

Appendix A: Personal Wellbeing Action Plan

A WAP reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work. It helps us develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these to our team or line-manager should we wish to.

This has been adapted and shortened from a MIND resource “Guide for employees: Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) - How to support your mental health at work”¹⁴. Please refer to this for more details.

You will see below some “thinking points” to help you fill in your personal WAP. A template WAP is then provided, which you can also adapt to suit your needs.

Common workplace triggers for stress and mental health problems

- Long hours and no breaks
- Unrealistic expectations or deadlines
- Overly pressurised working environments
- Unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work
- Inability to use annual leave
- A poor physical working environment
- Lone working
- Difficult interpersonal relationships
- Poor internal communication
- Poor managerial support
- Job insecurity or poorly managed change.

Some ideas for how you can stay well at work

- Develop good relationships with colleagues so you can build up a network of support
- Talk to someone you trust, at work or outside, about what upsets you or makes you feel stressed
- Say if you need help
- Be assertive – say no if you can’t take on extra demands
- Be realistic – you don’t have to be perfect all the time
- If everything starts to feel overwhelming, take a deep breath. Try and get away from your desk or situation for a few minutes
- Write a list of what needs to be done; it only takes a few minutes and can help you to prioritise, focus and get things in perspective. Differentiate between important and urgent. It can also feel satisfying to tick items off once they have been done.

⁴ https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5760/mind-guide-for-employees-wellness-action-plans_final.pdf

- Try and take a walk or get some fresh air during the day. Exercise and daylight are good for your mental health as well as physical health.
- Work regular hours and try to take the breaks and holidays you're entitled to, especially when working from home.
- Try to book a long weekend every 6-7 weeks to give you something to look forward too.
- Try not to work long hours. This may be alright in the short term, if the work has a specific purpose and is clearly defined – a team effort to complete an urgent project may be very satisfying. However, working longer hours on a regular basis does not generally lead to better results.
- Try to separate working hours from living hours; this is particularly important when working from home. Can you create a physical space that can be shut away when the working day is over? Can you have different computers/devices for work and home tasks?
- Especially if you are working from home, make the most of opportunities for remote or in-person contact. This doesn't need to be in the workplace, but could be an outside meeting, or meeting at a colleagues house.
- If you are provided with opportunities to have some input, particularly in decisions that may impact you, then take advantage of those opportunities
- Maintain a healthy work-life balance – nurture your outside relationships, interests, and the abilities your job does not use
- Make sure you drink enough water and that you eat healthily during the day to maintain your energy levels
- Learn some relaxation techniques

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

(For example taking an adequate lunch break, getting sufficient exercise, making the most of flexible working arrangements, opportunities to get to know colleagues, light and space, travel...)

2. Are there particular situations at work that can make you less mentally healthy?

(For example conflict at work, tight deadlines, something not going to plan, uncertainty for the future, travel...)

3. What can you ask your supervisor / line-manager / team to do to support you to stay mentally healthy at work?

(For example regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments, guidance on prioritising workload, consider reasonable adjustments...)

4. What early warning signs might you / your supervisor / line-manager / team notice if you start to experience poor mental health?

(For example changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues, difficulty making decisions, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches...)

5. Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth being aware of? You may wish to make your supervisor / line-manager / team aware of them too.

(For example a preference for face to face vs. email contact, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear deadlines if you have a tendency to over-work a task...)

6. Is there anything else relevant that you can think of?

(Remember to think about increasing the positive aspects of your working environment, as well as decreasing the negatives.)

Appendix B: Further resources

MIND: mental health at work toolkit for employers and employees:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/useful-resources/>

- (Particularly useful for line managers) How to promote wellbeing and tackle the causes of work-related stress
https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4662/resource3_howtopromotewellbeingfinal.pdf
- Guide for employees: Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) - How to support your mental health at work; https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5760/mind-guide-for-employees-wellness-action-plans_final.pdf
- How to manage stress; https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4667/how-to-manage-stress_2015.pdf

Useful guidelines on running virtual meetings:

<https://www.sdss.org/collaboration/coins/coins-telecon-recommendations/>

Breaking the long hours culture, 1998 report, Institute for employment studies

<https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/352.pdf>