

HSSE MOMENT - MENTAL HEALTH IS WORKPLACE HEALTH

While **physical safety** is often top of our minds, **mental health** is equally important. Stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue, can quietly affect performance, decision-making, and team dynamics.

What is mental health?

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It influences how we think, feel and act, especially when we are handling stress relating to others, or making choices.

How does mental health affect productivity?

Mental health plays an integral role in how productive we are, not just in obvious ways like feeling motivated, but also in much subtler areas like decision-making and creative thinking. The following are most typically impacted areas:

- **Focus & Concentration:** Poor mental health can make it difficult to stay on the task or absorb information, leading to frequent mistakes, distractions and incidents.
- **Energy Levels:** Conditions like depression or anxiety may cause fatigue or restlessness, impacting how much you can get done in a day.
- **Motivation & Drive:** When mental well-being is low, even routine tasks can feel overwhelming or pointless.
- **Problem Solving & Creativity:** Good mental health boosts cognitive flexibility, helping you to think creatively and adapt to challenges. Struggles with mental health can narrow your thought patterns.
- **Communication & Collaboration:** Your emotional state influences how you interact with others. Bad temper or withdrawal can cause team friction and affect group productivity.
- **Work Quality:** When someone is dealing with stress or burnout, the quality tends to drop, even if they're physically present and putting in hours.



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What can Leaders do to promote mental health?

Leaders have a very powerful influence on the well-being of their teams, not just through policies and procedures, but through their everyday actions and attitudes. Here are some of the meaningful ways that leaders can use to promote mental health:

- **Open dialogue:**
 - Normalize conversations about mental health so that team members can feel that they have a safe space to speak-up.
 - Share personal experiences (when appropriate) to show vulnerability and build trust.
- **Support work-life balance:**
 - Encourage regular breaks and time off.
 - Respect boundaries, like not expecting replies after work hours.
- **Provide resources and education/awareness:**
 - Offer access to mental health professionals or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).
 - Host workshops or share articles about stress management, emotional intelligence, and resilience.
- **Being flexible and empathetic**
 - Adapt workloads or schedules during high-stress periods.
 - Listen actively when someone is struggling and respond with empathy, not just solutions.

In closing, supporting mental health is not just a wellness initiative, it is a leadership responsibility. A mentally healthy workforce is a safer, more engaged and more productive work force.

