



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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How Supervisors Can Support Their Employees' Mental Health

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Understanding how supervisors can support their employees' mental health has evolved drastically over the past year as the pandemic continues to take a toll across the country. When employees are healthy and engaged, they are more likely to be productive in the workplace and have a positive impact. By making employee mental health a priority, managers play a role in creating a supportive professional environment where people can bring their best selves to work.

Below, we share ways that managers can support their employees to help ensure a healthy workplace where people feel able to exceed their goals and feel healthy both in their work and personal life.

Tip #1: Promote Using Time Off

It's important for supervisors to not just allow vacation and time off, but to actively encourage it. Studies have shown that productivity and efficacy increase when employees have opportunities to refresh their mindset. Supervisors should educate their team on how much time off they have, how to report when they will be taking time off and, what is expected of them before and after they take leave. The more knowledgeable employees are

regarding their company's policies, the more likely they are to feel comfortable making full use out of the time they deserve.

Additionally, do your best to alleviate fears that employees will be terminated or thought of as "lesser" for taking time off. Although we are still limited to where we can go right now, encourage your employees to consider vacation time as an opportunity for dedicated family time, caregiving, and downtime. Overwork can cost your company in lost productivity and increased burnout, which can leave people feeling exhausted, empty, and unable to cope with the demands of life.

Overall, getting workers to take time off has to begin from the top-down. Management can lead by example and make sure they are properly using all of their time off and demonstrating the advantages of taking a break. Encouraging employees to use their time off can provide greater productivity, engagement, recruiting, retention, satisfaction, and creativity. All of these are likely to contribute to a boost in the organization's bottom line.

Tip #2: Create A Safe Space

Create a safe space for your employees by opening channels for active and honest communication. Being vulnerable as a supervisor helps make communication with your team members easier and more open. One silver lining of the pandemic is that it has given us no choice but to be transparent about our lives while working from home; our kids may be running into the background of video calls or coworkers may get some glances at our disorganized home.

As a supervisor, it is critical that you talk about your own stress management, feeling of anxiety or the ongoing daily struggle to maintain a healthy work/life balance. This helps demonstrate to employees that you are also

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experiencing some of the same difficulties and can relate to their experiences. Research has shown that authentic leadership can help develop a level of trust and improve employee engagement and performance.¹ This openness creates opportunities for employees to safely communicate their struggles and highlight which areas they may need support in.

It's easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle of the everyday routine but taking time to get to know your employees beyond their job descriptions and day-to-day tasks. It's not about knowing all the details of someone's life, but instead knowing how you can better support them in their professional development or mental health.

Tip #3: Offer Multiple Ways to Communicate

Open communication between a manager and their employees is fundamental to the smooth operation of a business. By offering multiple avenues of communication, such as in-person chats, wellbeing feedback boxes, or virtual office hours, you're telling your employees that you value communicating with them in whatever way feels most comfortable given the situation.

Communicating in groups can be difficult for some people, so it may be important to have regular one-on-one meetings to create additional avenues of communication with employees. These regular meetings are a great space for more direct conversation and to learn about each other's preferred communication style. By showing employees that you are open to different methods of communication, it shows that you are there for them.

Tip #4: Model Preventative Self-Care

Don't simply tell your employees that you value mental health, show them. Model preventative self-care so your team members feel they can prioritize self-care and boundary-setting as well. Many times, supervisors may be too focused on their team's well-being and getting work done that they forget to take care of themselves. The actions of leadership have a huge impact on employee behavior. No matter how many positive policies you promote, if you're not acting on them yourself, your employees won't feel permitted to do so either.

An easy way to do this is to let your team know that you will be taking pauses throughout the workday to refresh. Share that you're taking vacations and do your best to disconnect when you're gone (really turn off that email) to prevent burnout.

Tip #5: Remind Employees to Use EAP Services

Remind employees to take advantage of First Choice Health EAP services that are offered at the workplace. Although mental health services are one of the most frequently requested resources in the work environment, employees may not know which specific mental health resources are available or forget that they are there when they need them. By discussing these services with employees, it both informs them of the support available and indicates that using these mental health resources is supported by the company, such as getting a referral to see a counselor.

To encourage the use of EAP services, you can:

- Offer this resource to employees as well as to their immediate family members who may be in need
- Make it easy for employees to know who to talk to or where to go to access mental health resources
- Emphasize that your EAP can be accessed confidentially and free of charge

Sources:

1. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1548051808326596>