



Remote working and supporting staff mental health:

Advice for Managers
at the United Nations

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Work happens in many places and it is something you do! As a manager, you have an important role in helping to protect the mental health of your staff. By doing so you will help them to cope better with changes and to support their capacity to fulfil their roles.

Tips for managers to help support business continuity and to support staff well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak:

SUPPORTING STAFF CARE

- 1 OFFER REGULAR CHECK-INS TO ASK EMPLOYEES HOW THEIR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING IS.** Consider the needs of staff who may require additional support such as staff with personal stressors or mental health needs; staff with disabilities; and staff who are caring for children, people with underlying conditions, or older adults.
- 2 INFORM TEAM MEMBERS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING A COMFORTABLE PLACE** at home where they can work (example: room temperature, lighting, type of chair, etc.).
- 3 ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO HAVE A ROUTINE,** regular work rhythms and to take frequent breaks.
- 4 EMPHASIZE THAT WORKING FROM HOME DOES NOT MEAN OVERWORKING;** encourage staff to maintain time boundaries for work.
- 5 BE SURE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION WILL NOT GO AWAY OVERNIGHT** and as such, we should prepare and focus on longer-term occupational capacity rather than maximizing short-term outputs.
- 6 IMPLEMENT FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES FOR WORKERS WHO ARE DIRECTLY IMPACTED** or have a family member impacted by a stressful event. Ensure you build in time for colleagues to provide social support to each other.
- 7 STRIVE TO MAINTAIN A SENSE OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY** during this unique period, to encourage teamwork and support all team members.
- 8 MAKE SURE THAT YOUR STAFF ARE AWARE** of where and how they can access mental health and psychosocial support if needed.

COMMUNICATION

- 9 KEEP UP REGULAR MEETINGS VIA TELE-CONFERENCE.** Use team meeting agendas to include time to communicate with staff on information updates and provide a space for staff to express any worries or uncertainties that they may be facing in this situation - - either during team meetings or as a separate regular check-in meeting.
- 10 CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION.** Share as much information as possible to increase transparency in this uncertain time. Seek accurate information and keep team up to date on any changes in logistics or work arrangements.

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

- 11 ENCOURAGE VIRTUAL COLLABORATION.**
- 12 ASK EMPLOYEES TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION VIA PHONE** so as not to overload emails. Maintain boundaries with any communication on personal mobiles.
- 13 LIAISE WITH ICT** to ensure employees are able to connect and set up workspaces at home.
- 14 ENHANCE TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 15 IF NEEDED, RE-DEFINE YOURS AND TEAM MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES** during frequent touchpoints. Clarity on role can help staff to reduce uncertainty.
- 6 ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO KEEP SIMILAR LEVELS OF OUTPUT WHERE POSSIBLE** but indicate that flexibility is expected as staff must balance family duties or may have to isolate if feeling unwell.

MANAGER SKILLS

- 17 CONSIDER HAVING BRIEF ONLINE TRAINING** to improve your skills as a manager in supporting the mental well-being of your staff.
- 18 AS A MANAGER, YOU MAY EXPERIENCE SIMILAR STRESS AS YOUR STAFF** and likely additional pressure due to your role. Ensure that you take care to implement self-care to mitigate stress during this time. Managers are key role-models for their staff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit:

<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/wellness>

For general information related to mental health and the UN System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, visit:

<https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/>