

6 Ways to Create a Mentally Healthy Business

A recent literature review by the University of New South Wales and Black Dog institute for the Mentally Healthy Alliance, found 6 factors for a mentally healthy workforce along with 5 ways to implement them.

Chair of the National Mental Health Commission, Professor Allan Fels said, “Poor mental health is a significant burden on our economy. The direct financial impact of mental ill-health on Australian businesses is in the vicinity of \$11 billion every year, largely due to absenteeism and reduced productivity.”

Dr Sam Harvey, Black Dog Institute researcher and Consultant Psychiatrist, says “In Australia, about 60 per cent of the population spends about 60 per cent of their waking hours at work. This means workplaces are a prime location to base mental health programs.”

“By implementing good quality mental health management across all levels of business, we will not only improve productivity but reduce the unacceptably high rates of mental ill health among Australians.”

The 6 outlines for creating a mentally healthy workplace:

1. **Smarter work design** – e.g. encouraging flexibility around working hours and when, where and how work is performed. Create more opportunities for individuals to be involved in the decision making process.
2. **Building better work cultures (organisational resilience)** – e.g. encouraging a culture of flexibility, building a safe and positive work climate, implementing anti-bullying policies, enhancing organisational justice, promoting team based interventions such as employee participation and providing group support, providing manager training and managing change effectively.
3. **Building individual resilience** – e.g. providing stress management and resilience training for those in high risk roles, using evidence based approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy. Providing regular physical activity in the workplace.
4. **Promoting and facilitating early help-seeking** – e.g. conducting well-being checks once appropriate support and resources are in place, providing stress management for workers with reported stress, using of Employee Assistance Programs which utilise experienced staff and evidence-based methods and peer support schemes.
5. **Supporting recovery** – e.g. providing a supportive environment, providing supervisor support and training, facilitating flexible sick leave arrangements, providing return-to-work programs, encourages individual placement support for those with severe mental illness.
6. **Increasing awareness** – e.g. providing mental health education and training. Actively engage in R U OK day

The literature also suggests a 5 stage, ongoing approach to implementing a healthy workplace. The steps include:

- conducting a situational analysis – looking at what is working and what isn't
- identifying and implementing a workplace mental health strategy
- adjusting intervention strategies as needed
- establishing commitment, leadership and support
- reviewing outcomes

For more information please visit www.logichealth.com.au or www.headsup.org.au

References:

1. The Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, www.headsup.org.au
2. Samuel B Harvey et al. *Developing a mentally healthy Workplace: A review of the literature*. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia