



# MENTAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

# Introduction

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes mental health as “a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” As such, those with good mental health are more likely to work productively, engage with colleagues, and make positive contributions to the organisation and the wider community.

A 2016 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey of 2,000 employees found that 95% of respondents said that poor mental health affects their performance at work, 85% said poor mental health makes it difficult to concentrate, 64% said it takes them longer to perform tasks, and 54% said it makes it difficult to make decisions. Respondents also said poor mental health affects their ability to help clients or customers with 48% of respondents saying it makes them struggle to juggle a number of tasks and 47% saying they are less patient with customers or clients as a result of poor mental health.

Mental illnesses can range from less common conditions, like bipolar disorder, to more common ones like depression and anxiety. The WHO found that there is a US\$4 return in improved health and productivity for every US\$ 1 put into scaled up treatment for common mental disorders, showing that investment in mental health is not only the right thing to do but good for business.

These high-level mental health guidelines were compiled based on advice from leading health authorities and with insights developed by private sector leaders in Travel & Tourism and organisational wellness associations. Note that the guidelines are subject to change and may be enhanced as new research and insights become available. While not all guidelines will be feasible for every business in the Travel & Tourism sector, the information is intended to provide guidance to be integrated and adapted by each business as appropriate. Businesses should also be guided by material, if any, provided by national and global public health authorities.

The guidelines are divided into four pillars, namely:

- 1. Developing a Supportive System**
- 2. Creating Safe Spaces**
- 3. Supporting an Agile System**
- 4. Exemplifying Support for Good Mental Health**

While it is essential for mental health to be thoughtfully integrated within organisational policies, it is important to note the importance of travel in enhancing individual's mental wellbeing. Indeed, travel provides an opportunity for individuals to try new things and meet new people, in turn helping them combat monotony. Travelling with loved ones for instance, helps meet people's needs for love and belonging. Holiday activities such as walking, hiking, and skiing in scenic areas can help individuals become more hopeful. Travel is also great for relieving stress, increasing one's energy and productivity, and boosting creativity. Ultimately, doing something enjoyable makes people happy, and people enjoy travelling.



## Developing a Supportive System

Maintenance of and support for good mental health should be part of an organisation's culture and strategy. This requires transparent and clear policies and practices that are shared and easily accessible to all employees. Travel & Tourism businesses should:

- Establish an integrated organisational strategy that includes mental health and wellbeing: from prevention and promoting good mental health to systemic support for those suffering with mental health conditions.
- Provide appropriate mental health support within the organisational structure to the extent possible. This could include access to professional and specialised support through the local health authority and/or the business itself.
- Develop leave policies that offer equivalent time off and/or concessions for mental health and physical health, without prejudice.
- Offer regular and appropriate staff training, for all employees, on mental health and how to detect signs of possible mental illness. Additional training may be required for line managers, but all employees should be equipped with the knowledge to help them understand mental health and identify signs of poor or declining mental health in themselves and their colleagues.
- Provide guidance, guidelines, and/or tips on managing mental health as well as information on where to access more information and support, if required. This may include offering training sessions on resilience, mindfulness, and other effective ways to maintain good mental health.
- Ensure all employees know how to request changes to work schedules and/or locations and have access to such allowances, as appropriate. This includes allowances for flexi time and adjusting hours and working location for all employees, without bias towards management.
- Create support systems at all company sites, where possible, that support new hires or transfers. Focus on combatting loneliness, especially for those who have recently relocated and may not have robust support systems as in their previous country, region, or location.



# Creating Safe Spaces

A system that values mental health needs to be supported by an enabling environment, which is safe, welcoming and provides the opportunity for employees to thrive. Creating safe spaces relates to ensuring the environment is free of discrimination whether in the office, on site, online or elsewhere. Travel & Tourism businesses should:

- Develop feedback systems that allow employees to share if and how the current systems are working well and not working well to meet staff needs.
- Foster an environment that respects the value of wellbeing, at all levels of the organisation, and does not ostracise those with mental health conditions whether common or less common.
- Foster a supportive environment for those with mental health conditions. Offer confidentiality for those who do not wish to disclose mental health conditions with the full staff.
- Develop systems that allow line managers to regularly check in with their staff on their wellbeing. Where staff may not be able to do so with their line manager, offer staff alternate ways to check in on their mental health and flag any potential concerns.
- Empower line managers and staff with tools to manage their workload and related deadlines to help manage anxiety and stress.
- Support and promote a balanced life that includes work and time away from work such as leisure travel, time with loved ones, and hobbies. This includes promoting an environment that does not encourage employees to contact each other while on leave.
- Develop systems that allow employees that travel often to be able to enjoy a combination of work and leisure time, where possible.
- Identify and develop mental health champions in each team where possible. Equip these individuals with the skills to effectively support and promote good mental health. Show that the organisation values the work done in promoting good mental health by including it in performance appraisals.
- Address mental health problems regardless of cause.
- Foster a culture of support where all employees, regardless of seniority, can offer support to each other.
- Foster a culture that does not ostracise or ridicule employees that value wellness and time off. Avoid language and practices that do not respect permitted breaks and or non-working hours, as stipulated by local laws or company policies.



## Supporting an Agile System

Agility and the ability to evolve over time are key to maintaining a healthy environment. This includes adjustments to the organisational systems and updates to how organisational policies are implemented. Travel & Tourism businesses should:

- Consider incorporating intentional wellness elements in the design of new buildings, offices, locations, and/or spaces, where possible.
- Empower employees with some level of control over their area of work, where possible. While busy times and tight deadlines are a reality, try to avoid continuously unattainable and unrelenting workloads. Avoid inflexibility that does not allow for human compassion. In cases of prolonged high-intensity work and very tight deadlines, provide some relief for employees after the busy period.
- Offer additional, targeted support for those whose jobs may carry higher risk levels that could have negative effects on mental health, where possible and appropriate.
- Involve employees in the management of their mental health. Avoid making decisions for those employees without their active involvement and support.
- Make professional skills development available to all employees, without prejudice. Empower employees with opportunities to grow to help avoid creating monotony in work over several years of service.
- Ensure facilities for employees that live on site are clean, safe, and of a high-quality. Ensure the environment is a positive one: poor living facilities can be detrimental to good mental wellbeing.
- Ensure that employees that live on site have safe spaces where they can be away from work. Permit employees to spend their time and days off as they see fit. Encourage them to spend time off site so they do not feel like they are always at work, even when they are on leave.
- Revise KPIs as necessary and be flexible in adjusting KPIs and deliverables, in consultation with the relevant employee, where job scope has changed over time.

## Exemplifying Support for Good Mental Health

An organisation's internal and external commitment to good mental health needs to be aligned. This requires a dedication to wellness in the broader sense from championing mental health in the workplace to sharing best practices across the sector. Travel & Tourism businesses should:

- Engage with local government on what support measures and policies are working and not working, where possible. Offer feedback on the effectiveness of wellness and mental health support available, based on employee experiences.
- Engage with like-minded businesses and associations to share best practice and improve support for and awareness of mental health.
- Equip and train customer-facing staff to address any mental health concerns or needs raised by customers.
- Champion, where possible, the value of good mental health in the Travel & Tourism sector.
- If possible, attempt to work with like-minded suppliers that also value the mental wellbeing of their staff.
- Invite mental health experts to assess and provide feedback on organisational mental health activities and identify areas of improvement, if possible. Incorporate this feedback where possible.

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# Acknowledgements

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