

Are you PSYCHED to be a mental health promoting workplace?

PSYCHED means Positive Support You Can Have Every Day and aims:

1. To stimulate conversations in the workplace that lead to a better understanding of mental health
2. To encourage employers to engage with staff to promote and foster mental health in the workplace by setting goals for positive improvement
3. To celebrate and share commitment, good practice and innovation in mental health promotion in the workplace.

What is mental health?

'Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'

(WHO, 2014).

Mental health operates along a continuum or scale ranging from poor mental health to positive mental health and just like our physical health, our mental health can vary from day to day.

Mental health comprises emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Learning about mental health in the workplace helps to develop working environments that are supportive, nurturing and open to growth and change.

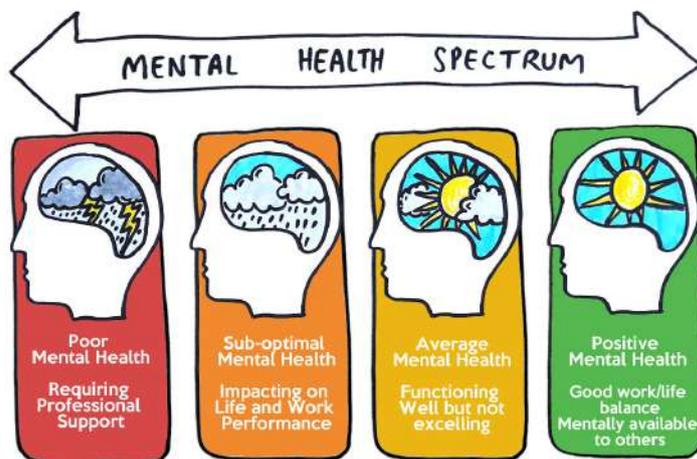
In Ireland, one in four people will use a mental health service at some stage of their lives.

(DOH, 2015)

The 2018 Annual Attitudes to Mental Health Survey, commissioned by St Patrick's Mental Health Services, showed that mental health stigma remains a problem in Irish society, with 29% of those surveyed reporting that they would not feel comfortable explaining to their boss that they need time off due to a mental health difficulty, 70% believing someone who was hospitalised to treat a mental health issue would be accepted but viewed differently and 61% of adults believing that treatment for a mental health difficulty is still seen as a sign of personal failure.

This is echoed by the 2018 VHI Health Insights report, which focused on mental health in the corporate workplace and found 50% of those surveyed believed that career prospects would be harmed if they did not hide their stress at work while one in five had missed work in the previous year due to stress, anxiety or depression. Worrying levels of unhappiness, dissatisfaction and stress were found amongst a significant proportion of the working population with women, those under 34 and people in the tech sector most concerned about their mental health. Resilience amongst workers under 34 years emerged as a significant issue with high levels of dissatisfaction cited. (HIWP, 2018)

However, as well as favouring the worker, a mentally healthy workplace also has an economic advantage. The Small Firms Association Absenteeism Report, 2014, found that absence costs small business over €490 million per annum. The main mental health issues that impact on workers in terms of absenteeism are anxiety and depression (13% or €63.7 million), stress (7% or €34.3 million), nervous debility/ bereavement (4% or €19.6 million) and post-natal depression (2% or €9.8 million). Further an ESRI report commissioned by the HSA found that job stress among employees in Ireland doubled from 8 per cent in 2010 to 17 per cent in 2015 with the main workplace stressors listed as: Emotional demands; Time pressure; Bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination etc. and Long working hours.



Employees - How to recognise a mental health promoting workplace:

- ✓ A safe, secure and supportive working environment
- ✓ Opportunities for social interaction and connection
- ✓ Offers an important source of social support.
- ✓ Systems in place to identify assess and address working conditions that lead to or are caused by poor mental health
- ✓ A culture where mental health supporting behaviours are encouraged
- ✓ Achievable job tasks with clear roles and objectives
- ✓ Jobs that offer opportunities for learning and development
- ✓ Feeling able to ask for and receive help during times of poor mental health and, where possible, feeling supported to remain at work or return to work.
- ✓ Feeling valued and that you are playing a useful role.

Employers - Why it benefits both you and your employees to have a mental health promoting workplace:

- ✓ Reduced absenteeism
- ✓ Reduced staff turnover
- ✓ Reduced workplace stress
- ✓ Improved employee health
- ✓ Improved employee engagement.
- ✓ Increased productivity and margins
- ✓ Enhanced recruitment profile
- ✓ A more creative and innovative workforce
- ✓ A happier work environment



Work Stressors

Work stressors or psychosocial risks arise from poor work design and poor organisation and management, as well as a poor social context of work. Work stressors may result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes such as work-related stress, burnout or depression.

Some examples of working conditions leading to psychosocial risks are:

- Excessive workloads
- Conflicting demands and lack of role clarity
- Lack of involvement in making decisions that affect the worker and lack of influence over the way the job is done
- Poorly managed organisational change, job insecurity
- Ineffective communication, lack of support from management or colleagues
- Psychological and sexual harassment, third party violence
- Lack of variety in tasks and monotonous workplace routines

(Source: ESENER www.osha.europa.eu)



From Knowledge to Action: Evidence based approach to creating a mental health promoting workplace.

PROMOTION

Promote mental health as a natural part of work by designing healthy work.

Encourage activities that promote and enhance wellbeing and which foster social bonds and interaction.

Work with staff to form consensus on options chosen.

Provide professional skills, coping strategies and resilience training.

Create a workplace culture that is not stigmatising mental health issues and/or affected individuals but supports open discussion about this topic.

Adopt the Five Tips for Mental Health at Work: **Connect** - **Be Active** - **Take Notice** - **Learn Something New** - **Give**, using both top down and bottom up approaches i.e. employer and staff led initiatives. (see page 4 and also PSYCHED website for more.)

PROTECTION

Ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken to evaluate and minimize unavoidable risk and eliminate avoidable risk at source.

Ensure role clarity with job control offering flexibility where possible, task and shift rotation and facilitating work/life balance. This is especially important in high demand environments.

Continuously monitor psychosocial risks, even if there appears to be no particular 'stress case', to be able to act at an early stage. This may also include the monitoring of absenteeism and presenteeism patterns.

Have clear policies on bullying, anti-social workplace behaviour, inclusion with adequate training for managers, supervisors and staff etc.

Ensure that employees and supervisors are trained appropriately for their roles and that all job tasks and expected outcomes are achievable, clear and realistic.

Provide as good a physical and technological environment as possible.

Consider worker characteristics such as multigenerational diversity, circadian style, ability and culture to encourage work patterns that maximise worker strengths and encourage interaction.

Discourage "always on" behaviours.

Create an employment relationship that promotes job security and stability in the workplace

SUPPORT

Consider wellbeing champions, peer support, EAPs and phased return to work initiatives.

Educate workers and supervisors about warning signs of mental health problems.

Promotion of a positive view of mental health in the workplace with an emphasis on well-being, happiness, gratitude and kindness.

Provide and communicate support pathways for depression, anxiety, grief, bereavement etc.

Consider establishing peer support measures such as training workshops on how to approach colleagues in distress e.g. SAFETALK. or mental health first-aiders.

Have policies in place that deal with how to respond following a crisis such as a death by accident or suicide.

For issues such as bullying, harassment, discrimination or peer pressure consider not only preventative measures but also follow up actions and policies for both the complainant and complaine.



Download the PSYCHED Workplace Checklist to help assess what Promotion, Protection and Support your business is offering.

There are many resources and links available on the PSYCHED website:
www.corkhealthycities/psyched

The Law

Employers are bound by legislation to protect employees from all hazards or stressors which can lead to injury.

Risk assessments should include assessments of hazards or stressors in the work environment, as well as control measures and monitoring and review in consultation with staff. Hazards that can lead to mental health injury in the workplace are called psychosocial risks.



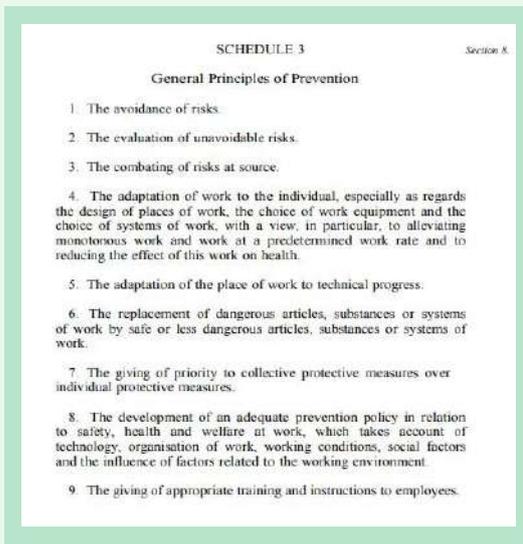
There are positive actions you can take.

You can familiarise yourself with the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015, the Disability Act 2005 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. A very good overview is provided by: IBEC – Mental Health and Wellbeing: A line manager's guide

Ensure that a risk assessment including both physical and psychosocial risks as mandated by Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 has been carried out.

Any size business from sole trader to large corporation can conduct a risk assessment. Work Positive (www.workpositive.ie) is a free to use state and stakeholder supported psychosocial risk management process provided by the Health & Safety Authority (HSA).

Familiarise yourself with SCHEDULE 3 Section 8 General Principles of Prevention, Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.



Five Ways to Wellbeing

The UK Government's Foresight project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing commissioned the New Economics Foundation (NEF) to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing. Based on their research, wellbeing and a positive experience of life come from two main elements: **feeling good and functioning well.**

Feeling good:

Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement.

Functioning well:

Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose.

Through their research, the **Five Ways to Wellbeing** were distilled as a practical roadmap to feeling good and functioning well.

Connect



With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active



Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice



Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning



Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give



Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

(Source: <https://neweconomics.org>)