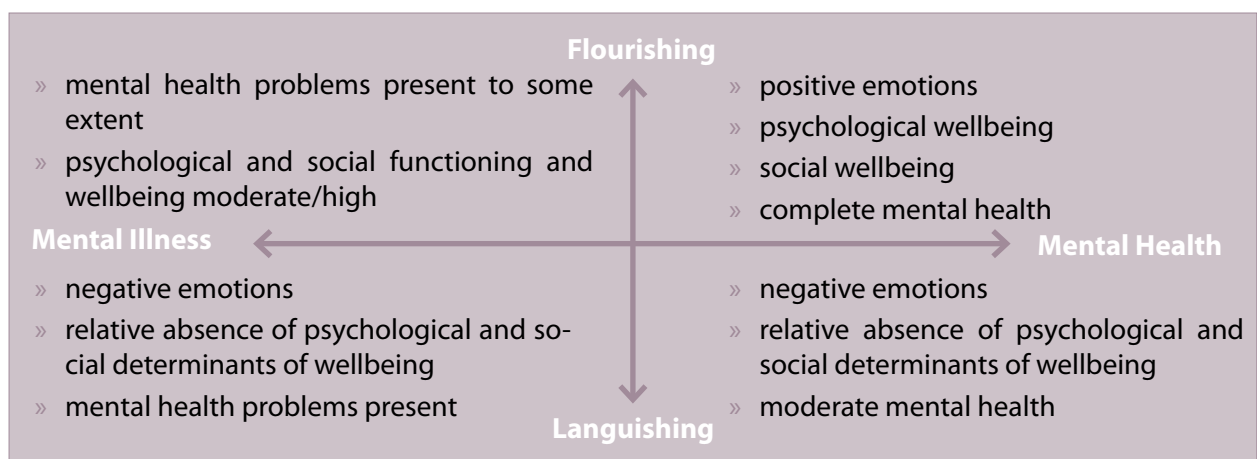


Figure 1: Continuums of mental health
(adapted from Keyes, 2002)

Mental health problems, as compared to mental health disorders, are fairly common and are often experienced during periods of high stress or following upsetting events. For example, bereavement symptoms of less than two months' duration do not qualify as mental disorders. Nevertheless, bereavement can become debilitating if the individual receives no support during this period. It may also be necessary for the bereaved person to attend counselling during this time. Active efforts in mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment can significantly reduce an individual's risk of developing a mental health disorder.

1.2 The Concept of MHP

The definition of mental health promotion is very similar to the general concept of health promotion as defined by the WHO in 1986. Therefore they have several common elements:

- a focus on the enhancement of wellbeing rather than on illness
- address the population as a whole, including people experiencing risk conditions, in the context of everyday life
- are oriented toward taking action on the determinants of health, such as income and housing
- broaden the focus to include protective factors, rather than simply focusing on risk factors and conditions
- include a wide range of strategies such as communication, education, policy development, organisational change, community development and local activities
- acknowledge and reinforce the competencies of the population
- encompass the health and social fields as well as medical services

It is necessary to separate mental health promotion from mental disorder prevention as the distinction between these terms is often blurred.

“Mental health promotion aims to promote positive mental health by increasing psychological wellbeing, competence and resilience, and by creating supporting living conditions and environments. Mental disorder prevention has as its target the reduction of symptoms and ultimately of mental disorders. It uses mental health promotion strategies as one of the means to achieve these goals. Mental health promotion when aiming to enhance positive mental health in the community may also have the secondary outcome of decreasing the incidence of mental disorders.” (WHO, 2004)

1.3 The Benefits of MHP

There are many reasons why organisations and companies should focus their attention on mental health promotion in the workplace. Aside from legal obligations and ethical duties, there is also a clear economic business case: In the UK, for example, studies show that more prevalent mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression account for 12 million lost working days each year (ILO, 2009). The cost to employers in relation to lost productivity as a result of mental problems is even higher than that caused by most other health problems. Mental health promotion can reduce the costs of absenteeism and helps prevent increased workload for employees who must take on the work of absent colleagues. Moreover, it can be a driver for successful business as it can foster increased productivity and performance by strengthening commitment and morale, lowering staff turnover and the associated costs of recruitment and training. A mentally healthy workplace can also help people to cope with change and difficult circumstances. This is particularly important in challenging economic conditions.

Mental health affects general health in many ways. It is clear, for example, that stress can lead to different physical illnesses such as coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes and that it plays a crucial role in risky health behaviours and addictions, such as heavy smoking and drinking or drug abuse.

Finally, the reputation of the organisation can benefit from the implementation of mental health promotion programmes. Being known as an organisation that takes responsibility for promoting the mental health of its employees can be of great benefit and can become part of the organisations' PR campaign. This improved image will assist in terms of recruiting new staff, enhancing the company's public reputation and appeals in a positive way to customers (European Network for Workplace Health Promotion, 2011).

1.4 Ethical Issues in MHP

The ethical issues involved in mental health promotion can be quite complex. These matters will differ between organisations or companies and will depend on the specific activities that are being carried out. Given that MHP deals with health issues, and that it often involves people with mental health problems, there are a number of ethical issues that may arise when implementing a MHP programme. The main ethical issues which need to be addressed include:

Beneficence - 'do positive good'

- The programme should be soundly based and its purpose should be to improve mental well-being
- The programme should be preceded by a careful assessment of the predictable risks, as well as the foreseeable benefits
- Adequate facilities and procedures should be in place in order to deal with any potential hazards

Informed consent

- Each potential participant must be adequately informed about the programme aims, methods, anticipated benefits and potential hazards, and any discomfort it might entail
- Participants have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from the project - all participants must be volunteers
- Any documentation given to potential participants should be clear and easy to understand
- Participants must be given the opportunity to raise issues of concern
- A complaints procedure must be available to all those involved

Confidentiality and anonymity

- The programme should conform to current data protection legislation
- All confidential details must be securely stored and be accessible only by those responsible for this task in the project
- It should not be possible to identify anyone from the reports of the MHP programme

Further information on the ProMenPol Ethical Vision and the steps involved in the management of ethical issues can be found at: http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/resources/promenpol_ethical_vision-2.pdf

1.5 Needs of the population

The impact of MHP activities inside the organisation is directly linked to the extent to which these activities meet the specific needs of the workforce. Hence, it is not advisable to implement off-the-shelf programmes. Instead, it is recommended to first undertake an analysis of the needs of the workforce and then to introduce programmes and activities that directly address those specific needs.

The methods used for data collection will vary according to the type and size of the organisation, the characteristics of the workforce and the resources available for such purposes. Conducting a needs analysis might involve face-to-face interviews, questionnaires or group discussions with managers, employees, employee representatives and health and safety professionals.

The second part of this handbook contains a topic called “Understanding your workforce”, which provides guidance on how to carry out a needs analysis in practice.

1.6 Factors for success: Evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence

Developing a successful plan for a mental health promotion programme or project requires achievable and measurable goals, which are based on the results of the needs analysis. A detailed project plan will help to ensure that the project is run professionally. It also ensures that all relevant parties have a common understanding of what will happen and of their roles and responsibilities. It will also ensure that they have access to information regarding available resources.

A sound plan for the implementation of a mental health promotion programme should include the following elements:

- All relevant details of the project plan (aims, goals, activities, responsibilities, budget, schedule, expected outcomes, training needs, available and required resources, monitoring procedures) must be agreed upon with top management
- The key elements of the project plan should be communicated to all relevant parties
- Activities should be planned according to ethical principles and guidelines

The mental health promotion planning phase can be divided into four steps:

1. Setting goals and targeting activities
2. Selecting mental health promotion tools
3. Implementing the plan
4. Monitoring and evaluation, follow-up

Setting goals

Goals must be measurable, achievable and understandable. It is possible to split larger long-term goals into several short-term goals with clearly defined aims for each activity. The roles and responsibilities of those involved must be specified clearly. The time-frame needs to be determined in advance in order to identify when certain goals must be achieved. This process includes the following actions:

- Determine the target group(s)
- Specify the duration of the intervention and the expected benefits
- Organise the plan with reference to short-term and long-term goals and set timeframes
- Specify expected and measurable outcomes
- Set indicators of achievement/success or process indicators
- Communicate the results to all relevant parties (stakeholders)

Good project management will assist with the development of a precise action and activity plan. Although a general project plan will have already been developed, there is also a need for a specific plan for each element of the implementation.

This also includes resources and responsibilities for the implementation of activities.

- Assign resources, personnel and a schedule for each activity
- Make use of existing resources where possible – it keeps costs down and helps to integrate the programme into the work environment
- Ensure reporting of the activities that take place

Targeting actions

This step relates to setting goals for each of the planned activities. It should incorporate the following elements:

- Set easily measurable targets for each of the activities
- Explore ways in which to involve all employees
- Incorporate learning activities
- Consider using multiple methods to reach the target group and use the communication channels that are common to the target group
- Consider any specific barriers that may exist for the target group

Selecting MHP tools

The selection of appropriate mental health promotion (MHP) tools is essential for the success of the project. MHP tools can support any activity during the process of implementation, i.e. project management, needs analysis instruments, problem-solving guidelines, etc.

- Ensure that high quality tools are selected and that the expertise needed to operate the tools is available. Organise training if necessary
- Seek advice from professionals who have previously used the tool(s)

Implementing the plan

Before implementing any of the activities of the mental health promotion programme or project, it is important to ensure that all facilities are available and ready for use.

The following steps are recommended when implementing the plan:

- Ensure that resources are available in sufficient quantities and are ready for use
- Hold a meeting to ensure that everything is organised and that everyone is clear about their

- own responsibilities
- Ensure adequate communication around the planned activities;
- Provide sustained support to all those involved
- Create a positive atmosphere at the workplace by promoting the mental health of employees

Follow-up and evaluation

The procedures for monitoring the progress of the MHP project need to be agreed upon as early as possible and they need to be in accordance with the project plan. Feedback from the monitoring process should be available during the operation of the programme and should be used to change the programme activities if necessary.

The following elements should be included:

- Qualitative and quantitative indicators
- Schedule of monitoring activities
- Feedback mechanisms and schedules, and
- Review and monitoring of progress

Evaluation involves analysing the data from the monitoring process and using the results to address questions such as “Has the process worked? Was the process efficient? Has the programme improved the health of the target group(s)?”

Mental health promotion programmes in the workplace are most successful if they involve the whole organisation, change the corporate culture, include personal skills development and if the programmes last for one year or longer. (ProMenPol, 2009)

2 Implementing MHP Initiatives

This chapter deals with the implementation of Mental Health Promotion initiatives in the workplace. While the implementation of a MHP project is the main activity, there are also some important aspects to be addressed before and after implementation. Therefore, the chapter starts with some ideas on how to get started and how to run a MHP initiative.

Furthermore, the following chapters highlight and describe some important aspects which you might take into account when implementing a MHP initiative by yourself, such as:

- Individual skills and organisational influences
- Identifying needs and making plans for MHP
- Gaining support and identifying resources for a MHP programme
- Communicating and promoting the idea of mental health
- Personal and social skills
- Training for MHP
- Evaluating success and continuous improvement

2.1 A MHP project: How to get started and how to run it

Mental Health Promotion (MHP) in the workplace should be seen as part of the everyday work of any professional who has responsibility for the supervision or management of staff. However, specific activities can also be organised as a project.

Some ideas about MHP may already exist in the workplace. However, in order to implement a MHP initiative successfully, these ideas need to be organised and embedded in a rationally planned process. There are many factors that should be taken into account and there is a risk that not all of these will be identified because of the complexity of the issue. To make the initiative manageable it is helpful to think of the individual skills that are required for carrying out a MHP initiative. It is also necessary to take the specific nature of the organisation (company, public service etc.) into account.

Both, individual skills and organisational influences are major factors and both have an effect on the course and the success of any MHP activity because:

- individual skills and organisational influences are strongly interconnected
- both factors contain aspects that can facilitate and hinder implementation, processes and outcomes.

A good way to get started is to think about a MHP initiative as a process that evolves in steps or stages. A common four step approach is presented in the chart below. The chart also highlights some activities within each step and points out the circular nature of the process.

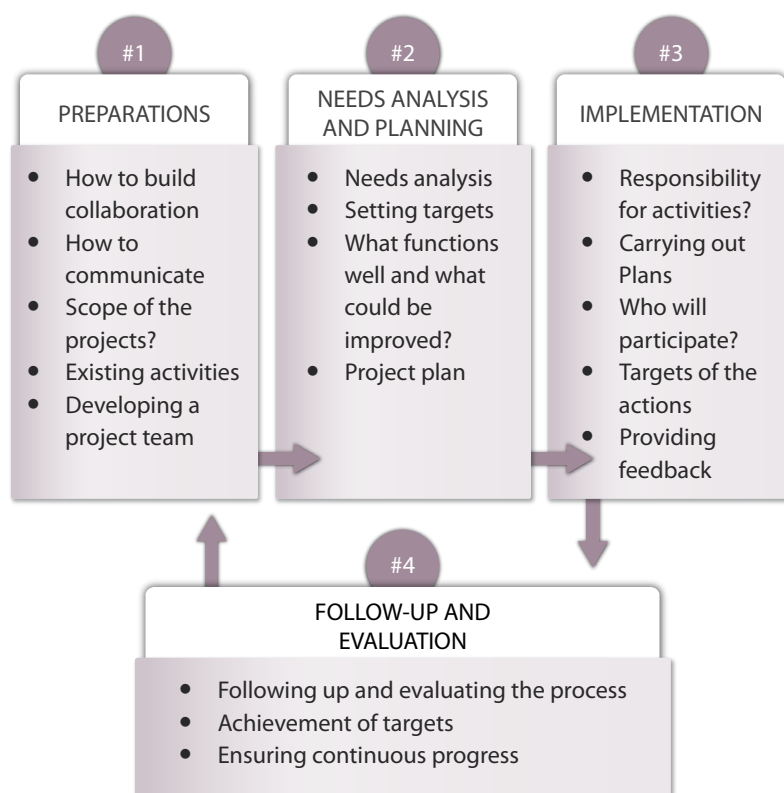


Figure 2: The Four Step Approach for Implementing MHP

(ProMenPol, 2009)

➔ **STEP 1: MAKING PREPARATIONS**

This first step is about getting ready to embark upon a MHP initiative within an organisation. A good start is important and it is desirable that the MHP initiative is integrated in on-going organisational activities and routines (e.g. quality assurance activities, leadership training). Setting up the process will involve consideration of established good practices from areas relating to project and process management such as building collaboration, communications, scoping the project and developing a project team.

A committed project team, with a clear mandate to manage and implement the project, is a key success factor in every MHP project. This team should be made up of representatives of the major stakeholders in the organisation (e.g. HR manager, employee representatives, employees), as well as experts who contribute meaningfully to the development of the project (e.g. Occupational Health and Safety staff). Given that a significant function of the preparation phase is to gather support for creating a MHP project, it is crucial that the approval and support of top and middle management and other relevant actors within the organisation is obtained. The project team will also have to set up appropriate structures to support the MHP project, e.g. communication channels, reporting relationships and policy development structures. This may be achieved by adapting existing features or by setting up new structures.

➔ **STEP 2: NEEDS ANALYSIS AND PLANNING**

A needs analysis ascertains the current state of health and wellbeing of individuals within the organisation. This activity helps identify risk factors for mental ill health and highlights areas requiring improvement. The output of this phase provides the basic information upon which the mental health project plan is set up.

The specific processes involved in the needs analysis are described below.

➔ **STEP 3: IMPLEMENTATION**

Using the mental health project plan, the project team needs to determine which activities can be implemented. Before an activity can be implemented, the project team has to identify which resources, facilities and personnel are needed. Goals should be clarified and the means by which to achieve these objectives should be understood. At this stage the project team must address who is responsible for what tasks, and when and how these activities will take place.

To ensure that implementation runs as smoothly as possible it is important to inform everyone about the activities which have been selected, when they will be introduced and how people can participate in these activities. Nevertheless, you might be confronted with individuals who lack interest in the project or experience resistance towards the plans and activities. It is wise to consider these issues in advance and to think about ways in which to deal with potential problems.

➔ **STEP 4: FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION**

MHP-projects should be evaluated and revised prior to any additional implementations.

Evaluating a MHP project can be a complex task. Often many different activities are carried out and

it is hard to get a clear picture of how each activity contributed to the overall success of the initiative. However, it should at least be possible to say something about the overall impact of the project and it is important to carry out a basic evaluation to discern which effects actually occurred. In-depth evaluation might not be possible without access to additional resources and expertise, which may reside outside the organisation. Evaluation is also important for determining whether or not the project achieved its goals.

There are several ways in which to obtain information for the evaluation. The first is to collect people's opinions by organising discussions, conducting interviews or administering questionnaires. You can also refer to data on absence days, staff turn-over, etc. In any case, the results from the evaluation serve as the basis for revising future MHP plans and activities.

2.2 MHP: Individual Skills and Organisational Influences

From an organisational perspective, MHP can be seen as a typical innovation process. As such, the process becomes an intervention in social systems, establishing new roles and structures, which as a result shapes values, norms and beliefs concerning mental health. MHP therefore will require changes within the organisation in terms of behaviour, actions, communication, and decision making procedures. This also means changes in relations within social networks, namely: among colleagues, among managers (of the same level or between management hierarchies) and between these groups, e.g. between managers and employees. Sometimes the creation of new organisational structures is required.

When professionals are properly trained and have the ability to implement MHP, but are either not supported or actively opposed by the organisation, they will be unable to conduct effective MHP activities. On the other hand, a company could provide supportive structures for MHP but the individuals involved may not possess the skills they need for effective implementation. In both these scenarios, it is unlikely that the MHP initiative will be successful. Consequently, individual skills and organisational support should be treated as two sides of the same coin and both have to be taken into account while planning, implementing and evaluating a MHP programme.

2.3 Identifying Needs for MHP

The process of identifying needs for a MHP programme should involve four central activities: Gathering and analysing data, setting targets, selecting MHP tools and planning the project.

The success of the needs assessment phase depends on a range of issues. The most important of these is participation of people during the data collection phase. To encourage participation, a comprehensive briefing on the purpose, activities and benefits of the project is essential. Ethical issues such as confidentiality, anonymity and security also need to be addressed with the appropriate stakeholders. Finally, the needs identification activities are likely to generate quite a lot of (realistic and unrealistic) expectations. For this reason it is essential that information, feedback about results, and transparency of the processes are considered thoroughly.

So how can you identify the needs of the workforce? A thorough needs analysis should combine information that already exists within the organisation (e.g. absence days, health records etc.) with data collected specifically for the MHP programme.

The needs analysis provides the basis for setting priorities and targets within the project plan. This can

be done in several ways:

- Involve the project team in the use or adaptation of an existing needs analysis instrument, or develop a new instrument (e.g. checklist, questionnaire, interview schedule, focus group instrument)
- Ensure high standards in relation to anonymity and confidentiality (and other ethical issues)
- Communicate the results of the needs analysis to all relevant stakeholders (e.g. management, employees, employee representatives)

The important issue here is to use a set of multiple methods rather than relying on one single method, e.g. a paper survey. You should bear in mind that all the methods and tools used to identify needs have their own particular strengths and weaknesses.

It is also worth remembering that the needs for MHP may not only be restricted to the topic or to the content of the programme. Needs relating to the way in which the programme is implemented can also be analysed, e.g. preferences in terms of the educational methods used.

Neglecting the needs analysis may result in a situation where the implementers undertake activities that are only important to them. This is not necessarily in keeping with the real needs of the target group and it is not cost effective.

In most cases, you do not have to develop your own tools and instruments (e.g. planning tools, check lists, screening instruments, questionnaires, evaluation instruments) as there are a large number already available, for example on the ProMenPol website.

The following factors should be taken into account when selecting a tool:

- Ensure as far as possible that the tools selected are of a high standard (e.g. validated, appropriate and accepted by the target group)
- Ensure that the expertise needed to operate the tools is available for the project
- Seek advice from professionals or people who have previously used the tools (e.g. colleagues)

2.4 Getting Support for MHP

Support for your MHP activities can be obtained internally and externally. The more support that you can get from the relevant individuals and groups within your organisation, the easier it will be to implement MHP and the better the outcomes.

The following four recommendations may be helpful:

- Elaborate the business case for the project
- Convince and seek support from key individuals and groups. These may include senior management, line management, HR personnel, staff representatives or leaders of different kinds
- Ensure the project is visibly supported by top management and workers representatives
- Identify potential members of the project team

Good communication is crucial for success. Sometimes it is necessary to develop such a plan for the project which includes the material and communication channels to be used, along with a schedule.

In addition, managing expectations is a major part of any project. The best way to achieve both of these aims (i.e. obtaining support and managing expectations) is to develop an agreement between the pro-

ject team and the management which covers the main points of the project plan, and also to communicate the agreement to all of the major stakeholders.

Mental health promotion activities sometimes require specific skills and knowledge, particularly in certain types of intervention, e.g. when the content of the programme is connected to specific problems such as depression, bullying, etc. In these circumstances it may be wise to look for support from outside the organisation.

There are a range of public or private institutions and agencies working in the field of public health or mental health promotion. Therefore, it is important to become familiar with the support infrastructure and services available, where assistance and advice may be accessed if necessary.

Institutions that can support MHP programmes in the workplace include health promotion centres, NGOs, public health institutions, medical institutions, legal institutions such as the Health and Safety Executive, health insurance and social security services (e.g. pension funds), employer associations or unions.

It is always important to make sure that all the members of the team understand why external support is being utilised and how their own activities are complementary to those of the supporting agency/body. Equally, those providing support should be informed about both the detail of the programme and the specific organisational factors which may affect implementation of the MHP programme.

In some cases, support may be provided by particular individuals rather than institutions, i.e. private counsellors.

2.5 Communicating and Promoting the Idea of MHP

In order to communicate the importance of the MHP initiative, it is necessary to target the appropriate setting and participants you want to involve. This process is vital since even the most essential programme will not be successful if it is not understood and accepted by the target groups and management.

- The most important issue, therefore, is to identify the appropriate communication channels and the right tone to get the key messages across. Below is some guidance on getting people involved and gaining acceptance of the project: The issues involved in mental health are usually of a sensitive nature. People do not like to talk about mental health and are afraid that they will be stigmatised if they disclose that they are experiencing mental health problems. Therefore, in order to communicate these issues and market the idea among employees, it is vital to build an atmosphere of trust to encourage communication and openness in relation to mental health.
- People want to be “heard”. This means that it is not sufficient to simply inform people; they should be granted the chance to give their opinion as well.
- It is important to use language that is appropriate to the receiver of the message. In the case of MHP, that means avoiding professional jargon and using language that most people in the organisation will understand. Also, bear in mind that workplace staff members are diverse in terms of age, education, gender, ethnicity, etc. Different groups may have alternative communication styles and needs. Ensure that no one is excluded by using group specific language
- It is vital to compose messages in a way that highlights the benefits of becoming involved in MHP activities.

- Think carefully about the media you use for communication. Not everyone in the organisation might have access to e-mail or to a computer (in case you want to use intranet). This is particularly relevant for those who work in the industrial, handcraft, logistics and storage sectors, or those who work as field staff.
- In a nutshell; it is always important to plan communication and to tailor it to the needs and capacities of the audience.

2.6 Personal and Social Skills

There are several personal and social skills that someone responsible for a MHP programme should possess. He/she requires knowledge of MHP concepts as well as the ability to set programme objectives, to create the framework for the programme and to utilise appropriate methods for the evaluation of the project's processes and outcomes. Secondly, the person should have the social and organisational skills necessary to create awareness of the programme, to motivate employee interest, to organise their collaboration, to appreciate their achievements, to solve conflicts and to encourage people to conduct their work in a timely and efficient manner. In other words, the person should possess management skills.

A key task in achieving this is to build a proficient project team and to ensure that all operations work efficiently. To do this, one should:

- Select competent individuals for the project team
- Ensure representation of the major stakeholder groups (e.g. management, team leaders)
- Develop a preliminary project plan to cover the early stages of the MHP process
- Assign roles to the members of the project team, e.g. project manager, communications and reporting, liaison with external stakeholders (where envisaged), data analyst.
- Manage any ethical issues that apply (e.g. use an ethics checklist)
- Assign resources, personnel and a schedule to each of the project activities
- Make use of existing resources where possible (e.g. health promotion) – this keeps costs down and it helps to integrate the programme into normal organisational practice
- Ensure that there are clear lines of reporting on the activities that take place.

2.7 Training for MHP

Becoming responsible for a MHP programme does not automatically mean that you have the specific knowledge, skills and competencies that are required. So undertaking some form of training might be necessary to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to prepare for the new tasks.

This is not just applicable to the project manager but might also be helpful for all other members of the project team. Training, therefore, should be arranged for members of a team to provide them with an opportunity to learn about MHP concepts and rules; the model phases of implementing a MHP programme; the possible fields of intervention; and how to assess the programme's effects.

It is advisable that all members of the team take part in training together. This way they simultaneously improve their knowledge and develop together as a team. If possible, the training should include a diagnostic phase and guidance on building a programme plan. The first version of a health promotion programme can then be developed, providing an additional outcome of the training. Depending on the scope of the programme, other courses that improve the knowledge and abilities of the MHP team (e.g.

enhancing communication skills) can also be useful. If possible, these courses should be tailored to suit the particular target group and setting of interest.

It is advisable that some team members acquire in-depth knowledge about MHP activities.

To assure the quality of training, it is always important to ask the following questions:

1. To what extent have the objectives of the training been fulfilled?
2. To what extent have the participants learning objectives been achieved?
3. To what extent is the new knowledge beneficial for the organisation as a whole and, specifically, for MHP implementation?
4. Do the participants have the opportunity to implement the new knowledge?

The quality of the training may determine the quality of MHP implementation.

“Training for Mental Health Promotion” is a training programme (MindHealth) specifically designed to teach people how to manage MHP programmes. The programme is designed and provided by the same consortium responsible for this handbook. It is a web-based training programme which addresses the different stages of the MHP process and provides a range of useful tools, exercises, literature and other resources. To locate the training programme, visit the website www.mentalhealthpromotion.net and then click on “Mindhealth”.

2.8 Evaluating Success and Continuous Improvement

A MHP programme is an ongoing activity and can be seen as a process that is being continuously improved.

It is important that evaluation is not regarded as a one-stage activity at the end of the programme, but rather as a continuous system of implementation and assessment.

To prepare a strategy for evaluation it is important to be familiar with the nature of the MHP programme. A MHP programme is not a final product that is implemented regardless of the circumstances. It is a kind of framework that can be developed and adapted according to the situation.

Protocols and procedures for monitoring the progress of the MHP project have to be established at an early stage. These should be developed at the same time as the project plan as this allows a comprehensive and proactive monitoring approach. Feedback from the monitoring process should be used to make any necessary modifications to the programme. Evaluation refers to the process of analysing the information from the monitoring process and using it to answer questions such as: Has the process worked efficiently? Has it improved what was intended?

Areas of specific interest in an evaluation include:

- Cost-benefit and cost-efficiency assessment: Do the benefits of the programme outweigh its costs? Could the programme be run in a more efficient way? Could another programme be more successful?
- Impact assessment: What are the immediate impacts of the programme in terms of, for example, attitudes of staff, awareness of mental health issues, satisfaction with the programme?

- Outcome assessment: What are the long term outcomes of the project?
- Process assessment: How did the MHP process of implementation work in terms of people's participation, satisfaction with the process and awareness of the programme?
- Sustainability is a key goal involved in all MHP programmes and therefore continuous adaptation and improvement is essential.

3 Roles in MHP initiatives

3.1 MHP as a Multidisciplinary Endeavour

The success of MHP in the workplace is based on several factors, including the promotion of positive attitudes, engagement, social support and appropriate resources. In terms of MHP interventions, there are already several quality criteria and reliable approaches available.

The reliability of the strategies and methods used determines the quality of the interventions. Because health promotion aims to develop sustainable solutions, programmes are oriented on several key principles and methods such as salutogenesis (promoting health), determinants of health, participation and empowerment.

Strategies of health promotion are more effective and sustainable if a network is established which consists of a broad range of stakeholders from various sectors and professions beyond the health sector. Mental health promotion is a cross-cutting issue which involves collaboration between different professionals and sectors. This collaboration allows for the utilisation of a range of knowledge, skills and resources to develop an integrated MHP approach.

There are several potential partners for workplace MHP initiatives:

- General manager and senior management level
- First management level, line manager, team leader
- HR managers and HR personnel
- Front line staff, operatives
- Employee representatives, workers' council
- Occupational health and safety professionals

In addition, there are other resources external to the organisation that can be utilised.

These may include:

- Health professionals, e.g. general health practitioners, therapists, psychologists
- Health services and institutions like health insurance companies
- Social and psychological services, NGOs
- Others, e.g. training providers

3.2 Key Roles in MHP

One of the key issues is the selection and availability of different stakeholders and professionals who could be involved in the MHP programme. As the above list shows, there is a broad range of potential actors available; however, this can vary across countries, economic sectors, institutions, organisations and companies.

Professional and stakeholder groups may vary, but the roles are very similar across all MHP programmes. The main roles that are involved in implementing MHP are outlined in the table below.

Table1: Roles in implementing MHP

| Role | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Expert | This refers to the person who has the technical knowledge to implement the MHP initiative. They are typically health professionals. |
| Decision maker | This refers to the person who makes decisions about the extent, scope, duration and other parameters of the MHP initiative. Typically this is an individual from senior management. |
| Implementer | This refers to the person who implements the activities of the programme or initiative. Typically, this would be someone from the first management level, like a line manager or a team leader |
| Developer | This refers to the role of developing or planning the MHP initiative. Typically, he/she could be an external consultant or a project manager. |
| Change manager | This refers to the person responsible for implementing any organisational change that is needed as part of the initiative. Typically, this would be a senior manager or external consultant. |
| Marketer | This refers to the person who is responsible for 'marketing' or persuading people to take part in or support the initiative. |
| Monitor | This refers to the person who is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and consolidating the initiative. |

3.3 Role Specific Knowledge and Skills

MHP programmes require people with specific knowledge and skills to take on particular roles.

When developing this handbook, focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews with different types of professionals from different kinds of organisations were conducted in order to find out which specific knowledge and skills are necessary for the various roles in MHP. The broad consensus was that it is necessary to involve different kinds of stakeholders and professionals to carry out a MHP programme in the workplace.

Among the participants involved in these consultations, the central and operative role in MHP initiatives was reportedly played by the implementer. This role was assigned to HR personnel and front line managers by the majority of participants. The role of the decision maker was often assigned to professionals such as the chief executive officer or the general manager, or people from senior management such as a department leader. Very often these professionals were also assigned to the role of the promoter of the MHP initiative. Other professionals who hold managerial positions were also assigned to this role (e.g. team leader, HR professional, Health and Safety professional, etc.).

The experts' role was often assigned to the health professionals but also to external trainers. Developers for MHP initiatives were seen as coming from all professional groups. Finally, the monitor or evaluator of MHP initiatives was typically seen as the responsibility of team leaders or HR staff.

Characteristic activities of the different roles were assigned as follows:

The Expert has responsibility for communication, motivation, and supporting activities.

Decision makers need to undertake advocacy activities for the MHP initiative in order to secure participation, cooperation and networking with relevant stakeholders.

Developers undertake planning activities in relation to the development and implementation of MHP projects, such as budgeting, resource planning, etc.

The role of the implementer is probably the most important as he or she is in direct contact with the beneficiary group (employees). Hence this role covers a wide range of activities such as preparing and planning the MHP intervention, carrying out the needs analysis, communicating the programme and evaluating it.

Some activities overlap with that of the promoter, who is responsible for comprehensive communication on activities and for internal networking. The promoter's role also involves balancing different interests and demands, organising support, and obtaining resources (e.g. financial).

The role of the monitor is focussed on gathering and analysing information on the direction, progress and outcome of the project. The role also includes responsibility for cost benefit analysis and budget control. In summary:

- The knowledge and skill requirements for roles across the different elements of an MHP programme vary substantially.
- Effective and sustainable MHP requires the involvement of different stakeholders and professionals
- Implementers hold the most important position and therefore need a broad set of skills and a comprehensive knowledge of MHP

Table 2: Skills for Mental Health Promotion

| Skill category | Specific skills | Description and examples |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Technical skills | Professional competence and expertise | |
| | Core skills (of the concerned professional) | depending on economic sector, branch, type of organisation or company and products or services it produces |
| | Specialist skills | depending on economic sector, branch, type of organisation or company and products or services it produces |
| | Knowledge | e.g. legal and ethical issues |
| | Process skills | e.g. for managing the overall interaction, creative and critical thinking skills, problem solving skills |
| | Management skills | Planning and Organisation skills; Decision Making skills: assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation, evaluation, e.g. of working process |
| | Leadership skills | e.g. delegation of tasks, organising work |
| Social skills | any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others | |
| | Expressive skills | for stating a point of view non-defensively but assertively |
| | Communication skills | verbal and non-verbal, e.g. listening skills for attending to another person's point of view, networking, team working, skills to motivate and support |
| | Commissioning, procurement and negotiation skills | |
| | Teaching skills | |
| Personal skills | Self management and emotional skills | |
| | Time management | |
| | Stress management | |
| | Self responsibility | |
| | Assertiveness | |
| | Emotional skills | e.g. sensitivity, empathy, sense of self, self-reflection and interpersonal skills such as effective communication with employees, their families and professionals in the care team (family communication skills) |

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Topics, Methods and Tools for MHP in the Workplace

Section 2 of this handbook introduces the key areas that must be considered when promoting and protecting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. An introduction to the key areas and related topics is provided here.

The following chapters, which are subdivided into areas, present the topics in detail. Each topic is discussed and practical aspects of the implementation process are explained. In addition, exercises and good-practice examples are also provided.

Section 2

1 Introduction: Key Areas/Topics for MHP Interventions in the Workplace

1.1 Key Areas for MHP Interventions in the workplace

Promoting the mental health of employees in the workplace requires a multidimensional perspective. There are several aspects to be considered. These include the work environment, corporate culture, leadership style of management, and the social cohesion and mode of communication between colleagues, all of which have an influence on the mental wellbeing of employees.

Numerous studies indicate that in order to establish an effective mental health promotion project in an organisation, interventions on both the individual and organisational levels are recommended. This handbook concentrates on interventions that address the individual aspects and which can be carried out by supervisors at all levels within the organisation to promote the mental health of workers under their supervision. The focus, therefore, is on topics of communication, leadership and individual interventions on stress.

As the aim of this handbook is to explain key aspects of positive mental health and to empower users to implement MHP measures in their organisation, it offers a flexible package of methods, tools and training. To obtain a clear understanding of the actual needs of managers in terms of the knowledge and skills required for implementing MHP measures, a thorough needs analysis was carried out. This needs analysis involved focus group work and in-depth interviews with managers from different hierarchical levels; HR personnel, employee representatives, company physicians, OSH personal and consultants. Based on the concept that different roles are important for a successful MHP process, the tasks and activities associated with different roles (e.g. decision maker, implementer, marketer, expert, developer, change maker, monitor) were formulated and discussed. Next, the knowledge, skills and activities that were required were defined and specified. An analysis of the findings from focus group experiences and interviews highlight four general factors that play a mayor role in MHP in the workplace.

These are therefore the key areas presented in this handbook:

- **Key Area 1:** The impact of Leadership
- **Key Area 2:** The role of communication
- **Key Area 3:** Understanding stress in the workplace
- **Key Area 4:** Dealing with work related stress

Each key area is described in the next four sub-chapters. As many of the topics are interrelated they should not be seen as separate from each other.

In the first area, the role of the leader, the impact of different leadership styles and the effects of this role on a leader's mental health are each addressed. Simple but effective measures, such as holding regular team meetings and giving advice and feedback in a clear but respectful way, are established ways by which to provide "good leadership". While this may be obvious on an abstract level, it is not always clear how a leader would incorporate these measures into daily practice.

1.2 **Area 1:** The impact of leadership

Topic 1: Impact of one's own behaviour

The individual behaviour of leaders affects their own health and these professionals act as role models for employees. Reflecting on your own behaviour is therefore a crucial prerequisite to all MHP activities.

Topic 2: Cohesion of teams

There is strong evidence that a team can significantly improve its efficiency by improving cooperation and cohesion within the group. Moreover, cohesion has an enormous affect on the wellbeing of employees.

Topic 3: Identifying your own leadership style

Leadership style is the approach taken when providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. The particular approach adopted has a strong impact on the wellbeing of employees.

Topic 4: Encouraging others to participate

Because occupational health management is always based on organisational strategies to reduce expenses and improve individual health awareness and behaviour, participation is a necessary condition for successful occupational health promotion as well as an outcome of it.

Topic 5: Valuing staff

Appreciation is a common human need. In an occupational context, appreciation has a significant influence on mental health and productivity.

Topic 6: Dealing with conflicts – Responsibility for subordinates

Conflicts often arise because people have differing interests, needs and perceptions. Conflict can impair cooperation and productivity and result in a hostile atmosphere in the workplace. Identifying, addressing and solving conflicts are therefore essential responsibilities for every manager.

Topic 7: Dealing with bullying or harassment

When conflict becomes serious it can result in workplace bullying and harassment. This issue is becoming increasingly important worldwide. The topic describes how the leader can deal effectively when such issues arise.

Topic 8: Advocating on behalf of your team

For teams to exhibit trust, motivation and loyalty, it is very important that supervisors advocate for their needs. This topic shows how this can be achieved, bearing in mind that a manager is also expected to act as a representative of the employer.

1.3 **Area 2:** The role of communication

Communication is a process of generating, transmitting, receiving, and interpreting messages. Effective communication is recognised as the key to business planning, leading an organisation and organising or controlling processes and people to achieve intended outcomes. Communication skills are important to both employees and employers as they contribute to better business results and the career success of individuals.

Communication between superiors and subordinates and the interactions among colleagues have a substantial impact on the mental health of the workforce. Therefore, communication between work-

mates or within a team - how it is organised, fostered, promoted and encouraged - is fundamental for the positive mental health of employees. Communication also relates to imparting information on programmes and measures of mental health promotion within an organisation in order to gather support and encourage everyone to participate and engage in a positive way.

Topic 1: Organising effective communications

This topic provides an overview of organisational communication and the role that it plays in organisational change and worker wellbeing.

Topic 2: Positive and negative communicating styles

This topic provides a summary of basic communication theory and the challenges to be overcome in achieving good communication outcomes.

Topic 3: Reviewing your own communication style

This topic aims to assist an individual frontline manager in reviewing his or her own communication style from a positive mental health perspective.

Topic 4: What Managers can do to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace

This topic provides a set of criteria which can be used to design effective positive health messages and evaluate the potential impact of workplace MHP materials.

1.4 **Area 3:** Understanding stress in the workplace

As work intensity increased in most European countries over the last two decades, work related stress has become a major source of health problems for workers all over Europe. Currently it is the second biggest cause of work-related health problems. Workers exposed to work-related stress are more likely than average to report absence due to work-related ill-health (23% compared to 7%) and they also tend to take longer periods of absence. Furthermore, stress related illness has become the main reason for early-retirement and has other consequences such as presenteeism (attending work when ill and therefore not performing efficiently) and decreased commitment to work.

Topic 1: The dynamics of workplace stress

Although occupational stress is covered by health and safety legislation, it is essential to understand stress and how it is generated in the workplace if mental wellbeing is to be promoted.

Topic 2: Understanding your workforce

There are certain types of stress associated with specific sectors and types of work. This section informs you of these relationships and helps you to identify specific stressors that may exist in your own context.

1.5 **Area 4:** Dealing with work related stress

Managers and superiors should not only know about stress but should address, reduce and prevent it if possible. Therefore, Area four of this handbook provides you with information on how to deal with work related stress and prepares you with the background knowledge needed for implementing a successful MHP programme in your workplace.

Topic 1: Carrying out a stress risk analysis

In most European countries, employers have an obligation to carry out a risk assessment of the work-

place. A stress risk analysis looks at different aspects of the workplace, the organisation, and the management, that can lead to work-related stress. It serves as a starting point for the development of an action plan to eliminate or reduce the identified risks.

Topic 2: How to provide support and adapt the workplace to reduce the negative impact of stress
There is much that can be done to eliminate or reduce the impact of work related stress at the source. In addition to improving working conditions and organisational processes, it is also important to strengthen the social and individual resources and protective factors among the workforce.

Topic 3: Coping skills for workers

As well as organisational improvements and changes in their own behaviour or leadership style, supervisors can also help to strengthen the coping skills of employees dealing with stress and other mental health hazards.

Topic 4: Work-Life balance in your team

Imbalances between the demands of work and other responsibilities and needs related to family-life, social activities, leisure time, etc., can affect the health of workers. Hence managers should support their employees to find a work-life balance that meets their individual needs.

1.6 Structure of the topics and how to work with them

Each topic begins with a brief introduction to the subject. The issue is then discussed in more depth and key points are highlighted. Many of the topics present explanatory tables; for example which illustrate key steps in an implementation process or compare positive versus negative communication methods used by managers. The topics offer possible beneficial actions or means by which to deal with particular issues in your workplace setting. The proper implementation processes and actions are also detailed. At the end of each topic, examples are provided which often refer to practices in other organisations. There are also suggested exercises for each topic which are available in the exercises manual. Finally, references to literature and web links are provided for those who wish to know more about the issues addressed in the topic.

In order to conduct the exercises effectively, you should have a thorough knowledge of the specific topic. If you want to enhance your knowledge, refer to the literature and documents in the recommended readings section at the end of each topic. Try to obtain as much information ahead of practicing an exercise. In addition, knowing the employees strengths, weaknesses, needs and interests will help you to select the most appropriate exercise.

It is not obligatory to work through every topic consecutively; you might choose to read the topics which are specifically relevant to your own needs and purposes.

1.7 Topics for MHP Interventions

As discussed, this part of the handbook comprises of 22 topics under four key areas. Table 3 presents an overview of the key areas (A) and the related topics (T). Each topic is covered in a separate chapter. The table also makes a cross-reference to the exercises associated with particular key areas and topics.

Table 3: Key Areas, Topics, and Exercises in this Handbook

| Areas (A) | Topics (T) | Exercises (E) |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| A1. The impact of leadership | | |
| 1. | Impact of one's own behaviour | 1, 2, 3 |
| 2. | Cohesion of teams | 4, 5, 6, 7 |
| 3. | Identifying your own leadership style | 7, 20 |
| 4. | Encouraging others to participate | 8, 9, 10 |
| 5. | Valuing staff | 7, 11, 12 |
| 6. | Dealing with conflicts – Responsibility for subordinates | 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 22 |
| 7. | Dealing with bullying or harassment | 13 |
| 8. | Advocating on behalf of your team | 14 |
| A2. The role of communication | | |
| 1. | Organising effective communications | 6, 10, 15 |
| 2. | Positive and negative communicating styles | 10, 11, 13 |
| 3. | Reviewing your own communication style | 10, 11, 13, 16 |
| 4. | What Managers can do to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace | 6, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19 |
| A3. Understanding stress in the workplace | | |
| 1. | The dynamics of workplace stress | 1, 2, 3 |
| 2. | Understanding your workforce | 8, 9, 12, 14, 17 |
| A4. Dealing with work related stress | | |
| 1. | Carrying out a stress risk analysis | 8, 13, 18 |
| 2. | How to provide support and adapt the workplace to reduce the negative impact of stress | 14, 19, 20 |
| 3. | Coping skills for workers | 1, 2, 19, 21, 23 |
| 4. | Work-Life balance in your team | 1, 3, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 |

Area 1: The impact of leadership

1 Impact of one's own behaviour (the impact of the leadership role on one's mental health)

The leadership role is linked to increased mental health risks

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as a state of wellbeing in which every individual can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Evidence suggests that professionals who work in leadership positions in the workplace are often at increased risk for developing a mental illness. The combination of role expectations and the conditions of leadership increase the likelihood that mental health problems will develop, including burnout, depression, substance abuse/ addiction and social isolation. Each of which has negative consequences for work teams and the company. In light of this evidence, the leadership role and associated mental health risks is an area which has received much attention in recent years.

The leadership role additionally entails responsibility for achieving and changing organisational goals. Decisions are often made where the future results may appear ambiguous and this can itself be perceived as stressful at times. Leaders must also maintain a certain professional distance from team members; they are socially separated from their teams and often have no other professionals at the same hierarchical level to which they can turn during difficult times. In the workplace environment leaders are not only responsible for their own health, but also for the wellbeing of their team members; therefore, looking after your own mental health will enhance your chances of promoting wellbeing among your employees.

How does the leader support and promote mental health?

Leaders in middle or low levels of the hierarchy generally have limited scope in relation to promoting wellbeing and it is important that leaders show support for health promotion activities in the company. In order to exhibit their support for mental health, leaders must also show that they practice what they preach; start with what you can influence, e.g. your own behaviour and your own appraisals.

Skills which might assist you in this activity include willingness for reflection and openness to behavioural change. At the organisational level, accepted company traditions may be assessed for usefulness and relevance.

It is a good idea to reflect on your own situation using a diary; for one week you might write down all the stressful situations you have faced and detail your associated feelings and physical reactions. Additionally, list what helps you deal effectively with stress and comment on the aspects which tend to prolong the experience of stress. Can you identify habitual patterns? What do you wish to change, which aspects should you inspect further, and what do you like? Evaluate your findings and consult recommendations for mental health promotion, or talk about it with friends, your family or a coach. You could also use the checklist described in Section 3, p102.

Exercises

10 recommendations for maintaining good mental health

The following guidelines provide advice on how to care for your mental health. See section 3 exercises, p96.

How you can really change your behaviour!

The more often we repeat behaviours or actions, the more ingrained in memory they become. This repetition forms “neuronal maps” in the brain. These maps make it easy to form habits but make it difficult to change them. If you wish to alter a habitual pattern, you must stimulate the brain with other activities, and in this way attempt to alter the neuronal map. See section 3, p99.

Checklist: How stressed am I in my job?

If you wish to investigate whether your stress symptoms are temporary or chronic, you can evaluate your own mental health using this self-administered test which you will find in section 3, p102.

Example

The SAP AG is a leading German software company. Dr. Natalie Lotzmann, Head of Health & Diversity, describes the company concept of healthy leadership training. She mentions that exercises which reflect the personal experiences of leaders are most important. Leaders who can identify what actually increases or decreases their levels of stress are also better equipped to lead people in a healthy and productive way (BKK Bundesverband, P. 19, 2011).

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- British Heart Foundation: Think fit! Think well! A simple guide to mental wellbeing for employees, 2008
- BKK Bundesverband (2011): Projekt Psyga transfer “Kein Stress mit dem Stress”

2 Cohesion of teams

What are the benefits of team cohesion?

- “A team is a group of people coming together to collaborate. This collaboration is to reach a shared goal or task for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. A group of people is not necessarily a team. A team is a group of people with a high degree of interdependence geared towards the achievement of a common goal or completion of a task rather than just a group for administrative convenience.” (<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadtem.html>, 10.06.2011)

The success of a team is influenced by group cohesion; when team members experience high levels of social support from others within the group, they tend to work more efficiently.

Social support in this context refers to:

- material support
- help, advice, information
- emotional support (e.g. listening, valuing, trust)
- honest, constructive feedback
- collaborative activities

A good leader will aim to create cohesion among team members. There is strong evidence that teams become more efficient when cooperation is improved.

Moreover, cohesion has a powerful effect on the wellbeing of employees because:

- Cohesion reduces occupational stress
- Cohesion enhances an individual's ability to deal with stress (i.e. a stressful situation is perceived as less demanding)
- Cohesion is a resource which promotes health

How does the leader encourage cohesion in teams?

In order to develop cohesion within a team, leaders should exhibit openness with regards to expressing feelings and emotions. Leaders are expected to get the job done, whether or not this means ignoring emotional issues. However, the most effective leaders tend to have an awareness of what is happening within the team on an emotional level. If leaders generate feelings of fear, competition or ambition within the team, either willingly or unconsciously, this may undermine their efforts in relation to encouraging cohesion.

Therefore, leaders should be aware that the ways in which people respond to them are not always rational but affected by his/her (mainly unconscious) perceptions, beliefs, experiences, prejudices and personality.

Table 4: How the leader’s behaviour can influence employee perceptions

| Actions by leader | Perceptions of employees |
|--|--|
| Perception of the problem | Filters, fear of detecting mistakes, guilt, relief |
| Definition/analysis of the problem | Acceptance, willingness to solve the problem, blocking, defence, insecurity |
| Search for causes | Disposition to check the norms, processes, prejudices – or defence |
| Decision to do something (or not) | Dealing with power, status, interests |
| Drafting the aims | Experiences, interests, values, wishes and visions |
| Development of alternatives | Handling with sympathy and empathy, openness, preferences |
| Monitoring and deciding on an alternative action | Relationships, willingness to cooperate, courage, fear, readiness to identify risks and take action |
| Planning enforcement | Trust, values, resistance, fear, norms, protection of acquired possessions, how to behave when conflicts arise |
| Evaluation of results | Approval, delight, status, disgrace, disappointment |

(Adopted from: Langmaack, Braune-Krickau, P. 143, 2000)

Steps for promoting team cohesion – Theme Centred Interaction

It is the responsibility of the leader to identify and organise activities which promote team cohesion. This might take the form of a casual department party which encourages staff to get to know each other, or regular team meetings which aim to improve information exchange. Of course, the activity chosen will depend on corporate culture.

In order to promote team cohesion, leaders should:

- Be enthusiastic (see also: topic 1)
- Highlight the importance of team cohesion as a matter of urgency
- Develop clear rules regarding appropriate behaviour; assign roles and responsibilities
- Keep the team informed
- Encourage members to spend time together and develop as a team
- Offer positive reinforcement, rewards

Team cohesion can be further illustrated with reference to Ruth Cohn’s model of Theme Centered Interaction (TCI). According to this model, when working in a team a different interaction process develops; communications occur on a number of levels, specifically at the individual level (“I”), the group or team level (“we”) and the common objective, theme or task level (“it”). In Figure 1 below, the diagram shows that these interactions take place in a particular setting with specific conditions (“globe”), which encompass the triangle. Quite often, problems arise within a team because this triangle is imbalanced, i.e. a conflict between team members undermines the work; the deadline of a project takes precedence over the wellbeing and emotional stability of the team; or an individual’s needs perish for the sake of group interests.



Figure 1: The TCI model of Ruth Cohn

(http://www.eppler-baden.ch/Texte_HE_E/tzi_E.htm)

The job of leaders during the team building process is to spend time with the team and be sensitive to people's feelings, needs and non-verbal communication.

One must guide the team through the steps of the team building process:

1. Forming (the team gets to know each other)
2. Storming (assigning positions and duties)
3. Norming (defining cooperation processes, development of rules)
4. Performing (efficient working)

Forming - stage 1

1. High dependence on leader for guidance and direction. Little agreement on team aims other than received from leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. Leader must be prepared to answer lots of questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships. Processes are often ignored. Members test tolerance of system and leader. Leader directs.

Storming - stage 2

2. Decisions don't come easily within group. Team members compete for position as they attempt to establish themselves in relation to other team members and the leader, who might receive challenges from team members. Clarity of purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties persist. Cliques and factions form and there may be power struggles. The team needs to be focused on its goals to avoid becoming distracted by relationships and emotional issues. Compromises may be required to enable progress. Leader coaches.

Norming - stage 3

3. Agreement and consensus is largely formed among the team, who respond well to facilitation by the leader. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Big decisions are made by group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Commitment and unity is strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working style. There is general respect for the leader and some of leadership is more shared by the team. Leader facilitates and enables.

Performing - stage 4

4. The team is more strategically aware; the team knows clearly why it is doing what it is doing. The team has a shared vision and is able to stand on its own feet with no interference or participation from the leader. There is a focus on over-achieving goals, and the team makes most of the decisions against criteria agreed with the leader. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Disagreements occur but now they are resolved within the team positively and necessary changes to processes and structure are made by the team. The team is able to work towards achieving the goal, and also to attend to relationship, style and process issues along the way. team members look after each other. The team requires delegated tasks and projects from the leader. The team does not need to be instructed or assisted. Team members might ask for assistance from the leader with personal and interpersonal development. Leader delegates and oversees.

Other instruments which may be used include a problem analysis, a strengths/weaknesses portfolio and a process analysis. The analytical tools assess aims and achieved performances. Further steps include a solution making process and the enforcement of interventions. A structured team building process is of course an intervention itself.

Leaders are responsible for reflecting and influencing group dynamics. Therefore possessing moderation skills and having the ability to manage conflict are essential leadership competencies. It might be wise to consult external support sources if conflicts emerge between team members or with the manager. The leader may also benefit from coaching or supervision from external support services. For further information about the four stages of the Team Clock Model refer to the exercise in Section 3, p109. The next step in the team building analysis is to carry out a needs analysis. This may entail a problem analysis, a strengths/weaknesses portfolio and a process analysis. Analytical tools assess aims and performance level. Further steps include a solution making process and the enforcement of interventions. A structured team building process is of course an intervention itself. You can find more detailed information about carrying out a needs analysis from the Promenpol website:

<http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol.en.needs-analysis-and-planning>

Exercises

Theoretical background: The Theme-Centred Interaction (TCI) model developed by Ruth Cohn

You can use this model to consolidate your team building interventions. This exercise can be useful for leaders to reflect on the cohesion of the team. By using the constructs of the TCI model, the leader can identify the unbalanced aspects. This tool is not intended to be made into a questionnaire for the team. See Section 3, p104.

Evaluate team dynamics

The Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing model of group development, also known as the “team clock model”, was first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965. He maintained that “these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the team to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solutions, to plan work, and to deliver results.” See Section 3, p109 and refer to the following website for more detailed information:

<http://www.sagecoach.com/leaderstrengths/Downloads/Article%20-%20Team%20Time%20Clock%20%28Andrea%29.pdf>

Improve cohesion by holding regular structured team meetings

Plan an agenda which addresses team needs, communicate the schedule, observe the time planned for each topic, delegate work to sub-teams, invite the team to participate in the decision making process and plan future steps. Decide if you will take on the role of the leader or moderator. As the leader, do not assume that you must take the floor at all times during the meeting. This exercise is described in Section 3, p122.

Example

Glaxo Smith Kline is a global pharmaceutical company which started a networking Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative in 2009. CSR is a process which aims to embrace responsibility for the company's actions and encourage a positive impact through its activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere who may also be considered stakeholders. At Glaxo Smith Kline the company introduced "Orange day" (referring to the companies' corporate design), where all employees are given the opportunity to work as volunteers in social projects. During and after this event, Glaxo Smith Kline noted improved communication and greater cohesion between staff members. This company have now implemented "Orange day" as a means by which to encourage cohesion and enhance team building capacity among employees (www.inqa.de, 20.09.2011).

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Tuckman, B.W.: Developmental sequence in small groups. (1965) Psychological Bulletin 63, S. 384 – 399.
- Cohn, R., Klein, I. (1993): Großgruppen gestalten mit themenzentrierter Interaktion, Mainz.
- Stadler, Spieß (2002): Mitarbeiterorientiertes Führen und soziale Unterstützung am Arbeitsplatz, BauA, Dortmund, Berlin.

3 Identifying your own leadership style

What is the most appropriate leadership style?

Leadership style refers to the manner by which an individual provides direction, implements plans and motivates people. Six key leadership styles are discussed here, including:

- Authoritarian or autocratic
- Participative or democratic
- Delegative or Free Reign

Poor leadership is associated with the adoption of one single style of direction, while good leadership tends to be more flexible; usually the leader will adopt a suitable style of leadership which is both conducive to managing their team but also involves aspects of all six leadership styles (<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadstl.html>, 12.05.2011).

Studies suggest that a participative leadership style is most conducive with wellbeing and results in fewer absence days among employees. In contrast, an authoritarian style, which is solely concerned with efficient work functioning, productivity and outputs, is less beneficial for staff members' health. One reason why the participative leadership style is preferable may be that organisations which follow an employee-orientated participatory approach are more likely to invest in occupational health programmes (Stadler, Spieß, 2002). It is also possible that leaders who value the participative approach are more likely to encourage cohesion among team members, are more approachable than other managers and are more concerned about the welfare of their staff. Leaders understand that a team is only as good as its individual members; if one person is suffering the whole team will be affected.

The advantages of a participatory style of leadership

Ignoring the motivation and engagement of employees can prove very costly for employers. In 2000, the Gallup Organisation developed the engagement index which is used for comparing International companies across countries. According to this index, employees are differentiated in terms of their level of engagement; engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged. In most European countries, approximately 12-16% of company personnel are engaged, whereas 18-31% are believed to be actively unengaged. The situation is similar in China and Japan. However, the USA shows more promising results. In France and Germany, the costs associated with disengagement amount to approximately 90 Million Euro. Managers who follow a participatory approach are in the best position to improve motivation among employees:

Encouraging engagement and motivation is important during different stages of HR Management. Particular attitudes and concepts used in HR processes will be more likely to raise levels of engagement among employees.

Table 5. Encouraging engagement of employees

| HR Process | less useful concept | better concept |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Hiring | Selection of employees based purely on skills and experience | Selection of employees based on their talents |
| Clarifying expectations | Defining the right steps | Defining the outcome |
| Motivating | Focusing on the individual's weaknesses | Focusing on the strengths of the individual |
| Developing | Helping individuals identify the next step in his/her career | Helping individuals identify the most suitable job/role |

(Hoffmeister, 2005/2006)

Empirical studies show that mental health is especially vulnerable during times of organisational change (European commission, Unit F.3, 2010).

Evaluating the efficacy of your leadership style

Leadership principles and corporate culture have a direct affect on staff members. Every leader has a choice regarding the particular style they choose to adopt and as the leader, you must identify the best approach which will enable you to fulfil this role successfully. How might you determine whether or not your approach is appropriate? Is your leadership style conducive with good health and wellbeing? Is it the best approach in terms of effectiveness and inspiring team members? There are several common characteristics and skills possessed by good leaders. The following aspects will help you to evaluate the success of your leadership style.

Do you possess any of the following characteristics?

- Emotional Intelligence
- Determination
- "Other" interests outside of the job
- Desire to foster the development of others
- Passion for ideals
- Visionary
- Systems thinker

In a review of the literature on leadership and mental health, results indicate that positive leadership is associated with organisational commitment, good organisational climate, clinical alliances and consumer satisfaction (Aarons, G.A. 2006).

Effective leaders possess the following skills:

- Coaching and mentoring expertise
- The ability to manage and tolerate change
- Effective communication abilities
- Conceptual skills
- Analytical skills
- The ability to motivate others
- The capacity for self-reflection

(Jordan, D.A. 2006)

Exercises

Feedback rules

It is often necessary to ask employees for feedback to find out if staff are happy with your style of leadership. In this way, you have an opportunity to see how other people perceive you and your behaviour, enabling you to adapt your approach if necessary. You can use a variety of instruments including structured feedback sessions, internal or external manager training and coaching/ mentoring programmes. In some companies, job rotation or guest observer programmes are also available. The Feedback Rules exercise is presented in Section 3, p115.

Feedback from others can be very useful for enhancing your own self-awareness and developing your communication skills. The feedback will likely reflect both positive and negative aspects and should be perceived as constructive rather than critical; the aim of this exercise is to help you improve your leadership skills so you can manage your team more effectively.

The Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the workplace introduced a programme known as Managing Mental Health Matters (MMHM), which focuses on helping managers, supervisors and other leaders learn how to effectively recognise and manage mental health related issues in the workplace. As a result of this programme, a skills assessment tool was developed for managers to evaluate their effectiveness in relation to responding to employee mental health. The Managing emotions Skills assessment is available from: <http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/mmhm/skillsassessment1.html>

Example

A German company, Bertelsmann AG investigated the relationship between healthy leadership style, staff productivity and economic outcomes. For employees, the factors which best communicated that the health and wellbeing of staff is important to the company included a high degree of autonomy and transparency in the job and reliable communication of the company strategy. Simultaneously, businesses performing well in these areas had lower rates of absenteeism and a higher return on investment (BMAS, 2008).

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Aarons, G.A.: Transformational and transactional leadership: Association with attitudes toward evidence-based practice. *Psychiatric Services*, 57 (8), 1162-1169, 2006
- Jordan, D. A. (2006). *A Framework of Leadership for Seven Hills Foundation*, 2006
- Rivard, J. C. (2006). *The role of Leadership in mental health system transformation*, NASMHPD

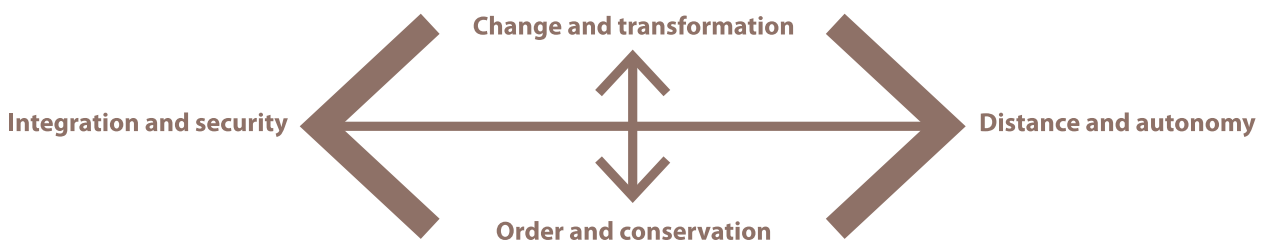
4 Encouraging others to participate

Successful mental health promotion depends on participation

Besides cooperative leadership there are two other perspectives regarding participation and mental health. Companies should encourage employees to participate in health promoting activities and develop their awareness in relation to mental health. Occupational health management results in organisational advantages including reduced financial expense. It also benefits the employee by improving their awareness of mental health issues and encouraging their uptake of healthy behaviours. However, these benefits can only be achieved with the voluntary participation of employees; participation is a prerequisite for successful occupational health promotion as well as the result of a health promoting workplace environment.

Considering employee needs to motivate participation

There are three basic needs which influence an individual's motivation for engagement including understanding, meaningfulness and self-efficacy. Leaders who wish to manage employee mental health should address these particular needs, for example by providing information, awarding qualifications or delegating responsibility. It is worth considering how you perceive your employees: are they considered talented individuals who are good at their jobs, or are they simply an occupational health expense? It is important to acknowledge that people behave differently for many reasons, i.e. due to personality, life circumstances, job satisfaction, etc. Riemann (1997) developed a concept based on four different mental dispositions or personality types, each of which lead to differing outcomes for the individual. For example, while some people look for integration and security, others prefer distance and autonomy. This preference is strongly influenced by an individual's personality type.



Some people are very balanced; they can adapt and be flexible in most situations. However, many people have difficulty adapting to all situations and should be placed in the position which best suits them. For example, when people work in a team it is important that leaders match the work tasks to suit particular character traits and blend the project groups effectively.

Encouraging participation by addressing employee needs and implementing changes in the workplace. Effective leaders can stimulate participation by offering concrete options for change. Health Canada describes two key areas where employee participation can be increased in order to produce mental and physical health benefits and to reduce costs.

These areas include:

Area 1: Rectifying problems relating to...

- space allocation

- heating/cooling/ventilation
- lighting
- design of workstations
- safety of operations
- efficiency of operations

Area 2: Decision making about...

- what new technologies to introduce
- how to introduce new technology
- shift/ time scheduling
- re-organisation
- organisation and design of workplace
- day-to-day work

(Health Canada, Ontario)

Firstly, the needs of the target group must be identified; questionnaires, job-site inspections, team meetings or other quality improvement methods like suggestion boxes can help. The “Health promotion circles” exercise has shown to be a successful participatory instrument too; if employees perceive that the company is taking a genuine interest in their health, participation will increase enormously.

An employee may experience low levels of self-efficacy if, for example, he/she has little control over their own work. It is important that leaders delegate responsibility in a clear manner. If the self-efficacy of team members or potential participants is not guaranteed, this will undermine the entire health promotion project. Low levels of self-efficacy are associated with the development of mental health disorders. Frequently, potentially successful health promotion activities are negatively affected by poor communication. By planning a communication strategy within the project, the leader will be in a better position to inform participants and improve their understanding. This strategy should also be discussed and agreed with the relevant stakeholders before it is communicated to employees. It is important to communicate the results and measures implemented, but also solutions to the problems identified by the project and any intermediate results. The aim is to ensure as much transparency as possible because mental health is recognised as a highly sensitive area.

Exercises

Participation in occupational health surveys

Health related information needs to be handled with care and often anonymous surveys are recommended, especially during the early stages of occupational health projects. Privacy regulations protect the employer and ensure the welfare of the employee. Answering a questionnaire is the first step in participation. The rate of return (response rate) is a good indicator of employees’ interest in the subject and also indicates a certain level of trust in administration of the survey. See Section 3, p117.

Less anonymous: Health promotion circles

Health promotion circles refer to employee meetings where the subject of health is discussed at length. These meetings have two main purposes: 1. Analysis of demanding work situations (by employees) and;

2. Identification of areas requiring improvement. The meetings are primarily based on employee feedback about occupational health problems and usually the discussions are moderated by an internal or external trainer. See Section 3, p119.

Easy to implement: Structured idea meetings

Structured idea meetings are another means by which to utilise employee expertise. The advantages of structured idea meetings include encouragement and consideration of employee ideas, as well as improved communication between managers and employees. These meetings are easy to implement and are especially useful in small and medium sized companies (DGUV, 2008). See Section 3, p122.

Example

Health promotion circle meetings are used by many companies in the EU. They have proven useful when introducing an occupational health promotion strategy. The following example describes a Health promotion circle meeting which was held by a call centre in a German bank. During their inquiry, the bank identified a number of health problems which were discussed in great detail at the meeting. Employees made several useful suggestions and their ideas were implemented.

The following suggestions were offered by participants:

- Provide communication training; reduce noise levels and be more considerate of employees trying to concentrate on their own work.
- Offer stress reduction training and meditation
- Introduce a rest room
- Schedule regular meetings, especially for part time employees to improve internal communication
- Make it possible for employees to alternate position in the workplace (i.e. sitting, standing)
- Inform employees about good exercises for back, neck and shoulders

One year later, 88% of employees reported that the working environment was “good”, while 91% indicated that the healthcare offered by the employer had improved.

(resource: <http://www.inqa.de/Inqa/Navigation/Gute-Praxis/datenbank-gute-praxis,eDid=6489.html>)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Antonovsky, A.: Health, Stress and Coping, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1979
- Health Canada: Best advice on stress risk management in the workplace, part2, <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>
- Further Information about different occupational health management tools you get within the “promenpol database”: <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol.de.toolkit>

5 Valuing staff

The need for appreciation and meaningfulness of work

Humans have an intrinsic need for appreciation. In the occupational context, appreciation has a significant influence on an individual's mental health and productivity. To value staff means to see personnel as human beings, not only as employees.

Appreciation has a powerful effect on an individual's self-concept. Likewise, if we believe in our ability to succeed and our experiences support this, we tend to interpret new tasks as challenges rather than threats. Success increases an individual's self-esteem and confidence, while failure tends to damage self-esteem and create self-doubt. People may also begin to view themselves negatively, focusing on the failure making it difficult to envisage success in the future. This self-defeating thought pattern makes it more likely that the individual will avoid new challenges in order to prevent predicted failure (Hüther, 2009).

Rewards can be expressed in different ways and may include monetary or symbolic incentives, the appreciation shown by superiors in front of the team, or benefits in the work schedule. Regardless of the reward, it is important that leaders at least exhibit a positive attitude towards staff and show appreciation for work well done.

The meaningfulness of work also has a powerful impact on mental wellbeing. Generally, work is defined as meaningful when employees perceive a goal, purpose, value or significance in their job. Studies show that work is meaningful when it is performed in a context that supports human values and in an environment that respects justice, equity and human dignity. Weisskopf-Joelson (1968) proposed a model which includes three dimensions relating to the meaning of work, namely: (1) a system of explanation or interpretation of life events, (2) a goal or a cause, and (3) integration of the inner life and the outer life.

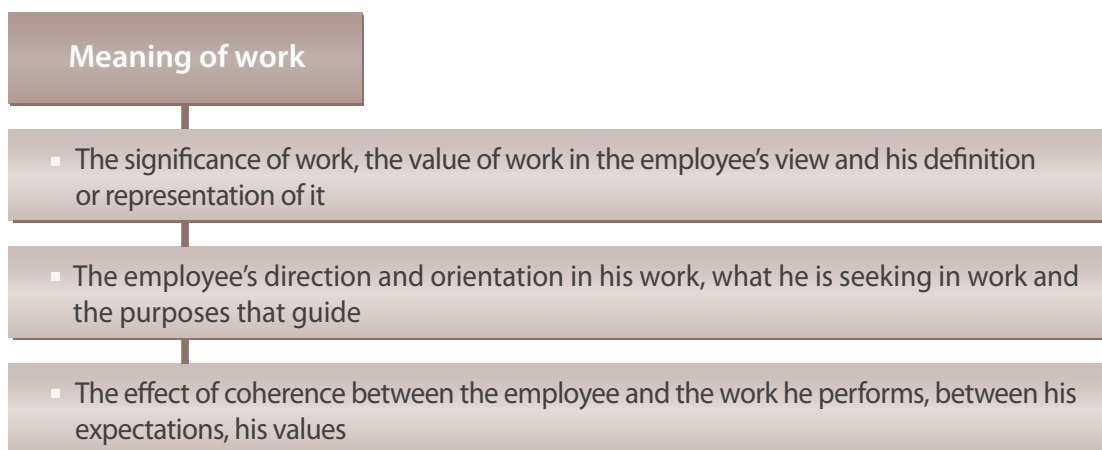


Figure 1: The TCI model of Ruth Cohn

Cited in: The Meaning of Work, Mental Health and Organizational Commitment – IRSST:

<http://www.irsst.qc.ca/media/documents/pubirsst/r-585.pdf>

How the leader can help prevent psychological distress in the workplace

Good practice management has been researched extensively. In order to help maintain a healthy workplace, managers are advised to ensure the following:

- Give employees clear instruction and check that the information is understood
- Offer stimulating tasks and objectives that are consistent with the organisational strategy
- Value and recognise the achievements of all individuals
- Recognise and acknowledge the skills of your staff members
- Adjust the workload to suit an individual's capacity and resources
- Provide support to the team

These practices are likely to reduce stress to a more acceptable level and demonstrate that the company is truly concerned about employee health and wellbeing. These activities alone are not enough to guarantee employees' commitment to work, therefore managers are also advised to:

- Ensure that all employees enjoy their work/ find it stimulating
- Give the team enough autonomy to organise their own work effectively
- Allow the team to design the work environment as much as possible
- Encourage the development of positive professional relationships
- Assign responsibilities to the team and facilitate their professional development.

(Morin, 2008)

Leaders require good communication skills

Good communication skills help leaders create a positive valuing atmosphere within the team. Communication training can improve these skills, i.e. dealing more effectively with misunderstandings or expressing oneself clearly. It is important to note that showing appreciation to staff in order to accomplish certain management goals is risky; the team may perceive the appreciation/ rewards as unauthentic. As a result, team members will lose faith in the leader, group cohesion will diminish and work productivity will suffer. Appreciation must be genuine.

Exercises

Four channels of communication

We interpret numerous verbal and non-verbal signals on a daily basis. Schulz von Thun proposed the four channels of communication model in which the first channel refers to factual information, the second to appeal, the third to the relationship between sender and recipient and the fourth channel to self-revelation (Schulz von Thun, 1991). See p124 in Section 3 for more information.

Appreciative Inquiry: building on strengths

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the idea that 'organisations change in the direction in which they enquire.' So an organisation which enquires into problems will keep finding problems, but an organisation

which attempts to appreciate what is best in itself will discover more about the positives. Enquiry into organisational life should have four characteristics. It should be:

1. Appreciative
2. Applicable
3. Provocative
4. Collaborative

See p129 in Section 3 for more information.

Examples

There are several examples of successful valuing communication styles, not only associated with the workplace but also involved in many private or daily life situations. You can find examples in the communications topics presented in Area 2 of this handbook (p59).

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Morin, E. (2008): *The Meaning of Work, Mental Health and Organizational Commitment*
- Schulz von Thun, F. (1991): *Miteinander reden – Störungen und Klärungen*, Reinbek
- Watzlawick, P., Beaven, J.H. (1967): *Pragmatics of human communication*

6 Dealing with conflicts – responsibility for subordinates

How does conflict arise?

The term 'conflict' can be applied to a range of scenarios, from a simple clash of diary dates to global conflict. It is difficult to imagine a constructive and creative process in which there are no disagreements and differences in opinion. Conflicts can arise as a result of many interdependent factors including differing interests, needs and perceptions and in any productive team they will arise regardless of how well a leader manages his/her staff. The challenges for a leader are not so much avoiding conflict, but how to ensure that the impact is constructive rather than destructive.

Organisations that acknowledge conflict as an inevitable aspect of work life are in a better position to benefit from creative conflict.

Conflict occurs when communications break down, assumptions are made, or animosity arises.

The main domains where conflict emerges include:

- Ownership of ideas, property, space or relationships;
- Self-affirmation, respect, and esteem;
- Advantage in terms of money, status, power, authority, rights;
- Realities in terms of values, beliefs and ideas.

Conflicts are most likely to arise when people find themselves on opposite sides of apparent dichotomies such as true/false; high/low; good/bad; right/wrong, etc.

The origins of most conflicts arise from the presence of divergent attitudes, values, and perceptions within a team (DeJanasz, Dowd & Schneider, 2001). These tensions can be the source of creative and constructive problem solving, or alternatively if not managed well, can become barriers to progress and prevent the achievement of goals.

How does the leader manage conflict in the workplace?

According to the Association for Conflict Resolution (2001), organisations that manage conflict effectively provide options for all types of problems and all people in the workplace, including employees, supervisors, professionals and managers to resolve conflicts as they arise. Positive leadership should promote a team culture in which disagreement is welcomed and resolution of conflict happens most often through direct communications.

If a problem has escalated, the organisation should make sure that there is easy access for employees to advise about how to manage the conflict or where conflict management support is available. A range of options for support should be available dealing with rights based issues and interest based concerns. For broader issues the organisation must ensure that there are multiple routes to resolving conflict with adequate systematic support structures which are coordinated and supported by senior management. (<http://www.mediate.com/articles/workedit2.cfm>)

Steps to resolving team conflict

To respond effectively to conflicts arising within a team, leaders need to be able to deal with any conflicts that are affecting them personally. It is important to acknowledge the diversity of knowledge, skills, experiences, beliefs and values amongst team members and ensure that all members of the team feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and have confidence that their contributions will be valued. At the core of conflict resolution is explicit recognition of each person's perspective on a contentious issue, making sure that all team members feel that the points they have made have been 'heard'. This requires that the differing ideas and opinions expressed by all team members are reflected in the problem definition in a non-judgemental and transparent form. One way of achieving this was proposed by Jerry Wisinski (1993). He put forward a model which is often referred to as the 'A-E-I-O-U' approach to resolving team conflicts.

The five principles are:

- A** Assume that everyone involved means well;
- E** Express your own feelings;
- I** Identify what you would like to see happen;
- O** Outcome - communicate the outcome that you favour while being open to other possible outcomes that could also meet your needs and concerns;
- U** Understanding – if individual team members understand the sources and dimensions of a conflict, they can work together to resolve the conflict cooperatively. It is also important to ensure that whatever agreement is reached is clearly understood by all team members and that they commit to it.

Another approach to managing conflict was proposed by Engleburg (2003). The '4 R's Method' involves:

- Reasons** The causes or reasons for the conflict are explored; these are discussed openly and respectfully;
- Reactions** Team members look at their own reactions to the conflict. If those reactions are destructive rather than constructive, individuals can self-correct and take the necessary steps to recommit to team success;
- Results** Team members explore what might happen if the conflict is not resolved;
- Resolution** The team considers and agrees on the best way for them to work together in order to resolve the conflict in a constructive manner.

If the conflict appears to be escalating, it is useful to consider holding a specific meeting to resolve the issue. The agenda of the meeting should be adapted to the type of conflict that has emerged. For example, if some team members feel that others are not contributing effectively to the work of the team, then the meeting should focus on the factors that are related to this issue. This will focus the team on positive problem solving rather than on the allocation of blame. One strategy that could be agreed is that the team is informed of impending delays well in advance, so that other members of the team can make arrangements to cope with the delay or to contribute to completing the problematic tasks.

When all strategies to resolve conflict within a team have been implemented and there are still major issues to be addressed, it may be necessary to involve an external facilitator. He/she can examine the arguments on both sides and provide a balanced view in regards to the issue and suggest the most appropriate solutions.

There are a number of ground rules which can assist a team to work collaboratively. These include:

- Team members show courtesy and respect at all times;
- Each team member acknowledges his or her own strengths and weaknesses and works with others for team success;
- Tasks are assigned to each team member based in their experience and talents and everybody works collaboratively towards a common set of objectives;
- Team consensus is established about the overall objectives and work is delivered in advance of deadlines to avoid placing additional stress on other members of the team;
- Each member of the team knows his or her contribution to the common goal and this fits with the work of the other members of the team;
- Team members understand that they are not only responsible for their own tasks but for the overall goal and for assisting each other with tasks which are presenting challenges;
- Effective knowledge management means that all members of the team are aware of the roles of others and how things are progressing well in advance of deadlines;
- The team should be facilitated to openly review each other's work, acknowledging strong points and analysing where things could be improved or enhanced;
- Each individual contribution should be viewed as a personal opinion and worthy of respect.

Managing workplace conflict is not about avoiding it but rather about embracing diversity, acknowledging differences and working towards progressive consensus. To foster this culture it is essential that there are clear ground rules which require team members to act with mutual respect, work to team deadlines and commit to the success of the team. Clearly agreed milestones, task responsibilities and procedures for sorting out disagreements are essential elements of good conflict management. (<http://naturesencore.hubpages.com/hub/OrganizationalTeamwork>)

Exercises

There are number of exercises included in this Handbook that can assist a leader in developing a team culture where conflict is managed effectively, resulting in productive and creative outcomes.

Structured team meetings can improve cohesion and assist team members to reflect on team needs and each others contributions and requirements (Exercise 6, p113).

Using feedback can help individuals develop self-awareness and promotes openness amongst team members. This can also assist in preparing them to accept contrary opinions and to acknowledge each others positions. Establishing rules on how to deal with feedback which are agreed upon and followed by all team members can provide a basis for constructive sharing of views without conflict (Exercise 7, p115).

Providing the team with training in communication strategies and how to use them effectively is an important pre-requisite for effectively dealing with disagreements and disputes. The communication model proposed by Schulz von Thun provides a useful basis for this. The model is comprised of four channels: 1) factual information; 2) appeal; 3) relationships; and 4) self-revelation. The model can be adapted and used to analyse communication difficulties within the team (Exercise 11, p124).

It is useful to create a positive problem solving culture within the team. This can be achieved by building on the things that are working well, rather than focusing on problem areas. The Appreciative Inquiry process was developed by David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University, in Cleveland, Ohio.

This approach emphasises building on the team's unique strengths to achieve success. The technique recognises and values the contributions of people and explores the potential possibilities for opening up new opportunities to achieve positive change (Exercise 12, p129).

Adopting a non-violent communication approach can help the team to become more empathetic and to work together more collaboratively. This approach was originally developed by Marshall Rosenberg to deal with conflicts, but the technique can also be used to encourage more empathetic forms of communication (Exercise 13, p133).

It is useful to examine the hidden rules that exist within the team which may be contributing to counter-productive conflicts. Raising team member's awareness about these rules can help to demonstrate how they influence team dynamics. If you wish to change the way in which the team works, try to identify the hidden rules which influence communication (Exercise 22, p155).

Example

The infection rate in US hospitals could be significantly reduced by implementing interventions in operational procedures, the use of checklists and – most importantly - changes in the way hospitals manage mistakes and failures. In the past, mistakes were considered failures on the part of the individual and management imposed consequences for those responsible. Nowadays, hospitals follow a more constructive approach, which acknowledges human error and views mistakes as opportunities to learn and improve procedures. An example of which involved the anonymous reporting of mistakes by Physicians on the internet (Pronovost, Needham, Berenholtz, et al., 2006).

RECOMMENDED READING

- Wisinki, J. (1993). Resolving conflicts on the job. New York: American Management Association.
- Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/1082603>
- Engleberg, I., Wynn, D., & Schuttler R. (2003) Working in groups: Communication Principles and Strategies (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin. A summary is available at: http://www.ehow.com/list_6765992_4-rs-understanding-conflict_.html
- De Janasz, S., Dowd, K. O. & Schneider, B. (2001) Interpersonal Skills in Organizations, McGraw-Hill/Irwin, Blacklick, Ohio, U.S.A.

7 Dealing with Bullying or Harassment

When conflict becomes a more serious issue

If conflicts continue for some time, they can cause disruption to productivity and affect cooperation within the team. Moreover, conflicts can escalate potentially leading to team break down or negative effects on the mental wellbeing of staff members. Keywords in this context include harassment, violence and bullying.

Workplace harassment: engaging in behaviour which aims to affect another employee negatively; this may involve verbal abuse or inappropriate conduct against the worker, who is not welcoming this treatment.

Workplace violence: exercising physical force, or the attempt to exercise physical force on an employee in the workplace that causes, or could cause, physical injury to the worker.

Workplace bullying: repeated, unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety.

The prevalence of conflict in the United States

What about the prevalence of such severe forms of conflict? And, is this a problem that arises in many companies? In the United States, the Workplace Bullying Institute conducted a representative survey in 2007 which revealed that:

- 37% of workers have been bullied: 13% are currently experiencing bullying while 24% have experienced bullying in the past.
- 40% of individuals who experience bullying never tell their employers and 62% of employers who are told ignore the problem, hoping that it will stop on its own as they do not know how to tackle the issue. This lack of action has the effect of normalising damaging behaviour.
- 45% of the victims of bullying suffer stress-related health problems.

(<http://www.workplacebullying.org/2011/04/23/cb/>)

Bullying, harassment and other forms of non-cooperative behaviour have a negative impact on the mental health of everyone in the organisation. This atmosphere creates a psychologically unsafe work environment that is associated with fear and anxiety.

The problem is even worse for those who already experience psychological problems. Those who suffer from mental illness are 2.5 times more likely to be victims of violence than the general population and are therefore in particular need of protection from workplace hostility (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2010).

What leaders should do in the case of bullying

Training for leaders and teams in non-violent and empathetic communication aims to prevent or minimise conflict in the workplace. Offering this type of training shows staff members that their needs are valued and understood. Creating an atmosphere of openness and trust reduces the risk that conflicts will continue privately.

If leaders become aware of bullying within the team, there are a number of steps they can follow:

- Prioritise the issue and speak about it regularly with the team
- Be clear in stating your position against bullying
- Advise the team and the organisation about bullying, its possible causes and consequences, and the options for addressing the problem
- Evaluate team dynamics
- Appoint a (widely trusted) contact person to receive any complaints
- Practice constructive exercises to deal with conflicts within the team
- Eliminate or minimise any difficulties associated with the way the work is organised.
- Be mindful of the emotional effects that decisions can have on employees
- Clear up any differences and possible misunderstandings that you are aware of as soon as possible
- Address gossip and rumours in order to avoid potential conflict
- Be open-minded and objective and give people the opportunity to talk privately
- Take the initiative and check out your concerns with those who may be involved
- Be sensitive to the atmosphere within the team
- Provide possibilities for skill enhancement

(Adopted from Beermann, Brenscheidt, 2010, S. 30)

Leaders should decide carefully what role they want to take on when dealing with conflicts between team members. In some cases, it is wise to acknowledge that there is an existing conflict but to refrain from getting actively involved. If it appears that the issue is no more than a slight disagreement which is unlikely to escalate, it might be as easily solved by the employees themselves. Indeed, the involvement of a supervisor in a minor disagreement between employees may be unwarranted and counterproductive.

In other situations, and especially when one of the parties asks for support, leaders can listen to the grievance but ask the employee what efforts he/she made to resolve the conflict themselves before taking any action. This is inviting the person to take personal responsibility. Don't forget to let the other party know that you have been informed and that you would like both/all of them to first try and resolve the issue themselves, without you becoming involved. Ask both sides about the difficulties they are experiencing; however, be careful if you feel that there is an imbalance of power between the parties, that their communication abilities differ substantially, or that one of them is an outsider. Under these circumstances, allowing those involved to resolve the conflict could be counterproductive.

A third possibility for leaders is to take up active involvement in the conflict. This is of course necessary if the employees are not able to resolve the disagreement by themselves. You can decide whether to be a referee or a judge. Whichever role you take on depends on how likely it is that the parties can be guided towards an agreement. If there is a chance that an agreement can be brokered, then taking on the role of a referee is preferable to taking on the role of a judge.

Asking for support when a conflict becomes prolonged or intensifies is a sign of competence rather than weakness. Support may be sourced internally (e.g. HR department, superiors, employee representatives) or externally (mediator, coach). The greatest advantage of utilising external professionals is that they are objective. Leaders must acknowledge that they are not a neutral source.

Exercises

Training in non-violent communication and dealing with failures

Non-violent (NVC) communication is an attitude rather than a tool. Developed to deal with conflicts, it can also be used more generally to modify everyday communication towards more empathetic, appreciative and understanding behaviour. “NVC begins by assuming that we are all compassionate by nature and that violent strategies — whether verbal or physical — are learned behaviours taught and supported by the prevailing culture. The concept also assumes that we all share the same, basic human needs, and that each of our actions are a strategy to meet one or more of these needs. People who practice NVC have found greater authenticity in their communication, increased understanding, deepening connection and conflict resolution.” (<https://www.cnvc.org/>)

Failures or misunderstandings are typical occurrences that give rise to conflict. Therefore, leaders don't like mistakes. But the less accepting a company is of mistakes, the more likely it is that problems will be concealed leading to potential cost implications as a result. What else – in addition to nonviolent communication – could improve dealing with failures in a team? Look for guidelines on how to deal with mistakes. Look also, however, for any hidden rules in your organisation as these might impede your efforts to make improvements (Exercise 13, p133).

Example

A member of a team of five accountants in a busy high powered nation-wide consultancy firm had approached her manager three times with issues about other members of her team and had indicated that she was experiencing undue stress as a result being bullied and mistreated by the others. Her work required her to be out of the office 3 or 4 days per week. This was the same for her colleagues.

The Manager, who was only recently appointed to her post (3 months) took advice from the previous manager and got an update on any previous issues raised by the staff member. Based on this information, she reviewed what had been done to respond to the complaints, whether they had been documented, the shared characteristics of each of the complaints and what caused the initial complaint or what was occurring around that time. This gave her an overall impression of the issues, trends and themes.

The manager then arranged a time and a place (private, not overlooked, not visible) to meet with the staff member, by agreement, during the working day and allocated an hour for this meeting.

She asked the staff member to describe what she was complaining about, and took notes. She presented her with the company policies and procedures and suggested that they meet again, once the manager had digested the content of the complaint, in 3 to 4 days, agreeing a time. She asked the employee to consider the options available to her, referencing the handbook/policy document, in the meantime and reassured her that she, as a manager, was committed to finding a working solution as soon as possible.

Then the manager assessed the core of the complaint and decided how it should be classified as:

- A complaint of rude behaviour and unkindness;
- A complaint regarding the team not 'getting on well and not working together;
- A complaint of lack of role clarity/lack of general cohesion or a malfunction in team dynamics;
- A complaint of bullying by others against the employee.

The manager took care to categorise what the real complaint was, independently of the way in which the employee referred to it. At the subsequent meeting, the manager worked through all elements of the complaint. It emerged that the employee felt that the other four accountants got along well and excluded her, did not behave in a friendly way towards her, and that she wasn't getting access to the shared work-related information they exchanged between each other and that as a result, her work was suffering. She believed that this started after she was absent for 3 weeks a year ago during a very busy period and she felt that the others blame her for taking that leave which resulted in their being overly pressurised.

The manager decided that the primary issue was one of a lack of team cohesion and a sense of isolation on the part of the employee. The employee had her own interpretation of the reasons for this. She was not claiming any one person was targeting her, but that they communicated better and in a more trusting way with each other than they did with her. The manager made sure that the employee felt that she had been listened to and acknowledged her concerns. She then suggested an intervention which was put in place and monitored.

The intervention included:

- Team training in terms of communication and sharing of information;
- Introducing new ways of team working, putting two people working in pairs for one day each week for 3 months;
- The manager being more present when everyone was in the office to lead the way in how information was shared and to facilitate interaction so the employee did not feel isolated;
- A reminder was issued throughout the department that working together was essential and excluding anyone was deemed counterproductive.

Such cases often flounder due to inactivity on the part of the manager, and lack of empathy with the hurt of the complainant. Once both of these issues are handled properly, a managed solution can be put in place to eradicate many such conflicts through support, assistance and a managed short- or long-term intervention.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Association for Conflict Resolution (2001) Designing Integrated Conflict Management Systems: Guidelines for Practitioners and Decision Makers in Organizations, <http://www.acrnet.org/Page.aspx?id=580&terms=Guidelines>
- Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca
- Center of Nonviolent communication: <https://www.cnvc.org/>
- Workplace Bullying Institute: <http://www.workplacebullying.org>

8 Advocating on behalf of your team

Responsibility for your team

Team leaders are expected by people outside of the team, as well as team members, to manage contacts and relationships with the rest of the organisation. They are in charge of effectively communicating the team's purpose, goals and approach to all those concerned. (<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadtem.html>, 18.05.2011)

Leaders need to establish a good relationship with their team

Is there a relationship between the advocacy efforts of managers on behalf of employees and the mental health of staff? Obviously it is very important for team motivation and loyalty that leaders transmit company goals into feasible processes, tasks and work packages. It is also important that the team are confident that the leader will advocate for their needs in the workplace. It takes courage for Leaders to intervene on the team's behalf when problems arise. Leaders who lobby for their team in difficult situations gain the respect and trust of employees and are therefore in a better position to implement less popular decisions at another time.

Leaders need good negotiation and communication skills

Leaders are often asked by staff to advocate on their behalf during projects. The roles and responsibilities of project members are not always clearly defined at the beginning, or they may change during the life of the project. Supervisors have to negotiate with project managers to protect employees from excessive demands. Project management tools help leaders identify available resources, as well as those that are needed.

Leaders are faced with somewhat divided loyalties with respect to their role as representatives of the company's interests and their role as advocates for their teams. Leaders who defend their teams during difficult times require self-confidence and an approach that is guided by values which are based on a concern for both the long term welfare of team members and the company's prosperity. Good communication, networking and diplomacy skills are an advantage in this regard.

Exercises

Target agreements on behalf of the team

If a target meeting is scheduled with your manager, try to prepare yourself by identifying the current weaknesses, needs, potentials and expectations of team members. Having this information in mind is a prerequisite for negotiating achievable goals and avoiding unrealistic expectations. It is important to communicate with team members and make it clear that negotiating target agreements is also governed by specific requirements set by your own superior, that are non-negotiable. The following example demonstrates the benefits of good communication in the workplace. See exercise 14, p136.

Example

Baringa Partners, a consultancy with 170 staff members, won the UK's Best Workplace Award for the second time in 2011. One reason for this success seems to be management's efforts to maintain open and direct communication within the organisation, whether this concerns good or bad news. Sensitive subjects, i.e. how to behave appropriately towards clients, are also handled directly with tact and understanding. But the communication at Baringa Partners is not a one-way-street; "Good managers listen as well as speak. During the monthly company meetings with senior management, the floor is opened for employees' questions and discussion of issues. But to support those who don't want to speak in public, each person is assigned a mentor, which ensures they have a channel via which to discuss issues on a one-to-one basis." (Finn, 2011, p. 8)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Great place to work: www.greatplacetowork.co.uk

Area 2: The role of communication in promoting positive Mental Health in the workplace

Introduction

This section provides an overview of what constitutes effective communications at both the organisational and individual levels. Communication is about sending and receiving verbal and non verbal messages within the organisational context. It is a process of generating, transmitting, receiving, and interpreting messages. This can occur at a person to person, group, workforce wide or mass communication level. Effective communication is recognised as the key to business planning, leading an organisation and organising or controlling processes and people to achieve intended outcomes. It can be either formal or informal. Communication skills are important to both employees and managers. They are important to the career success of individuals and contribute to better business results.

The area of communications and positive mental health is viewed from three perspectives. The first is communication from the perspective of the overall organisation; the second is from the perspective of interpersonal communications between one person and another, or between one person and a group; and the third is from the perspective of a person trying to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace.

This section provides a description of effective communications and details how to ensure communication achieves its intended goal. The chapter discusses the positive and negative characteristics of a variety of communication styles and suggests ways in which you can review your own communication style. Finally, it explains how managers can communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace.

1 Organising Effective Communications

How are messages communicated?

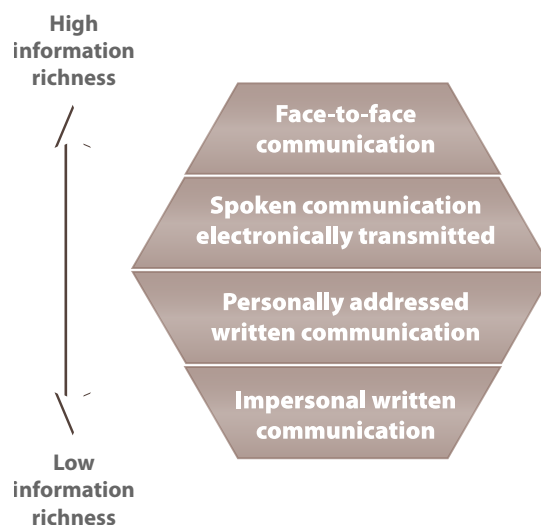
Communication is the sharing of information between two or more people or groups to reach a common understanding. In the workplace, good communication is critical in terms of increased efficiency, the quality of products and services, responsiveness to customers, business innovation and employee wellbeing.

Communication can be described in terms of the phases of the communication process. Put simply, it involves two primary phases:

1. A transmission phase in which information is sent from a sender to a receiver
2. A feedback phase in which the receiver returns complementary information which clarifies how the message was received

It is a two way process whereby the right message is being sent and is correctly received and understood by the person or audience. For communication to be effective, it is important to know and understand how the audience interprets the message.

The content of a message can be more effectively transmitted if it is encoded in more than one channel or mode. Thus, face to face communication uses non-verbal modes such as body language and facial expression and paralinguistic cues such as tone and pitch. Face to face communication has the richest content. Spoken communication transmitted electronically is also rich in content as it uses voice cues and allows for the immediate feedback about the extent to which the message is being received. Written communications are less rich in content.



The most appropriate channel to use will depend on the purpose of your communication and its content.

It is also possible to distinguish between formal communications, which arise from power relations in the workplace or as a result of operational procedures, and informal communications which occur 'around the water fountain' or coffee machine.

Communication is considered a 'soft skill' which is essential to effective management. Soft skills refer to the ability to respond effectively to the psychosocial environment of the workplace. Communication is one of the essential soft skills which are crucial to workplace performance and is at the core of developing and maintaining productive relationships. A manager or supervisor who is interested in promoting positive mental health within their team or department should pay attention to the way in which messages are being transmitted both formally and informally.

How effective communication is vital for success

Effective communication can be defined as passing the right message or information to the right audience, in the right way, at the right time and with the right effect, impact and outcome.

Effective communication is important because it establishes trust between a manager and his or her employees or team members. Good quality communication prevents misunderstandings and break down in communication. It creates an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable discussing their feelings and speaking out when they need support or require changes made to their work. Effective commu-

nication means that workers understand their job responsibilities clearly and are better equipped to respond to job demands.

Staff members in organisations typically spend more than 75% of their time interacting with others: thus it is no surprise to find that poor communication is at the root of a large number of organisational problems. Effective communication is an essential component of organisational success.

There are a number of key concepts that can help a manager to ensure more effective communication as a Sender and as a Receiver.

1. The manager as the Sender needs to share information with others. As a Sender, the manager must make sure that:
 - a. The **Message** contains all the information others need in order to interpret the message correctly – what information to communicate, this can include explicit content such as the main idea and implicit content for example about the value of the person.
 - b. The **Encoding** of the message is clear and the content is translated into the most appropriate language.
 - c. The **Noise**, which is anything that interferes with the communication process, is reduced. This includes aspects such as the peoples' perception of the message and its intention, the implicit biases that people have about the organisation and the context, stereotypes and beliefs that people may have about the characteristics of particular groups of people. The Receiver is the person or group for which the message is intended
 - d. The **Medium** or pathway that is used is appropriate to transmit the message. In Formal communications this may be a memo or an official email. In more Informal communications, face to face or phone communications may be more appropriate.
2. The manager as Receiver needs to be aware of the potential noise in the messages he or she receives and to make sure that:
 - a. The message is **Decoded** accurately and interpreted appropriately.
 - b. The **Feedback** to the Sender acknowledges that the message has been received, eliminates misunderstandings and ensures the message is correctly interpreted.

Organisational communication strategies for delivering information

Communication in an organisation flows through formal and informal pathways:

- Vertical communications flow up and down the corporate hierarchy
- Horizontal communications flow between employees at the same level
- Informal communications can span levels and departments - the grapevine is an informal network carrying unofficial information throughout the firm.

Frontline managers play an essential role in the organisational chain of communications. Vertically, they receive communications from senior management or the HR and OSH functions, which they transmit to their subordinates. They receive feedback from their employees which they transmit upwards to higher levels of management within the organisation.

Organisations have different views regarding the importance of communications. It is possible to identify 5 levels of organisational communication culture ranging from a basic top-down approach, which is determined and restricted by management (Level 1), to an organisational strategy which aims to enhance the capability of the organisation and its employees (Level 5). (Shaffer, J: The Future of Organisational Communication: A Market Driven Approach, 2005)

It is useful for a manager to become aware of the communication culture in his or her own organisation.

Level 5 Organisation Capability: Communication management is a condition of employment, used as a strategic capability. Managers at all levels are held accountable for the communication environments they create and sustain. Employees function full-time with minimal direct supervision. The organisation competes for “Best Companies” or “Work For” awards;

Level 4: Integrated System: The organisation creates and sustains a communication environment that continuously improves organisational performance. It adopted the principles and practices of open book management where employees are expected to think and act as business owners. Ongoing work groups assume expanded responsibility for key issues such as mental health promotion. Managers are held accountable for communication effectiveness.

Level 3 Performance-Based: Communication management focuses on improving organisational performance. Managers encourage cross-functional employee group problem solving on key issues such as quality, service, cost and efficiency. Communication effectiveness and efficiency are regularly measured and used as a foundation for improvement and leadership accountability.

Level 2 Managed Process: A structured communication system is in place to effectively manage formal communication media and processes. Communication management is largely top-down. Managers usually make the decisions, but frequently after obtaining the opinions of employees. Managers have received some basic communication skills training but are not held accountable for results.

Level 1: Need-to-Know: Communication is strictly on a need-to-know basis. Managers determine what employees need to know. Communication is not formally or informally managed. Managers make all the important operational decisions, inform employees, and then clarify what is required by responding to questions. Information sharing encourages conformity to policies, procedures and standards.

Levels 1 (Need to Know) and 2 (Managed Processes) are mainly about delivering information. In levels 3 (Performance based communications) and 4 (Integrated communications), the strategies aim to improve organisational performance. Level 5 endeavours to enhance the overall capacity of the organisation.

The role of a frontline manager depends on the communication strategy adopted by the organisation. In a need-to-know or managed communication process, the role is primarily passing on information. In more proactive approaches, the frontline manager is the cornerstone of effective communication. From a positive mental health perspective, frontline managers should pay attention not only to formal messages which originate in a structured way from senior management or worker representatives, but also to informal and interpersonal communications with individuals or groups for whom they have responsibility.

Exercises

In Section 3, Exercise 15 on p137 shows you how to develop an Inventory of Communication Functions and Methods. Linking your primary communication activities to the most appropriate communication method or medium will improve your communication style.

Example

Positive and clear communications can create a supportive work environment which can reduce the onset, severity, impact and duration of stress and mental distress, eliminate ambiguity of roles and expectations, create an ethos of tolerance and support, foster constructive and creative relationships and enhance awareness of positive mental health behaviours and practices.

Behavioural guidelines for leading positive organisational change are presented below (Whetten & Cameron, 2004).

Table 6. Guidelines for fostering change

| Behavioural Guidelines for fostering positive change in an organisation | |
|---|---|
| Establish a climate of positivity | A. Creating positive energy networks |
| | B. Ensuring a climate of compassion, forgiveness and gratitude |
| | C. Identifying and giving people feedback on their strengths and unique competencies |
| Create readiness in others to pursue positive change | A. Benchmarking best practice and comparing current performance to the highest standards |
| | B. Instituting symbolic events to signal the positive change |
| | C. Creating a new language that illustrates the positive change |
| Articulate a vision of potential | A. Focusing on creating positive deviance rather than correcting negative deviance |
| | B. Including both convergent questions focusing on the organisation as it is now and divergent questions about the potential of the organisation for development. |
| | C. Making the vision interesting |
| | D. Ensuring credibility of the vision by demonstrating integrity, enthusiasm and personal passion and creating straightforward and simple messages. |
| | E. Creating a symbol to represent the vision |
| Generate commitment to the vision | A. Making the effort expended on the visions enjoyable |
| | B. Providing opportunities for people to publicly commit to the vision. |
| | C. Instituting a strategy of small successes by finding something easy to change; changing it; publicising it; then repeating the process |
| | D. Communicating the vision frequently |
| Ensure sustainability of the vision | A. Providing opportunities for people to develop and to articulate the vision themselves |
| | B. Developing the capacity of people to be role models and leaders of positive change |
| | C. Maintaining accountability and rewarding success in making positive changes |

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- There are many useful insights into workplace communications on the Mind Tools Website: <http://www.mindtools.com/page8.html> A useful paper entitled Team Building: Developing a Productive Team, created for the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Programme by Arnold Batement is available from the University's Digital Commons at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2214&context=extensionhist>
- David A. Whetten and Kim S. Cameron (2004) *Developing Management Skills* (6th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Jones, G. R. & George, J. M. (2004) *Essentials of Contemporary Management*, McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.

2 Positive and Negative Communicating styles

Why do managers need to be good communicators?

Communication skills are vital in any form of business. In order to be effective there needs to be regular communication between teams, individuals, departments, employers, suppliers and customers. Ineffective communication can result in poor organisational performance and can reduce competitive advantage. The core tasks in a manager's or supervisor's role are people oriented; hence good people skills are essential. A manager who does not understand his or her team members will not only face challenges in completing projects but also in promoting good mental health.

The advantages of good communication in the workplace

Good workplace communication improves morale and promotes a positive workplace ethos. If employees do not receive any positive feedback or updates on how the company is performing, this has a negative impact on motivation.

Good workplace communication also increases efficiency within the workplace. If employees are clear about the company's objectives and how they contribute to achieving these goals, then productivity is likely to improve. In addition, this helps to promote a positive sense of belonging and value within the team.

Ineffective communication can result in office rumours, gossip and conflict as well as distrust among colleagues, managers and subordinates. In order to ensure healthy employees, good working relationships and high quality organisational performance, an atmosphere of trust and honesty is recommended. A manager must possess good communication skills in order to achieve this. Whether the content of the message relates to technical information or to motivational material, the clarity of transmission is fundamental. Managers need to become more aware of their own communication style and the impact it has on their employees.

How can a manager communicate effectively?

There has been extensive research into the factors which constitute good and effective communications and the main barriers to workplace communications.

Table 7: Guidelines for effective communication

| Effective Communication Guidelines | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Sending Messages | 1. Use clear and complete messages. |
| | 2. Use symbols the receiver can understand |
| | 3. Use a medium appropriate for the message and, importantly, one that is monitored by the receiver |
| | 4. Avoid filtering (holding back information) and distortion of the message as it passes through other workers |
| | 5. Ensure a feedback mechanism is included in the message |
| | 6. Provide accurate information to avoid rumours |
| | 7. Avoid jargon when communicating with people outside a close group |
| | 8. Control emotions until composure has been restored |
| | 9. Emphasise non-verbal cues and ensure that actions are consistent with words |
| Receiving Messages | 1. Pay attention to what is sent as a message |
| | 2. Be a good listener: don't interrupt |
| | 3. Ask questions to clarify your understanding. |
| | 4. Be empathetic: try to understand what the sender feels |
| | 5. Understand linguistic styles: different people speak differently |
| | 6. Pay attention to speed of delivery, tone and phrasing |

| Barriers to Effective Communication | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Ineffective Messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Unclear, incomplete, difficult to understand » Sent over an inappropriate medium » Lacking a provision for feedback » Received but ignored » Misunderstood » Delivered through automated systems that lack the human element |
| Information overload | Many people do not have time to read all the electronic work-related information available to them. This creates the risk that potentially important information will be missed and results in quality issues and lost productivity |
| Filtering | The deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favourable to the receiver |
| Selective Perception | What an individual sees and hears is influenced by his/her attitude, background, and experiences |
| Emotions | The interpretation of a message is affected by the way the receiver feels |
| Language | The meaning of words differs between people from diverse backgrounds. The interpretation of a message can be affected by a person's gender or cultural values |
| Avoidance | Not saying what you genuinely think or believe will prevent the other person from understanding your position or feelings |
| Alienating messages | Trying to win an argument or to always be right using body language, gestures, aggressive tone, labeling, sarcasm, making threats or using blaming as a weapon |

Exercises

An exercise for interpreting non-verbal communication signals as well as verbal signals is provided in Section 3, Exercise 11 p124.

Example

Examples of Effective Communication include:

1. Giving people your full attention while they are talking to you.
2. Encouraging other people to talk by asking appropriate questions.
3. Presenting your own ideas in a way that helps people become receptive to your views.
4. Encouraging teamwork and building cooperation and commitment.
5. Showing respect for people's ideas and feelings, even when you disagree with them.
6. Accepting differences and conflict as a normal part of any work environment and trying to address them constructively.
7. Remaining open to negative feedback and communicating difficult issues in a respectful way.
8. Making sure you have understood what other people are trying to communicate.
9. Finding a way to work with difficult people without becoming negative yourself.

These guidelines were adapted from an online quiz which evaluates the effectiveness of your communication. The test can be accessed at: www.wittcom.com/communication_skills_quiz.htm

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- David A. Whetten and Kim S. Cameron (2004) *Developing Management Skills* (6th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Nadler, D and Tushman, M. (1989) *Organisational framebending*. *Academy of Management Executive*, 3: 194-202.

3 Reviewing your own Communication style

Good communication helps promote positive mental health

The way in which a person phrases and transmits messages is as important as the content in the message. From a MHP perspective, interpersonal communication skills are just as important as formal communications about organisational culture and appropriate responses to mental health or distress in the workplace.

Personal and interpersonal communications provide not only a basis for encouraging workers to engage in communications and behaviours that foster positive mental health, but also to provide workers with the opportunity to express difficulties with mental distress or occupational stress.

This topic describes a number of positive communication strategies. There are a variety of self assessment exercises in Section 3 of this handbook (from p96) that you can use to explore the effectiveness of your communication skills.

Practicing good communication will enhance your skills

The importance of positive communication strategies for a frontline manager should not be underestimated. By choosing the right way of communicating you can increase efficiency, enhance the motivation of a team, create a positive psychosocial environment at work, reduce the risk of workers feeling isolated and increase the likelihood that workers will communicate challenges or difficulties they are experiencing.

The role of the manager, as a transmitter of positive mental health messages and receiver of feedback in relation to potential difficulties, can be empowered by practicing some basic communication strategies.

The key skills covered include:

- Active Listening
- Workplace Conversations
- Feedback Skills
- Conflict Management
- Negotiation Skills
- Initiating a difficult conversation
- Handling Workplace Meetings
- Using Electronic Communication

Exercises

Effective listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. An exercise in active listening is included in Section 3, p140.

Structured Team Meetings is another exercise which may be useful for improving communication. Refer to Exercise 10 on p122.

Example

The National Food Service Management Institute in the University of Mississippi has developed a series of modules on human resource management, to meet a need for relevant materials that would provide directors and supervisors with tools to teach managers effective management skills. One relevant course is the Communication Skills for Managers module, which is designed to be delivered in 1 hour. The manual offers trainers' notes, suggested time frames, teaching suggestions and handouts.

The content of the module provides a useful overview of the central communication issues facing managers and supervisors in the food service sector but is extremely relevant to managers regardless of the business sector in which they work.

The main topics addressed by the module are:

1. Creating a climate for open communication;
2. Listening effectively;
3. Speaking effectively;
4. Using I-messages;

These are one way to deal with conflict and problem situations. These are a non-judgmental means of conveying one's feelings about another's behaviour. An I-message identifies and names the speaker feelings; describes behaviour in a blameless way; and provides a concrete tangible effect of that behaviour.

One useful resource developed for the course is an inventory of personal communication strategies which helps participants to rate the extent to which they:

- Ask their employees what kinds of information they want and need;
- Encourage sharing of information among employees;
- Know who needs what information and when;
- Hold regular meetings to keep communication open;
- Give the speaker your full attention;
- Wait until the speaker has completed his thoughts before responding;
- Refrain from having the last word;
- Attempt to remember the speaker's key points;
- Outline your key thoughts in your mind before speaking;
- Pause to answer a tough question rather than jumping right in to respond;
- Watch others' non-verbal actions to note misunderstanding or disinterest;
- Speak clearly and concisely.

National Food Service Management Institute, The University of Mississippi (2001) Communication skills for managers <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080213054142.pdf>

Another example of good communication strategies is the learning resource developed by the Alberta Department of Employment and Immigration: Career and Workplace Resources Section entitled Let's Talk: A guide to resolving workplace conflicts in 2007. The aim of the publication was to assist organisations and employers to deal effectively with conflict at work. It provides a wide variety of effective techniques, and outlines the skills and attitudes required to identify and resolve conflicts at work. It explores how workplace conflicts arise and sets out a series of strategies for resolving disputes and conflicts.

These include:

- Issue-based problem solving
- Using the right words and asking the right questions
- Facilitation and using external assistance
- Resolving differences
- Using problem resolution in unionised environments

The guidelines are available on the MHP-Hands website or at:
<http://alis.alberta.ca/pdf/cshop/letstalk.pdf>

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Robbins et al (2005) Fundamentals of Management, 4th Canadian Edition, Pearson Education Canada
- Managing your communication skills is available at: http://www.explorehr.org/articles/HR_Powerpoint_Slides/Managing_Your_Communication_Skills.html

4 What Managers can do to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace

How can the manager raise awareness about mental health promotion?

An important objective of mental health promotion is to raise the awareness of employees of the issues that can have an impact on their wellbeing and inform them about what they can do to protect their mental health, in a similar way to their physical health.

The greater the awareness of staff of the protective factors for mental health, the better able they will be to address any personal and work related issues which may impact on their mental wellbeing and increase their sensitivity to the needs of others.

A positive workplace culture creates the likelihood that a worker who is experiencing mental distress will communicate this. As a result, it is possible to identify problems and intervene earlier in order to provide the appropriate support. If workers' awareness of the early signs of mental distress has been openly discussed, they are more likely to seek help at an earlier stage.

Managers are well placed to raise awareness and to assist people to cope by; providing information about mental health and access to services, creating mental health promoting workplace practices including flexible working hours, promoting work-life balance, and creating a more positive working environment. (Adapted from: What can employers do to promote good mental health in the workplace? Available at: <http://www.shift.org.uk/employers/lmr/index.html>)

What is the manager's role in promoting mental health?

A workplace ethos where each worker is treated with respect and dignity, and where the risk of negative behaviours such as bullying or harassment has been reduced, will foster more positive mental wellbeing among staff members. This can also result in reduced absence leave due to illness, grievance and discrimination claims, complaints, and the development of mental health problems.

The contribution made by individual frontline managers is essential to the effectiveness of any MHP programme. It is likely that a manager, supervisor or team leader will become involved in mental health promotion as part of an overall organisational campaign.

The role of line managers and supervisors in Mental Health Promotion (MHP) initiatives in the workplace are central to the success of such programmes. While the policies, materials and the dissemination of information are usually the responsibility of senior management, the HR department, the Occupational Health and Safety function or a joint labour-management committee, the responsibility for transforming these into relevant practice at the frontline lies with the team leader, manager or supervisor.

So, the person responsible for frontline supervision is the transmitter of the key messages of the campaign and acts as a locus for implementation. Initially, you have to brief yourself properly on the content of the positive mental health campaign. The second challenge is to communicate the key messages to staff in a way that makes sense to them personally and from the perspective of their work.

Beginning a mental health promotion campaign

Understanding the message

The key to gaining a thorough understanding of the content of a MHP Campaign is to become involved. In order to transmit the positive messages and to create a healthy workplace culture you need to be familiar with the main concepts. Attend any briefing sessions which are organised and collect the materials that have been developed. There are also useful publications available on the MHP-Hands project website (<http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=handbook>). Finally, it is important to maintain contact with the person responsible for the campaign so that any queries you may have can be answered, and so that you can get advice and support if you experience challenges or barriers in implementing the positive mental health programme.

You can also become familiar with the main elements of a MHP programme independently by reading some of the useful resources that are available. Many of these are on the ProMenPol website (<http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol>).

It is generally accepted that there are 5 domains of workplace wellbeing and these are presented in the table below.

Table 8: The five domains of workplace wellbeing

| The Five Domains of Workplace Wellbeing | | |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Domain | Elements | Examples |
| Physical | Physical Health | Exercise programmes, Health checks |
| | Mental Health | Work-Life Balance, Conflict Resolution Training |
| | Working Environment | Chill-out area, Ecologically valid design |
| | Physical Activity | Safe working practices |
| | Accommodation | Working from home, OHS |
| | Ethical Standards | Values-based leadership, Corporate governance |
| Values | Diversity | Equal opportunities, Cultural relevance |
| | Psychological contract | Job satisfaction, Employee commitment |
| | Spiritual expression | Recognition of religious practices |
| | Autonomy | Team consultation, Management by targets |
| Personal Development | Career development | Mentoring, Guidance, Career Breaks |
| | Lifelong learning | Access to learning, Vocational training |
| | Creativity | Innovation and creativity workshops |
| | Positive relationships | Respect agenda, Team building |
| Emotional | Resilience | Self-awareness training, Coping skills training |
| | Emotional intelligence | Anger management, Emotional support |
| | Social responsibility | Community involvement, Ecological activities |
| | Change management | Consultation, Engagement |
| Work organisation | Work demands | Risk assessment |
| | Autonomy | Control, Whistle blowing |
| | Job security | Working hours, Shift work, Redundancy policy |

(CIPD What's Happening with Workplace Wellbeing? Available at: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/wellbeing-at-work.aspx>)

Getting the Message Across (The Health Communication Unit, 2002)

Mental health messages are one specific strand of a health communication campaign. Health messages that actually result in behaviour change in the target group are not easy to construct and even more difficult to transmit.

There are a number of factors which help predict whether or not a message will be communicated successfully. For the information to have the greatest chance of being transmitted correctly, the audience need to:

- Tune in to the message
- Attend to it
- Maintain interest in it
- Understand it
- Think about it
- Develop related skills
- Agree with the position in the message (attitude change)
- Store the message in memory
- Pull the message from memory when relevant, and
- Decide to act on the information (intention).

In order to accomplish each of these steps, a number of communication strategies should be implemented. The communication exercises in Section 3 will assist you in this process; p122, p124, p133 and p140.

Exercises

It is essential to communicate to senior management the economic aspects of psychosocial issues in the workplace (stress, violence, harassment, burnout, etc.). This is an important step in developing a mental health promotion strategy. In Section 3, Exercise 17, p142 describes how to prepare the business case for Mental Health Promotion.

The Return to Work Interview exercise may also be helpful (p147). This interview is a management tool; the interview is conducted when an absent employee returns following absence. This tool can assist by supporting and reintegrating the employee back into the workplace.

Examples

The Work in Tune With Life - Move Europe project was implemented by the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP). The project aimed to help promote mental health in workplaces. The campaign was co-funded by the European Commission under the Public Health Programme 2003 - 2008. The project increased the awareness of companies and the general public about the needs and benefits of mental health promotion at work, attracted companies to take part in the campaign and designed practical measures and models for promoting mental health in workplace settings.

Examples of brochures and other promotional materials are available on the ENWHP website at: <http://www.enwhp.org/enwhp-initiatives/current-initiative-work-in-tune-with-life/mental-health-at-the-workplace.html>

The website has 20 case studies of good mental health promotion practice. One example is presented below.

Agis Zorgverzekeringen operates in the Financial and insurance sectors. It is one of the major health insurers in the Netherlands. It has 1.23 million customers and 1,500 employees. To promote mental health in the workplace, Agis makes use of its own 'Health Behaviour Model'. Employees who are not (yet) absent, but who indicate that they experience some form of mental problems at work, are detected using this approach. Depending on the nature of such problems, employees are offered a specific programme to increase their resilience. This systematic approach reduced the absence rate from 9% to 2.5% in 2010. In addition, the productivity and wellbeing of employees increased in recent years.

Both the physical and mental health of the employees is high on the agenda. From an initial focus on preventing absenteeism, the emphasis has now shifted towards promoting healthy behaviour for all employees.

The model for prevention of psychological problems is embedded in the overall HR policy. Agis promotes mental health on a particular website on the intranet of the organisation. In addition, there is an open consultation hour at the workplace, where anyone can go to make further inquiries. Also, each employee is sent an annual statement of all activities / services that exist within Agis, to keep the employees (mentally) healthy. Each year, a group of about 550 people are requested to fill in a questionnaire (a Periodic health examination). In addition, employees also receive a physical check-up. Both are discussed / reviewed with the company doctor.

There is always someone from the occupational health team available so that employees can always pass by for support. Another important success factor is the support of the top management, both in content and budget. The HR department and the Health and Safety team heavily invest in relationships with supervisors, who play an important role in policy implementation. Finally, openness, trust and security for employees are considered key success factors in corporate culture. Agis continues on this path and aims to focus, in addition to the existing initiatives, on interventions strengthening the mental wellbeing of staff to better utilise people's potential.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- The Health Communication Unit. (2002). Health communication message review criteria (Rep. No. 3 Vol. 2). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto, Dalla Lana School of Public Health. Available at: http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/resource_display.cfm?resourceID=56
- McGuire, W.J. (2001) Input and Output Variables Currently Promising for Constructing Persuasive Communications. In Rice, R. & Atkin, C. (Ed.). Public Communication Campaigns. 3rd Ed.
- Preventing stress, promoting positive manager behaviour: Longitudinal research study exploring the effects of a learning and development intervention for managers aimed at helping them show the management behaviours identified by earlier research as being important for preventing and reducing stress in their staff. Available at: http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/preventing_stress_research_insight.pdf
- Kerr, R. (2011). Managing Wellbeing Toolkit. Managing Wellbeing network, University of Ulster. http://www.csreurope.org/data/files/HL_Blueprint_/Toolkit_EDIT_10_v2_Final.pdf

Area 3: Understanding stress in the workplace

Introduction

This part of the handbook deals with a number of issues relating to workplace stress and mental health promotion, namely:

- The dynamics of workplace stress.
- Understanding the work sector in which your organisation operates and understanding your workforce.
- Creating a mentally healthy atmosphere at work.
- The role of the manager in a mental health promoting organisation.

These issues are important during implementation of MHP for a number of reasons:

The dynamics of workplace stress

No organisation can adequately address the mental health of a workforce without addressing workplace related stress. Although occupational stress is covered by health and safety legislation, it is essential to understand the causes of occupational stress if mental wellbeing is to be promoted. This section of the manual provides an introduction to the main theories of workplace stress and how it manifests itself in the workplace.

Understanding your work sector and your workforce

There are certain types of stress which are associated with specific work sectors and types of work. This section informs you of these relationships and helps you to identify specific stresses that may exist in your own work context.

Creating a mentally healthy atmosphere

Mental health promotion at work is not only concerned with stress prevention, it is also concerned with improving wellbeing at work. This section addresses a principle component of this process – the work environment.

The role of the manager

The manager plays a key role in promoting mental wellbeing. This function may involve initiating a programme, supporting a programme or implementing a programme. The important aspects of this role are outlined in this section.

The following chapters provide you with the background knowledge required to implement a successful MHP programme in your workplace.

1 The dynamics of workplace stress

What is stress in the workplace?

Definitions of stress often refer to the bio-psychosocial model. This model is made up of three components; an external stressor, internal processes and the interaction between the two. The external stressor refers to aspects of the environment, e.g. a heavy workload. Internal processes relate to the physiological factors that are at work within the individual; so an employee who has a very heavy workload may begin to experience stress symptoms if they feel unable to manage it. The interaction between these external and internal processes has an effect on our thoughts and emotions which can cause stress. This stress often leads to physical health problems such as hypertension, headaches or stomach problems.

There are several definitions of stress. The Social Partner Agreement, reflecting the views of the main stakeholders in the employment sector, defines stress as:

'A state, which is accompanied by physical, psychological or social complaints or dysfunctions and which results from individuals being unable to bridge a gap with the requirements or expectations placed on them.'

This definition does not characterise stress as a disease, but describes it as a reaction to sources of stress in the workplace. It emphasises a number of important aspects, i.e. that demands in the environment impact on the individual. Failure to cope with demands or the presence of excessive demands will lead to mental and physical breakdown.

The importance of preventing stress in the workplace

Workplace stress is the most prevalent occupational health problem and it poses a great risk to mental wellbeing. Therefore, it is essential to deal with stress when attempting to promote and manage mental health issues in the workplace. In addition, occupational sources of stress are subject to health and safety legislation; in all EU countries employers are obliged, where possible, to prevent stress from occurring, and to protect employees from developing stress where this is not possible.

The first step towards dealing with occupational stress is to become aware of the main concepts and approaches to the topic. This will equip you to understand the main sources of stress and to consider the kinds of interventions that are most likely to prevent this problem and promote mental wellbeing.

Common models of occupational stress

The demand-control model

A well known model of occupational stress was developed by Karasek, who proposed that job demands and having personal control over one's responsibilities each play important roles in terms of stress (<http://paei.wikidot.com/karasek-demand-control-model-of-job-stress>). Job demands refer to the psychological factors present in the job and include stressors such as a fast pace of work, interruptions during work, a heavy workload, time pressure, high levels of concentration, and the need for a quick reaction time. Job control refers to how interesting and diverse the work is, how much personal creativity can be incorporated in to it, and whether or not there is room to learn new skills. Control also refers

to the amount of decision making power that an employee has over his/her own job, their work team, or in relation to company policies.

Based on this model, there are four types of job - high strain, passive, active and low strain jobs.

High strain jobs (Low control, High Strain) refer to roles where the employee has a large amount of work but little control over the volume or pace of it. This increases strain; the outcomes of which include anxiety, depression and physical illness. While this level of strain is intolerable for many, other employees may thrive under these circumstances. Those who perform well in such conditions may have higher levels of self esteem or confidence and they may also possess more efficient coping skills and resources than other employees.

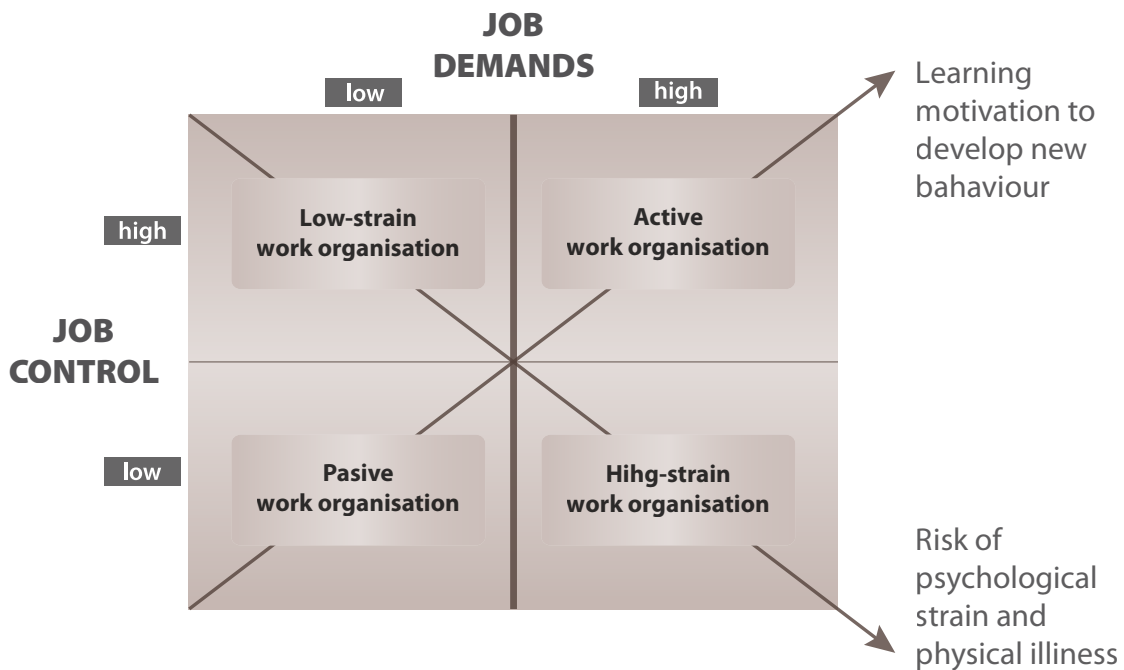
The kinds of occupations that are associated with high strain include machine operatives, chefs and kitchen staff. A majority of women work in high strain roles, including those who work as office or telephone operators, dressmakers and waitresses.

Passive jobs (Low control, Low Strain) are those often associated with administrators, but the passive nature of the role must stem from job success rather than the unimportance of the job. Low control roles involve following procedures. When the process is carried out smoothly, employees have met the objective with little job control or strain.

However, employees working in passive job roles are often more likely to lack motivation, to create a workplace environment where no new learning takes place and where employees lose previously attained skills. The kinds of employees in these job roles include clerical workers, personnel and transport operatives.

Active jobs (High control, High Strain), are considered less stressful because these employees tend to have resources which protect them from strain and therefore prefer active jobs. Here strain is an expected part of the work. These employees experience only average psychological strain because they are flexible and use their skills to find appropriate and direct solutions to what they see as challenges rather than problems. The outcomes for these employees include learning and growth. Active jobs tend to be highly regarded and prestigious; examples include solicitors, judges, doctors, professors, engineers and managers of various types.

Finally, in **Low strain jobs (High control, Low Strain)** employees are strongly influenced by social factors and possess a high level of control over their own and others' jobs. They tend not to experience high strain but contribute fully in roles that relate to the management of tasks from an authoritative position. Jobs in this category include sales representatives, repairmen and linemen, where the work often requires a high level of training. (http://www.ilo.org/safework_bookshelf/english?content&nd=857170416).



(Source: Dhondt et al., 2005)

The effort reward imbalance model

Another well known model of occupational stress was developed by Siegrist (<http://www.uni-dues-seldorf.de/medicalsociology>). This model suggests that as social beings, employees expect that their efforts will be rewarded and that the work process will operate in a reciprocal manner. Rewards in this context include improved self esteem, good career prospects and job security, as well as financial rewards. This model clearly has implications in terms of health promotion policies and contractual fairness. When staff effort is perceived as exceeding the rewards, employees may experience distress. This distress has been linked with negative health consequences including heart disease, depression, reduced wellbeing and self reported health problems.

Because some people deal more effectively with stress than others, the outcomes of stress differs between individuals; those who are highly ambitious and committed to their job will often overcompensate by working extremely hard, focusing all their efforts on the task at hand; these individuals often suffer the most when their efforts are not rewarded sufficiently. The negative effects of the effort-reward imbalance have a powerful effect on the emotional health of the over committed worker. People with high commitment are at an increased risk of developing stress related illnesses.

For more information on other models of stress in the workplace, see Mark, G.M. & Smith, A.P. Stress models: A review and suggested new direction: http://psych.cf.ac.uk/home2/smith/Mark_and_Smith_Typeset.pdf

The following guidelines demonstrate how you as a manager can use occupational health models to identify workplace stress in your employees and how to deal with this issue: http://www.bacpworkplace.org.uk/journal_pdf/acw_winter04_a.pdf

How does non-work related stress impact upon employees?

Stress that comes from outside of work can also play a major role in increasing the stress load on the individual while at work. Stress may be linked to family circumstances, financial pressures and major life events, or even from relatively minor sources such as commuting. Stress from external sources often spills over into the workplace, adding to the stress load which already exists at work, reducing motivation and job performance. It is more often this combination of work related stress and stress in an individual's personal life that has the most negative affect on mental wellbeing, leading to burnout and a higher risk of absenteeism. Therefore, in order to improve employee's wellbeing, it is important to adopt a holistic approach considering the possible cumulative effect of both work related and non-work related stress on the individual.

Developing a stress awareness programme

The models of stress described above highlight the need for an awareness raising programme to inform staff about the nature of stress. It is essential to understand the dynamics of stress at work when developing a stress prevention programme. Employees at all levels need to be informed about the main sources of stress and the resulting effects on health and wellbeing. In addition, it is essential that staff members are informed about legal requirements in the area.

The steps to be taken in developing and implementing an awareness programme are:

Table 9: Developing and implementing an awareness programme

| Step | Activity |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Identify key messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Examine key models of stress » Extract key messages: the sources of stress, consequences of stress, coping with stress, managing workplace stress |
| Identify target groups | For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Entire workforce » At risk groups » Staff responsible for managing stress |
| Identify methods | What methods are to be used for communicating and raising awareness? Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Training » Information campaigns » Publications » Electronic media » Face to face |
| Implement programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identify persons responsible for implementation » Plan activities » Resource activities » Monitor and evaluate activities |

For more information about designing awareness campaigns in the workplace, please refer to the following links from the Training for Mental Health Promotion website:

For more information about designing awareness campaigns in the workplace, please refer to the resources section of the Training for Mental Health Promotion website:

<http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=training>

You can also register for free on this website in order to access the MindHealth E-learning Course.

Exercises

As a first step, it would be helpful to get to know the legislative situation in your specific country. This is an exercise to start with:

EXERCISE

All countries in the EU have legislation relating to occupational stress in the statute books.

Refer to this legislation and record the following:

1. What are the employer's obligations with regards to managing occupational stress?
2. What tools are available or recommended to support the employer in preventing and managing stress?
3. Are there any tools available that specifically relate to raising awareness about occupational stress?

There are many tools available for promoting awareness of occupational stress and its effects. Many of them can be found on the ProMenPol website: <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol>

1. Best Advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace - Part 1 and Part 2
2. Stress Risk
3. Work positive questionnaire
4. UK Management Standards on Work-Related Stress, with Screening Tools, Analysis tool, Analysis Manual (English, Welsh)
5. ACT CISM On-Line Workplace Stress Management Course (English)

Example

Fatigue at work

In The Netherlands a large-scale, national, research programme on fatigue at work took place between 1996- 2004. This multidisciplinary programme includes psychological and medical research and is supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Fatigue is a pressing social problem and in the Netherlands about one in every three work-disability benefit recipients is assessed as work disabled on mental grounds. 30,000 Dutch workers receive a diagnosis of this kind every year. A closer inspection of these mental cases reveals a specific profile: the majority suffer from chronic job stress, depression, adjustment disorders or burnout – all mental conditions that are closely related to fatigue at work.

The program had two main objectives:

1. to improve scientific knowledge of fatigue at work;
2. to develop scientifically based tools for occupational health practitioners such as diagnostic tools and protocols, and intervention strategies.

The second objective is particularly important as organisations are encouraged to pursue an active policy in tackling the psychosocial, environmental, and physical risk factors, reducing sickness absence and work disability, and promoting employee health and wellbeing at work.

The programme consisted of four methods of enquiry:

1. Experimental research in work psychology on mental load and performance. Typically, psychophysiological (cardiovascular and neuroendocrine models) and cognitive modelling techniques are used.
2. Clinical and organisational psychological field research on occupational stress and burnout. Fatigue at work was investigated in relation to specific job stressors and negative outcomes such as poor performance and absenteeism. Explanatory models are used that emphasize the employee's subjective interpretation of their work situation.
3. Risk factors or determinants of fatigue related to the incidence and prevalence of fatigue in the working population, including fatigue related absenteeism and work disablement.
4. Occupational health research on prevention, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of mental conditions that are closely related to fatigue at work such as job stress, adjustment disorders, burnout and depression.

For more information on the programme refer to the following website: http://oem.bmj.com/content/60/suppl_1/i47.full.pdf+html

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Dhondt, S., Kraan, K. and Van Sloten, G. (2005). Work organisation, technology and working conditions. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin.

2 Understanding your workforce

Identifying the risks, needs and preferences of employees

It is important to note the distinction between the risks, needs and preferences of employees, as all of these are indicators of mental health.

Table 10: Risks, needs and preferences

| Indicator | Definition |
|--------------------|---|
| Risks | Objectively or expert defined risks to mental wellbeing. These are indicators that have strong associations with poor mental wellbeing outcomes such as depression, anxiety or feelings of distress. They include factors such as night work and shift work, high job demands, low levels of job control/autonomy, among others. |
| Needs | Needs refer to what the individual regards as being important for their mental health and wellbeing. They may be related to risks, but they can also extend to other factors. The point is that these have been defined by the employees themselves. In a situation where health promotion is not compulsory, the best way of ensuring the participation of employees is to meet their expressed needs. |
| Preferences | Employee preferences are similar to needs, except that the employee has stated that they wish to take action on specific needs or risks. This provides a powerful basis for designing interventions for health promotion since it encourages all employees to buy in to the process. |

These indicators generally refer to negative features in relation to health. However, it is also important to define the positive features of the workplace that contribute to wellbeing. These include features of the work environment such as having interesting and rewarding work, being included in decision making and having workplace support. It can also include personal characteristics such as having good coping skills and resources.

It is important that both the positive and negative factors are addressed when trying to understand your workforce.

What approach should I take when implementing a MHP programme?

There are two general approaches to promoting the mental wellbeing of a workforce. The first can involve taking off-the-shelf programmes and implementing them in the workplace, regardless of the risks, needs or preferences of the workforce. This approach is fairly short sighted because it is unlikely to reflect the real needs of the workforce.

The second approach involves undertaking an analysis of the needs of the workforce. This is more likely to have an impact on wellbeing since it directly addresses the needs and preferences of employees.

Principles of MHP programme design

There are a number of principles of programme design that need to be followed when assessing the needs of a workforce.

These are:

Principle 1 - The needs of the employees should be met. This should be the case for all employees, regardless of their health status. Therefore, mental health promotion programmes should be all inclusive, involving every employee.

Principle 2 – Programme implementers should understand the feelings, needs and attitudes of individuals and particular groups of employees. Not all employees have the same needs, when considered individually or within a group.

Principle 3 – An employee’s physical and mental health is influenced by health habits which are inter-related. The most successful programmes include interrelated components because the benefits of one often build upon another, encouraging overall mental health improvement in the individual.

Principle 4 – The MHP programme should be sensitive to your workplace environment. Organisations will differ in terms of existing systems, operating procedures and culture, so the programme must consider these aspects. Hopefully, the programme will encourage a more supportive working environment, where employees take more responsibility over their own mental health.

Principle 5 – A mental health promotion policy for the workplace is a necessity. This policy will give the organisation direction in terms of mental health promotion. The document should lay out the organisation’s values and approach to promoting the mental health of employees.

Factors associated with poor mental health at work

There are a number of factors associated with poor mental health at work which can originate from: the external environment, the work environment, the characteristics of the job, the work equipment and work methods, products and services, and the work content.

The most common sources of stress are linked to work characteristics and work content – these are psychosocial sources of stress. Factors linked to the work environment or to work equipment relate to the physical characteristics of work.

On p102 in the exercises section, you will find a table which outlines the full range of work related stress issues that have been identified in scientific studies. From the current perspective, the list provides a useful starting point for identifying specific sources of stress in your organisation.

Factors associated with good mental health at work

There are also a range of factors associated with positive mental wellbeing.

The Edinburgh Declaration (<http://www.enwhp.org>) of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion sets out the following recommendations for promoting mental wellbeing at work:

- Provide meaningful and stimulating work opportunities and a supportive work organisation
- Provide opportunities for employee skill development, including self-confidence and social competence development.
- Promote greater employee participation in decision making.
- Recognise the key role played by managers in regards to supporting staff.

- Create a positive work environment and clarify job roles and expectations.
- Reduce sources of stress in the work environment and develop individual's resilience to stress by enhancing their coping strategies.
- Encourage a culture of enterprise, participation and equality; challenge stigma and discrimination in the workplace.
- Support, retain and employ people with mental health problems.
- Develop and implement strong policies on mental health and wellbeing at work.
- Monitor the impact of these policies and interventions.

Conducting a needs analysis

An essential part of gaining an understanding of your workforce is to conduct a needs analysis in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. This should involve dealing with factors that are negatively associated with mental wellbeing, e.g. sources of occupational stress (which is a statutory responsibility), and also with the positive or health promoting factors that may exist in your workplace.

There are many instruments available that deal with sources of occupational stress (refer to the ProMenPol tools database to search for examples that are most suitable for you - <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol.en.toolkittab>).

However, in order to get a full picture of your employees' needs, you will need to augment these methods with an assessment of the positive factors for mental wellbeing which operate in your own workplace.

Most of the methods employed in this area involve the use of self-report questionnaires. These can be administered in workplaces of all sizes, although they work best with relatively larger organisations. Where appropriate, they may also be supplemented with group based methods. It is also useful to review records in relation to work absenteeism when assessing needs for mental health promotion programmes. These should indicate the extent of mental health related absenteeism. Some examples of these methods are provided in Section 3.

A thorough needs analysis provides the basis for the MHP project. It should take account of information that already exists within the organisation (e.g. health and safety, occupational health, absenteeism) and it should collect new data on specific mental health promotion needs. It provides the basis for setting priorities within the project plan. The following steps are recommended:

- Involve the project team in the development of the needs analysis instrument (e.g. the questionnaire, interview schedule, focus group instrument)
- Pilot the instrument for acceptability and practicality
- Ensure high standards in relation to safeguarding anonymity and confidentiality
- Communicate the results of the needs analysis to all employees

Assessing needs is quite a technical activity and it may require the involvement of a technical expert from outside the organisation who possesses knowledge in relation to:

- Workforce demographics and culture
- Knowledge of occupational stress instruments
- Survey procedures
- Confidentiality procedures
- Structure of the organisation
- Basic statistics

Exercises

There are a variety of tools that may be used to support the needs analysis activity. In section 3 you might use the Appreciative Inquiry exercise on p129, or Making the business case for mental health promotion on p142.

You can also find them in the in the ProMenPol tools database:

- Stress Risk (English)
- Best Advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace - Part 1 and Part 2 (English, French)
- Work Organisation & Stress: Systematic Problem Approaches for Employers, Managers and Trade Union Representatives (English, French, Japanese, Spanish)
- UK Management Standards on Work-Related Stress, with Screening Tools, Analysis tool, Analysis Manual (English, Welsh)
- The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire

Examples

There are a number of work sectors and job types that are associated with poorer mental health. Table 11 below presents data from The Eurofound Working Conditions Survey.

Table 11: Workers suffering from work-related stress, overall fatigue, anxiety, irritability, sleeping problems by economic sector (%)

| Sector | Stress | Fatigue | Anxiety | Irritability | Sleeping problems |
|-----------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|--------------|-------------------|
| Agriculture and fishing | 28.5 | 43.3 | 9.4 | 9.8 | 10.7 |
| Education and health | 28.5 | 23.7 | 12.7 | 15.5 | 12.0 |
| Transport and communication | 24.2 | 22.9 | 6.8 | 13.6 | 13.2 |
| Manufacturing and mining | 23.3 | 24.5 | 7.5 | 10.6 | 9.2 |
| Hotels and restaurants | 23.3 | 22.6 | 7.1 | 12.6 | 8.4 |
| Public administration and defense | 22.7 | 18.0 | 11.1 | 12.6 | 10.1 |
| Construction | 22.5 | 28.0 | 6.2 | 9.9 | 4.5 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply | 21.8 | 21.6 | 7.0 | 11.6 | 6.0 |
| Real estate | 18.4 | 13.8 | 8.1 | 8.5 | 7.4 |
| Wholesale and retail trade | 16.2 | 15.3 | 5.0 | 7.2 | 5.3 |
| Financial sector | 14.8 | 13.7 | 6.1 | 6.3 | 6.9 |

(European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007)

According to this survey, stress occurs most frequently in the agriculture and fishing, education and health sectors – more than a quarter of people working in these sectors report experiencing high levels of stress. The lowest levels of stress were reported in the financial sector and the wholesale and retail sectors. These findings were largely confirmed when investigating the outcomes of stress – fatigue, anxiety, irritability and sleep quality. The education and health sectors were consistently high in relation to all of these outcomes, while the financial sector was lowest.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Op De Beek, R., Van Den Broek, K. And De Meyer,S. (2009). Mental Health Promotion. In: Haratau, T. and Wynne, R. (eds.). (2009). Workplace Health promotion – definitions, methods and techniques.

Area 4: Dealing with work related stress

1 Carrying out a stress risk analysis

Identifying problems in the workplace which affect mental health

In all European Union countries as well as many other countries outside the EU, employers have a legal duty of care towards the people who work for them. Their duty of care relates to ensuring the physical, psychological and social health of all employees. For example, EU law states that employers must take steps to prevent all types of risk to workers' health. In order to do this, employers must regularly carry out risk assessments to find out which areas of work might cause harm to their staff.

Employee wellbeing is most negatively affected by mental exhaustion, tiring conditions including monotony of work, mental saturation, excessive demands, or conversely, feeling unchallenged.

Employees should be involved in the process of stress risk analysis. Elements of work organisation and management (psychosocial hazards) that can lead to work-related stress must be included in risk assessments. The aim of the risk assessment is to identify work-related factors that can have a negative impact on worker and on organisational health and safety. A risk analysis which is tailored to the specific workplace and its tasks is the basis for effective interventions.

The prevalence of mental health issues in the workplace

About 30% of employees in Europe experience symptoms of stress and related health problems. The negative influence of stress on the workability of staff is well documented. In the UK, one in six employees experiences depression, anxiety or problems relating to distress. This proportion increases to one in five employees if you include alcohol and drug abuse. Of those experiencing depression and anxiety disorders, fewer than a quarter (24%) seek and receive treatment. For those with an alcohol or drug dependence problem, the figures are even lower – less than 13%.

For UK employers, the total cost of mental health problems per employee each year averages at £1,035, mainly due to reduced productivity and increased absenteeism. Studies show that effective programmes which aim to manage mental health at work can save approximately 30% of these costs. But for the majority of employers, awareness of mental health issues at work remains poor (http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/training/depression_and_anxiety.aspx).

What does psychosocial risk management involve?

Workplace psychosocial risk management is based on the principles of prevention, in accordance with occupational health and safety law. It aims to eliminate risks if possible, or at least reduce them, with a view to protecting workers' health (for an introduction to psychosocial risks and definitions of some key terms, see P74 Identifying the risks, needs and preferences of employees).

Psychosocial risk management involves five main steps

1. Identifying hazards and assessing risks
2. Developing an action plan to address the risks identified
3. Implementing the action plan to eliminate or reduce risks
4. Evaluating and reviewing the action plan
5. Organisational learning and development

Managers who are willing to become involved in this process should prepare good arguments for introducing risk management. The problem to be addressed must be agreed upon with all those involved, particularly senior managers. Initiate the process but do not fight on your own! In general, it is the responsibility of the health safety board or occupational health management to establish a steering group. Employee representatives, HR and chief executives should be involved to ensure that the analytical findings lead to operational changes. Helpful skills include the ability to communicate clearly, open-mindedness, willingness to listen, experiences with analytical tools and knowledge of project management.

Exercises

HSE Management Standards Approach and data collection

The British Health and Safety Executive (HSE) designed a Management Standards approach, in order to help employers manage the causes of work-related stress more efficiently. It is based on the familiar 'Five steps to risk assessment' model, requiring management and staff to work together. The standards refer to six acknowledged sources of work related stress, which can cause serious problems if not properly managed. The document can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>

Information for the risk assessment can be collected through a range of methods. Surveys are frequently used as part of the process. There are a number of tools that are either designed specifically for the identification of psychosocial hazards or which incorporate measures that can be used to do so. Examples of surveys of this type are the EU-OSHA Online interactive Risk Assessment Tool (OiRA) for micro and small enterprises (http://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/riskassessment/index_html), and the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards for Work-related Stress Indicator Tool (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf>). Other data collection methods, such as group discussions, interviews with key stakeholders or observational methods can also be used.

Examples

Unilever Germany Holding AG conducted a risk assessment with a health inquiry in 2008. Each year, approximately 21 days were lost for each individual employee. Both absenteeism as well as presenteeism occurred. Presenteeism refers to employees attending work when they are sick. There may be a number of reasons for this, i.e. an employee may come to work because he or she needs the money and cannot afford to take time off. Additionally, an employee may go to work due to devotion to the job. Regardless of the commitment of the latter group of employees, presenteeism is not welcomed and leads to losses in productivity and poorer health. Consequently, employees who suffered from a disease who attended work also indicated a high level of stress. The executive board responded: Since June 2010 all managers at Unilever are trained in healthy leadership which puts a focus on strengthening the health resources of the workers (BKK Bundesverband, 2011).

In Spain, training appears to be a common method of stress management used, for example, by the National Institute of Public Administration. However, training in psychosocial issues is regarded as limited, since it does not necessarily tackle the problem at its source. Participant experts have pinpointed a series of priority training areas in psychosocial risks at work for the relevant actors involved:

Table 12 Priority training areas in psychological risk prevention, according to employers and workers, Spain

Priority training areas in psychological risk prevention

| Employers | Workers | Risk prevention strategy |
|---|---|---|
| Improve working conditions for the prevention of stress | What is stress? | Improve working conditions for the prevention of stress |
| What is stress? | How to fight against stress | Jobs that trigger stress |
| Risks of stress in the workplace | Risks of stress in the workplace | Identification of stress symptoms |
| Jobs that trigger stress | Improve working conditions for the prevention of stress | How to fight against stress |

Source: ISTAS, 2000 (500Kb pdf)

For further information on work related stress and similar examples from other countries, consult the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) website at: http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/reports/TN0502TR01/TN0502TR01_8.htm

Another company with a systematic health promotion approach, far beyond traditional occupational safety concepts is Caixa Geral, the largest Portuguese financial group. "The results from individual and group surveys among the workforce as well as medical data and findings from workplace studies by the technical and health service, are used as a basis for planning health-related activities. External consultants conduct workplace studies twice a year, during which room air and temperature, noise level, lighting conditions, electromagnetic radiation and tobacco smoke concentrations are measured. Ergonomic criteria play a key role in the design of workplaces. Moreover, work is underway to improve the conditions for psychosocial health in the company." (<http://www.enterprise-for-health.org/network/members/caixa-geral.html>)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- British Health Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk
- Enterprise for Health: www.enterprise-for-health.org
- Shain, M.: The role of the workplace in the production and containment of health costs: the case of stress-related disorders, in: *Leadership in Health Services*, 12(2): i-vii, 1997

2 How to provide support and adapt the workplace to reduce the negative impact of stress

Understanding the factors which can cause stress in the workplace

As a leader, you are responsible for motivating employees to work efficiently and achieve company goals. At the same time, the leader also has a duty of care for employee wellbeing, where good working conditions must be provided. Most leaders appreciate the difficulties in relation to combining these sometimes conflicting interests.

The concept of stress is widely discussed. There is consensus that stress itself is a subjective experience and it is how the individual appraises the situation that dictates whether he/she will experience stress. Stressors include factors associated with the job, one's family or neighbourhood and each can have a cumulative effect. Stress can also be experienced in a positive way (Eustress); this kind of stress is stimulating and helpful for personal growth. However, stress which impacts negatively upon the individual is a psychosocial hazard.

How stress is experienced and whether the impact is positive or negative, depends on several factors:

- duration
- intensity
- possibilities to react to stress/ control the stress factors
- coping strategies and resources available to the individual

Therefore, stress has a lot to do with individual perceptions and experiences. Enhancing an individual's resources and offering experiences to handle stress successfully is an important way to support employees. Firstly, managers should of course try to reduce the duration and intensity of stress factors in order to prevent negative consequences.

Work-related factors for stress are clearly determined. These generally include workload and work pace; work schedules (rotating shifts, variable schedules, unpredictable schedules, night shifts, number of working hours); job security; recognition and support; autonomy and exercise of skills. When problems emerge in relation to any of these areas, these factors cause health problems affecting people's ability to work. They are therefore targeted by MHP interventions with the long term goal of prevention of disease and psychological distress in work environments.

Of course, in a comprehensive risk analysis protective factors and resources should also be assessed. The results of surveys investigating the quality of work life have identified some of these factors: learning and development opportunities; social purpose; moral correctness of processes, practices and results; and positive relationships (Morin, 2008).

Mental health problems are a leading cause of absenteeism across Europe

According to statistics from a number of health insurance companies in Europe, mental health issues

will be a great challenge for companies in the future. This is especially true for regions or branches which are facing rapid demographic change. For example, in 2010 in Germany approximately 12% of all absence days were due to mental health disorders, with 28 days absence taken on average (Resource: DAK, 2011). Both, the number of days and the number of people affected increased significantly over the last decade.

Approaches implemented to reduce the impact of psychosocial risks

There are a number of ways in which psychosocial hazards can be reduced. Poor work organisation, defined as the way in which jobs and work systems are designed and managed, can produce excessive and unmanageable demands and pressure on employees. Poor work organisation can also result in little or no support from others, or a lack of control over one's own work. Research has shown that the most stressful types of job are those which value excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to the employee's knowledge and abilities, where there is little opportunity to exercise any choice or control, and where there is little support received from others.

In fact, leaders who know that the working conditions are poor but who are not in a position to change these hazards themselves, are advised to discuss the problematic situation with superiors or the management board. The problem should not be ignored. Nevertheless, leaders might be faced with a situation where an individual employee requests personal support, or alternatively, meet an employee who seems to need help but who will not ask for help. What is the procedure from here? You have three possible approaches:

1. Improve personal resources

Employees should be matched appropriately to their work. The organisation may consider offering further training and opportunities for personal development. The leader may recommend health promoting activities including yoga, sports or smoking cessation courses. They should have access to psychological services should this be required. The leader should also help people to achieve a work-life-balance, e.g. take proper leisure time and minimise long working hours.

2. Improve social resources

Be a role model in health prevention activities. Encourage cooperative behaviour rather than competition. Improve the teams' abilities to deal with conflicts and failures and make yourself easily accessible. Tolerate informal exchange. Care for team events especially during busy times. Integrate new team members, e.g. mentor programme. Initiate and encourage information exchange.

3. Improve organisational resources

Encourage a corporate culture of appreciation and fair staffing policy. Ask for occupational health management. Delegate not only responsibilities, but also opportunities for decision making. Support employees in organising their work processes, deadlines and tasks as much as possible. Assign complete and meaningful tasks. Set achievable goals and be open to change.

It is the manager's objective to assess the achievement of employees and notice if there are high rates of absenteeism or reduced efficiency. It is best to speak to subordinates early on, especially if you have noticed any behavioural changes or possible signs of mental distress, e.g. irritability, aggression, increased

frequency of errors, decreased performance, slowness at work, frequent lateness, increased smoking, drinking or substance abuse, higher than usual sickness absence rate, bad temper, sensitiveness, anxiety, reduced interaction with colleagues, complaints of stress, etc. The role of leaders here is not to detect illness or engage in therapeutic interventions; rather leaders can organise workplace changes and offer further assistance or advice. It is difficult to standardise every situation and therefore there is no “one fits all” solution regarding how to deal with these issues. Many companies provide communication training to help supervisors to become more efficient in identifying and talking to vulnerable employees.

Discussing mental health issues with an employee

Discussions with employees about problems relating to their work or productivity must be prepared. This conversation could uncover the reasons why the employee has failed to meet work demands. It may be that the employee is experiencing stress due to excessive demands – it is therefore vital to deal with this problem at an early stage in order to help prevent the development of chronic stress or a mental illness.

In preparing this meeting, leaders should think about their own attitudes, motives and perceptions towards the subordinate and ask themselves the following questions:

- Do I think that demand and support are balanced?
- Do I have an attitude of appreciation towards the employee?
- Do I assume an attitude of empathy or charity?
- How can I deal with the intimacy of the subject while keeping a professional distance?
- What is my responsibility, what is the employee’s responsibility?
- What is an appropriate outcome of the interview for me?
- If the discussion ends without a consensual result, what further steps should be taken and who else should be involved?

(DGFP, p. 29. 2011)

Exercises

Return to work interviews

This interview is a management instrument. It is conducted when an employee who has been absent for health reasons, returns back to the workplace. In the past, this tool was quite often misused to detect shortcomings or chronic health problems of employees. Today however, the return to work interview is generally used to identify employee needs in terms of support (Resource: Bitzer, 1999). See Section 3, Exercise 19 p147.

A glossary of the companies' health standards and experts

Do you know your internal (or external) contact persons/services where you can avail of help if an employee develops a mental health disorder or goes on long term absence? Create a list of services if one does not already exist. See Section 3, Exercise 20, p151.

Examples

BLG Cargo Logistics is a company employing about 220 employees, who operate throughout the day and night at the harbour of Bremen. Under a project dealing with qualification, health and demographic change, the company implemented a project team which noticed some problematic aspects in their existing work schedule. These were long shifts, especially over the weekend, consecutive night shifts and flexible assignments on the weekends (which undermined weekend planning). To deal with these issues, the BLG relocated as many tasks as possible to the day shifts. Secondly, the management board and works committee agreed to stop consecutive night shifts being carried out by the same employees; a new schedule was developed where night shifts were covered by almost all workers equally. However, employees older than 50 years of age were given some flexibility. In an employee survey, conducted at the end of the project, 85 % of the employees considered the rearrangement of shiftplans as a “very important” or “important” measure for reaching the aspired goal of enhancing workability of the workers. (Jürgenhake, Schulte, Simon, Voorman, 2007).

A short afternoon nap helps keep employees refreshed, increases creativity and improves one’s ability to concentrate. Research suggests that the risk of injury and heart attack also declines with increased rest. For example, a study conducted in Greece in 2007 revealed that employees who enjoy a regular siesta, tended to have fewer health problems and work related accidents (Resource: Naska et al., 2007). Unfortunately, most companies do not allow employees to take siestas because this is simply not part of company or country culture. Yarde Metals is a US enterprise which has also experimented with the introduction of afternoon naps where results have proven convincing. The company introduced a rest room with comfortable seats and a quiet atmosphere. This environment enabled staff to relax, resulting in employee health benefits and improvements in overall productivity levels. More details can be found at: <http://www.inc.com/articles/201108/sleeping-on-the-job-should-your-employees-take-naps.html>

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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3 Coping skills for workers

Promoting employee coping skills in the workplace

In addition to organisational improvements and changes in leadership style, leaders can also help to strengthen the coping skills of employees. Obviously managers can influence individual coping strategies within an occupational health programme, but they should also understand the limits. Supervisors have the opportunity and duty to address inadequate or problematic coping strategies, e.g. nicotine or alcohol abuse. On the other hand, sustainable behavioural changes cannot be forced. Managers have to strike a balance between workplace interventions and respect for employees' choice with regards to healthy behaviour.

Resilience refers to the capacity to cope with stress and adversity. Resilience is commonly understood as a process rather than a personality trait. This means that resilience can be learned.

The positive effects of coping skills

How did you sleep last night? The British mental health foundation found that one third of the population suffers from insomnia (Mental Health Foundation, 2011). Insomnia is a well known symptom of stress. Coping strategies are therefore very important for enabling normal daily functioning. Mental health is strongly affected by personal thinking and feelings. It is also influenced by external conditions, including individual strategies which are utilised to cope with stress and strain.

Steps to improving the coping skills of employees

Managers should bear in mind that stress and coping strategies are assessed and perceived differently by individuals. For example, one individual might find that a long walk each day is helpful; for another person, getting work done on time and having one hour per day without disturbance is vital. It is important to introduce a variety of measures, for example enable access to sports massage in the workplace, provide breaks, and allow employees to say "no" when they feel overworked. If you want your team to improve in terms of developing personal coping strategies, try to integrate stress reduction methods in your daily working procedures and motivate staff members to do the same.

Superiors should consider three aspects when improving the coping skills of staff. Firstly, employees fear admitting that they need coping skills as this makes them come across as weak. If you really want people to take part in stress reduction training, yoga or time management courses, you have to address this fear and make sure that participation is appreciated and valued in the team.

Secondly, be aware that you are a role model in dealing with stress.

The third aspect relates to a companies intention to improve coping skills. If people believe that a change in behaviour is expected from them without addressing the organisational sources of stress as well, they may find this frustrating. This could be regarded as a hidden attempt to raise work efficiency and not as a measure for health improvement. In this case, staff organisations will probably not support and advertise the training and health projects.

Exercises

10 practical tips for coping with stress

Whether you are a supervisor or a subordinate, everyone benefits from advice on mental health. Refer to Section 3, Exercise 1, p96.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation by Jacobson

This exercise is helpful for decreasing acute stress symptoms, but is also widely used to prevent serious stress related diseases. The technique was developed by the medical scientist Edmund Jacobson in the 1930's. Although the technique is not new, it is still popularly used in the United States and Europe today. The more the exercise is practiced, the more effective the results. It is easy to learn and there are no materials needed. It can be conducted in a lying or sitting position, e.g. in bed, in the office, on a train, etc. The method is based on Jacobson's findings that stress, anxiety and worry are associated with increased tension of muscles, while calmness is linked with relaxed muscles and fewer musculoskeletal complaints. Jacobson proposed that there is a strong relationship between physiology and the mind. Jacobson proposed a technique which at first may appear contradictory; in this method, muscles are purposely tensed for a short period of time, and following this the muscle groups are each repetitively relaxed. In this way, the muscles learn to relax following acute tension. (Jacobson, E, 1938). See Section 3, Exercise 21, p154.

Example

The London Underground 2002/2003 health report highlighted the organisation's losses with regards to health and was used as a basis to secure five years funding for a proactive Health Plan, to deliver business benefits in line with the organisations objectives. One part of the Health Plan was entitled The Stress Plan: http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/case_studies/afe_hw_05_londonu.html

The Stress Plan was developed together with a consultant and comprises of a number of interventions, including the Stress Reduction Programme and the Managers Toolkit. They were designed to meet the needs of the organisation, to enable managers to better manage stress related absence, to provide a practical solution for reintegrating employees with stress related illness and to build employee resilience to prevent future absence.

The Stress Reduction Programme is based on cognitive behavioural therapy techniques and is designed to help participants understand the effects of stress and establish a healthier approach to work and life. It is often used as part of a gradual return to work programme, offering managers practical help while supporting employees.

Impact of the programme:

1. Already the Stress Reduction Programme has resulted in absence reduction, with savings of £455,000 – a return on investment of 8:1;
2. Evidence of improved productivity and company culture;
3. Evidence of individuals making positive changes in relation to health and lifestyle.

The London Underground Stress Reduction Programme won the UnumProvident Healthy Workplaces Award in 2005, supported by the Department of Health and in association with the Health and Safety Executive.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Further information about how to reduce stress: Davis, M., et al.: The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook, New Harbinger Publications, 2008.
- Links to Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction: <http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/whatMB-SR.php> or: <http://www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=42066>
- Windemuth, D., Jung, D., Petermann, O.: Praxishandbuch psychische Belastungen im Beruf. Vorbeugen. Erkennen. Handeln, Universum Verlag, 2010.

4 Work-life-balance in your team

What is work-life balance?

The concept of the work-life-balance has become increasingly popular in the past 20 years. It focuses on how people spend their time and is based on the idea of dichotomy of work, career or ambitions on one hand and leisure time, health, family, friends and self development on the other. In a broad sense, the concept refers to how to balance different needs and interests in order to find life balance. "Work-life balance involves meaningful daily achievement and enjoyment in each of the four life quadrants: Work, family, friends and self". (<http://www.worklifebalance.com/worklifebalancedefined.html>)

Another definition takes an occupational focus: "Work-life balance is about creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments, which will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity." (Abercromby, 2007).

Within the occupational concept of work-life balance, several other areas are discussed, including: family friendly policies, working time schemes, the opportunity to work from home and HR strategies based on life span approaches.

The importance of encouraging work-life balance

The importance of work-life balance for the health and wellbeing of employees has been evidenced by several research studies. According to findings in Canada, almost 60% of employees experience conflict between work and family life; the amount of time spent at work is the most significant determinant of conflict (Lowe, 2005).

Similarly, employee's attitudes towards job priorities appear to be changing. In a representative study of German employees aged 18-39 years, 92% of those with children and 64% of those without children agreed with the statement: "When choosing a new employer, a family friendly policy is more important, or even as important as the salary". And 78% of those with children and 59% of those without reported that they would be willing to change employer if their job and family life were not compatible (GfK, 2007).

Research studies of "top job" employers indicate that an increasing number of companies integrate concepts of work-life-balance in their HR-policies (Resource: Bruch, 2011, <http://www.topjob.de/studie-2011.html>). An annual ranking of German medium-sized enterprises published by St. Gallen University shows that working schedules are highly flexible in most companies and 75% allow teleworking. 93 % offer part-time-jobs and a rising number provide childcare for their employee's children. The enterprises stress the importance of work-life-balance and family friendly working conditions to attract qualified staff (Bruch, 2011).

If your employees maintain a good work-life-balance, they are more likely to exhibit better health and wellbeing. This means that employees will spend time outside of work with family and friends, and will pursue hobbies, offer voluntary services, etc. An enjoyable and interesting life outside the company will help staff members cope more effectively with occupational stress. As the areas of workability, mental health and motivation become increasingly important, it is wise to support employees in caring for their work-life-balance. "Work-life balance is a much bigger and further-reaching issue than many organisa-

tions and individuals may yet have realised. The smartest and most forward-looking organisations will see that by putting work-life balance at the heart of their cultures and their strategic plans, they will not only be satisfying employees and creating more equitable workplaces, but increasing their productivity and responding competitively to significant changes, such as our growing 24/7 lifestyle." (Jones, 2003)

How can the manager promote a work-life balance for employees?

Organisations can help employees to achieve a better work-life balance. The following activities are recommended:

- flexible working hours, sabbaticals, etc.
- working from home
- family friendly work organisation, e.g. no meetings after 5pm
- a company culture which enables leaders and employees to achieve a work-life-balance, e.g. coaching, employee-assistance-programmes
- human resource development for part time employees
- help reintegrating back into the workplace following parental leave
- support for childcare or care of the elderly
- a parent-children-room or a room for breast-feeding women
- a family-day in the company
- communication and information about further support in relation to stress, work-life-balance, etc.
- "disconnect from work" vacation policy – no cell phones or laptops when on vacation

Every organisation differs in terms of vision, goals or procedures. These structures often evolve through employee interpretations of the behaviour of colleagues and superiors and this will influence one's work-life-balance. Apart from the official organisation rules, employees also operate under "hidden" rules, which may contradict organisational rules, i.e. family-friendly policies. Employees themselves participate in creating these covert rules, both voluntarily and unconsciously. Superiors also play a role in the development of hidden rules because they act as role models for employees – the behaviours and attitudes of managers are generally adopted by employees.

Exercises

Hidden rules of your team

Hidden rules exist in every team and every organisation. It is helpful to be aware of these rules because they strongly influence the behaviour of staff. Exercise 22, p155 is an activity which enables you to uncover these hidden rules.

Time Management Techniques

This exercise can be helpful for leaders as well as team members. For more information refer to Exercise 23, p157.

Examples

Most companies in Ireland have shown little interest in an initiative which aims to help employees balance their work life with other responsibilities, such as caring for their children. Work Life Balance is an initiative which aims to develop and implement policies that assist workers to combine their work life with their life outside of the workplace. This can include family and caring responsibilities or personal development. The concept involves putting in place working arrangements that assist workers, such as reduced hours, job sharing and study leave.

In order to highlight this, Work Life Balance Day takes place annually. This year's event is on March 1st. However a survey carried out in the lead up to this has revealed that many Irish companies are less than enthusiastic about it. In fact, over 80% of companies surveyed had nothing arranged to mark Work Life Balance Day. Furthermore just 3% of an average company's annual training budget is spent on Work Life Balance or related staff training. This is despite the fact that many companies admit that stress and work life balance problems account for over half of all absenteeism.

For more information about work life balance, see the following link: <http://www.worklifebalance.ie>

In Germany, there are several initiatives which emphasise work-life-balance in HR policy. One of the most popular concepts is the "audit beruf und familie" (audit work and family), a certificate for companies and organisations who set up their own goals with respect to family-friendly policy and audit the ongoing process within 3 years. This initiative is an important element in employer branding, public relations and also useful when recruiting new staff. For further information visit the following link: www.beruf-und-familie.de

The Steel Division of the Voestalpine Group, an international steel processing enterprise is situated in Linz, Austria. This company is another example of good practice in terms of work-life balance programmes. Viewing health and safety as a management task is one objective of the LIFE project (LIFE standing for "Lebensfroh" (joie de vivre), "Ideenreich" (inventiveness), "Fit" (fitness) and "Erfolgreich" (success), which is a comprehensive programme aiming to create an attractive world of work at Voestalpine for all generations and genders. Among the newly employed, almost one in six was over 40 years of age, reflecting company culture.

The LIFE Programme strategic areas include:

- **Flexible Working Hours:** Balancing family and career and cushioning the stresses caused by shift work creates job satisfaction and builds motivation
- **Workplace Design Tailored to Life Phases:** Supporting and encouraging an individual's strengths in every life phase to the greatest extent possible
- **Equal Opportunities:** Achievement is not about gender or age
- **Safety and Health:** Whether during work or leisure time, whether during an active career or after retirement, we want to encourage and safeguard our employees' achievement potential
- **Culture, Management, and Development Measures:** Lifelong learning, staying innovative, and ensuring a structured transfer of knowledge means providing opportunities
- **Finding and Retaining New Employees:** Attracting new talent and integrating their potential by creating an attractive working environment.

See the following webpage for further information: <http://www.voestalpine.com/group/en/jobs/life-programme>

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Abercromby, M.: A Report on the Importance of Work-Life Balance”, 2007
- Jones, A.: About time for change, The Work Foundation, London, 2003
- Enterprise for health: www.enterprise-for-health.org
- Audit beruf und familie: www.beruf-und-familie.de

Exercises

Section 3

Purpose of the exercises

This exercise handbook is supplementary to the Handbook for Mental Health Promotion in the Workplace. The exercises presented here are linked to the topics of the handbook and it is strongly recommended that you become acquainted with the topics before you begin implementation. The exercises for each of the topics are presented in the table on the next page.

The purpose of these exercises is to provide first level managers, team leaders and other workplace professionals with interventions that can improve and foster the mental health and wellbeing of their subordinates, co-workers and themselves. These exercises were selected due to their practical nature, permitting a “hands-on” approach and the opportunity to incorporate these exercises into daily workplace life. The exercises are presented in a simple step-by-step way, making it easier to implement MHP interventions. The exercises do not only describe what managers could do, but also provide you with ready to use materials including worksheets, checklists, etc.

Structure of the exercises and how to work with them

All exercises have an identical structure which guides you through the process of implementing interventions in just a few steps. The exercises begin with a brief description of the resources and materials required to perform the exercises effectively (i.e. worksheets, checklists, etc.) and finish with references to additional information for those who wish to engage with a specific issue in more depth.

Description: The description provides an introduction to the exercise. The topic(s) relating to this exercise are noted here and the goals and learning objectives are detailed (e.g. expectations of participants, potential benefits of the exercise).

Resources: This section describes the preparation time, didactic or working form (e.g. group work, pair-work, single work), and the recommended target group (e.g. a specification of target group/beneficiaries in the setting).

Material: This part lists the material(s) required such as working sheet templates, checklists, presentations, moderation material, etc.

Remarks, Notices: In this section, recommendations are highlighted and potential challenges or stumbling blocks during implementation are also mentioned.

Variations: This section provides suggestions for variation in terms of implementing the exercise (i.e. working form, target group, different materials, less time for implementation).

Further Readings: If you would like to obtain more detailed information about the exercise (i.e. background details and practical examples), this section provides you with useful recommendations of books, articles and online resources.

| Areas (A) | Topics (T) | Exercises (E) |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| A1. The impact of leadership | | |
| 1. | Impact of one's own behaviour | 1, 2, 3 |
| 2. | Cohesion of teams | 4, 5, 6, 7 |
| 3. | Identifying your own leadership style | 7, 20 |
| 4. | Encouraging others to participate | 8, 9, 10 |
| 5. | Valuing staff | 7, 11, 12 |
| 6. | Dealing with conflicts – Responsibility for subordinates | 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 22 |
| 7. | Dealing with bullying or harassment | 13 |
| 8. | Advocating on behalf of your team | 14 |
| A2. The role of communication | | |
| 1. | Organising effective communications | 6, 10, 15 |
| 2. | Positive and negative communicating styles | 10, 11, 13 |
| 3. | Reviewing your own communication style | 10, 11, 13, 16 |
| 4. | What Managers can do to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace | 6, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19 |
| 5. | What Managers can do to communicate positive mental health messages in the workplace | 3.6, 3.10, 3.11, 3.14 |
| A3. Understanding stress in the workplace | | |
| 1. | The dynamics of workplace stress | 1, 2, 3 |
| 2. | Understanding your workforce | 8, 9, 12, 14, 17 |
| A4. Dealing with work related stress | | |
| 1. | Carrying out a stress risk analysis | 8, 13, 18 |
| 2. | How to provide support and adapt the workplace to reduce the negative impact of stress | 14, 19, 20 |
| 3. | Coping skills for workers | 1, 2, 19, 21, 23 |
| 4. | Work-Life balance in your team | 1, 3, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 |

1 10 recommendations about mental health

Description

The 10 recommendations listed in the table below are about caring for one’s own mental health. They are useful for everyone, irrespective of whether they have a leadership role or not. The recommendations are basic and offer a starting point from which you can progress.

Material

The following recommendations can be given to staff or used as a kind of self assessment tool. It is also possible to adapt the list to create a stress prevention diary. Try to implement each recommendation at least once per week and note your experiences.

| 10 recommendations for positive mental health | |
|---|--|
| 1. | Talk about your feelings: Discussing your feelings helps you maintain good mental health and also enables you to cope more effectively during times of stress. Talking to someone is not a sign of weakness, it is your responsibility to look after your health and wellbeing. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend it to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 2. | Eat well: There is a strong link between what we consume and how we feel – the immediate effect of caffeine is an increase in alertness; sugar intake leads to an initial increase in energy followed by a slump when blood sugars suddenly drop. Foods can also have long-lasting effects on your mental health. Food high in Vitamin B can have a relaxing effect, i.e. Oats and Celery. Take time to prepare meals and eat nutritious foods. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend it to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 3. | Keep in touch: Friends and family are good sources of support. They can offer advice and may be willing to discuss the issues/problems with you. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend it to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 4. | Take a break: A change of scene is also good for your mental health. It could be a half-hour lunch break at work or a relaxing weekend away. Even a break of a few minutes from a task can be enough to reduce stress. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend it to a colleague? | |
| | |

| | |
|--|---|
| 5. | Accept who you are: We all have different talents; some people are talented in math or cooking, while others are blessed with a good sense of humour. We all have inadequacies too. Appreciate the person you are, your body, your way of living, your talents, and open your mind to others. Be pleased with your accomplishments and accept your shortcomings. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 6. | Keep active: Evidence shows that engaging in physical exercise releases chemicals in your brain (known as endorphins) that make you feel good and help boost your immune system. Regular exercise can enhance your self-esteem and help you to concentrate, sleep and feel better. Exercise also helps keep the brain and other vital organs healthy. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 7. | Be sensible with alcohol: We often drink alcohol in order to change our mood; some people drink to deal with fear, loneliness, or personal problems, but the numbing effects are only temporary. Heavy consumption of alcohol and alcoholism is associated with a number of mental health problems including anxiety and depression. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 8. | Ask for help: Nobody is perfect; if you are experiencing difficulties and you feel you cannot cope, ask for help. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 9. | Do something you are good at: What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past? Enjoying yourself helps combat stress. Engaging in an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it and by achieving something you can boost your self-esteem. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend to a colleague? | |
| | |
| 10. | Care for others: Caring for others is often an important part of maintaining strong relationships with significant others. |
| How did this work? Would you recommend to a colleague? | |
| | |

Resource: British mental health foundation

FURTHER READINGS

— British mental health foundation: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

2 How you can really change your behaviour!

Description

In order to be as efficient as possible, actions which are repeated many times are memorised. They soon become routine and as a result we don't have to focus consciously on them. However, these behaviours, thoughts and activities become habits which can be difficult to change. If you really want to change something, you have to overcome the engrained pattern of behaviour. This requires both motivation (a genuine desire to change) and a systematic approach involving a number of small steps. It is often easier to substitute a habitual behaviour with an alternative one than to try to eliminate it. This exercise can be used to alter your own behaviour or it can be shared with a worker who needs to adapt to changed circumstances in the workplace.. It can be used in any situation where behavioural change may be required.

Resources

Behavioural change involves setting out small steps which lead progressively to an end objective; this will also involve frequent repetition and rewarding yourself for successes. It can take about 3-4 weeks of regular repetition to make the transition from one habitual thought or behaviour to a more positive and productive one.

Material

It is important to try this approach yourself before you recommend it to others. For the purpose of the exercise, select one of the 10 positive recommendations from the list provided in the previous exercise and use the template below to plan and execute a behavioural change plan.

There are four main elements to a behaviour change plan:

1. Make a deal with yourself: set a goal, make a plan.
2. Look for your own hurdles and plan how to bypass them.
3. Search for a group of like-minded people, a friend or a coach. Tell them what you are going to change. Request them to ask frequently about the progress of your plans.
4. Evaluate your steps daily or weekly and reward yourself as you accomplish each goal along the way.

| Desired Behaviour (Use active language and specify concrete outcomes) | | | | | | |
|--|--------|-----------|---------------------------------------|----------|--------|------|
| In x weeks time I will be: | | | | | | |
| Personal reward | | | | | | |
| When I have accomplished this I will treat myself to: | | | | | | |
| What are the roadblocks? | | | | | | |
| List the things that are preventing you from achieving your goal and how you can remove them or work around them | | | | | | |
| Barrier to change | | | What can you do to remove the barrier | | | |
| 1. | | | a) | | | |
| 2. | | | b) | | | |
| 3. | | | c) | | | |
| 4. | | | d) | | | |
| 5. | | | e) | | | |
| Support Group | | | | | | |
| List the people to whom you will reveal and discuss your plan | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Behaviour Change Plan | | | | | | |
| Break down the plan into small easily attainable steps; Decide when each step will be implemented and how long it should take. Review the plan daily and assign yourself a score | | | | | | |
| Step | Action | Milestone | When | Progress | | |
| | | | | Slow | Medium | Good |

Remark

If you want to do more sports for example, set a concrete goal. This could be a class you want to join, a distance you want to swim in a specific time, or whatever. Ask yourself what prevented you participating in sports until now. Maybe you find it difficult to leave for a gym class after coming home in the evening - then you should change your behaviour by going directly to the gym after work. Talk about your sporting ambitions with friends – maybe you can engage in enjoyable activities as a group? Finally, evaluate how much you enjoy sport and how satisfied you are with the planned activities. A short example is provided below.

| Desired Behaviour (Use active language and specify concrete outcomes) | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|--------|------|
| In 4 weeks time I will be walking at least 30 minutes each day for exercise | | | | | | |
| Personal reward | | | | | | |
| When I have accomplished this, I will treat myself to a new pair of trainers | | | | | | |
| What are the roadblocks? | | | | | | |
| List the things that are preventing you from achieving your goal and how you can remove them or work around them | | | | | | |
| Barrier to change | | | What can you do to remove the barrier | | | |
| 1. | I am too tired after I get home from work | | a) | I could walk in the morning or at lunch time instead | | |
| 2. | I find it hard to get out when it is cold and wet | | b) | I can buy proper thermal rain gear | | |
| 3. | It is hard to motivate myself | | c) | I can make a deal with my colleague John Smith that we will exercise together | | |
| Support Group | | | | | | |
| List the people to whom you will reveal and discuss your plan | | | | | | |
| Hilda my partner | | | My colleague John Smith | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Behaviour Change Plan | | | | | | |
| Break down the plan into small easily attainable steps; Decide when each step will be implemented and how long it should take. Review the plan daily and assign yourself a score | | | | | | |
| Step | Action | Milestone | When | Progress | | |
| | | | | | Medium | Good |
| 1 | Buy my thermal rain gear | New rain coat with hood | 1/11/12 | | | ✓ |
| 2 | I will walk for 15 minutes every lunchtime | I have done this for 10 days out of 14 | 15/11/12 | | ✓ | |
| 3 | I will walk for 20 minutes every lunchtime | I have done this for 5 days out of 7 | 22/11/12 | | | |
| 4 | I will walk 30 minutes every lunchtime | I will have done this every day for 10 days | 1/12/12 | | | |

3 Checklist: How stressed am I in my job?

Description

This is an exercise that you can do for yourself or which you can suggest to a worker who comes to you for advice or assistance. There are a number of warning signs that have frequently been associated with a negative stress reaction. The checklist below describes some of the most common signs. For the signs to be indicative of being overstressed they should be happening frequently or over an extended period of time. This checklist can be used to test whether or not your stress symptoms are temporary or serious.

Resources

You need about 5 minutes to answer the checklist. If you identify any signs that you are over stressed you should take some time to consider what you could do to alleviate either the symptom or to change the things in your life that are at the source of the stress. You can change things either by removing yourself from the source of the stress, by engaging with others to eliminate it or by engaging in positive mental health activities.

Material

| Checklist of Signs of Stress | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|-------|--------|----------------------------|
| Signs of Stress | Never | Sometimes | Often | Always | What can I do to fix this? |
| 1. It's no problem to fall asleep, but during the night I wake up quite often and start to brood. And then I have difficulty getting to sleep again. In the morning I don't feel rested. | | | | | |
| 2. I have less energy for hobbies, friends or my family than I had previously. In fact, I don't plan as much time now for things that I like. I just don't have the time. | | | | | |
| 3. I try to avoid much contact with team members because that takes up my time and requires a lot of effort. | | | | | |
| 4. I notice that I am developing physical disorders, i.e headaches, indigestion. | | | | | |
| 5. In my own personal time, I find it difficult to stop thinking about work. | | | | | |
| 6. One weekend is not a long enough break from work.. | | | | | |
| 7. I find it increasingly difficult to concentrate on a single task. I'm easily deflected by emails, calls etc., and I have problems getting restarted. | | | | | |
| 8. If things do not go as well as expected I give up much quicker now that I would have had in the past. | | | | | |
| 9. I am increasingly aware of the daily grind of work demands and responsibilities. | | | | | |
| 10. Although I do my job quite well, I notice that I have unstable moods. Even though I don't want to, I sometimes react peevishly or get annoyed. Every day I feel an inner resistance to work. | | | | | |

Explanation:

If you rated more five statements as **Often**, you should examine your work-life balance to see if there are aspects that need to be changed or if you need to start introducing some positive activities into your life.

If you rated three or four statements as **Always**, you are showing the initial signs of exhaustion. It's time to check your stress levels and your resources of strength.

If you answered five or six as **Always** you feel a loss of energy, commitment and well being. You should try and improve your stress competence and investigate preventative measures.

If you rated seven or more statements as **Always**, you are exposed to stress in your job or your home life, probably for several years. You are facing a severe health risk. Take care of yourself, start changing your behavior and try to eliminate stress factors linked to your work or your home life.

Remarks, Notices

It might be helpful to compare and discuss your answers with other people who complete the questionnaire, i.e. family, friends or colleagues. Do not hesitate to look for medical or other professional advice if you feel that your stress levels are becoming unmanageable.

Evaluation and Reflection

The 10 recommendations in Exercise 3.1 provide suggestions of positive things that you can do and Exercise 3.2 provides you with a way to plan changes in the way you react to stressful situations. In this case, you can plan the changes you want to make to reduce stress and exhaustion in your life. Be both realistic and ambitious. Try to develop new habits and evaluate your progress every week within a period of 3 months. Then complete the work sheet again. What has changed?

FURTHER READINGS

— BKK Bundesverband: Projekt Psyga transfer “Kein Stress mit dem Stress”, 2011

4 Exercise based on Theme-Centred Interaction (TCI) model

Description

The TCI model is based on the view that team work is dynamic. It involves the task or project in which the team is engaged (IT), how each person in the team is interacting with the task and the other team members (I) and how cohesive the team is as a whole (WE). It also acknowledged that the team is operating in an external context with specific dynamics and particular conditions (“globe”), which encompass the triangle. You can use the TCI model to focus in on what aspects are creating challenges for effective team working and individual team wellbeing. For example it could be a conflict between two members of the team, the project deadline could be creating tensions, one member of the team may not be making an adequate contribution to the work of the team or some aspect of the organisation, such as planned redundancies, may be affecting the members of the team.

Resources

You only need a few minutes to answer the questions in the checklist below. It is meant for individual work. If you want to know more about the theoretical background, further reading is recommended. You can use this scheme to look at the balance of your team. This is just an indicator, it is not an analytical tool.

Material

Theme Centred Interaction Checklist

The TCI model can help a leader to gain a perception of team and group processes, assist in planning of team and group processes and to decide on the next steps for action. In order to review the extent which your team is working effectively, consider the following elements of the Theme Centred Interaction model. The key to good team working is balancing all four elements of the model.



Resource graph: http://www.eppler-baden.ch/Texte_HE_E/tzi_E.htm

Use the rating scale to assess the extent to which, as leader, you ensure that each of the elements of the TCI model are in balance.

1. I don't do this
2. This is something I intend to do
3. This is something I should do more regularly
4. I always ensure that this happens

Make a note of the things that you are currently doing in each area and consider how you could enhance each aspect in order to achieve a more balanced team.

| Theme Centred Interaction Checklist | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| The (I): | | | | |
| As the leader I create opportunities for every team member: | | | | |
| 1. To develop personally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe briefly how you do this: | | | | |
| | | | | |
| List things you could do to make sure this happens: | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 2. To deal with issues that concern them | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe briefly how you do this: | | | | |
| | | | | |
| List things you could do to make sure this happens: | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 3. To bring in his/her own personality and energy into the work of the team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Describe briefly how you do this: | | | | |
| | | | | |
| List things you could do to make sure this happens: | | | | |
| | | | | |

Theme Centred Interaction Checklist

The **(WE)**:

As leader I create opportunities for my team:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To engage and interact together in constructive and creative ways | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. To participate in cooperative working and learning together | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. To reflect upon how things are progressing for the team in practical and social terms | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

Theme Centred Interaction Checklist

The (IT):

As leader I make sure that all the members of my team:

1. Have a shared understanding of the common goals and objectives of the team

1

2

3

4

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

2. Clearly understand the core concrete tasks to be undertaken by the team, the targets and schedules and the contribution of each team member

1

2

3

4

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

3. All team members are in agreement with the goals and the strategies being used to achieve them

1

2

3

4

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

Theme Centred Interaction Checklist

The **(GLOBE)**:

As leader I encourage and support the team and each team member to:

1. Work together to meet the needs of the organisation and achieve its mission

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

2. To respond constructively to external pressures and demands

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

3. To have an influence on the ethos of the organisation and on the way in which it impacts on the work of the team

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

Describe briefly how you do this:

List things you could do to make sure this happens:

Remarks, Notices

The aim of this checklist is to assist you in clarifying your perceptions about the current balance of your team. However, teams are by their nature dynamic and the external context can often impact on the way things are working in the team. According to Cohn, a team is most productive if all dimensions are more or less balanced. This requires a consistent approach to each of the elements. It may be useful to keep the four elements in mind and view stresses and tensions that arise from each of the four perspectives.

FURTHER READINGS

- Cohn, R., Klein, I. (1993): Großgruppen gestalten mit themenzentrierter Interaktion, Mainz
- Hornecker, E. (2001) What can we learn from Theme-Centred Interaction for CSCW and computer supported group processes, Position paper for the E-CSCW (Computer –supported Cooperative Work) Workshop on Structure and Process: the interplay of routine and informed action, Bonn Germany
- <http://www.ehornecker.de/Papers/TZI.pdf>

5 Team clock

Description

This exercise aims to identify what stage the team are at, according to team member feedback (Topic 1.3). This is most useful for project groups or teams in the early stages of development. Each team member is given a copy of a symbolic clock and an explanation of the background and meaning of the model. The employees are asked to mark the point at which they believe the team is currently at. The results are reviewed and discussed by the group.

In this four stage model, the progression is:

1. **Forming**
2. **Storming**
3. **Norming**
4. **Performing**

The features of each phase are described in 1.3.3, p37:

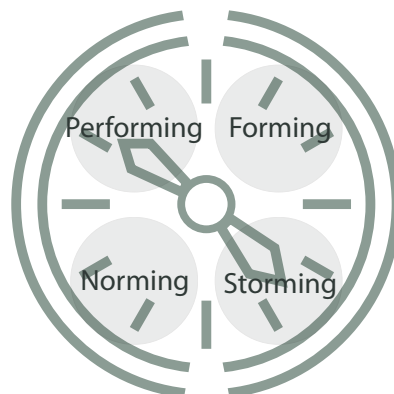
Resources

This exercise will take about 10 minutes to complete. The results will assist you in identifying what stage of development your team has reached and provide you with feedback to assist the team to progressing towards more productive performance.

The exercise can also be used with the team by asking each member of the team to complete the checklist and to discuss differences in ratings. The amount of time needed for discussion depends on the make up and heterogeneity of the team. It may take up to 15-30 minutes. The exercise can be used as warm-up activity at team meetings to improve team cohesion and work flow.

Material

A graph like this can be used as an introduction to the exercise.



Review the statements below to gain an insight into the stage of development that the team is currently going through

| Forming | | Not at all | Some times | Often |
|------------|---|------------|------------|-------|
| 1. | The team is very dependent on leadership for guidance and direction | | | |
| 2. | Disagreements about the aims of the team have to be resolved by the leader | | | |
| 3. | The team members require clarification of their individual roles and responsibilities | | | |
| 4. | Questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships need to be answered by the leader | | | |
| 5. | The team members often ignore agreed processes and procedures | | | |
| 6. | It feels like the team is testing the tolerance of its leader | | | |
| 7. | Team members question the system and organisation | | | |
| Storming | | Not at all | Some times | Often |
| 1. | It is difficult for the team to reach decisions | | | |
| 2. | There is a competitive atmosphere between team members and people try to assert themselves over others | | | |
| 3. | The team members challenge the leadership | | | |
| 4. | The team understands the purpose of the activity but there are also areas of uncertainty | | | |
| 5. | The team is fragmented by cliques and factions and there are internal power struggles | | | |
| 6. | The team needs to be refocused on its goals and away from relationship and emotional issues | | | |
| 7. | Compromises are required to enable progress | | | |
| Norming | | Not at all | Some times | Often |
| 1. | There is agreement and consensus among team members | | | |
| 2. | It is easy to facilitate team working | | | |
| 3. | Everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities and accepts them | | | |
| 4. | Important decisions can be reached through team consensus | | | |
| 5. | Decisions about detail and some leadership responsibilities can be delegated to individuals or small groups | | | |
| 6. | Commitment and unity is strong within the team and develops its own processes and working style. | | | |
| 7. | The team engages in fun and social activities. | | | |
| Performing | | Not at all | Some times | Often |
| 1. | Team members are aware of the overall strategy of the team and why it is doing what it is doing. | | | |
| 2. | The team has a shared vision | | | |
| 3. | The team can work independently with little guidance on delegated tasks and most decisions are based on agreed criteria | | | |
| 4. | The team is motivated to overachieve in terms of goals and targets | | | |
| 5. | Relationship, style and process issues are resolved and disagreements are resolved within the team positively | | | |
| 6. | Changes to processes and structure are made by the team. | | | |
| 7. | Team members take care of each other and seek personal and interpersonal development support from the leader | | | |

Scoring:

The checklist can be scored by simply counting the number of times the ‘Often’ rating is assigned to items in a particular phase.

As a team leader, your aim is to help your team reach and sustain high performance as soon as possible. To do this, you may need to change your approach depending on the current stage of development of the team. The steps below will help ensure you are doing the right thing at the right time.

1. Identify your team’s stage of development from the exercise
2. Consider what needs to be done to move towards the Performing stage, and what you can do to help the team progress effectively. The table below provides an indication of what your role should be at each stage and think about how to move the team forward.
3. Schedule regular reviews of where your teams are and adjust your behaviour and leadership approach to suit the stage your team has reached.

| Stage | Activity |
|-------------------|--|
| Forming | Direct the team and establish objectives clearly. A good way to do this is to negotiate a team charter. |
| Storming | Establish process, structure and work to reduce conflict and build good relationships between team members. Generally provide support, especially to those team members who are less secure. Remain positive and firm in the face of challenges to your leadership or the team’s goals. Perhaps explain the “forming, storming, norming, and performing” idea so that people understand why conflicts occur and understand that things will improve in the future. Consider teaching assertiveness and conflict resolution skills where necessary. |
| Norming | Step back and help the team take responsibility for progress towards the goal. This is a good time to arrange a social or team-building event |
| Performing | Delegate as far as you sensibly can. Once the team has achieved high performance, you should aim to have as “light a touch” as possible. You will now be able to start focusing on other goals and areas of work |

Adapted from Mind Tools http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm

Remark

If you become aware that conflict exists within the team, it might be better if team members are asked to complete the exercise anonymously.

Variations

The team clock can also be used to start an open exchange of ideas. But the facilitator must ensure that this exercise enables all team members to have their say and affirms that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers (exercise 3.7).

FURTHER READINGS

- Tuckman, B.W.: Developmental sequence in small groups. (1965) Psychological Bulletin 63, S. 384 – 399

6 Structured team meetings

Description

Structured team meetings should be held regularly to improve cohesion. The organiser should plan an agenda which reflects team needs. To do this, you might ask the team for suggestions. Communicate the agenda a few days in beforehand. At the meeting, observe the time planned for each topic and delegate topics to sub-teams. Invite the group to participate in decision making and future planning. This exercise corresponds to topics 1.3, 1.5 and 2.3.

Resources

Depending on team member needs, meetings should be held at least once a month and last between one and two hours. Try to integrate team meetings into the work schedule of part time workers, staff working night shifts or field staff. Highlight the importance of attending these meetings.

Material

There should be an agenda which is communicated in advance of the meeting, a protocol and a subsequent to-do list. The following is an example of a recommended schedule:

| | Topic | Duration approx. |
|----|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Last protocol and to-do-list | 15 minutes |
| 2. | 1-2 actual topics (with to-do's) | 30 minutes |
| 3. | Progress feedback from the team | 15 minutes |
| 4. | Next meeting and other business | 10 minutes |

Remarks

Before starting, decide if you will play the role of leader or moderator. Whichever role you take, remember that everyone should be given time to talk and participate; you do not need to control the floor.

Variation

Structured "idea meetings" are an alternative option, as they make use of employees' expertise. The advantage of an idea meeting is that the individual is encouraged to contribute his/her own ideas. These meetings also help improve communication between management and employees. They are easy to implement and therefore of special interest to small and medium sized companies. Idea meetings are usually run without a trained moderator.

At the beginning, the manager completes an assessment to identify potential needs. Then, a represent-

ative team (4-7 people) should meet regularly (e.g. once a month) within a defined period of time (e.g. 6 months), preferably without the presence of the manager/ leader. It is important, that the meetings take place at times suitable for the participants. The team organises itself and appoints one person to act as the moderator.

At each meeting, the team considers the following five questions and discusses the findings with management afterwards:

1. What has changed since the last meeting? Are there tasks still outstanding from the to-do-list (with exception of the first meeting)? (5 minutes)
2. What is working well and what could be improved? (15 min)
3. Of all the areas needing improvement, which is the most important one? (15 min)
4. How could we change the situation (indicators for success, conditions, consequences, sustainability)? (30 min)
5. Who does what, until when (written to do list)? (15 min)

Evaluation and reflection

The meetings can be evaluated formally or informally. You might wish to invite a professional mediator to one of the meetings in order to strengthen cohesion and to intervene early should any conflicts arise.

FURTHER READINGS

- DGUV (2008): Arbeiten: Entspannt – gemeinsam – besser, so geht's mit Ideen-Treffen speziell für KMU, Dresden

7 Feedback rules

Description

Feedback can help a person develop self-awareness and promote openness. Before giving or asking for feedback, consider your intention: Do you want to get/give acknowledgement, do you want to improve/help to improve, do you want to identify weaknesses or do you want to hear other people's opinions? Here are some rules on how to deal with feedback which should be observed. This exercise corresponds to different topics, e.g. 1.3, 1.4 or 1.5 p.....

Resources

There are no specific resources needed, just people who are willing to give or receive feedback.

Material

The rules below can be written on a flip-chart and discussed regularly in team meetings. Of course, they are also useful in all types of discussions, including those involving conflict.

1. When feedback is provided which needs to be kept confidential this should be made explicit
2. The receiver should have the right to object to feedback.
3. If feedback is welcome, the receiver listens and can ask whether he/she understands it in the way the sender wants it to be understood, but the receiver should not explain or make excuses regarding what is said. .
4. Feedback should be linked to observable behaviour or situations.
5. Feedback should be authentic, empathic and offered with the intention of helping the receiver to improve or learn.
6. Feedback should not be confined to the negative aspects of an issue. It should also encompass the positive aspects and act as a means for identifying alternative approaches.
7. Feedback can be accepted more easily if the sender speaks of his/her own feelings and needs in relation to the specific situation.
8. The person providing feedback speaks from his or her point of view and does not make definitive claims about the truth of something.
9. A person providing feedback should try to avoid making judgements, generalisations and expressing prejudices.
10. It is up to the person receiving the feedback to decide what to do as a result.

Remarks

Authentic feedback is a very helpful process. Good self-esteem is required, especially in leaders. If you ask for feedback, first of all think of how you would deal with criticism – are you really willing to listen to someone who criticises your actions?

Evaluation and reflection

We can use the feedback rules to compare how we view ourselves with how others view us. The model proposes that for improved communication it is preferable if both views more or less converge.

| My personal aspects... | known to me (internal) | |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| | known to me (internal) | not known to me |
| known to others (external) | A: public part of my personality – known to me and observable to others | C: my blind spot – unconscious habits, forgotten experiences, etc. |
| not known to others | B: my private person – behaviours or motives that I have not previously told/shown to others | D: my dark room – the sub-conscious |

Resource: Handy, Charles (2000). 21 Ideas for Managers. San Francisco

Feedback can help to enlarge field “A”. Communication becomes increasingly easier and quite often trust and cohesion will grow. That does not mean, of course, that team members share all their private thoughts or experiences.

FURTHER READINGS

— Handy, Charles (2000). 21 Ideas for Managers. San Francisco

8 Occupational health surveys

Description

Health related information is highly confidential; therefore anonymous surveys are widely used during the early stages of occupational health projects. Anonymous surveys serve the interest of employers in terms of detecting risks and assessing needs, but they also protect the privacy of employees. Other advantages of health surveys are that they provide the opportunity to gather representative information and to use the data for evaluation purposes. In this case, the survey has to be repeated. Answering a questionnaire is the first step of participation. The response rate is a good indicator of the level of interest in the subject and the level of confidence in how the survey has been conducted. A survey is normally carried out with personnel across the whole organisation but it can also be conducted with personnel in specific departments. This exercise corresponds to topic 4.2.

Resources

The expenses involved in conducting a health survey (e.g. for development, administration, information and data analysis) have to be taken into account. External support may be needed, especially during the development and data analysis stages. If a standardised survey tool exists, health related questions could possibly be added. The total cost will depend on the number of employees. A minimum of 25-30 persons is necessary to ensure anonymity of participants.

Material

In this section, three examples of health surveys are described. For detailed information, refer to the internet link.

COPSOQ

The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) is a screening tool developed with the aim of assessing and improving the psychosocial work environment.

The tool consists of three instruments:

1. A long questionnaire for research purposes;
2. a medium length questionnaire to be used by work environment professionals; and
3. a short version to be used by workplaces.

Languages: Danish | English | Finnish | Norwegian

URL: <http://www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk/en/publikationer/spoergeskemaer/psykisk-arbejdsmiljoe/~media/Spoergeskemaer/copsoq/english-copsoq-2-ed-2003-pdf.pdf>

Impuls-Test

With the IMPULS-test, job-related stress factors and resources can be described. The test contains 11 themes with 26 questions in total. The employees evaluate the conditions of work. Every question has to be answered twice: the first time in relation to the current situation and the second time with respect to a preferable situation. Both answers are compared.

Language: German

URL: <http://www.impulstest.at/default.aspx>

Risk assessment questionnaire

This is a questionnaire developed to gain feedback from employees about the potential causes of stress at work. Also provided is a tool to help analyse results from the Risk Assessment Questionnaire and subsequently identify common risks and priority issues in the workplace. An electronic tutorial is available to train the user how to use the analysis tool with instructions on how to interpret the results.

Languages: English

URL: http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Workplace_Stress/Work_Positive_Project_2008_2009/Work_Positive_Questionnaire_Tool.pdf

Remarks, notices

When a company conducts a health survey it is important that staff members are informed of the results. Moreover, as a survey raises expectations, the company should implement some new measures to improve the existing situation. If no improvements are made following completion of the survey, employees may experience frustration and lack of motivation.

Evaluation and reflection

Following completion of the survey, the questionnaire administration process and the chosen tool should be critically assessed. This also includes conducting a cost-benefit analysis.

FURTHER READINGS

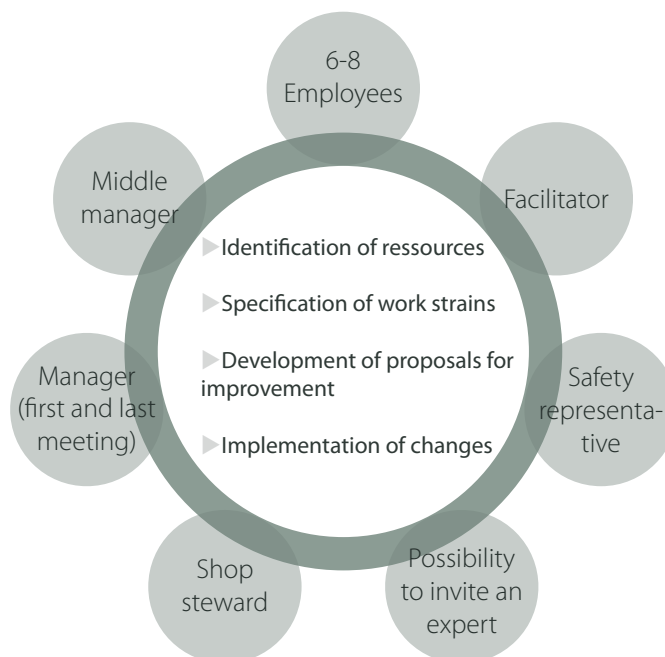
- Further information about different tools can be found in the “ProMenPol Database”: <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol.en.promenpol-tool-kit>

9 Health promotion circles

Health promotion circles are moderated meetings of employees. They have two main purposes:

1. To provide an analysis of demanding work situations by employees themselves, and
2. To make improvements.

They require the participation of personnel, using the expert knowledge of employees regarding health problems in the workplace.



(Danish National Centre for the working environment)

The meetings are guided by:

1. Discussion and prioritisation of the occupational factors which cause health risks
2. Discussion around the reasons for the situation
3. Discussion and prioritisation of solutions

A clear procedure needs to be in place for communicating the conclusions and queries generated by the health promotion circle.

Resources

A health promotion circle consists of 8-12 employees, generally without leadership responsibility (supervisors and middle managers can participate), and a moderator. The participants should be representatives of the group. Health experts, such as company physicians, can be invited for specific topics or the whole course. There should be 3-6 meetings of 1-2 hours duration, and these should take place during work time. Participation is voluntary. External moderation is recommended. The meetings are

documented to keep the staff and leaders informed. Results are presented to a steering committee.

This exercise is designed to provide feedback from staff about their awareness of, and willingness to participate in a health promotion circle.

Material

| Health Promotion Circle Interest Questionnaire | | |
|---|-----------------|--------------|
| This short survey aims to gather information about staff members' interest in participating in a Health Promotion Circle. | | |
| What is a Health Promotion Circle? | | |
| <p>A Health Promotion Circle (HPC) is a group of interested employees who meet to explore and discuss in depth the subject of health in the workplace. These meetings have two main purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The analysis by the members of the Circle (employees) of demanding work situations; 2. The identification of areas requiring improvement. <p>A health promotion circle usually consists of 8-12 employees. The participants should be representative of a wide range of staff roles and levels. The meetings are usually moderated by an internal or external trainer. Management may attend the first meeting to clarify expectations and can be invited to the final meeting to receive feedback from the Circle. If required, internal or external experts can also be invited to take part in a meeting to deal with specific topics or to attend a whole meeting.</p> <p>Normally the HPC holds three to six meetings which last between 1 and 2 hours, which take place during work hours. The meetings are documented to keep the staff members and management informed. Results are presented to a steering committee.</p> <p>The success of a HPC depends on staff participation, the expert knowledge of employees about health problems in the workplace and feedback to the organisation. Participation is voluntary.</p> | | |
| How can you become involved? | | |
| You can indicate your interest in getting involved in a HPC by completing the short questionnaire below and returning it to me. | | |
| | Disagree | Agree |

1. I am aware of the importance of promoting health within my workplace
2. I support the idea of establishing a Health Promotion Circle in this organisation
3. I believe that I can make a positive contribution to improving the ways the organisation promotes and protects the health of its employees
4. I have some suggestions to make about areas where health promotion needs to be improved
5. I am willing to participate in a Health Promotion Circle if one is established

Remarks

It is important to communicate the importance of the health promotion circle extensively before it is implemented. The exercise can help you to do this. If there is sufficient interest in participating, it is important that you follow up on the suggestion. Consequently, it is important that the concept is agreed

with all organisational stakeholders including senior management, HR, occupational health and health and safety representatives.

In the event that you establish a Health Promotion Circle, you must commit to evaluating proposals from employees carefully and incorporating them where possible into organisational policies and practices. All results should be disseminated, including those which will not be acted upon.

FURTHER READINGS

- Danish National Center for the working environment: Testing of the health circle method to improve the working conditions in Danish elder care.
<http://www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk/en/projekter/udvikling-af-arbejdsmiljoesundhedskredse--amsk/beskrivelse-af-projektet>
- Vogt, U. (2003): Gesundheitszirkel, in: Badura, B., Hehlmann, T. (Hrsg.): Betriebliche Gesundheits-politik, Berlin, S. 227-231

10 Structured Idea Meetings – Group Brainstorming

Description

When it works, group brainstorming can be very effective for bringing the full experience and creativity of all members of the group to bear on an issue. When individual group members are having difficulties with an idea, another member's creativity and experience can take this concept to the next stage. Group brainstorming can therefore develop ideas in more depth than individual brainstorming.

Another advantage of group brainstorming is that it helps everyone involved to feel that they've contributed to the end result, and it reminds participants that other people have creative ideas to offer. What's more, brainstorming is fun and it can be a great team-building exercise.

Resources

Brainstorming in a group can be risky for individuals. Unconventional suggestions may appear foolish at first but may actually prove invaluable. Because of this, you need to chair sessions seriously so that good ideas are not dismissed and so that the common issues relating to group problem-solving don't stifle creativity.

You can often obtain the best results by combining individual and group brainstorming, and by managing the process carefully according to the "rules" below. In this way you encourage people to focus on the issue without interruption (this occurs due to the dedication of group members), you maximise the number of ideas you can generate and you get that great feeling of team bonding that develops in a well run brainstorming session.

Materials

In order to run a group brainstorming session effectively, ensure the following:

1. Find a comfortable meeting environment and set it up ready for the session.
2. Appoint one person to record the ideas that arise during the session. These should be noted in a format which everyone can see and refer to. Depending on the approach you choose, you may want to record ideas on flip charts, whiteboards, or computers with data projectors.
3. If people are not already experienced in working together, consider using an appropriate warm-up exercise or ice-breaker.
4. Define the problem you want solved clearly and lay out any criteria to be met. Make it clear that the objective of the meeting is to generate as many ideas as possible.
5. Give people plenty of time on their own at the start of the session to generate as many ideas as possible.
6. Ask participants to voice their ideas, making sure that you give everyone a fair opportunity to contribute.

7. Encourage the group to develop upon other people's ideas and to use suggestions to create new ideas.
8. Encourage an enthusiastic, uncritical attitude among members of the group. Persuade everyone to contribute and develop ideas, including the quieter members of the group.
9. Ensure that no one criticises or evaluates ideas during the session. Criticism introduces an element of risk when voicing ideas. This stifles creativity and cripples the free flow nature of a good brainstorming session.
10. Let people have fun brainstorming. Encourage them to come up with as many ideas as possible, from solidly practical ones to wildly impractical ones. Welcome creativity!
11. Ensure that no train of thought is followed for too long. Make sure that you generate a sufficient number of different ideas, as well as exploring individual ideas in greater detail.
12. In a long session, take plenty of breaks so that participants continue to concentrate.

Remarks

Brainstorming is a useful means of generating radical solutions to problems, just as long as it is managed well. During the brainstorming process there is no criticism of ideas, and free reign is given to people's creativity (criticism and judgment hinder creativity).

This tends to make group brainstorming sessions enjoyable experiences which are great for bringing team members together. Using brainstorming also helps people commit to solutions because they have participated in the development of these resolutions.

3.10.5 FURTHER READINGS

- Mind Tools Essential skills for an excellent career

URL: <http://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html>

- Tom Stevens Think Leadership Ideas

URL: <http://thinkleadershipideas.com/leadershipideasblog/files/7brainstormtips.php>

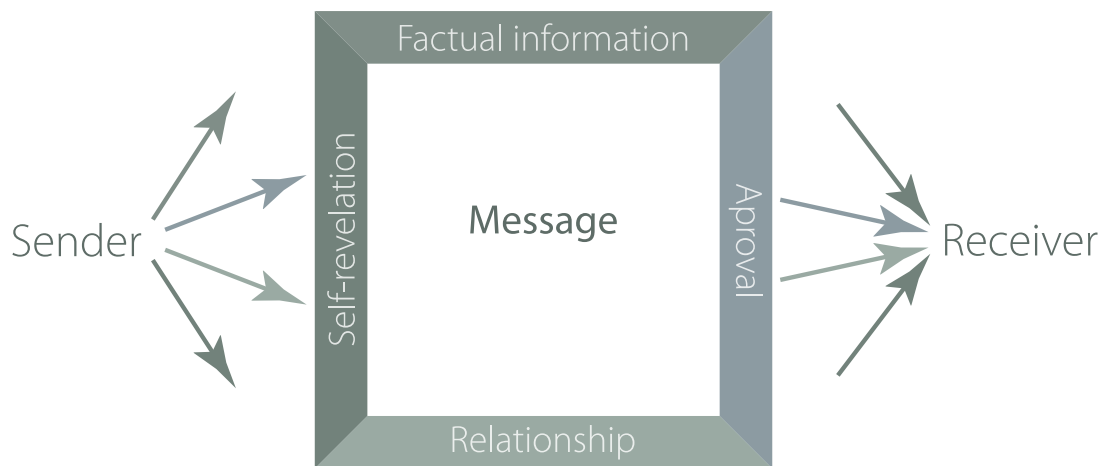
11 Four channels of communication

Description

We interpret both nonverbal and verbal signals of other people on a daily basis. This assumption is incorporated into a communication model proposed by Schulz von Thun. He postulates that we communicate using four channels simultaneously, namely: the channel of factual information, the channel of appeal, the channel relating to the relationship between the sender and recipient and the channel of self-revelation. Quite often we strengthen one type of signal, but we should remember that we send other indicators unconsciously and we never know which part of the message is received by the recipient or how it is “decoded”. This exercise could be integrated into a team meeting dealing with communication. The model can be adapted and used to develop examples of communication difficulties within the team.

Resources

The exercise can take from 15 minutes to a number of hours, depending on how it is adapted and the amount of discussion generated. The diagram and table provide the basis for introducing the exercise to the group.



The four communication channel, Schulz von Thun, 1991, graph cited from: <http://www.skepticalscience.com/news.php?n=293>

What we send and receive through the Four Channels of Communication – Prompt Sheet

| 1. Content Layer (CL) (factual information) | |
|---|--|
| Senders | Receivers |
| a. Dates b. Facts c. Content d. Clarity e. Coherency | Is the information: a. True and accurate? b. Relevant to the present issue? c. Sufficient to describe the current issue? d. In need of elaboration? |
| 2. Relationship Layer (RL) (what I think of you) | |
| Senders | Receivers |
| a. A self statement, b. An indication of what is going on inside c. What they are feeling, d. What they stand for e. How they conceive their role f. Explicit 'me' messages g. Implicit 'me' messages | a. What does this tell me about the other? b. What kind of person are they? c. What is their attitude? d. How is their emotional state? |
| 3. Self Revealing Layer (SRL) (who I am) | |
| Senders | Receivers |
| a. What the relationship is with the receiver b. What the sender thinks of the receiver c. Intonation d. Expression e. Emphasis | a. How does the receiver feel treated by the way in which the sender is treating them? b. What does the sender think of the receiver? c. How is the sender relating to receiver? |
| 4. Appeal Layer (AL) (what I want you to do) | |
| Senders | Receivers |
| What the sender wishes to achieve a. Affect b. Influence c. Advise d. Instruct e. Direct | What the receiver should be a. Thinking b. Doing c. Feeling |

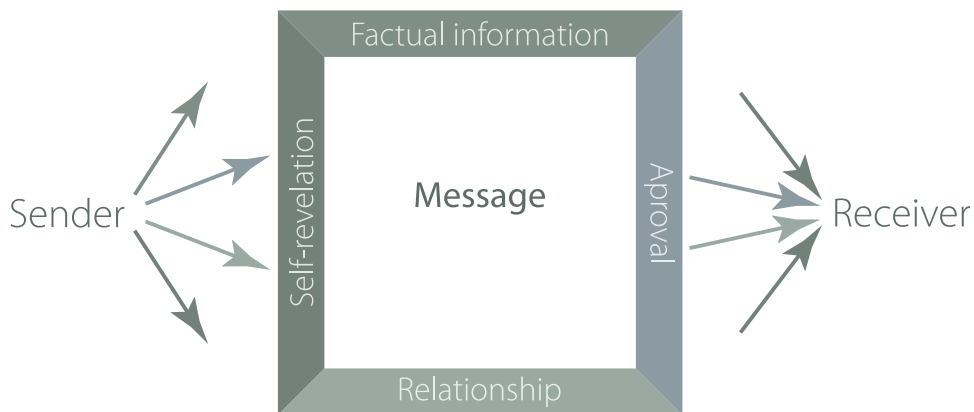
Explain to the group that they are involved in an exercise. Introduce the concept of the Four Channels of Communication. Provide each of the group participants with several copies of the Sender and Receiver worksheets provided below.

Implement a meeting in the normal way. Before embarking on an agenda item, ask each participant to make notes in the worksheet about what he or she wants communicate to the rest of the group in relation to the topic. Give adequate time for people to do this.

As the item is being discussed, those who are listening make notes about what elements of the message they are receiving.

Before embarking on the next item, ask one of the senders to tell the group what he or she was trying to communicate through each of the four channels. Then allow the receivers to provide feedback to the sender about what they actually received through each of the four channels.

Material



| Sender Worksheet | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. | What factual information do you want to communicate - Content Layer |
| | |
| 2. | What do you want to communicate about your relationships with the others - Relationship Layer |
| | |
| 3. | What do you want to reveal about who you are in the communication - Self-Revealing Layer |
| | |
| 4. | What do you want to achieve through this communication - Appeal Layer |
| | |

| Receiver Worksheet | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Name of the Sender: | |
| 1. | How accurate, relevant and sufficient was the communication in terms of factual information- Content Layer |
| | |
| 2. | What did the sender communicate to you about themselves in terms of who he or she is as person, and his or her attitudes and feelings? – Relationship Layer |
| | |
| 3. | How did you feel by the way you were treated by the sender, how he or she relates to you and thinks of you? - Self-Revealing Layer |
| | |
| 4. | What do you believe you should be thinking, doing or feeling as a result of the communication ?– Appeal Layer |
| | |

Remarks

In order to encourage participation and make people feel more comfortable with the process, you could volunteer to act as the sender the first time around. In subsequent sessions you could ask people to volunteer to share their communication intentions. In this way those who receive feedback are prepared for it. Finally, you can encourage those who have not acted as sender to prepare something in advance of a meeting so that they are better prepared. Ultimately, it is not necessary that everyone in the team acts as a sender.

You can do this with a number of agenda items at the same meeting or select a different item and sender in a series of meetings. You will find that the first time you do it, people will take more time over the exercise. After a few attempts, participants will make notes more automatically.

During the feedback to sender phase, be sensitive to whether the feedback he or she is receiving is impacting negatively on the confidence and esteem of the sender.

FURTHER READINGS

- Schulz von Thun: Six tools for clear communication. Available on: http://www.schulz-von-thun.de/index.php?article_id=71
- An English document is available at <http://www.skepticalscience.com/news.php?n=293>

12 Appreciative Inquiry – Positive Problem Solving

Description

Many approaches to problem solving focus on analysing what went wrong and what can be done to fix things. Appreciative Inquiry shifts the focus onto things that are working well and builds upon these. The method was developed by David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University, in Cleveland, Ohio. Appreciative Inquiry emphasises building on your unique strengths to achieve success.

The approach recognises and values the contributions of people and things involved in a situation and explores the potential for opening up new opportunities to achieve positive change.

Resources

Appreciative Inquiry has a wide range of applications from personal development and team building to promoting organisational change. The Appreciative Inquiry approach revolves around a cycle of four phases (often referred to as the 4d approach) as illustrated in the figure below.



<http://www.inspiring-results.com/aboutai.html>

1. **Discovery phase:** Engage people in conversations about key strengths and positive characteristics of the team or the organisation. This involves recounting stories about their most positive experiences such as when they felt most energetic, motivated and involved in their work. This facilitates the development of a map of the positive factors at the core of the team of the organisation when it is performing at its best.
2. **Dream phase:** Explore the most ambitious aspirations for the team or organisation in the future. Identify new ways to build on the key positive attributes. This assists team members to become energised because they realise that they can reach their own most valued aspirations by contributing to the teams. Write alternative dream statements and then get a commitment to act to make them a reality.
3. **Design phase:** Create maps or models of the type of organisation that can achieve the aspirations identified in the Dream Phase. Encourage people to specify what things would motivate and energise them to invest their efforts to achieve the vision. Develop challenging proposals for ideal ways that the team or the organisation can operate in terms of its structures, systems, values, norms, strategies and relationships.
4. **Destiny phase:** Build towards the desired future by innovating and acting. Allow people to act on their own initiative to make changes to aspects in which they are particularly interested. Establish methods that can coordinate the work of the team and continue to encourage improvisation. Make sure to highlight and celebrate achievements.

Below are two exercises. The first exercise can be used to build teams and the second can be used to address specific problems.

Materials

Best Team Exercise (Bushe 1998)

1. Group members are asked to recall the best team experience they have ever had.
2. Even for those who have had few experiences of working with others in groups, there is a 'best' experience.
3. Each group member is asked, in turn, to describe the experience while the rest of the group is encouraged to be curious and engage in dialogue with the focal person.
4. Encourage members to set aside their clichés and preconceptions, get firmly grounded in their memory of the actual experience, and fully explore what was it about themselves, the situation, the task and others that made this a "peak" experience.
5. Once all members have exhausted their exploration, ask the group, on the basis of what they have just discussed, to list and develop a consensus on the attributes of highly effective groups.
6. The intervention concludes by inviting members to publicly acknowledge the behaviours/actions of other group members which have improved communications.

Groups that received this intervention scored significantly higher on task outcomes and group processes than groups that did not (Bushe & Coetzer, 1995).

Positive Problem Solving (Adapted from MindTools)

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_85.htm

The Appreciative Inquiry approach to problem solving includes an initial additional step. Thus, the first stage of the process is to identify and describe the problem you're trying to solve.

Once there is a clear specification of the problem space, i.e. what is at the core of the problem and what aspects are peripheral or less relevant, the four phases of Discovering, Dreaming, Designing and Delivering can be implemented.

Step 1 Define: Before you can analyse a situation, you need to define what it is you are looking at. Specifying the issues positively will help focus on its positive aspects. Rather than seeking ways to fix the problem, focus on ways to enhance the elements of the issue which are positive. This change in perspective and language subtlety can have a significant impact on what is focused upon. Be broad in the description of the issue to ensure that the way the problem is defined does not limit the range of possibilities and paths for change, so keep your topic broad.

Step 2 Discover: Explore the best strategies and processes that have worked in the past, and look at things that are currently working well. Involve as many people as possible and design your questions to get them talking and telling stories about what they find is most valuable (or appreciated), and what works particularly well.

For example, if the challenge is to establish more effective recruitment procedures, you should ask recently recruited staff to interview each other to explore what they liked about the job before they joined the company and what they appreciate most about the organisation now. The following questions might be useful for exploring this issue:

- When you think back to when you decided to join the company, what was the thing that attracted you the most?
- Tell me a story about a time when you were very enthusiastic about your work.
- What factors are most important for success at the company?
- Tell me about a time you felt most proud about the company.

Another approach to solving this problem could be to look at the different approaches you use to recruit people and to identify the ones that bring the greatest volume of good recruits. When you've gathered enough raw information, you can analyse the data and identify the factors that contributed most to the team's or organisation's past successes; the aspects that are most valued; the things that people find most motivating or fun; and what makes people proud to be part of the team or organisation.

Step 3 Dream: Think about how you can take the positives you identified in the Discovery step and envision how these can be reinforced to build on genuine strengths. If the way forward is not clear from the Discovery step, it may be useful to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to brainstorm creative and innovative ideas of what the organisation and team could accomplish (See Exercise 3.10). Once you have agreed upon your dream or vision, you can take it to the Design step.

Using the recruitment example above, the positive points that most people attributed to the team or the organisation could be used to send strong messages to potential candidates to attract more suitable candidates. Alternatively, it might be possible to discontinue some of the things that aren't working and reallocate effort and resources to reinforce the things that are.

Step 4 Design: Examine the practical activities and steps that are required to support the agreed vision. Make sure to cover all aspects of the team or organisation that could impact on the desired outcome including systems, policies, processes, strategies and procedures that will enable the aspiration to become a reality.

Step 5 Deliver: This is also referred to as the Destiny phase. It is about implementation and needs to be well planned and prepared. The key to successful delivery is ensuring that people keep the Dream (vision) as the focal point. Different parts of the team or organisation will normally be focusing on the actions that are most relevant to them and thus it is essential to ensure effective coordination and the sharing of experiences between the diverse actors in the delivery process. If successful, a variety of changes will occur simultaneously throughout the team or organisation supporting and sustaining progress towards the Dream.

Remarks

As a team development intervention, there are times when a more focused inquiry is required than the "best team" inquiry described above. In these cases some subset of teamwork, like leadership or conflict management, is what members need to talk to each other about.

The "best team" Appreciative Inquiry is particularly appropriate for new teams and may help the team do some important norming without having to go through storming. When teams are first formed, members are trying to establish their personal identities in the group. Much of the activity in the forming and storming stages arises from the disparity between establishing personal identities and complementary roles

The main strengths of the Appreciative Inquiry approach to problem solving arise from Steps 1 and 2. Steps 3 to 5 are standard implementation steps in many project management approaches. If you have your own preferred approach for implementation, use this.

FURTHER READINGS

- Appreciative Inquiry Commons, Western, Weatherhead School of Management, Cleveland U.S.
URL: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>
- Bushe, G.R. (1998) Appreciative inquiry in teams, *The Organization Development Journal*, 16:3, pp.41-50.
URL: <http://www.gervasebushe.ca/aiteams.htm>
- Bushe, G.R. & Coetzer, G. (1995) Appreciative inquiry as a team development intervention: A controlled experiment, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 31:1, 13-30.

13 Non-violent communication

Description

Non-violent communication is a strategy rather than a tool. It was developed by Marshall Rosenberg to deal with conflicts, but can also be used to change communication in general towards a more empathetic and appreciative approach.

Resources

This exercise is a tool to reflect your own communication style. It is helpful to practice non-violent communication within a group.

Material

Non-violent communication is based on four steps:

- Name what you observe (instead of what you estimate)
- Speak about how you feel
- Discuss what you need
- Ask yourself or others

Try to practice these steps when you disagree with someone. It's also possible to ask the other person about his/her observations, feelings and needs. It is important to listen carefully and to ask if you have understood things in the way the other person meant.

Non-violent communication is grounded in the following paradigms:

1. There is not one single truth, but different perspectives on it. Therefore, "right" or "wrong" also depends on an individual's point of view, values, etc.
2. Everybody is responsible for his or her own feelings and needs.
3. Everybody wants to satisfy his/her needs, and every action is an attempt to do something good for oneself.
4. Remain open-minded to unexpected solutions. Do not think in terms of the preferred solution but in terms of your unsatisfied needs.

Below are some templates that can help you structure what you need to say:

- By specifying what you think the person feels and needs, you empathise with them and are more likely to view the situation as the other person does.
 - "Are you feeling _____ because you need _____?"
- If you uncover the thought behind the feeling you are more likely to discover the underlying need. Moderate your statement of feelings or needs with simple words like I am wondering if you might...; how about this...; could this be the case...; maybe... etc. The phrasing makes it clear that this is your speculation - it is not an attempt to analyse the other person or tell them what they are feeling.

- “Are you angry because you are thinking _____?”
 - I am wondering if you are feeling _____”
 - State an observation clearly so that the other person hears it as an observation.
 - “I see _____”or“Iamhearing _____”
 - Express a thought so it is heard as a thought, which is capable of changing as you get new information or ideas
 - “I am thinking _____”
 - Clear the way so you can make a request
 - “Would you be willing to _____?”
 - Offer to help fulfill a need just identified, while leaving the other person responsible for their own need.
 - “Would you like it if I _____?”
 - Complete templates for all four steps could be:
 1. I see _____.
 2. I am feeling _____.
 3. Because I need _____.
 4. Would you be willing to _____?”
- Or:
- I see _____.
 - Are you feeling _____.
 - Because you need _____?
 - ”
 - “Would it meet your need if I _____?”
(or a statement of your own feelings and needs followed by a request)

Here are two examples applying this approach:

| Issues to be addressed | Responses | |
|---|--|---|
| | Counterproductive | Non-violent |
| An employee is angry because she has not been promoted | There is really no point in being angry about it. It will just turn people against you | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I see that you were not successful in your application for promotion 2. Could it be the case that you are angry because you feel that you could do the job better? 3. Because I need you as a valued member of the team, we need to resolve this 4. How about if I find out the reasons for this decision for you so you will be better informed next time? |
| A staff member has been consistently late over an extended period of time | I am concerned that you are constantly turning up late for work | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I see that this is the third day you have come in after 9 o'clock 2. I am feeling concerned about you and your health 3. I need to understand what is going on for you 4. Would it meet your needs if we were to introduce flexi-time arrangements for you? |

Adapted from The Centre for Non-violent Communication Website
<http://www.cnvc.org/addressing-workplace-conflict-three-steps>

Remarks

To implement a culture of non-violent communication in a team, it is useful to practice the process with external trainers beforehand.

Variations

Failures or misunderstandings are common occurrences which give rise to conflicts. Therefore, leaders prefer to avoid these situations. But the more company culture bans mistakes, the more likely that problems will be hidden, leading to additional costs. How can leaders manage failures in a team more effectively?

- Create a climate of trust (valuing employees who report mistakes).
- Be a role model. Take responsibility for your mistakes and those in your area of responsibility.
- Do not pillory anyone who makes a mistake. Analyse the reasons which caused the mistake.
- Evaluate the consequences and react immediately to control any damage caused.
- Develop a sustainable solution. Prevent a repeat occurrence.
- Act; do not focus on the negative.

Another way to make people feel valued is to use the “Appreciative inquiry” tool, which poses questions including: “What’s working?” and “What’s good about what you are currently doing?” Here, the focus is on what works rather than fixing what does not work. “It is the opposite of problem solving. Instead of focusing on gaps and inadequacies to remediate skills or practices, appreciative inquiry focuses on how to create more of the exceptional performance that is occurring when a core of strengths is aligned. This line of reasoning is assumed to be motivating. The approach acknowledges the contribution of individuals, in order to increase trust and organisational alignment.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry)

FURTHER READINGS

- Rosenberg M. B. (2003): Non-violent Communication: A Language of Life 2
- Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D. (2003): Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change

14 Target agreements on behalf of the team

Description

If a target meeting with your boss is scheduled, try to prepare yourself by identifying the current weaknesses, needs, possibilities and expectations of team members. Creating a good atmosphere and asking specific questions will help you to obtain this information. Asking questions shows that you take the team's opinions seriously. It also offers the chance to advocate for the team's needs in negotiations with superiors.

Resources

Preparation with the team takes about an hour. You should use the information gathered to create your own target agreement strategy on behalf of the team.

Material

Leaders should bear in mind the "contract specifications" that they wish to discuss. Issues to be considered include:

1. Supportive arguments for your preferred goals
2. A priority list of goals
3. Plans regarding how to reach these goals
4. The need for support, resources, etc., to implement the plans
5. Arguments against expectations/demands which go beyond the aims and objectives of the team.

Remark

After you have spoken to your superior, communicate the results to the team and make plans for implementation. Otherwise people may feel excluded.

15 Inventory of Communication Functions and Methods

Description

The degree to which communications is central to good management is illustrated in the number of key communication roles specified for managers (Mintzberg, 1973)³. Information richness is the amount of information that a communication medium can carry and the extent to which the medium enables the sender and receiver to reach a common understanding (Jones & George, 2004).

Linking your primary communication activities to the most appropriate communication method or medium will improve your communication style.

Materials

Consider each of the communication activities specified for managers listed in the right hand column of the table and specify the extent to which you use each method of communication in carrying out each activity by using a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 indicates you never use a method for this activity and 4 means that you always use it.

Then use the lower part of the table to review which methods could help to improve your management style.

| | | Face to Face | Video Conferencing | Telephone | Personal Written Communication | Email | Impersonal Written Communication | Intranet or Groupware | The Grapevine |
|----|---|--------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Collecting information and feedback about success, problems and opportunities from subordinates | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Liaising with superiors, colleagues and subordinates to collect and communicate information | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Networking and information exchange | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Dissemination of factual and value based information | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | Acting as a spokesman in a public relations role | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Informing and lobbying key stakeholders | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Negotiating with others over contentious issues | | | | | | | | |
| 8. | Socialising with subordinates and superiors | | | | | | | | |

³ Mintzberg, H. (1973) *The Nature of Managerial Work*, Harper and Row Inc. Penn., US

| | | Face to Face | Video Conferencing | Telephone | Personal Written Communication | Email | Impersonal Written Communication | Intranet or Groupware | The Grapevine |
|---|---|--------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 9. | Exchanging information and handling paperwork | | | | | | | | |
| 10. | Interacting with external actors | | | | | | | | |
| 11. | Motivating staff | | | | | | | | |
| 12. | Disciplining and guiding staff | | | | | | | | |
| 13. | Managing conflict with and between staff | | | | | | | | |
| 14. | Developing and mentoring staff | | | | | | | | |
| Review each communication method below and list how you could improve your management communication style by enhancing it or introducing it, if you do not already use it. Specify why you think this would be useful. | | | | | | | | | |
| a. | Face to Face | | | | | | | | |
| b. | Video Conferencing | | | | | | | | |
| c. | Telephone | | | | | | | | |
| d. | Personal Written Communication | | | | | | | | |
| e. | Email | | | | | | | | |
| f. | Impersonal Written Communication | | | | | | | | |
| g. | Intranet or Groupware | | | | | | | | |
| h. | The Grapevine | | | | | | | | |

Remarks

Brief descriptions of each of the communication methods or media are presented below.

1. **Face-to-Face:** This has the highest information richness and can take advantage of verbal and nonverbal signals. It enables instant feedback. Approximately 65% of a message transmitted in face-to-face communications is transmitted through body language.
2. **Video conferencing (Video Skype):** This provides much of the same richness of face to face communication and can reduce travel costs and meeting time.

3. Telephone or Audio Skype Communication: Electronically transmitted spoken communication has the second highest information richness. Telephone conversations are information rich with tone of voice, sender's emphasis, and quick feedback, but provide no visual nonverbal cues.
4. Personal Written Communication: Personally addressed written communication has a lower richness than the verbal forms of communication, but is still directed at a given person. Personal addressing helps ensure that the receiver actually reads the message—personal letters and e-mails are common forms. It does not provide instant feedback to the sender although the sender may get feedback later.
5. E-mail Communication: Email allows employees to work from home and keep in contact. It has a lower richness but has the advantage that all team members can be kept up to date on progress and positive results. The key to successful email communication is ensuring a focus on a single topic, keeping it brief and to the point.
6. Impersonal Written Communication: This type of communication has very low information richness. It is useful for sending messages to a wide range of receivers where little or no feedback is expected. Good examples of this are newsletters and reports.
7. Intranet or Groupware: Intranet is a company-wide system of computer networks for information sharing by employees inside an organisation. It combines a diverse choice of electronic communication options including discussion forums and web announcements. Groupware refers to computer software that enables members of groups and teams to share information with each other and improve communication. It can support electronic team meetings.
8. The Grapevine: This refers to unofficial ways that communications take place in an organisation. It is neither authorised nor supported by the organisation. Information transmitted through the grapevine is difficult to judge for accuracy but can provide a useful way to promote health messages.

FURTHER READINGS

- Mintzberg, H. (1973) *The Nature of Managerial Work*, Harper and Row Inc. Penn., US
- Jones, G. R. & George, J. M. (2004) *Essentials of Contemporary Management*, McGraw-Hill Companies Inc

16 Active Listening Exercise

Description

Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. It is made up of three elements:

- Hearing
- Interpreting
- Assigning a contextual meaning.

Listening is an active process where you need to let go and give all your attention to the person talking (If you are too stressed, you cannot give 100% attention). Sometimes the listener tends to get ahead of the topic and spends a lot of mental energy getting an answer together (or in some cases a rebuttal), before the sender is finished speaking

It is important to distinguish between Listening and Hearing. Hearing is the process of capturing the sound waves through the ears and sending this data to the brain. Listening is about interpreting the message based on past experiences, learning and the context.

Active Listening requires patience: If an individual is struggling to express him or herself well, it is important not to show signs of being disinterested such as tapping one's foot, sighing or tapping the desk with one's fingers. No matter how uninteresting you find a conversation within the workplace, it is important to be patient and to note the main points.

Materials

Active Listening Review:

Review the following steps to improve Active Listening Skills and consider how effective you are as an active listener:

| | | I don't do this | I do this | | |
|--|--|-----------------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| | | | Now and then | Often | All the time |
| Active Listening Skills⁴ | | | | | |
| 1. | Paraphrasing meaning by translating what the speaker is saying in your own words | | | | |
| 2. | Reflecting feeling by conveying your empathy and encouraging the speaker to continue | | | | |
| 3. | Reflecting facts by summarising every now and then | | | | |
| 4. | Synthesising several ideas that the speaker has put forward into a single theme | | | | |
| 5. | Imagining out loud what it must be like to be in the speakers position | | | | |

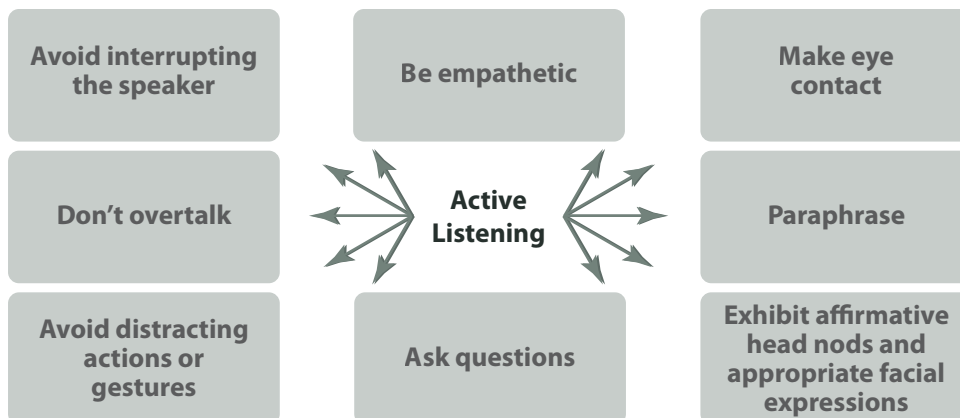
⁴ Adapted from http://www.explorehr.org/articles/HR_Powerpoint_Slides/Managing_Your_Communication_Skills.html

| | | I do this | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| | | I don't do this | Now and then | Often | All the time |
| Active Listening Steps | | | | | |
| 1. | Pay attention to the speakers body language and particularly his or her facial expressions | | | | |
| 2. | Be aware of the tone, rate of speech and particular key words | | | | |
| 3. | Use questions and re-phrasing to clarify what the person is saying | | | | |
| 4. | Use receptive language to show that you are listening | | | | |
| 5. | Shift your position during the interchange to gain a different perspectives on the topic | | | | |
| 6. | Avoid the urge to give advice when someone is explaining a problem | | | | |
| 7. | Pick out keywords and phrases and use them to maintain focus on the core message | | | | |

Remarks

Active Listening includes recognising non-verbal communication: Listen to what the other person is communicating through facial expressions, gestures, posture and props such as a pen, ruler or pencil.

Key Active Listening Behaviours⁵



Active Listening includes showing listening signals: Indicate throughout the conversation that you are listening carefully by nodding the head, maintaining eye contact and smiling at regular intervals at appropriate moments. When a speaker knows that he or she is being actively listened to, it makes it easier for the individual to share ideas or thoughts.

You can practice Active listening by:

- Being Externally Focused:

⁵ Adapted from Robbins et al (2005) Fundamentals of Management, 4th Canadian Edition, Pearson Education Canada

- Follow and understand the speaker as if you were “in their shoes”
- Listen not only with your ears, but also with your eyes and other senses
- Absorb the tonality shifts, rhythm and language usage, not just the words
- Avoid Judgment:
 - Choose to listen, rather than judge
 - Listen to the other person rather than form counter arguments
 - Acknowledge the speaker verbally and non verbally
- Demonstrate Interest:
 - Ask questions to clarify
 - Use keywords and phrases while asking questions, as well as jotting down notes
 - Avoid interruptions unless absolutely necessary

FURTHER READINGS

- Robbins et al (2005) Fundamentals of Management, 4th Canadian Edition, Pearson Education Canada

17

Preparing the Key Messages for making the Business Case for Mental Health Promotion

Description

It is essential to communicate to senior management the economic aspect of psychosocial issues in the workplace (stress, violence, harassment, burnout, etc.). Preparing the business case is an important step in developing a mental health promotion strategy.

The key messages in a business case include:

- The costs of not taking action regarding this issue;
- The costs of assessing the situation; anticipated and evaluated;
- The investment costs (and returns on investment) involved in Mental Health Promotion.

If an organisation has no knowledge or awareness of these risks, it can not act to solve them. The key messages in the business case must raise awareness and convince all workplace stakeholders to tackle the problems by identifying, resolving and preventing them.

This exercise is designed to assist you in identifying the most important key messages about the costs associated with mental health difficulties for your organisation and to consider what quantitative and qualitative evidence you can gather to support these key messages.

Materials

The most important Cost messages in a business case for Workplace Mental Health Promotion are listed in the table below. The messages can be classified as facts and figures relating to the costs associated with absenteeism related to mental ill-health and to the costs of presenteeism, i.e. people still working while experiencing mental distress.

Rate each message in relation to how valuable it would be as a cost message in your organisation and consider how easily you could gain access to, or gather, this data or evidence required to make the case.

| Costs of absenteeism (Days Lost and Replacement costs) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Importance of message for my organisation (1=low; 5=High) | This data is not available | I can estimate this data | This data is readily available | I have this data already |
| Quantitative Data | Benefits paid to absent employees | | | | | |
| | Professional health insurance contributions | | | | | |

| Costs of absenteeism (Days Lost and Replacement costs) | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Quantitative Data | Overtime for colleagues | | | | | |
| | Job advert fees and fees for temporary staff | | | | | |
| | Extra salary costs for insecure jobs | | | | | |
| Qualitative Data | Management and human resources' time | | | | | |
| | Recruitment, training and apprenticeship time | | | | | |
| | Extra work for colleagues | | | | | |
| | Slowing of pace/decline in results | | | | | |
| Costs of presenteeism (Reduced productivity, Decline in workplace relationships, Stress related workplace incidents) | | | | | | |
| | | Importance of message for my organisation (1=low; 5=High) | This data is not available | I can estimate this data | This data is readily available | I have this data already |
| Quantitative Data | Penalties linked to extended deadlines | | | | | |
| | Legal fees: lawsuits and grievances | | | | | |
| | Increase in costs of resulting absenteeism | | | | | |
| | Increase in work insurance premiums | | | | | |
| | Rise of benefits for work stoppages | | | | | |
| Qualitative Data | Increased error rate | | | | | |
| | Reduced quality | | | | | |
| | Drop in innovation | | | | | |
| | Loss of ability to win a market / satisfy clients | | | | | |
| | Management's time spent on adaptations within the team | | | | | |
| | Tarnished image for clients / group | | | | | |
| | Reduced attractiveness of company | | | | | |
| | Management and human resources' time | | | | | |

Remarks

Some general facts and figures may help you to get your message across. For example:

- 25 percent of European citizens will experience a mental health problem during their lifetime
- 27 percent of the adult population in Europe is affected by mental health problems, that is 93 million people
- The World Health Organization estimates that by 2020, depression will become the second most important cause of disability in the world
- Across Europe, the levels of absenteeism, unemployment and long term disability claims due to work related stress and mental health problems have been increasing. For example: Around 10 percent of long-term health problems and disabilities can be ascribed to mental and emotional disorders
- Total costs of mental health disorders in Europe are estimated to be 240 billion Euro per year.

Direct costs such as medical treatment account for less than half of this sum. The larger amount of 136 billion Euro is due to lost productivity, including sick leave absenteeism

Company costs estimates can be supported either by:

- Numerical (Quantitative) data: benefits paid, occupational health contributions, etc. or
- Qualitative data: support when integrating the replacement employee, reduction in quality and innovation, etc.

It is important to note that the list in the table is indicative. You should consider what other facts and figures might be seen as key in your own organisation.

FURTHER READINGS

- Work in Tune with Life (2009) A guide to the business case for mental health Available at: http://www.enwhp.org/fileadmin/downloads/8th_Initiative/MentalHealth_Broschuere_businesscase.pdf

18 Risk Management Standards

Description

The British Health and Safety Executive (HSE) designed the Management Standards approach to help employers deal effectively with the causes of work-related stress. It is based on the familiar 'Five steps to risk assessment' model, requiring management and staff to work together.

The Standards refer to six potential sources of work related stress, namely:

- Demands– including workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- Control– how much power a person has in their job.
- Support – including encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- Change – how organisational change (small or large) is managed and communicated in the organisation
- Relationships – promoting positive work relations in order to avoid conflict and unacceptable behaviour.

Resources

A risk management approach is an organisational process. The stages in the process are illustrated in the figure below.



Adapted from Health and Safety Executive Website
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/before.htm>

The following exercise offers a general overview of what aspects might be addressed.

Material

Information for the risk assessment can be collected using a range of methods. Surveys are frequently administered as part of the process. There are a number of tools that are either designed specifically for the identification of psychosocial hazards, or which incorporate measures to identify the presence of such issues. Examples of surveys of this type are the EU-OSHA Online interactive Risk Assessment Tool (OiRA) for micro and small enterprises, and the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards for Work-related Stress Indicator Tool. Other data collection methods, such as group discussions, interviews with key stakeholders, or observational methods can also be used.

Once information on the psychosocial hazards has been collected, it is important to find out how many workers are affected and the extent to which the hazards are harming their health. Health and wellbeing surveys are often used to collect this information.

Whatever data collection method is used, the risk assessment should take diversity issues into consideration, i.e. age and gender, and it should not ignore the wider context such as occupational sector characteristics or socioeconomic and cultural variations.

Data collected from the risk assessment should be considered at group level. Psychosocial hazards usually vary from situation to situation. Therefore, what might constitute a risk in one type of job, may not be conceived as a risk in another type of job; likewise, what might affect one kind of worker will not always impact on another. It is therefore more useful to consider groups of relevant workers, rather than individual employees.

The risk assessment informs the action plan, which details the necessary measures. Below is a sample action plan designed by the HSE:

Action plan template – an example of using one element of demands

| Demands | Desired state | Current State | Practical Solutions | Who will take the work forward | When? | How will staff receive feedback? | Action completed |
|--|-----------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|-------------------------|
| The organisation provides employee with adequate and achievable demands in relation to agreed work hours | Average to good performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Bad/ very bad performance » Workloads are not planned and busy periods often occur during the summer months when people are on annual leave | 1. Plan the work better and if busy periods clash with annual leave, consider talking to other departments to see if temporary resources can be provided | 1. Line managers to lead and suggest the idea to senior manager | 1. Issue to be raised at the next senior manager meeting | 1. Via monthly meetings, staff bulletins | Yes (Date) |
| | | | 2. Employees to talk to line managers about upcoming leave and potential difficulties with workload during monthly meetings | 2. All, with line manager to lead | 2. Immediately | 2. During monthly meetings | 2. Yes activity ongoing |

(www.hse.gov.uk/stress).

FURTHER READINGS

— British Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk/stress

19 Return to work interviews

Description

This interview is a management tool. Return to work (RTW) interviews are conducted when an absent employee returns following absence. In the past, this tool has been misused in order to examine the employee and put pressure on them.

Today, the return to work interview is used for other purposes:

- Letting the person know that they were missed (as a person and in his/her job role)
- Updating them on what has been happening in their absence.
- Reintegrating them into in the team
- Establishing whether or not the absence was caused by exposure to occupational risks (i.e. in the case of an illness)
- Offering them support (in the case of an illness)

Resource

This is the type of interview in which the Appreciative Inquiry approach (Exercise 3.12) and Non-Violent Communication (Exercise 3.13) can be very useful. It is also important to be aware of the four channels of communication as described in Exercise 3.11. The following guidelines can be used when interviewing a person who had been out of work as a result of sickness absence. The interview should never be carried out over the phone, always in person.

It is important to set up the interview so that the person does not feel he or she is being coerced into returning to work before he or she is ready. It is also important to ensure that the person volunteers to attend the interview. The most appropriate approach is to invite the person to attend the meeting to discuss anything that the company can do to assist the person to return to work. The employee has the right to refuse this offer.

Material

The characteristics of the return to work interview:

| Characteristics |
|---|
| The direct manager is the interviewer. |
| The interviewer asks questions in a non-directive way, maintaining a respectful attitude. |
| The interview should be arranged close to the time when the employee will return to work. |
| The interview should be scheduled rather than impromptu. |
| An interview should be conducted with every employee returning to work following a period of absence. |

Return to Work Interview

Aim: to explore options for a returning employee who has been out of work for more than 6 weeks as a result of a mental health condition.

1. Make it clear at the beginning of the interview that:
 - The aim is to explore what the company can do and how they can help the person back to work
 - The time frame is something that the person can decide
 - There is no need to reveal anything that person wants to keep confidential
 - The person will be given time to consider what is agreed at the meeting. Then there will be a second meeting to review and finally agree with the person what actions, if any, will be implemented.
2. Use the Discovery step of the Appreciative Inquiry tool to:
 - Explore the aspects of work which the person enjoyed most
 - Identify the elements that gave them the most satisfaction
 - Discuss the positive aspects of their life currently (while absent)

It is possible to direct the person's attention to aspects that are not mentioned spontaneously.

Areas to explore include:

- Job demands
 - Job Control
 - Support
 - Relationships
 - Role
 - Organisational Change
3. Use the Dream Step of the Appreciative Inquiry tool to help the person identify the outcomes they would like:
 - In their personal life
 - In their work life

If the person does not offer any objectives relating to RTW, prompt them using a factual comment such as:

- "I noticed that you didn't mention any return to work goals."
 - "Are you feeling concerned about your return to work?"
 - "Because I need to focus on the issues of return to work, I would like to talk more in depth about this."
 - "Would you be willing to talk more specifically about returning to work?"
4. Introduce the Design step from the Appreciative Inquiry tool by summarising the RTW goals that the person has proposed and focus on those that related to RTW. Some of these could relate to the person's health or family life such as fatigue or caring responsibilities.

Encourage the person to consider what things would make return to work easier using prompts such as:

- “Would you be willing to discuss the things would make return to work easier for you?”
- “How about focusing on some of things that we can do to help you return to work?”
- “Because you need to think about returning to work, it might be a good idea to think about what things can be done to make this easier.”

Encourage the person to consider both:

- Factors that can facilitate RTW, and
- The barriers that need to be removed in order for effective RTW to happen

If the person has difficulty coming up with strategies, you can make some suggestions including:

| Environmental Interventions | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Flexible Scheduling |
| 2. | Allowing time to attend medical and therapy appointments |
| 3. | Changing work conditions |
| 4. | Assigning some tasks to other employees |
| 5. | Exchanging work responsibilities with other employees |
| 6. | Breaking a large task into a series of smaller tasks |
| 7. | Modifying job duties |
| 8. | Allowing self paced work |
| 9. | Varying tasks throughout the day |
| 10. | Transitional work in another job role for a short period |
| 11. | Return to work part time during the initial stages |
| 12. | Allowing more frequent, short breaks |
| 13. | Carrying out a risk assessment of the person’s job |
| 14. | Removing aspects of the job that are most stressful in the initial stages |
| Capacity Building Interventions | |
| 1. | Training in stress coping strategies, problem solving or confidence building |
| 2. | Attendance at relaxation sessions |
| 3. | Becoming involved in physical exercise or creative activities |
| 4. | Put the person in touch with a counsellor |
| Support Interventions | |
| 1. | Mentoring |
| 2. | Providing formal or informal support |
| 3. | Holding brief meetings every week to monitor how things are going |
| 4. | Holding a meeting with the supervisor to agree on adaptations |
| 5. | Briefing co-workers about the strategies agreed |
| 6. | Providing awareness training for other staff |
| 7. | Offering mediation between the person and the supervisor |

At the end of this step, it is important to summarise for the person what you understand has been established.

5. In the *Deliver* step of Appreciative Inquiry, it is essential that any commitments made in the *Design* step can be delivered effectively. From this perspective, it is critical that any agreement reached with the person is approved by Senior Management and HR.

This should be done prior to making the final agreement with the person. Therefore, it is best to hold a second meeting with the person once the plan has been approved.

It is also important to agree milestones with the employee so that progress can be regularly evaluated and changes made to the plan.

Remarks

These general principles should be incorporated into the company's HR policy. It is necessary to implement the return to work interviews as part of the overall HR approach, in order to avoid causing annoyance or conflict.

FURTHER READINGS

- Bitzer, B.: Das Rückkehrgespräch, 1999
- Thomson, L. Neathly, F. & Rick, J. (2003) Best practice in rehabilitating employees following absence due to work-related stress, Health and Safety Executive , UK <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr138.pdf>

Glossary of the company health standards and experts

Description

Do you know who to contact (either internally or externally) if an employee is suffering from a mental illness or is absent from work in the long-term? Make a list of whom to contact if one does not already exist. This glossary can be used by leaders as well as staff to obtain accurate information quickly.

Resources

When gathering this information for the first time it takes a while to interview people, to collate the information and to document the findings. The resource should be updated regularly.

Material

The following tables can help you identify what resources and standards are already in place and what now needs to be developed.

| Glossary of Health Standards | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----------|------------|-------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| | Policy | Standard | Procedures | Guidance Document | Surveys | Brochure Frequently Asked Questions | Staff Development Capacity Building | Not Addressed |
| Organisational commitment to promoting positive mental health | | | | | | | | |
| Indicators of mental health | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluation and monitoring of mental health outcomes | | | | | | | | |
| Confidentiality, privacy and rights | | | | | | | | |
| Handling disclosure | | | | | | | | |
| Analysing problems | | | | | | | | |
| Stress prevention strategies | | | | | | | | |
| Recognising the main signs of stress | | | | | | | | |
| Dealing with stress | | | | | | | | |
| Early intervention | | | | | | | | |
| Work-life balance | | | | | | | | |
| Bullying and Harassment | | | | | | | | |
| Mental Health Promotion | | | | | | | | |
| Prevention of Mental Health Difficulties | | | | | | | | |
| Return to Work | | | | | | | | |
| Job demands and design | | | | | | | | |
| Workload scheduling | | | | | | | | |
| Employee support options | | | | | | | | |

| Directory of Health Expertise | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|------|-------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| Which actors can be involved? | Problem analysis | Diagnosis | Giving advice and guidance | Providing Support, | Offering Interventions | Job Analysis | Name | Phone | Email | Contact Address | Date Updated |
| Internal | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Occupational Health Expert | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employee Assistance expert | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Health & Safety manager | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Staff support organisation | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HR-department, | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employee support options | | | | | | | | | | | |
| External | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Medical doctors | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Therapists | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ergonomist | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Substance Abuse Counselling | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Psychosocial Counselling | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employment Law Adviser | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organisational Health Analysis | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other Specify | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

| People who need to be involved at different stages in the mental health promotion and protection process | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| | Disclosure by employee | Employee exhibiting stress symptoms | Complaint of bullying or harassment | Workplace incident | Request for reasonable accommodation | Request for training in coping skills | Request for leave | Intermittent absence | Extended absence | Return to Work |
| Superiors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Occupational health manager | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employee assistance expert | | | | | | | | | | |
| Health and Safety manager | | | | | | | | | | |
| Staff support organisation | | | | | | | | | | |
| HR-department | | | | | | | | | | |
| External medical doctors or Therapist | | | | | | | | | | |

Remarks

Feedback from staff should be obtained on the content of the glossary to ensure that it meets their needs.

FURTHER READING

- The Road to Psychological Safety: Legal, scientific and social foundations for a national standard for psychological safety in the workplace
- http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce_2011/The_Road_to_Psychological_Safety.pdf

21 Progressive Muscle Relaxation by Jacobson

Description

This exercise is helpful in alleviating acute stress symptoms, but it is also widely used to prevent serious stress related diseases. The more the exercise is practiced, the more effective the results. It is easy to learn and no materials are needed. The relaxation can be conducted in either a lying or sitting position, e.g. in the office, on the train, in the park, etc. The exercise is based on Jacobson's discovery that consciously contracting a muscle causing tension for a short period of time can produce deep relaxation when the muscle is released

Resources

It is most effective if this exercise is practiced before stress becomes a problem. If the exercise has become automatic for you, it can be used as a coping strategy during times of anxiety or stress. Once you have become familiar with the exercise you may wish to share this with other staff members. You could introduce the activity at the beginning of a team meeting as a warm up exercise.

To begin the exercise, sit or lie in a comfortable position. One after the other, all muscle groups are tightened for about 5-10 seconds and then relaxed for about 30 seconds.

Material

Relaxation Training (short version)

1. First of all: sit or lie comfortably. It is helpful to do the exercise in a quiet place. Close your eyes. Start with your dominant hand and make a fist. You should notice the tightness without exaggerating the tension. It should not hurt. Breathe normally. After 5-10 seconds release the tension, open your fist and feel the relaxation in your hand for about 30 seconds. Enjoy the feeling! Feel present.
2. Continue this procedure with your other hand, then with both of your hands together.
3. Continue with both arms now. Bend your arms towards your shoulders slowly and keep them taut. Then, relax your arm muscles and lower your arms.
4. Now, lay your hands on a surface and turn the inner sides up. Then, tighten your arms and press your hands into the surface. After 5-10 seconds, relax your arms and hands.
5. If you want you can continue with your face, shoulders, upper and lower parts of the body, legs and feet.
6. Before finishing the exercise, bend your arms a number of times, breathe deeply and then open your eyes.

Remarks

This exercise is an excellent way to ensure that you have a relaxing sleep. When you are lying in bed you

can carry out the exercise. Make sure you don't have to get out of bed afterwards.

Alternatively you can implement the exercise before you get out of bed in the morning. It only takes about 5 minutes and is a great way to start the day.

If you want to know more about other exercises and their effectiveness, look for professional training in your local area.

FURTHER READINGS

— Davis, M., et al. (2008): The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook

22 Hidden rules of your team

Description

Hidden rules exist in every team and every organisation. It is helpful to be aware of these because they can influence the behaviour of staff members. Below are some statements which may indicate where hidden rules exist. Do you recognise some of them? If you want to make changes try to find out what hidden rules exist within your own team/organisation.

Resources

This exercise is designed for a team session. Distribute the questionnaire at a team meeting and ask participants to complete it. Give them 5 minutes to mark their responses and then ask them to put their answers in a plain envelope. Collect the questionnaires and analyse them. At the next meeting, present the results to the team and facilitate a discussion about what needs to be improved. Help the team to prioritise three areas to be addressed and ask people to suggest what could be done to improve each of the areas for the next discussion. At the following meeting, engage staff members in a team brainstorming session (Exercise 3.10) to generate ideas for action. Structure these into an action plan to be reviewed at subsequent meetings.

Material

| | This is not true of this organisation | There is some truth in this | There is a great deal of truth in this | This is very true |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| (Physical) presence | | | | |
| "The most important thing is that the light is on in my office." | | | | |
| "It is important to be seen by different people in or outside the office during the day." | | | | |
| "If it takes until the evening to complete a task, it has to be very important (and to the person who does the job as well)." | | | | |
| Dealing with time | | | | |
| "Someone who manages the job within 8 hours hasn't got much to do. Long hours give the appearance of being busy." | | | | |
| "Coming late to all meetings and talking about being short of time gives the appearance of being busy". | | | | |
| "If you constantly leave meetings 15 minutes early while giving assurances that the topic is important to you, you give the impression of being motivated but very busy. This way you can avoid having to take on too many tasks". | | | | |

| | This is not true of this organisation | There is some truth in this | There is a great deal of truth in this | This is very true |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Work-life-balance | | | | |
| "Work-life-balance is accepted but only in your spare time" | | | | |
| "Someone who advocates for a work-life-balance just wants to change the job." | | | | |
| "Talking about family time, or the wish for flexible working hours, is a sign of limited commitment to the team." | | | | |
| Health attitude | | | | |
| "Illness is private and shouldn't be mentioned at work. At most, one might mention a sports injury." | | | | |
| "Health promoting behaviour is for those who need it – it is a sign of weakness and underperformance." | | | | |
| "If a colleague eats healthy food or is mindful of occupational safety etc., he or she is considered an outsider." | | | | |
| Work demands and control | | | | |
| "Having difficulty meeting targets is a problem with you and not with the workload" | | | | |
| "You never know when you will be asked to do extra work without warning" | | | | |
| "The more effective you are the more work is loaded onto you" | | | | |
| Support | | | | |
| "Problems with a co-worker are your own fault" | | | | |
| "Anything you say in confidence is passed around all over the workplace" | | | | |
| "Needing support is a sign of weakness" | | | | |

Remarks

If the statements in the questionnaire do not meet your needs, you can generate your own statements and use the same method.

FURTHER READINGS

- Dattner, B. (2012) *The Blame Game: How the Hidden Rules of Credit and Blame Determine Our Success or Failure*, Simon and Schuster

23 Time Management Techniques

Description

The following is just one example of a time management technique, though several varieties exist. The exercise may be helpful for leaders as well as team members. Of course, the list of time management techniques can be expanded.

Material

Use a daily planner in either paper or electronic form. Aim to complete at least one page per day.

Throw away your to-do list. Ask yourself a simple question about each item on the list, i.e. "When am I going to do this?" Then transfer each item off the list to a specific day in your planner when you will actually do it. This relieves stress and gets important items completed in a much more timely fashion.

Keep your planner with you at all times so you can record commitments immediately. Pick a specific time each day to return phone calls and emails. Early morning correspondence gives the other person the whole day to get back to you. Leave detailed voice messages on your voicemail and encourage others to leave the information you need on your voicemail, if you are not available. Do not multitask while having a conversation on the phone or talking with someone face-to-face.

Focus on the other person and the conversation. This speeds up the communication and ensures that key information is conveyed, reducing time delays in the future. Multitasking is a counterproductive time management technique, especially when dealing with people; everyone wants to feel listened to and multitasking is inconsistent with this activity.

(<http://www.worklifebalance.com/time-tips.html>)

Remarks

Time management techniques can also be applied in a team and have the potential to rectify many organisational challenges. The key is to ensure that each member of the team can balance personal commitments with the overall project/task schedule. Ultimately, a team is a group of people who come together to perform a common function in order to achieve agreed objectives. Therefore, good team time management involves the coordination of team member activities so that organisational goals are achieved in a timely manner. Team time management differs from individual time management because it is scheduled according to the organisation's time scale.

While an individual time management strategy is measured on a daily or weekly basis, an organisational strategy usually develops plans in terms of months, quarters and year end. It is important to assist team members to develop realistic personal time management plans, which are congruent with team and organisational demands.

A team leader can communicate targets and project milestones and assist team members to organise their personal and work commitments in line with the workload.

The key steps in effective team time management are:

- Use annual and quarterly time frames;
- Ensure that the right people attend meetings;
- Develop a common understanding of organisational goals and time frames;
- Create a shared project plan with individual responsibilities and deadlines clearly specified;
- Effective delegation – tasks are allocated to the right people at the right time;
- Monitor and obtain feedback about progress towards milestones;
- Listen to team member’s concerns and coordinating efforts;
- Discuss progress toward reaching project goals;
- Re-schedule and re-allocate responsibilities to respond to ‘road blocks’;
- Acknowledge milestones reached and targets achieved;
- Group problem solving and planning.

(<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0801-time.html>)

FURTHER READINGS

- Dodd, Pamela, Sundheim, Doug (2005): The 25 Best Time Management Tools & Techniques: How to Get More Done Without Driving Yourself Crazy
- <http://www.worklifebalance.com/time-tips.html>

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