

Manager Mental Health Training





Your role as a manager in creating psychologically safe workplaces

As a people leader, it's important to create an environment where your employees feel enabled to speak up freely, take risks, and make mistakes without fear of humiliation or retaliation. Fostering psychological safety is one of your most important roles. When employees feel safe, they're more likely to contribute fully, bring new ideas, and even challenge the status quo in a positive way. It builds trust, improves morale, and reduces turnover.



Open Communication

- Do:
 - Encourage open communication
 - Listen without interrupting
 - Respond constructively
- Don't
 - Place blame
 - Judge
 - Ignore your biases



Regular Feedback

- Offer specific feedback
- Acknowledge mistakes as learning opportunities
- Share your own mistakes when appropriate
- Remember: Vulnerability is okay, even for leaders



Zero tolerance policy

- Don't tolerate harassment, bullying or exclusion
- Create clear reporting pathways for employees
- Make it known that retaliation won't be tolerated

Things to keep in mind as you work towards a more psychologically safe workplace:

1. Maintain open communication so you can provide observations and resources.
2. Be reasonable with your employees and yourself.
3. Be self-reflective and ask for feedback.



Warning Signs

Your role as a people leader puts you in a unique position to notice when an employee might be struggling. Recognizing the early warning signs of mental health issues and responding appropriately can make a huge difference in supporting your team.



Some common warning signs include:

- Mood changes. An employee may be more irritable, have mood swings, show signs of nervousness or worrying
- Change in work performance. They may start missing deadlines, the quality of their work is decreasing
- Habitual fatigue or tiredness
- Increased sick days
- Substance misuse. They come to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Interpersonal conflict. They're unable to get along with their coworkers
- Withdrawn behaviour. They avoid people, responsibilities and social events



Responding to early warning signs: the "check-in"

- Communicate that you want to check in. Let the employee know that you want to "check in" with them to see how everything is going. Ask questions in a sensitive way.
- Ensure privacy. Hold the meeting in a private, quiet place without distractions.
- Offer support.
- Don't pry or ask personal questions. It's unprofessional, unethical, and not within your rights to ask.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting. An initial check-in could be overwhelming for an employee. Creating an action plan or strategy for managing mental health-related issues may be more productive if tackled in a follow-up meeting.
- Keep checking in. Although you shouldn't hound an employee, it is important to follow up and continue to check in at regular intervals.



Managing Absenteeism

Absenteeism is when an employee regularly stays away from work. In the workplace absenteeism doesn't just affect schedules and deadlines—it can be a sign that something more significant is happening, like a mental health challenge. As a manager, recognizing absenteeism and addressing it sensitively is critical to supporting your team and maintaining productivity.



What is Absenteeism?

- Frequent or prolonged absences
- Little or no prior notice before absences
- Absence patterns that disrupt workflows



Importance of addressing Absenteeism:

- Absenteeism can cause disruptions to an organization
- Absenteeism can be a sign of deeper mental health issues
- Proactively addressing Absenteeism can minimize its impact



What are your responsibilities as a manager?

- Managing employee workload
 - A workplace that constantly overworks its employees can cause levels of pressure and stress that affect mental and physical health and could lead to increased absenteeism.
- Protecting employee privacy
 - You're legally responsible for maintaining the privacy of your employees and any of their health-related concerns.
- Demonstrating respect
 - When you demonstrate respect for your employees you help create loyalty and reduce absenteeism.
- Providing leadership
 - When your employees are clear about what you expect of them, and they look up to you, they're less likely to experience stress about unknowns.
- Providing psychological support
 - Create an open culture in which mental health can be discussed. Absenteeism is less likely to occur when your employees feel psychologically safe.
- Fostering trust and empathy
 - Checking in regularly with employees can also help minimize the chances of mental health issues leading to increased absenteeism.



Managing Conflict

Conflict is part of life and that also means it shows up in the workplace. But when it's not managed well, it can impact team morale and productivity. As a manager, your role is to navigate your team through conflict being mindful of everyone's mental health, while maintaining a safe and respectful work environment.



Interpersonal conflict can stem from a number of things

- Simple miscommunication
- Stress over deadlines
- Differences in personalities



Addressing the conflict involves:

- Talking to the employee(s) involved
- Getting all the perspectives without jumping to conclusions
- Reacting to the conflict using the four-step APIC method



The APIC method – assess, plan, implement, check

- Assess
 - Assess the situation
 - Gather information and perspectives
 - Avoid jumping to conclusions
- Plan
 - Devise a plan to manage the situation
 - Encourage the employee(s) to take ownership of the plan
 - Ensure the plan you come up with has actionable steps
- Implement
 - Implement your plan in a collaborative manner
 - Take ownership of managing the behaviour
 - Make sure to maintain the privacy of the employee(s) involved
- Check
 - Incorporate check-in points with your employee(s)
 - Evaluate your plan's progress on an ongoing basis
 - Make changes to your plan as needed

Employee Behaviour and Accountability

It's impossible to understand everything that is behind a person's behaviour or reaction – this is not your expertise, mandate, or role. However, there are certain situations where an employee's behaviour or actions in the workplace are unacceptable and require your intervention.



Initial questions to consider:

- How common is the behaviour?
- Is the behaviour affecting others?
- Is there a significant change in the employee's behaviour?



Workplace bullying

Sometimes, conflict isn't just difficult behavior—it's bullying. Some tips on dealing with workplace bullying include:

- Talking to the employee(s) involved
- Getting all the perspectives without jumping to conclusions
- Reacting to the conflict using the four-step APIC method





Addressing Concerning Behaviour and Workplace Bullying

The best way to properly address concerning behaviour or workplace bullying is to talk directly with the employee(s) involved. These types of discussions can be difficult, but they're necessary.



Tips for having difficult conversations

- Ensure you have time and privacy to discuss the matter.
- Be an active listener.
- Thank the employee(s) for bringing the issue to your attention.
- Assure them that you can work together to find a solution.



Tips for holding employees accountable

- Be specific and factual.
- Focus on behaviours, not the person.
- Address the situation as early as possible.
- Set clear expectations and consequences.
- Ensure you follow organisational policies and procedures.

By implementing these strategies and consistently working to create a psychologically safe environment, you'll not only improve your team's well-being but you can also enhance their performance. Remember, building psychological safety is an ongoing process that requires commitment and regular attention. As you continue to foster open communication, provide constructive feedback, and address harmful behaviours, you'll see the positive impact on your team's morale, engagement, and overall success. Stay attentive to your team's needs and be willing to adapt your approach as necessary to ensure a truly psychologically safe workplace for all.

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