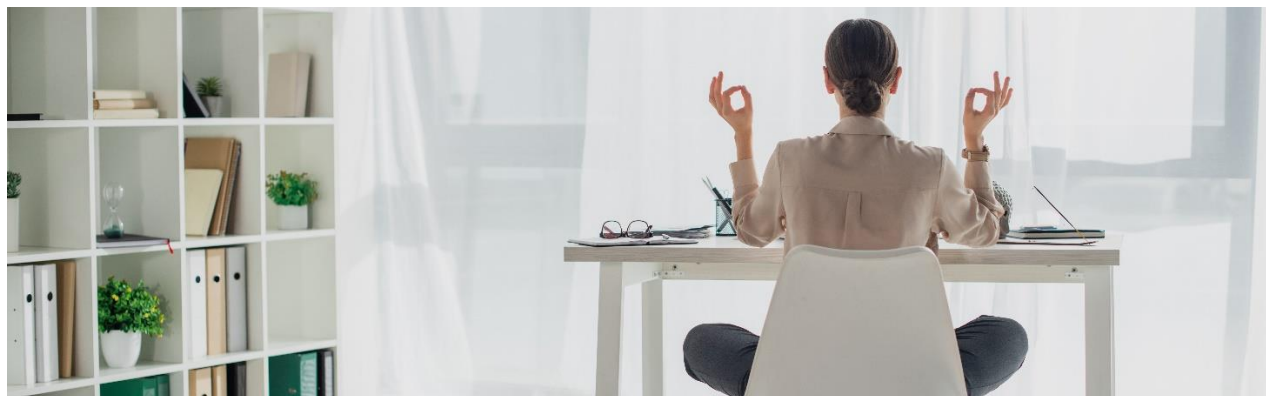


Mental well-being is a workplace priority

Mental Health Day 2022

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE IN BRIEF



Mental health (MH) presents one of the toughest challenges to individual well-being and productivity. Work and MH are closely interconnected. A safe and healthy working environment supports MH, and good MH enables people to work productively and safely. Yet, the prevalence of MH problems in the workplace affects millions of workers and costs trillions of dollars globally and is pervasive in all economies; developed, developing and under-developed.

Recent transformations in the world of work – including technological development, climate change, globalisation, and demographic shifts – are changing where and how people work. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the pace of change, especially in remote work, e-commerce, and automation. It also disrupted labour markets, increased financial instability, and prompted widespread restructuring of enterprises. For many workers, these changes created new psychosocial risks or exacerbated existing ones.

RELEVANCE TO BUSINESS

Employers recognise the important role they play in enhancing the MH and productivity of their workforce. Enterprises that implement MH policies and programmes often find benefits in doing so, notably through reduced days lost through sick leave, improvements in staff turnover, employee satisfaction, morale, and productivity.

NEED FOR PREVENTIVE ACTION

Improving MH at work requires different efforts and strategies by employers and employees to **prevent** work-related MH conditions and to **protect and promote** MH at work. Businesses, together with workers, can achieve mental well-being by embedding MH as an essential element into their existing OSH Management Systems to effectively identify, assess and mitigate psychosocial risks. MH problems need to be given the same importance as physical health.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE MH MANAGEMENT

Despite the obvious negative impacts of poor MH and the urgent and overwhelming need for addressing MH issues, some formidable impediments complicate the problem. The diagnosis is usually more complex and takes longer to establish; the symptoms are often somewhat diffused and are not always easy to distinguish from problems in and with the work or problems brought in from outside the work; the problems are often long-lasting, and the risk of relapse is high. Connected with these challenges is the stigma and discrimination causing people with MH conditions likely to be treated less favourably or engage in an open dialogue about these issues.



This highlights the need for sensitisation of employers and business managers through effective training and creating greater awareness and acceptance of the prevalence of MH issues in the workplace so that collective efforts can be made to resolve and manage these rather than shying away from them.

IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING MH RISKS

Given the human and financial costs of MH problems, we must create positive and supportive work environments and develop the ability to identify and intervene early and effectively when issues arise.

The WHO and ILO Policy Brief on MH at Work emphasises a 3-prong strategy to address the problem.

The below strategic approach provides a structured way to prevent or minimise psychosocial risks. Refer to the upcoming IOE MH Guideline Paper for more detailed methodologies and specific actions.

