Foster employee well-being
An HR Toolkit to support teamleads

This toolkit is based on input from more than 40 HR professionals and 1,800 coached people.

Nearly 70% of senior HR leaders consider employee well-being and mental health to be top priorities (Future Workplace 2021 HR sentiment survey).

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What can you do with this toolkit?

All teamleads want to provide the best care for your team. That is why we have put together a toolkit to help them effectively tackle stress and burnout and improve the well-being of employees. This toolkit offers practical, proven tools and actionable steps to get started right away.

An estimated 15% of working-age adults have a mental illness at any given time. Depression and anxiety are estimated to cost the global economy $1 trillion annually, mainly through lost productivity. - WHO (2022)

With practical tips, clear examples and directly applicable actions, this toolkit will help your managers make a difference. Together, you will build a working environment where everyone feels valued and support

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How to use this toolkit

- **Understand the core ideas:** Take time to read each section for a good overview of best practices for employee wellbeing.

- **Share with managers:** Give managers the condensed version of the toolkit, with practical steps to improve wellbeing within their teams.

- **Focus on key areas:** Decide which parts of the toolkit are most relevant to your organisation: Connection & Communication, Growth & Development or Inspiring Leadership.

- **Organise training courses:** Use this toolkit to develop training courses and workshops so that managers gain the necessary skills and knowledge.

- **Implement simple steps:** Encourage managers to start with small changes, such as active listening during meetings and regular feedback sessions.

- **Track progress:** Check in regularly with managers to monitor progress, address challenges and provide ongoing support and resources.

- **Gather feedback:** Solicit feedback from both managers and employees to improve and adjust strategies where necessary.

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The 3 success factors for a good workplace:

1. Ensure connection & open dialogue
2. Support growth & learning
3. Lead with integrity & purpose

1. Ensure Connection & Open Dialogue

Connection and communication are key to a supportive and productive work environment. When employees feel heard and valued, they are engaged and motivated. Together, we can ensure that everyone feels at their best, both at work and outside.

In short

- Listen actively: Build trust within your team by really listening to what everyone has to say,
- Encourage confidence: Create a safe environment where everyone can be open about challenges and successes,
- Schedule regular sessions with a social character: organise check-ins and social events to strengthen team spirit,
- Give constructive feedback: Help your team grow by giving regular and useful feedback.

"I feel uncomfortable talking about the problems that affect me at work because I am afraid it will be used against me." - Anonymous employee

1.1. Listen actively.

Active listening not only builds trust, but also valuable connections. This leads to stronger engagement and increased productivity. By truly paying attention, acknowledging and offering feedback without judgement, you can make a positive impact as a manager.

a. Train managers: Make sure managers attend training courses and workshops to learn how to listen better. This helps them to really understand what is going on with their team members.

b. Anonymous feedback channels: Provide anonymous feedback channels, such as a suggestion box or a digital platform. This allows employees to express their opinions freely.

To share with your managers

Tips for effective active listening:

1 Give your full attention

Show that you are really listening by making eye contact and avoiding distractions.

2 Acknowledge the message

Nod or give a verbal affirmation such as "I get that" to each message.

3 Offer feedback without judgement

Ask through, ask questions and reflect on what has been said, without immediately judging. For example, "What makes you..." "So if I understand correctly, ...?"

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1.2. Create a culture of trust and safety.

When employees feel safe, they dare to step out of their comfort zone, make mistakes and share their concerns. This fosters an open and innovative work environment. You can even reward mistakes by giving an award for it under the guise "if I make more mistakes than you, I win".

a. Show your humanity as a leader: Encourage managers to be open about their experiences and challenges. This helps create deep understanding, encourages innovation and inspires true authenticity.

b. Create a safe Atmosphere: Reward people who make mistakes and share them openly.

c. Normalise Bad Days: Emphasise that it is okay to have a bad day and share it out loud.

d. Transparency: Transparency is crucial for building trust. Encourage managers to adopt an open-door policy and explain the reasons behind decisions made by higher-ups. This helps employees feel engaged and informed and reduces uncertainty.

1.3. Regular one-to-one and team meetings.

They promote open dialogue and trust, essential for a connected team environment.

"Seeing my manager openly share his own journey and encourage questions made me feel safe to share my ideas and ask questions without fear of judgement. It made a big difference in my motivation and engagement."
- Anonymous employee

To share with your managers

Tips to encourage openness and transparency:

1 Be yourself

Share your own struggles, experiences and challenges. Everyone is human first and foremost. This strengthens the mutual bond and encourages innovation and learning.

2 Say "I don't know" more often.

Be open about sharing your insecurities and learning moments. It can be a powerful way to strengthen trust and cooperation within your team.

3 Share decision-making

Explain the rationale behind decisions so everyone understands the context.

4 Invite people to questions

Organise regular Q&A sessions or updates for employees. This provides a safe space for employees to seek clarification.

5 Start a team meeting with a check-in round

with Red, Orange or Green. It immediately clarifies your state of mind for others and encourages colleagues to help each other. Not everyone needs to share their feelings in a group, but it is easy for everyone to check-in with a colour. According to Braden Kowitz, who writes about high-performing teams, check-in rounds help create more inclusive meetings. When everyone starts a meeting by speaking once, it becomes easier to speak again later during the same meeting. If you are trying to help a teammate feel more at ease, a simple check-in round could be the way to make them feel comfortable speaking in front of their colleagues.

6 Organise Social Events

Organise regular get-togethers with a social component to strengthen relationships and improve team cohesion.

"I always thought my colleague was unapproachable, but after spending time together during a team event, we really connected. Now our working relationship is much stronger and collaboration is much easier."
- Anonymous employee

1.4. Offer Constructive Feedback.

Constructive feedback helps employees grow and feel valued. Establishing a culture of regular feedback ensures continuous improvement and development.

a. Training in giving and receiving feedback: Offer training in which employees learn how to give and receive constructive feedback. This not only strengthens their skills but also the bond between them.

b. Schedule Regular Feedback Sessions: Encourage managers to schedule feedback sessions with their teams every two months. This ensures continued dialogue and strengthens collaboration.

1.5. Recognition programmes

At Inuka, we believe that recognising and rewarding employees for their contributions can give a huge boost to both morale and motivation. Here are a few tips on how to do this effectively:

a. Develop Structured Programmes: Develop structured programmes that regularly recognise and celebrate your employees' achievements. Think monthly awards, team outings or just a personalised 'thank you' card. Small gestures make a big difference!

b. Encourage Peer to peer recognition: Encourage colleagues to appreciate each other. This helps build a supportive and appreciative work culture. For example, introduce a system where employees can nominate each other for a 'Colleague of the Month' award. This makes people feel seen and appreciated by those close to them.

2. Supporting Growth & Learning

By giving your employees opportunities to learn and grow, you allow them to flourish. That way, they feel valued and supported, and together you build a resilient and engaged team.

In short
- You can only win or learn. Embrace challenges as opportunities to learn and grow.
- Encourage career planning. Actively guide your people in this. Your job as a manager is to help employees grow.
- Employees who develop, develop your organisation. Make use of training budgets and learning resources and offer them proactively.
- Ensure an Inclusive Induction Process: Provide a warm welcome for new employees with a well-organised induction programme and a buddy system.

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2.1. Keep learning.

Amy Edmondson made a surprising discovery: better care teams in hospitals seemed to make more mistakes. She discovered:

"Better teams didn't make more mistakes, but are more willing to discuss them. What happens if all teams have a climate of openness that allows them to report and even resolve these mistakes?" - Amy Edmondson

Seeing setbacks as learning opportunities fosters resilience and a growth mindset. Sharing experiences where mistakes led to learning strengthens team dynamics.

To share with your managers

1   Encourage error sharing.

Create sessions where you encourage your team to share what they have learned. This promotes openness and a culture of continuous learning.

2   Acknowledge effort and improvement.

Acknowledge not only outcomes, but also effort and improvement. This emphasises perseverance and hard work, core components of a growth mindset.

3 Growth mindset check-ins.

During regular progress discussions, ask employees about their challenges and what they have learned. This keeps the focus on growth and development, and fosters a learning team environment.

"In my department, making a mistake is seen as a failure, so not making mistakes is guiding my work and I feel it blocks me."
- Anonymous employee

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2.2. Career planning

At Inuka, we believe in the power of clear career paths and active support for career growth. As a result, employees not only feel valued, but also clearly see their growth opportunities within our organisation.

To share with your managers

1 **Individual career development plans**

Work with employees to create personalised career development plans outlining their goals and the steps needed to achieve them.

2 **Mentoring programmes**

Pair employees with mentors to guide their career development and provide ongoing support.

2 **Give every employee a coach**

Offer every employee a coach to cope better with change.

2.3. Promotion of Learning

Continuous learning opportunities help employees grow professionally but also stay motivated. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, the whole organisation reaps the benefits.

Learning budgets: Provide employees with a learning budget so they can attend workshops, meetings and courses that match their career goals. With this approach, you ensure that learning becomes an integral part of daily work life, making employees feel supported and valued.

This is how you build together an environment where everyone can get the best out of themselves.

Tips to encourage the use of learning budgets:

1 Regular reminders

Keep reminding your team of available learning budgets. A simple reminder can give just that push they need to take action.

2 Make it easy

Make sure applying for and using the learning budget is a piece of cake. Nobody likes complicated procedures.

3 Share success stories

Share stories of colleagues who have used their learning budgets and how this has enriched their careers. For example, like Anna who now successfully leads larger projects thanks to a project management course.

3 Align with career goals

Work with your team members to find learning activities that match their personal career ambitions. This makes learning not only useful but also motivating.

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To share with your managers

1 **Develop learning plans**

During performance reviews, encourage employees to create individual learning plans. This gives employees a clear path to growth.

2 **Regular training sessions**

Schedule periodic training sessions on relevant topics to ensure your team's knowledge and skills remain up-to-date. Consider sessions such as 'Digital Skills' or 'Leadership in Practice'.

3 **Inclusive onboarding process**

A well-organised onboarding process makes new employees feel welcome and supported. This reduces stress and increases engagement. For example, start with a warm welcome, personal introductions and a mentoring programme.

4 **Buddy system**

Pair a buddy with each new employee for a warm welcome and ongoing support. A buddy is a buddy who helps find their way around our company so that the new colleague quickly feels at home.

5 **Thorough onboarding programme**

Develop an onboarding programme that clearly communicates roles, expectations and available support services. Make sure new employees feel welcome and supported from day one, with a clear and structured plan to guide them.

"Building a culture starts the moment you hire someone, with your employee induction programme. It has to, because undoing a negative first impression is almost impossible. Stress is much harder to undo than to prevent." - Talmundo

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3. Leading with integrity & purpose

Show, don't tell.
Leading by example is crucial for creating a culture of well-being and productivity. Imagine being an inspiring example to your team every day. When you demonstrate healthy habits, such as taking time for a short walk or open communication about challenges, you set a positive tone for the whole organisation.

When you address problems early, you create an environment where everyone feels heard and supported. This not only makes for a happier team, but also for better results. So, be that leader who not only talks about wellbeing, but lives and breathes it. Your actions inspire others to do the same.

In short
- Show how to do it. Make sure managers are aware of their role model when it comes to healthy habits.
- Respond immediately to problems. Help managers to always be ready and act quickly on welfare issues.
- Establish clear work-life boundaries. Encourage a healthy work-home balance.
- Create inclusive policies. Develop and promote policies that ensure mental health includes everyone.

3.1 Focus on well-being

Leaders who model healthy work-life balance habits inspire employees to prioritise their own well-being. This leads to a healthier, more productive workplace.

a. Wellness challenges: Organise company-wide wellness challenges to encourage healthy habits. Think of walking competitions, water drinking competitions or joint meditation sessions. Together, this is how we make health fun and achievable!

b. Modelling behaviour: Openly share your wellbeing practices with your team. Show how you make time for sports, healthy meals and relaxation. By sharing your own experiences, encourage your team to adopt similar habits. Together, we can create a culture of wellbeing.
Leaders who model healthy work-life balance habits inspire employees to prioritise their own well-being, leading to a healthier, more productive workplace.

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To share with your managers

1 **Offer training**

Organise training sessions for managers on how to model wellbeing behaviours. Show how small daily actions can make a big difference in the team.

2 **Share resources**

Provide your managers with valuable resources, such as inspiring articles, short videos and best practices on wellbeing. This will help them to continuously improve.

3 **Set expectations**

Communicate clearly that managers should instil healthy behaviours. Discuss the positive impact this has on the whole team and encourage them to actively do so.

4 **Lead by example**

As an HR professional, be a role model for wellbeing behaviours. Show how you apply this yourself in your work and inspire managers to do the same.

If managers have trouble modelling behaviour:

6 **Mentoring**

Pair struggling managers with a mentor who excels in welfare practices. Learning from an example can be very effective.

7 **Regular check-ins**

Schedule regular check-ins to discuss progress, provide feedback and additional support where needed.

8 **Recognition**

Give recognition and reward managers who successfully model wellbeing behaviours. This encourages others to do the same.

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From managers for managers. How others encouraged their employees.

Personal Story:
"I used to often work late into the night. But at some point I realised that this was negatively affecting my health and productivity. Now I make sure I really disconnect after working hours and spend quality time with my family. This helps me to be much more focused and energetic during the day. I want to encourage all of you to find a balance that works for you. It really does make a big difference!"

Practical Tip:
"Every day I take a 15-minute walk during lunch. This helps me clear my head and recharge. It's a small habit, but it has a big impact on my productivity and mood. I encourage you to also find a habit that helps you recharge during the day. Maybe it's a short walk, some breathing exercises, or something else that works for you."

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3.2 Taking action on problems

Addressing well-being issues quickly ensures that the work environment remains supportive and prevents small problems from becoming bigger.

Steps to recognise and address well-being problems:

1	2	3	4
Notice the wellbeing issue or change	Have a dialogue with your employee	Agree actions & Implement changes	Review action plan and check-in

Addressing wellbeing problems quickly ensures that our work environment remains supportive and prevents small problems from becoming bigger. Here are some simple steps to recognising and addressing wellbeing problems:

How to support team members with well-being issues:

1 Check in regularly

Schedule set times to talk to your team members about their well-being and any challenges. This doesn't have to be formal; a simple conversation over coffee can provide a lot of insight. The important thing is that everyone feels heard and supported.

2 Listen without judgement

Take the time to really listen to your team members. Let them know you are there for them, without immediately coming up with solutions.

3 Recognise the signs

Watch for changes in behaviour or performance. If someone seems less engaged or is often absent, this could be a sign of a wellbeing problem.

4 Take action

If you identify a problem, work with the person involved to make a plan of action. This can range from adjusting workload to engaging professional support.

5 Follow up

Stay in touch with your team member to see how things are going and whether further support is needed. This shows your commitment and helps avoid long-term problems.

3.3 Visible work-life balance setting

Promoting clear work-life boundaries helps your employees maintain a healthy balance, which reduces stress and promotes their well-being.

a. Wellness note in email signatures: Ask managers to add a welfare note to their email signatures that reads:
" *Wellness note: Are you receiving this email outside normal working hours? Managing work and life responsibilities is unique to everyone. I have sent this email at a time that works for me. Please reply to this email at a time that works for you.*"
This promotes respect for personal time and encourages flexible working hours.

b. Encourage taking breaks: Encourage regular breaks during the working day to prevent burnout. Breaks help you recharge your energy and stay productive.

c. Further support for overachievers:
Some managers struggle to set boundaries due to their urge to overachieve. HR can support them in the following ways:
- **Promote a culture of balance:** Regularly communicate the importance of work-life balance through newsletters, meetings and workshops. Show that balance is the norm, not the exception.
- **Offer training and resources:** Provide training on time management and the benefits of setting boundaries. Share practical resources such as articles and videos on maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This way, you help managers set and respect their own boundaries.
- **Personalised coaching:** Offer one-to-one coaching sessions to help managers identify and implement effective boundaries.

d. Inclusive mental health policy
At Inuka, we believe in a working environment where everyone feels valued and respected. An inclusive mental health policy ensures that every employee feels supported. Together, you build a culture of honesty and respect, where everyone can be themselves and feel truly welcome.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Run heart-warming campaigns to ensure that employees are not only aware of, but really understand why our company policies are important for their well-being. Consider posters with inspiring stories from colleagues and interactive sessions where questions can be asked.
- **Policy development:** regularly review and update policies with input from both employees and experts. Listen to the changing needs of all our employees and don't be afraid to innovate. For example, organise quarterly meetings where employees can give their feedback and we discover together how to create a better working environment.

To share with your managers

1 Ensure everyone knows and feels comfortable using the wellness solutions, tailored for all groups.

2 Make sure employees easily find and understand wellness policy.

3 Check if visuals, tone, and language about mental wellness connect with your team.

"Yes, I did say I was stressed. HR mentioned a mindfulness workshop, but I'm a 59-year-old technician and I have no interest in sitting on a cushion to feel mindful!"
- Anonymous employee

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Time to turn suggestions into actions. Here's your checklist!

Checklist

	In place	To check	To do
1. Building connection & open dialogue			
Promote active listening	●	●	●
Encourage trust	●	●	●
Schedule regular meetings	●	●	●
Provide constructive feedback	●	●	●
2. Supporting growth & learning			
Learn from setbacks	●	●	●
Career planning	●	●	●
Promoting learning	●	●	●
Inclusive onboarding process	●	●	●
3. Leading with integrity & purpose			
Focus on well-being	●	●	●
Acting on issues	●	●	●
Setting Visible work-life boundaries	●	●	●
Mental health inclusive policies	●	●	●

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About Inuka

Inuka, a certified B-Corp, helps everyone deal effectively with personal, organisational and social change by providing access to an Inuka coach. Regardless of your function or level, an Inuka coach makes what matters to you transparent and tackles it with you in short, powerful steps. This is how you strengthen your resilience so that you function better in any situation.

Our ICF-certified coaches use a science-based framework backed by ten years of thorough research. This helps individuals and teams become more effective. This difference is noticeable and proven with unique, measurable results. This was noted: in 2023, we were awarded the HR Innovation Better Workplaces.

For more information, visit www.inukacoaching.com or follow us on LinkedIn.

Curious?

Reach out for a digital cup of coffee or learn more at inukacoaching.com.

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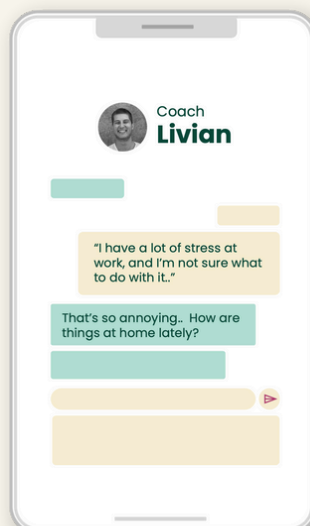*Chief Business Development*
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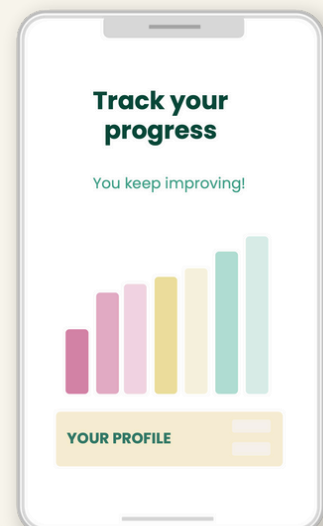**+31 (0)6 5160 4866**

With Inuka your employees can...
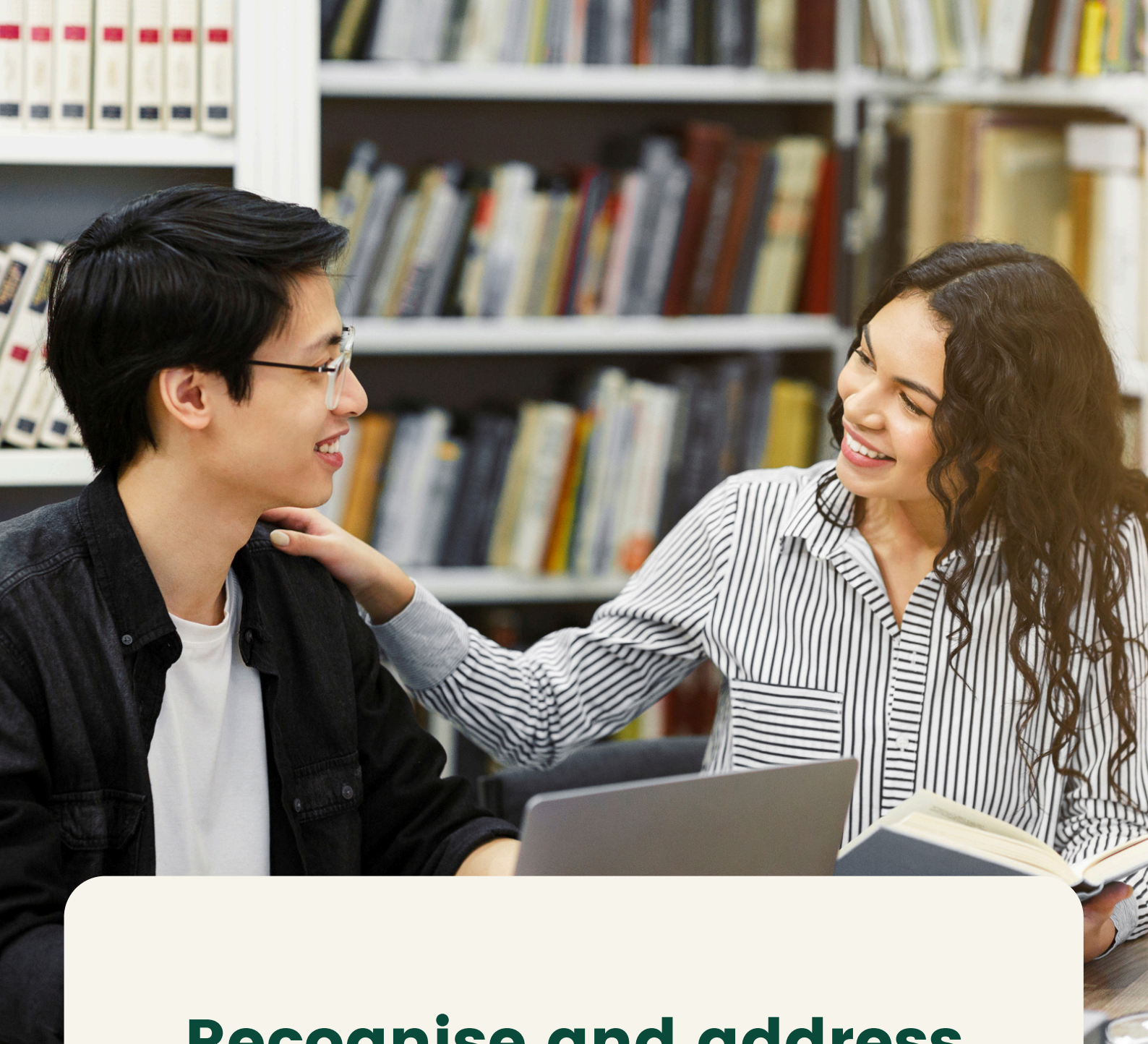
Discover how they are really doing.

Tackle their challenges with a coach, where and when they want.

Feel better after 4 sessions.*

How are you doing?

Do you easily make decisions?
Yes   No

Did you sleep well?
Yes   No

Are you able to think clearly?
Yes   No

Coach
Livian

"I have a lot of stress at work, and I'm not sure what to do with it.."

That's so annoying.. How are things at home lately?

Track your progress

You keep improving!

YOUR PROFILE

*Our results are published in the Cambridge Global Mental Health Journal (2021).

Recognise and address well-being issues

Practical guide to for managers

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Where can wellbeing problems start?

In the workplace	External triggers
People working long hours and not taking breaks	Child abuse, trauma or neglect
Unrealistic expectations or deadlines	Having a long-term physical health condition
High-pressure environments	Unemployment or losing a job
Unmanageable workload or lack of control over work	Homelessness or poor housing
Unsupportive workplace culture or management	Being a long-term carer for someone
Negative relationships or poor communication	Drug and alcohol abuse
Job insecurity or poor change management	Domestic violence, bullying or other abuse as an adult
High-risk roles	Severe or prolonged stress
Lone work	Facing discrimination and/or stigmatisation

What signals to look for?

Physical	Mental	Behavioural
Fatigue	Fear or distress	Increased smoking and drinking
Indigestion or upset stomach	Loss of motivation	Restlessness
Headache	Loss of humor	Arriving late, leaving early, extensive lunches
Appetite and weight changes	Distraction or confusion	Working longer hours
Joint and back pain	Difficulty relaxing	Intense or obsessive activity
Changes in sleep patterns	Memory lapses	Reduced or inconsistent performance
Visible tension	Illogical thought processes	Uncharacteristic errors
Nervous, trembling speech	Difficulty absorbing information	Increased absenteeism
Chest or throat pain	Increased suicidal ideation	Unusual problems with coworkers
Sweat	Reacting to experiences or sensations imperceptible to others	Risk-taking
Constantly feeling cold	Seemly overreacting to problems	Disruptive or anti-social behavior

Steps for recognising and acting on well-being issues

1. Notice the issue: The first step is to observe and identify any changes in an employee's behavior, performance, or engagement that may signal a well-being concern. This could look like a drop in productivity, more frequent absences, noticeable mood swings, or pulling back from team interactions.

Action: Keep an eye on your team's usual behaviors and performance levels. This way, you can easily notice any changes. Make sure to interact regularly and observe closely – this connection helps you understand and support them better.

2. Have a Dialogue: Once you notice an issue, the next step is to have a private and supportive conversation with the employee. Your goal is to understand their perspective, show genuine concern, and gather more insights about their situation

Action: Let your employee know that you're here to support them, not to judge. Start with open-ended questions, allowing them to share what they're comfortable with. Show them that you're genuinely interested in their well-being, and reassure them that this discussion is all about providing the help they need.

3. Agree on Actions / Implement Changes: Work together to find practical ways to boost their well-being. This might mean adjusting your workload, offering more flexible working hours, connecting them with professional support, or giving them access to our well-being resources.

Action: Make sure the actions you agree on are practical and work for both of you. Get the employee involved in making decisions. This way, they'll feel empowered and you'll both be set up for success.

4. Review and Check-in: After making the changes, the final step is to follow up with your employee. This is crucial. It shows you care and helps you see how effective your actions have been. Plus, it keeps the support going strongl.

Action: Schedule follow-up meetings to chat about how your team members are doing and see if the changes are making a difference. Be ready to tweak the plan based on their feedback. Regular check-ins show that our organization truly cares about their well-being.

Did you notice some wellbeing issues signed in a team member?

At the next page you will find tips how you spark meaningful conversations that can boost your team's well-being. Think of it as a friendly chat, aiming to create a supportive space where everyone feels valued and understood.
Remember, our goal is to nurture an environment where every team member feels seen and appreciated. Let's dive in and make a positive change together:

How to start a conversation:

Changes in participation:

- "I've noticed you've been quieter in our recent meetings. How are you feeling about the projects we're working on?"

Shifts in work patterns:

- "It seems there's been a change in your work habits lately. Is there anything affecting your ability to manage the workload?"

Alterations in physical appearance:

- "I hope you're doing well; I've observed some changes recently. Is everything alright, both professionally and personally?"

Emotional cues in communication:

- "During our conversations, I've sensed a bit of frustration. Is there something on your mind that you'd like to discuss?"

Social withdrawal:

- "I've noticed you've been spending a lot of time on your own. Is there anything you'd like to talk about?"

Decrease in productivity or quality of work:

- "I've noticed some challenges in meeting the usual standards of your work. What support do you need to get back on track?"

Increased absenteeism:

- "I've observed that you've been away more frequently. Is there anything happening that's impacting your ability to come to work?"

Signs of fatigue or exhaustion:

- "You seem to be carrying a heavy load lately. Are you finding enough time to rest and recharge?"

Changes in mood or behavior:

- "Lately, I've noticed a change in your demeanor. Is there anything that's been affecting your mood?"

Lack of enthusiasm for work:

- "It seems like your usual passion for work isn't as evident. Would you like to share what's been on your mind?"

Avoidance of responsibilities:

- "I've seen some hesitancy around taking on new tasks. Is there a particular aspect of your current responsibilities that's overwhelming?"

Difficulty concentrating:

- "You mentioned having trouble focusing lately. Let's talk about what might be causing this and how we can address it."

Expressing negative sentiments about work:

- "I've heard you express some concerns about feeling satisfied at work. Can we explore what might improve your experience?"

Reluctance to engage in team activities:

- "I've noticed you've been less involved in team activities. Is there something on your mind that's making you feel disconnected?"

Signs of stress or anxiety:

- "You've seemed more stressed/anxious than usual. Is there anything specific that's contributing to this feeling, and how can I help?"

Approaching team members:

When noticing these signs, it's crucial to approach the conversation with empathy, keeping in mind the goal is to understand and support, not to judge. Tailor your approach based on your relationship with the team member and the context of their situation. Always assure them of confidentiality and your intention to support their well-being and professional satisfaction.

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