MAKE THE SHIFT

The Manager's Guide

to Managing Mental Wellbeing for Shift Workers

working **well** in wellington

The Manager's Guide to Managing Mental Wellbeing for Shift Workers

This guide has been developed by the Wellington Primary Care Partnership Working Well in Wellington project team as part of the Working Well in Wellington project, supported by WorkSafe's WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund.

This project aims to develop and promote strategies that protect the mental wellbeing of shift workers.

As a manager, you hold an important leadership position. You share a responsibility to provide a mentally and physically healthy and safe work environment. This handbook aims to give you some information about the possible impact of shift work on mental wellbeing and offers some simple strategies and resources that you can use to protect the mental wellbeing of your team.

Working shift work can disrupt sleep, nutrition, exercise, and social connectedness – all of which are crucial to physical and mental wellbeing. You therefore need to ensure that you do everything you can to assist your staff to deal with these disruptions and preserve mental wellbeing.

These strategies can also be of great benefit to you and your family in your everyday life.

We encourage you to read this handbook and discuss it with your team and leadership group. We wish you well in your endeavours to create a mentally healthy workplace.

November 2021

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Shift work and
mental wellbeing

What is a shift worker?

A shift worker is anyone who works outside the hours of 7am to 6pm.

There are an estimated 1.4 million shift workers in Australia. That is approximately 16% of all employees.

When you work a shift schedule you are often out of sync with the normal daily life activities of your family and friends. It can also cause fatigue as the body tries to stay awake when it should be sleeping.

This can lead to:

» Social isolation or loneliness for the worker and/or their partner

» Not enough time spent with children

» Missing events like birthday parties and graduations

» Decreased quality of time with family and friends due to tiredness

» Moodiness or irritability with family and friends

» Difficulty in coordinating or being part of family routines

» Difficulty making social or family plans

For many people, adapting to shift work can place strains on their professional and personal life. As a manager is it important for you to recognise symptoms of mental distress and help to create a work environment that can support your team.
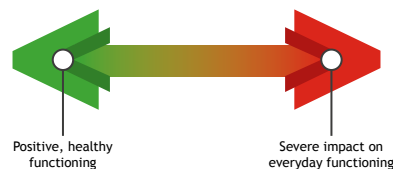
What is mental health?

The phrase 'mental health' is often misunderstood. You might hear it used as a substitute for mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is

"a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community".

Essentially, mental health is the emotional resilience that allows us to enjoy life, create friendships, and be productive, including in our jobs. Emotional resilience also allows us to survive life's disappointments, such as loss and bereavements, family challenges and numerous stressful situations (Keating, F).

Mental health is not merely the absence of a mental health condition, but about being mentally healthy in the way we think, feel and develop relationships. It can be helpful to think of mental health as being on a continuum.

Positive, healthy functioning — Severe impact on everyday functioning

Your mental health is not fixed. It is normal to move up and down the continuum throughout the course of your life, or even the day.

You might feel pretty good about getting a compliment at work, but then get really anxious when something goes wrong that you had no control over. This is a normal response to stress and usually resolves relatively quickly, or when the situation changes.

A mental health issue may develop when the feelings are of such long duration and high intensity that they start to impact upon your ability to function in everyday life.

A National Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey in 2007 found that 45% of Australians between the ages of 16-85 years of age experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. In any given year 20% of Australians experience a mental health condition.

You can read more about this at www.headsup.org.au/your-mental-health/what-is-good-mental-health and www.beyondblue.org.au

The importance of a mentally healthy workplace

Work is good for mental health but a negative working environment can lead to physical and mental health problems. Work plays a strong role in our lives in that it provides social contact and support, keeps us physically and mentally active, allows us to develop and use skills, gives us social status, a sense of identity and personal achievement, and provides a way for us to structure and occupy our time.

If the workplace is not supportive, it can trigger or exacerbate mental ill health. 25% of all employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives (Fernadez, 2016). Anxiety, depression and stress-related disorders are the most common issues.

Creating a balance between higher productivity and a mentally healthy workforce can be tricky and it relies on a positive philosophy of staff wellbeing from the organisation and well-trained managers who can recognise signs of ill health and provide support; promote a positive, supportive and inclusive working environment for their staff; and develop good systems of work that support a mentally healthy workplace.

As a manager, you are well-placed to influence the work-related factors that can contribute to mental injury in the workplace.

Work-related factors are anything in the design or management of work that increase the risk of work-related stress.

Factors that contribute to work-related stress:

Organisational factors

» Work demands – particularly high intensity periods of work in stressful or demanding situations

» Low levels of control over work

» Poor levels of support by supervisors and colleagues

» Lack of role clarity and role conflict

» Poorly managed relationships

» poorly managed change

» Workplace incivility

As a manager you have significant control over these factors and are in an excellent position to ensure that these factors are mitigated. Taking time to check in with your team members, both individually and in a group setting, and seeking their input and suggestions are important ways that you can improve these organisational factors.

Bullying and harassment are often prevalent when these organisational factors are not attended to.

Environmental factors

- » Noise
- » Temperature and humidity
- » Lighting
- » Vibration
- » Air quality
- » Cramped workspace
- » Unguarded plant and equipment
- » Hazardous manual handling

Some of these issues may be difficult for you to remedy immediately. It is, however, your responsibility to monitor your team's physical conditions and report any hazards or concerns that you or they may have.

The first step in creating a mentally safe workplace is to listen to your team.

Individual factors

Individual factors refer to the differences in a person's resilience levels, personality, and experiences. They are not necessarily directly within the employer's control. We can, however, be alert to mental health signs and symptoms and be prepared to talk to team members who may be struggling.

This handbook will give you tips and ideas about how to do this in Section 5.

Maintaining good mental health

We know that in addition to having a mentally safe workplace, our mental well-being can be assisted by doing four important things:

- » Sleeping well
- » Eating well
- » Exercising
- » Socialising

Shift work can have a negative impact on all of these.

As a manager of shift workers it is important that you encourage your team to be aware of these protective factors and help to create an environment in which mental wellbeing is considered to be as important as physical health.
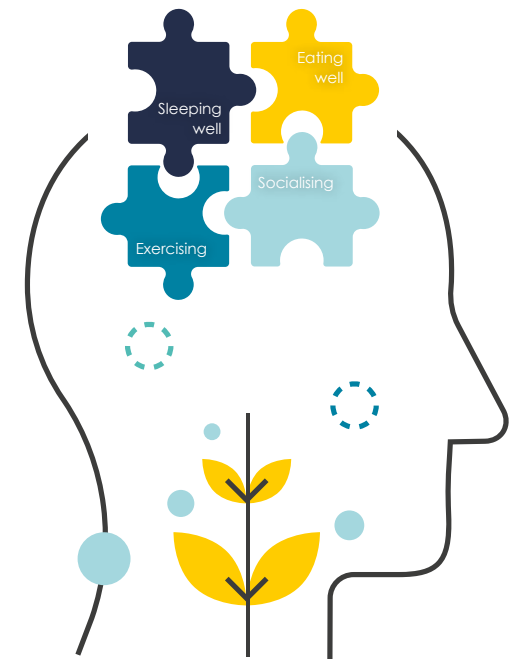
You can read more about this here: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/ mental-health-safety-basics

The manager's role
in mental wellbeing

Five Workplace Protective Factors

A review of the literature by the National Mental Health Commission and Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance (2014) identified five protective factors that are fundamental to developing and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace.

These are the foundation of the Working Well in Wellington project and the strategies that have been developed, such as this handbook, are aimed to enhance these factors.

The five factors are:

1. Job Design: These are things such as rosters, how the working day is constructed, the tasks that you do and the sequence in which they are done. Poor work design can lead to fatigue, repetitive and unnecessary over-work, and/or physical hazards.

2. Organisational Factors: These include policies and procedures, industrial fairness, organisational culture and rewards. Poor organisational factors will decrease motivation and can lead to conflict between individual and corporate values which can harm mental wellbeing.

3. Team/group factors: These include how the team is led and works together to achieve common goals. A team that is not cohesive or is not led with authenticity will not work together and will create pressure on the individual team members.

4. Home/work conflict factors: Work/life balance is extremely important. Where there is a conflict between the demands of work and home, staff may begin to develop anxiety and/ or depression symptoms as they struggle to overcome the conflict.

5. Individual biopsychosocial factors: We are all individuals with our own health and life histories that may impact our mental wellbeing. Our mental wellbeing may be more or less triggered by different incidents and experiences.

As a manager you can help to develop and maintain a mentally healthy workplace by taking a special interest in all of these areas and working towards alleviating any factors that might be causing mental conflict.

For example, you can:

» Make sure that rosters are fair and equitable, particularly in rotating annual leave and time off over public holidays such as Xmas/New Year

» Read and review the organisation's policies and procedures and make constructive comments about any stress points or areas of conflict between policy and practice

» Check in with your team regularly and organise joint activities that can help to promote team cohesion

» Develop team goals that link to the organisation's goals, and rewards when they are met

» Be aware of team members' personal and family situations and encourage an atmosphere of open communication where any family or personal commitments are respected

» Get to know your team members and have regular one-on-one meetings to talk about their progress in their work and how they are going both personally and professionally in this very challenging work environment

» Develop mentoring relationships between team members so that everyone has someone (not necessarily management) who they can relate to

The best way to develop a mentally healthy workplace is to work with your colleagues and management to focus on the protective factors and be open to change and new ways of doing things.

On an individual level there are four factors that help to maintain and improve mental wellbeing.

Sleep well

Good sleep is integral to our wellbeing. While we sleep many important functions take place that help the body in physical recovery and repair, support brain development, cardiac function and body metabolism, as well as supporting learning, memory and mood.

Our sleep is regulated or timed by our internal body clock, or circadian rhythm. One circadian cycle is completed approximately every 24 hours. When this rhythm is impaired it can impact upon our general physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Light helps to keep our circadian rhythm synchronised. When the eye senses light, it sends a signal to the brain to be awake. As it becomes dark in the evening, your body produces a hormone called melatonin that tells your body it is time to sleep.

Shift work can confuse your circadian rhythm due to your need to be awake during the night when the darkness is signalling that it is time to sleep. This, in turn, can impair your sleep and affect the important repair and recovery work that your brain does during the sleep cycle.

The following tips will help your team to avoid fatigue and perform at their best:

» The shift worker must allow time to wind down after getting off a shift. As a manager it is important to help your shift workers to finish work on time so that they can maintain their winding down routine

» Encourage cat naps during break times. Naps are beneficial and will not affect a person's "long sleep" if they are kept to 10-15 minutes

» Encourage use of bright light therapy glasses for those staff who find them useful

You can read more about sleep and mental wellbeing at www.theconversation.com/disrupted-sleep-wake-cycle-linked-to-mental-health-problems-new-study-96554

Eat well

Your brain needs a lot of nutrients to function and keep you well, both physically and mentally. Eating well can also help to regulate your sleeping patterns, energy levels, and your mental wellbeing.

You may have noticed that your mood often affects the types of food you choose, as well as how much you eat. Some foods can lift your mood, energy levels and concentration, while others can have the opposite effect.

Eating regular meals that provide the nutrients you need to sustain energy during shift work can be challenging.

The following tips can help your team eat well during shift work:

» Ensure that all staff take all meal and tea breaks, especially when on night shifts. Shift workers on night shifts need to eat small meals regularly and taking breaks promotes good eating habits

» Encourage all staff to stay adequately hydrated. Drinking at least one litre of water during a shift, preferably taken in regular sips, helps to maintain the fluids that are needed in a healthy work environment

The following links have some further information about nutrition and mental wellbeing.
www.healthdirect.gov.au/diet-and-mental-health

www.headspace.org.au/blog/the-best-foods-for-mental-health/

Exercise

Exercise and physical activity can help maintain your mental wellbeing. Physical activity helps to get blood and oxygen moving around the brain, which has positive effects for brain chemistry and functioning such as:

» Releasing chemicals like endorphins and serotonin that improve your mood and help you to feel good

» Increasing connections with nerve cells in the brain

» Increasing the size of the hippocampus which is the area in the brain responsible for memory

» Reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety, which can improve sleep.

» Physical activity is the movement of muscles that uses energy. It may be incidental movements such as housework, walking, or climbing stairs. It can also include exercise.

» Exercise is physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive and intentional. It is intended to improve or maintain physical fitness.

We know that shift work can interfere with regular exercise or participation in organised sport, however, physical activity doesn't have to be regular, programmed or specific exercise.

It could be anything you do in your day-to-day life – like running errands or doing housework, or walking and cycling rather than taking the car.

The following ideas can help your team to maintain good levels of physical activity:

» Your staff may be very busy on their feet and might feel that they get enough exercise at work. However, regular additional recreational exercise is also important. Balance weight training with cardio work to maintain good mental wellbeing

» Encourage your team to participate in sporting clubs - perhaps as a manager, you could even form your own sporting team with your staff so that you can share some exercise together. The advantage of a team of shift workers is that you will always have people who can make up the team at any time

You can read more about the benefits of physical activity and exercise and mental health and wellbeing on the sites below.

www.healthdirect.gov.au/exercise-and-mental-health

www.headtohealth.gov.au/ meaningful-life/physical-health/being-active

Socialising

Human beings are social creatures.

As far back as we can trace, humans have travelled, hunted, and thrived in social groups. Social groups, including family, provide us with an important part of our identity. The number, and strength, of our relationships also affects our mental health and wellbeing.

Socialising can lower rates of anxiety and depression, increase self-esteem, and help us to have greater empathy and more trusting and cooperative relationships.

In contrast, loneliness can lead to disrupted sleep patterns, elevated blood pressure, and increased cortisol (a stress hormone). It is also a risk factor for depression.

We know that the unsociable hours of shift work can limit social interactions. It is therefore important to find ways that enable your team to continue to develop and nurture their social interactions and keep in touch with those who are close to them.

Helpful tips:

» Shift changes are inevitable when you have to fill a roster. There will be times when you need to call someone in to fill a space. Be mindful that this may cause disruption to other planned events in that staff member's life and could add to the imbalance between work and family demands. Therefore ask rather than tell, and actively listen to their response. "Yes" does not always mean yes

» Lead a regular discussion group about mental wellbeing and use this to check in with team members

» Try to organise work-related social events at rotating times so that more team members have a chance to attend at least one event

General management tips for supporting the mental wellbeing of your team

General conditions that are important to the ongoing mental wellbeing of work teams (MHFA England, 2016) include:

» Develop and actively lead a work culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and issues such as bullying are not tolerated

» Develop a culture where open and honest communication is encouraged and support and mutual respect are the norm

» Give your team members more control over their work and how they do it. Lack of autonomy is a major cause of stress

» Ensure that your team members have the right level of skill for the job

» Audit the work environment for work-related factors causing stress in the workplace.

For further information, please go to www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health- safety-basics

The growth mindset

There is a lot of talk about the importance of a growth mindset in helping us to negotiate our way through our world. As a manager it is important to work with a growth mindset and to show leadership in this area. That means that we fundamentally believe that we can all learn and grow at all stages of our lives.

We used to believe that our brain didn't grow beyond childhood and that some people were just naturally better at some things than others.

But failure is just a temporary state – it simply means that we haven't learned that skill yet.

Research on brain elasticity now shows that our intelligence and skills are not fixed. We can always learn and adapt to new situations and thrive on challenges.

Saga Briggs has identified 25 ways to develop a growth mindset:

1. Acknowledge and embrace imperfections
2. View challenges as opportunities
3. Try different learning tactics
4. Follow research on brain plasticity
5. Replace the word 'failing' with the word 'learning'
6. Stop seeking approval
7. Value the process over the end result
8. Cultivate a sense of purpose
9. Celebrate growth with others
10. Emphasise growth over speed
11. Reward actions, not traits
12. Redefine 'genius'
13. Portray criticism as positive
14. Disassociate improvement from failure
15. Provide regular opportunities for reflection
16. Place effort before talent
17. Highlight the relationship between learning and 'brain training'
18. Cultivate grit
19. Abandon the image
20. Use the word 'yet'
21. Learn from other people's mistakes
22. Make a new goal for every goal accomplished
23. Take risks in the company of others
24. Think realistically about time and effort
25. Take ownership over your attitude

Growth mindset and mental wellbeing

Practising and adopting a growth mindset can help us to assess what is important and not sweat the small stuff. Being kind to yourself and accepting your life journey and its learnings can help you to sort through the competing priorities of your life and seek support and guidance when you haven't quite mastered something new yet. It can have a calming effect in a very crowded life and can therefore help to protect your mental wellbeing.

Your adoption of a growth mindset will demonstrate the desired model for your team and promote an enquiring and positive atmosphere.

And finally...

Look after your own mental wellbeing – **a good manager leads by example.**

Your team will be looking to you to set standards. Staff look up to managers and observe their behaviours to work out how they can get ahead in the organisation. They are also well tuned to observe any inconsistencies between your words and actions.

Whilst you may not be a shift worker, it is important that staff observe you taking care of your mental wellbeing and seeking help when you need it.

Openly talking about your mental wellbeing sends an important and positive message to your team.

Signs and symptoms
of mental ill health

Looking out for your team

Mental ill health has no respect for age, timing, background or circumstances and can be triggered by a range of events, including happy ones.

Triggers can include:

» Starting a new job or a first job

» Working with new people

» Managing shift work

» Poor relationships with a manager

» Coping with workload

» Getting married

» Having a baby or having children whose demands on a parent can trigger issues

» Bereavement

» Health scares or illness of the individual or members of their family

» Divorce or relationship breakdown

» Redundancy or fear of redundancy

» Changes to management personnel, organisational structures or service delivery

» Coping with promotion or increased workload/increased responsibilities

A good manager knows their team and is therefore well placed to identify early warning signs of deterioration in mental wellbeing. You can observe whether certain tasks, work environments, times of the day or particular team dynamics are causing stress to the individual.

It is highly unlikely that a person with anxiety or depression will initiate the conversation with you. It is up to you as the manager to look for behavioural and physical signs and be prepared to initiate the conversation.

The most common signs of deteriorating mental wellbeing are behavioural changes

People who are extroverted may become more introverted, or vice-versa. You may notice that they no longer talk about their favourite things. They may become quite pedantic or a perfectionist, or conversely not take as much care as they used to in their work or physical appearance.

Some common signs to look for include:

Behavioural signs

» Missing deadlines, forgetting tasks and increased errors or accidents

» Complaining about lack of support from the manager, being fixated with fair treatment, or constant complaining about the workload

» Unacceptable behaviours toward peers, the manager or the clients/patients or their families

» Irritability, aggression or tearfulness, or arguments with peers

» Being withdrawn and not participating in conversations

» Inability to concentrate – indecision

» Difficulty in remembering things

» Loss of confidence

» Unplanned absences

» Taking on too much work and volunteering for every new project

» Being adamant that they are right

» Working long hours – e-mailing out of hours, on days off or on holidays

» Being louder or more exuberant than usual

» Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes/sedatives

» Being increasingly self-critical

» Perfectionism – to the point of being unable to commence or complete a task

» Loss of insight into own behaviour and how it is affecting others

» Increasing pessimism

» Loss of interest and motivation

Physical signs

» Constant tiredness – being run down

» Unplanned sick leave

» Headaches

» General body aches and pains

» Slower reactions

» Difficulty sleeping

» Weight gain or loss

» Lack of care over appearance

» Gastrointestinal disorders

» Rashes/eczema

It is really important to pick up these signs early. As with most health conditions, early diagnosis and support make for much better outcomes.

Leading in
times of change

Mentally safe workplaces

Workplaces are constantly changing as we develop new ways of doing things and respond to internal and external demands and situations.

When faced with a crisis, you can be forced to think and behave in ways that feel unfamiliar. Whether it's a technological, financial, natural, or health crisis – at work or in the community – a crisis demands that managers lead.

Sometimes we can find ourselves in uncharted waters. As a manager, you have a responsibility to ensure that the workplace is still a mentally safe place for your team members during these challenging times.

Your workplace is changing

Learning new ways of doing things can be very challenging in periods of general heightened anxiety. You may find that some staff are quite resistant to this change or may challenge the need for it.

As a manager, it is important that you see this as a reaction to the situation, not a challenge to your leadership.

It is important that your team members have a sense of control over their work life during this period of change. Some changes may be forced upon you, but it is still very important to consult with those affected and get their ideas about how they can be best implemented.

Anxiety and depression can both cause changes to brain functioning and it may take people longer to learn new things. As a manager you may need to change your expectations about how much training and support your team will need to adopt any new practices and provide more support during such times.

You may also need to be more flexible in approving personal and planned leave so that your team members can attend to urgent health matters and/or support family and friends. Therefore, work may not be the well-oiled machine that it usually is. We are all human and will have very human responses to each other. Some of these may test our relationships. As a manager it is important that you ease the control that you might usually exert on the team and be understanding of the inevitable errors or efficiency lapses that occur when humans are stressed.

Taking control of yourself (not others)

As a manager there will be things that you can't control.

It is important to be able to find things about yourself that you can control.

The emphasis here is on controlling yourself, not others. At home you can control things like what you eat, wear and how you will fill your day. You can control your social interactions and choose to interact with people who you know will help you to remain positive.

At work you need to be able control what you can about yourself. There will be limitations and it is important for your mental wellbeing, and that of your team, that you demonstrate that you can control yourself in these difficult conditions.

It is tempting to try to control others when you are feeling a lack of control. As a manager this is particularly fraught.

Understanding your spheres of control, influence and concern can be a useful way of working out what you can control (and therefore spend more time concentrating on); what you can influence (spend some time concentrating on); and what you are concerned about (which ideally you should spend less time concentrating on).

For further information take a look at the following site:

www.forge.medium.com/worried-about-the-coronavirus-this-simple-mind-shift-helps-me-to-re-frame-my-fears-e772a2cbfd8b

You cannot control other people – each of us will deal with our own reality in our own way. During times of change your team members, family and friends may be having a similar sense of loss of control. Trying to control them – even with the best of intentions – may damage your relationships and their mental wellbeing.

Your management responsibilities

As a manager you are responsible for providing a safe workplace for your team. That includes both physical and mental safety. There is a clear distinction between the mind and body but when considering mental health and physical health, the two are very connected.

Poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems. Likewise, poor mental health can negatively impact physical health, leading to an increased risk of some adverse health conditions.

The following sites have excellent information regarding workplace obligations during a public health crisis for managers:

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces

www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/managing-coronavirus-covid-19-risks-mental-health-work

This handbook talks about the importance of eating well, sleeping well, exercising and socialising to protect and enhance the mental wellbeing of shift workers. These actions are even more important in times of change.

The following websites are recommended and will provide you with useful information that may help.

www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/coronavirus-anxiety-resources

https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

What to do if
you are concerned

Useful steps to help

If you are concerned about a team member's mental wellbeing, there are some useful steps you can take:

1. **Ask if they are OK**
    "I notice you haven't been as enthusiastic in handover lately – is everything OK with you? Can I help you with something?"

2. **Listen to them but don't try to solve the problem**
    "That sounds really difficult/scary for you. I am glad that you told me. How are you feeling?"

3. **Encourage action**
    "I think it may be useful to get some help. Who do you think could help you through this? Let's make a plan."

4. **Check in**
    "How did you go today at the Doctor? Is there anything I can do to help?"

You don't have to fix the problem. You do need to offer your understanding and support.

The appendix has some useful resources that you can refer to and use.

Management responsibilities

As a manager, you have a key role in helping your team members. Understanding how to intervene in order to create a healthy workplace includes:

» Protecting the mental wellbeing of staff by reducing the work-related risk factors

» Making work meaningful by promoting mental health and wellbeing through education of staff so they can recognise issues in themselves or others

» Letting staff know that help is available

Everyone should have the opportunity to work, whatever their mental health status. As a manager it is important to understand the mental health issues that your team member is facing, and put these issues in the context of the individual's strengths and capabilities.

It is important to identify what the individual can do rather than focussing on what they can't do.

In most cases, the individual's mental health issues derive from a combination of work and non-work related issues.

It is in your interest to support your team member, whatever the original cause or trigger, and work out how to keep the employee engaged with the organisation.

Working out practical steps that the manager and employee can take together might include:

» Matching job requirements with the employee's capabilities at the time

» Talking to the employee when signs of stress are evident

» Keeping in touch (welfare checks) when the employee is on sick leave and offering support and a return to work plan

» Supporting an employee to manage long term illness whilst staying at work

» Accessing sources of support for the employee

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Most Australian businesses have Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). These programs entitle employees and their immediate family members to free counselling and support for personal and/or work-related issues from an external professional provider.

EAP can help with a range of issues and concerns including:

» Interpersonal conflict and tensions
» Work-related stress
» Changes in work environment
» Harassment and grievances
» Relationship or family matters
» Personal and emotional stress
» Grief and bereavement
» Career issues
» Mental health concerns
» Personal crisis or trauma

This help is free and completely confidential. Most programs offer employees (and their families) up to four hours of counselling, per issue, per year.

Most EAPs also provide assistance to managers with a range of issues, including:

» How to encourage an employee to use the EAP
» How to have helpful conversations with staff having difficulties
» Support in how to effectively communicate in the workplace
» Assistance in handling team issues around diversity
» Managing a challenging employee or an employee who is behaving unusually
» Dealing with employee performance management issues (the emotional component)
» Guidance in handling serious or emergency workplace issues

How to get help

There will probably be EAP posters and pamphlets available at your workplace, and EAP is usually included in most workplace inductions.

As a manager, you are a vital link between EAP and your team. It is therefore important that you know how to contact EAP and how to encourage your team members to seek assistance.

It is a great idea as a new manager, or when starting with a new organisation, to contact EAP and have a chat about what management services they can provide for you and how you can best facilitate access for your team.
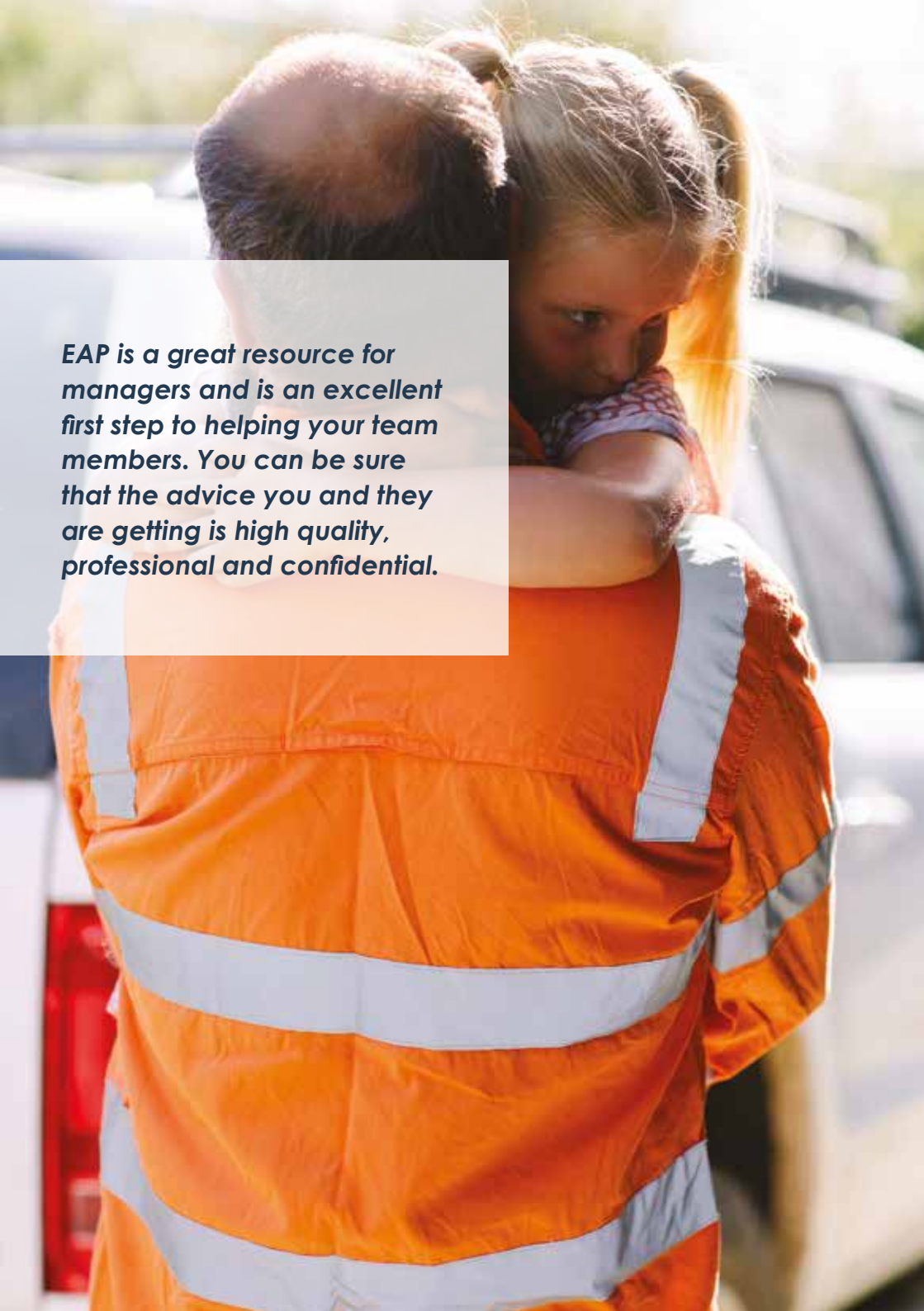
Remember

» This service is completely confidential

» It is free

» It is there to help you with both personal and work issues

» Your family members can also receive this help

» It is there to support you to become a better manager

Counselling and support services are not just for those who are overstressed or in crisis. It is better to use these services when you are just starting to notice early symptoms. Early intervention can save a lot of pain.

So if you notice any signs or symptoms of early mental health issues, you can encourage team members to use this service.

We also encourage you to use it for your own issues, or those of other immediate family members.

EAP is a great resource for managers and is an excellent first step to helping your team members. You can be sure that the advice you and they are getting is high quality, professional and confidential.

Ready to lead?

The manager's checklist

Managing mental health in the workplace requires supportive and effective management practices. Here is a checklist to see how prepared you are to improve and support the mental wellbeing of your team.

Preparation – knowing your team

» I have regular (at least monthly) one on one meetings with each individual team member

» I check in with the group regularly during handover to test the group mental health temperature

» I know what motivates each individual team member, what they are good at and what tasks they tend to struggle with

Preparation – knowing yourself

» I have regular one on one meetings with my manager where I know that I can get support

» I understand and recognise my signs of stress and have strategies in place to help to ease them

» I feel comfortable talking about mental health and wellbeing

Preparation – knowing your workplace

» I have read the organisation's policies that support mental wellbeing and understand my role in their implementation

» I know where I can go to get assistance regarding any concerns that I may have with a team member's mental wellbeing

The practice

» I feel comfortable in asking RUOK and can follow the four steps as identified in Section 4

» I instruct all my team members to take all of their work breaks and actively intervene if they are not doing so

» I know the company's Employee Assistance Program policy and procedure and know how to help my team to access counselling

» I encourage my team members to take cat naps during their breaks

» I encourage my team members to regularly sip water during their shift

» I understand and use best practice rostering principles as the basis of all individual team member's rosters

» I check in with team members regarding their life outside work and any conflicts between shift demands and family/social needs

» I understand how the work-related factors can influence mental health and how I can manage these factors to reduce the risk of work-related stress in my team members

The evaluation

» I actively and regularly ask each team member to give me feedback about my performance as a mental wellbeing focussed manager

» I actively and regularly ask my manager to give me constructive feedback about my performance as a mental wellbeing focussed manager

Appendix: Key resources

Management and leadership

» www.mhfastorage.blob.core.windows.net/mhfastoragecontainer/
bbaee8ce4864ea11a811000d3ab82d69/Line%20Managers%20Resource%20Screen.pdf

» www.dummies.com/business/management/managing-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/

Mentally healthy workplaces

» www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health-safety-basics

» www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/work-related-psychological-health-and-safety-
systematic-approach-meeting-your-duties

Mental wellbeing

» www.headsup.org.au/your-mental-health/what-is-good-mental-health

» www.beyondblue.org.au

» www.ruok.org.au

» www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

» www.bcfirstrespondersmentalhealth.com/looking-for-help/self-assessment/

Shift work tips

» www.healthyshiftworker.com/shop/

» www.thenewdaily.com.au/finance/work/2016/11/19/shift-work-health-tips/

Sleeping well

» www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/what-circadian-rhythm

» www.re-timer.com/the-product/how-to-sleep-better/

» www.theconversation.com/disrupted-sleep-wake-cycle-linked-to-mental-
health-problems-new-study-96554

Eating well

» www.jeanhailes.org.au/news/foods-for-shift-workers

» www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/109773/shifting-
nutrition.pdf

» www.healthdirect.gov.au/exercise-and-mental-health

Exercising well

» www.puregym.com/blog/a-guide-to-working-out-for-shift-workers/

» www.workplacewellnessonline.ca/pdfs/Shift%20work%20-%20getting%20

» enough%20sleep%20and%20exercise.pdf

» www.headtohealth.gov.au/meaningful-life/physical-health/being-active

Socialising well

» www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/Strong-relationships-
strong-health

» www.headtohealth.gov.au/meaningful-life/connectedness/community

» www.jeanhailes.org.au/news/friendships-mental-health

Dealing with a crisis

» www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19

» www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/coronavirus-anxiety-resources

» www.beyondblue.org.au/coronavirus

» www.habitsforwellbeing.com/the-circle-of-concern-and-influence/

» www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/be-healthy/exercise-covid-19

References

» Briggs, Saga "**25 Ways to Develop A Growth Mindset**" www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/develop-a-growth-mindset/

» www.bcfirstrespondersmentalhealth.com/looking-for-help/self-assessment/

» Fernadez, Rich "**5 Ways to Boost Your Resilience at Work**" Harvard Business Review, June 2016

» Keating, F., "**7 steps to Build a Mentally Healthy Workplace**" Easysafe.com

» **"Mental Health First Aid England"**, Line Managers Resource 2016

» National Mental Health Commission and Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, Developing a Mentally Healthy Workplace: A Review of the Literature, (2014)

» Price Waterhouse Cooper, "**Creating a Mentally Healthy Workplace: Return on Investment Analysis" (2014)"**

» www.forge.medium.com/worried-about-the-coronavirus-this-simple-mind-shift-helps-me-to-re-frame-my-fears-e772a2cbfd8b

» www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/mental-health

» www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases

» www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19

» www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/coronavirus-anxiety-resources

» www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

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