Business in Mind is a DVD and Resource Kit that aims to promote mental health in small to medium enterprises.

The Business in Mind research project evaluates the effectiveness of the resource package and is run by staff from the University of Tasmania, the Menzies Research Institute and Griffith University. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council, beyondblue and WorkCover Tasmania and is supported by the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

For more information about the project please visit www.businessinmind.edu.au.
getting the most out of business in mind

The Business in Mind DVD works together with the Resource Kit to help you consider ways of promoting mental health in business – both your own and that of the people you work with.

The DVD features case studies of business people sharing how they manage mental health issues, as well as tips from a range of experts in business, psychology and medicine.

The Resource Kit helps you to apply what you’ve seen in the DVD to your own personal and professional situation by providing further information and ideas for exploring key topics in more detail.

Once you have watched the DVD and browsed the Resource Kit, you can revisit relevant chapters according to your needs.

For some, seeking further assistance from an appropriate professional regarding any of the topics covered might also be beneficial.
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relevance of mental health to business

It doesn’t matter whether mental health problems are experienced by business managers or their staff, common conditions like depression and anxiety can impact on business performance.

key impacts:

- Lost productivity (through days off work or not working at full capacity).
- Damage to relationships with clients, staff or family members.

why should smaller businesses be concerned?

- The fewer people who work in a business, the greater the potential for impact.
- Allocating resources and/or training for specialist human resource services enjoyed by larger organisations isn’t always possible.
- According to the World Health Organisation, depression is becoming more common, and by 2020 it will be second only to heart disease as the leading cause of disability.
what you need to know:

- Depression and anxiety are illnesses that can only be diagnosed by a psychologist or medical professional.
- Effective treatments are available – usually psychological counselling and/or medication.
- Early treatment has been shown to lead to early recovery.
- Learning about the symptoms and some of the strategies that can be used in response can help minimise the impact on your business.

“We’ve had somebody that had the ‘Black dog’...it was a learning curve for me.... I wasn’t sure what I could do...each of the staff we have are a critical part of the business.”

Darren, IT company
depression

Everyone gets low or feels sad from time to time, but this generally passes. Depression is different. Depression can drastically change the way you think, feel (physically and emotionally), and behave, most of the time, most days.

There are many different reasons people experience depression – both personal and work-related. Some of these include:

- Health issues;
- Relationship conflicts or breakdowns;
- Bereavement;
- Unemployment and financial problems;
- Prolonged work stress;
- Threats to professional identity;
- Genetic vulnerability (family history).

Regardless of what is causing the depression it is important to know it is not something people can just ‘snap out’ of. They may need professional help to recover.

depression checklist

If you answer “yes” to two or more of the checklist questions you could be at risk. You should consider seeing a GP or psychologist for further assessment.

If "yes" to any of the above, have you or someone you know also....

- Had difficulty concentrating?
- Lost weight (due to poor appetite)?
- Been waking early?
- Felt slowed up?
- Tended to feel worse in the mornings?

“I had depression for three years before I was diagnosed.... I didn’t understand what was going on with me.”

Karl, accountant
anxiety

We all feel anxious or worried occasionally. Sometimes people have difficulty controlling their worry - it becomes excessive, unrealistic, and interferes significantly with their day-to-day life.

anxiety checklist

In the last six months, have you, or someone you know ...

- Felt keyed up or on edge?
- Been worrying a lot?

If "yes" to two of the above...

- Been sleeping poorly?
- Had headaches or neck aches?

...or had any of the following:

- Trembling, tingling?
- Dizzy spells, sweating, or diarrhoea?
- Been worried about your health?
- Had difficulty falling asleep?
- Been irritable?
- Had difficulty relaxing?

If you answer “yes” to five or more questions you could be at risk. You should consider seeing a GP or psychologist for further assessment

substance abuse

People suffering from depression and anxiety often have associated problems with excessive use of alcohol and drugs. You might like to unwind with a beer or glass or wine sometimes, but heavy or prolonged use of drugs or alcohol as a way of coping can lead to additional problems, including risks to workplace safety.

alcohol and drug use checklist

If you answer “yes” to two or more questions you could be at risk. You should consider seeing a GP or psychologist for further assessment

- Have you felt you ought to cut down on your drinking or drug use?
- Have people annoyed you be criticising your drinking or drug use?
- Have you felt bad or guilty about your drinking or drug use?
- Have you ever had a drink or used drugs first thing in the morning to steady your nerves, get rid of a hangover or get the day started?
workplace issues

Mental health issues impact on the way people function at work. You might have noticed a change in the behaviour or mood of someone with whom you work. In some cases, the following work behaviours may have come to your attention:

- Impatient, irritable or more easily angered than usual
- Consistently looking tired and fatigued
- Increasingly absent from work, or less punctual than normal
- Less productive at work e.g. missing easily attainable deadlines, taking longer than usual to complete tasks or having difficulty managing multiple demands
- Less socially engaged or communicative.

tips for promoting help-seeking

- Arrange a private meeting to let your colleague know what you’ve observed.
- Be specific:
  
  “I’ve noticed that you seem really tired and forgetful lately. It’s unusual for you and I’m concerned about you.”

- Use open questions (to avoid a yes or no answer), to help start a conversation:
  
  “How are you feeling at the moment? ’ or ‘So tell me what’s going on for you right now?’

- Give your colleague your full attention (maintain eye contact, keep a relaxed posture).
- Show empathy by trying to put yourself ‘in their shoes’:
  
  “I can understand this might be difficult to talk about.”

- Offer your support:
  
  “It sounds like you’ve been having a very hard time. I’d like to be able to help any way I can. What can I do to help you right now?”

- Explore the support options that would work best for them:
  
  “Have you spoken with your GP?’ or ‘I’d be very willing to help with finding some professional support for you.”

- Have some phone numbers of support services handy so you can assist them to make an appointment with a GP or psychologist. If possible, offer to pay or subsidise help.

Be aware that if a person is depressed they may lack motivation or energy to make changes for themselves or their situation. They may even become angry or upset with you. It is important to remain calm and controlled, while offering support and understanding.
mental health help and information

**beyondblue**

beyondblue is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders in Australia. beyondblue have a range of free information resources on depression, anxiety, treatment and recovery that you can access via the ‘Get Information - Downloadable beyondblue Information Resources’ link at www.beyondblue.org.au, or call 1300 22 4636.

**WorkCover**

Mental health can be an occupational health and safety issue. In some cases, people can develop a mental health problem as the result of what happens to them at work. To find out more, access the information service available in your state, or contact Safe Work Australia on 02 6121 5317, or visit www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au.

**workplace mental health**

- beyondblue workplace program - 1300 22 4636.
- OzHelp - 1300 OZHELP (1300 694 357) - www.ozhelp.org.au - a workplace-based early intervention suicide prevention and social capacity building program.
- Mental Health First Aid - www.mhfa.com.au - a 12-hour course that aims to improve mental health literacy in workplaces and the community.

**mental health help lines**

If you are having thoughts about suicide or self harm, seek IMMEDIATE help from a GP, emergency helpline or your local hospital.

**Lifeline - 13 11 14**  **Suicide Helpline - 1300 651 251**  **Suicide Call Back Service - 1300 659 467**

- SANE Australia Helpline - 1800 187 263
- Mensline Australia - 1300 789 978
- Australian Psychological Society Referral Line - 1800 333 497
- Mental Health Information Service - 1300 794 991
- Kids Helpline - 1800 551 800
- Relationships Australia - 1300 364 277
- Carers Australia - 1800 242 636
- Bush Crisis Line and Support Services - 1800 805 391
- Centrelink Farmer Assistance Line - 1800 050 585
- Lifeline’s ‘Just Ask’ (Rural mental health information) - 1300 13 11 14.
coping with stress

Whilst it’s often said that we all need a little bit of stress to keep us motivated, too much stress can be harmful to our health. Work-related stress can be a major contributing factor in depression and anxiety disorders. Improving your coping skills can help protect you.

stress in business

Running your own business can present you with a range of potentially stressful situations:

- Financial – carrying large personal and business debt, cash flow, tax, payroll and accounting issues.
- Workload – long hours, taking work home, not taking breaks, demands of administration and government regulations.
- People management – recruiting and motivating staff, handling performance problems and dismissals, conflict resolution, customer relations.
- External conditions – variability in demand for products and services due to social, economic and environmental changes.

“Each one of us suffers from stress, whether we like to admit it or not....Understanding how it affects you and your workplace is a great investment for your business.”

Gavin, agricultural business
signs of stress

When we perceive a threat to our safety, our bodies respond physically in a way that prepares us for ‘fight or flight’. However these situations are rare and what we are often reacting to when we feel stressed are ‘psychological’ threats rather than physical ones. If this happens often, over time we can become physically exhausted and experience symptoms of mental ill-health.

It’s important to recognise when your stress is becoming unmanageable and when you need to use some healthy coping skills to reduce stress.

stress can affect...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>you physically</th>
<th>your mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Chest pain or pounding heart, high blood pressure.</td>
<td>• Mood swings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fatigue.</td>
<td>• Feeling irritable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduced interest in sex.</td>
<td>• Finding it difficult to relax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diarrhoea or constipation, nausea.</td>
<td>• Feeling low or depressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weakened immune system, getting colds more often.</td>
<td>• Easily angered or frustrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Muscle tension, aches and pains, headaches.</td>
<td>• Feeling overwhelmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fast, shallow breathing, sweating excessively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the way you think</th>
<th>your behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulty concentrating.</td>
<td>• Eating more or less than usual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thinking negatively.</td>
<td>• Sleep problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anxious or racing thoughts.</td>
<td>• Using alcohol or other substances to relax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Memory problems.</td>
<td>• Avoiding people or responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excessive worrying.</td>
<td>• Nervous habits like nail-biting, teeth-grinding or hand-wringing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
your stress audit

How well do you think you are coping with stress in your life at the moment?

- What causes stress in your life?
- How do you feel physically when you’re stressed?
- What kind of thoughts go through your head?
- How does your mood change when you’re stressed?
- How does your behaviour change when you’re stressed?

“You have to be ever vigilant that you’re coping, because small business is one of the toughest things you’ll ever do.”

Sue, marketing and promotions company
managing stress

The most effective ways of managing stress depend on how much control we have over the source of the stress.

You may have heard of some of these approaches. A combination of these approaches has been shown to work well. The key thing is to find out what fits best for you.

**thoughts-feelings-behaviour**

Changing the way you think about something you’re finding stressful can change the way you feel about it, and the way you behave in response.

This is known as a cognitive-behavioural approach.

**problem solving**

Are there some practical or creative solutions to reduce or eliminate the source of the stress? Talking through your problems can help you brainstorm ideas.

**behaviour change**

Sometimes all we need to do is change what we do – spend more time doing things we enjoy, do more exercise, get more sleep, change how we communicate.

**mindfulness/acceptance**

This is learning to accept thoughts as just thoughts, rather than believing them uncritically to be true. It is also learning to accept that some things can’t be changed, and learning how to cope with that fact.

learning to accept

what you cannot change or control and

challenge or change the things you can control
changing thinking

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) helps you learn to identify and challenge any patterns of thinking that might be unhelpful to the way you cope, and replace them with more helpful ways of thinking.

“Managing my thoughts is a key issue for me.”

Karen, corporate trainer

thought monitoring

A common way to learn the connection between our thoughts and the way we feel is to fill out a thought monitoring form after stressful situations occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>situation</th>
<th>mood</th>
<th>unhelpful thinking</th>
<th>helpful thinking</th>
<th>new mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recall a recent situation that you found upsetting or difficult</td>
<td>Hurt 85% Angry 90% Frustrated 85%</td>
<td>Why does he have to always make things so difficult? Maybe he doesn’t respect me as his manager?</td>
<td>He’s not always like that. Maybe he’s stressed about his divorce, and it’s got nothing to do with me. Maybe I should just ask how he’s going at the moment.</td>
<td>Hurt 10% Angry 15% Frustrated 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened? Where? Who was involved? When?</td>
<td>What were you feeling? How strong was this mood? (0-100%)</td>
<td>What was going through your mind? What thoughts did you have?</td>
<td>Write alternative, balanced thoughts that could have been more helpful. Rate again moods listed in column 2 after practicing helpful thoughts. List any new moods (0-100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
common unhelpful ways of thinking

Sometimes the way we think or talk to ourselves is negative or unhelpful. Some thoughts increase distressing feelings or make us feel like we are not coping. Below are some examples of common unhelpful or negative thoughts that we’re all guilty of from time to time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black and white thinking</th>
<th>“I must get everything done today before I go home tonight, otherwise everything will be a complete disaster.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What ifs?</td>
<td>“What if I put all this effort in and fail? I’ll never be able look anyone in the eye again”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiral of negatives</td>
<td>“I’m not going to get the project finished on schedule, which means I’m useless. This will mean the company will get a bad reputation for sure. I’ll end up losing the business at this rate.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leap to conclusions</td>
<td>“My colleague was abrupt with me today. She must be angry with me about what I said at the meeting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-generalize</td>
<td>“That client has threatened to take his business somewhere else. Therefore all my clients must be unhappy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt and self-blame</td>
<td>“It is my fault that everybody is upset about the restructure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong, uncompromising words</td>
<td>“I should..., I must..., I always..., I never...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unkind or mean to myself</td>
<td>“I’m a failure, I’m stupid, I’m a fraud...someone will see through me one day and see I’m not all that great after all.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

tips for challenging unhelpful thoughts

- If my best friend, or someone I loved, was thinking this way, what would I tell them?
- Five years from now, when I look back, will I look at things differently?
- Are the things I’m jumping to conclusions about justified by evidence?
- What am I ignoring about the strengths or positives in me, and how I’m coping at the moment?
- Am I blaming myself for things over which I do not have complete control?
**helpful thinking**

Some thoughts are more helpful than others. They help us to manage strong emotions or stress, and help us to cope. Turning unhelpful thoughts around means thinking about stressful things in a more realistic and helpful way – like not worrying about the ‘what ifs’ or the worst that can happen and not blaming ourselves, but instead having thoughts that help our coping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One step at a time</th>
<th>“I’m imagining the worst. I can’t be worrying about things that have not happened and may never happen.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on positives</td>
<td>&quot;I’m finding it easier now to manage my business’ finances. Each week the finances are getting easier to manage.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore alternative explanations</td>
<td>&quot;Maybe my colleague is having troubles at home. Her response to me might have had nothing to do with how she feels about my management decisions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess evidence</td>
<td>&quot;It is not true that everybody avoids me in all situations since I was promoted. In fact, some work friendships have become closer.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce self-blame</td>
<td>&quot;There was no way of knowing that the financial crisis was going to hit.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on reasonable goals</td>
<td>“I won’t lose the weight and get fit overnight. Change takes time. I’m better off making small, achievable changes to my lifestyle if I want to make a long-term difference.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced view</td>
<td>&quot;I will feel frustrated if I can’t get everything done before tomorrow. But I can cope with frustration. Some things will just get done a day later than I’d planned.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softer or less extreme words</td>
<td>&quot;Might; maybe; perhaps; possibly; sometimes; could; manageable...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be your own best friend</td>
<td>&quot;I’m being too hard on myself. I wouldn’t talk to my best friend in such a harsh way. I’ll try to talk to myself in the same way I would when encouraging and supporting a close friend.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
changing behaviour

As well as changing the way we think to manage our stress, there are a number of things that we can do or change about our behaviour that can also help.

relaxation

Learn some relaxation techniques. Many people have found that this helps them reduce and manage the symptoms of stress and anxiety.

- Simple breathing exercises are easy to do anywhere at any time, only take a few minutes, and can be used as often as you need. These can be readily found on the internet.
- Using a voice–guided meditation or relaxation mp3 or CD can help you relax before bed or after a stressful day at work.

exercise

We all know that exercise is one of the most important things we can do for our health and wellbeing. Even with the best of intentions, exercise often slips to the bottom of the list.

Exercise isn’t just going to the gym or a going for a run. There are many ways to become more active. Alone, with others, with a trainer, classes, sports groups, outdoor activities, walking or riding to work – you might need to experiment find what works for you.

Workplace-based physical activity programs are a great way to increase your exercise and improve the wellbeing of staff. These initiatives can range from simple low cost strategies to more comprehensive approaches.

There is a wealth of information available to help you put in place strategies to create or maintain an active lifestyle.
**sleep**

Sleep is crucial to our quality of life. Poor sleep can impact our health and immune systems.

There are a number of practical strategies for improving sleep habits:

- Caffeine, nicotine and alcohol can all affect sleep quality.
- Stick to a regular sleep pattern – even on weekends.
- Cut out naps, which can interfere with your quality of sleep at night.
- Vigorous exercise is better earlier in the day – not too close to bedtime.
- Make sure you have a comfortable sleep environment.
- Save the bedroom for sleeping or sex. No phones, TVs, work or laptops!
- Try to relax and slow down at least 30 minutes before going to bed. Give your body time to relax and prepare for sleep.

**talk to others**

A major risk factor for depression is a lack of supportive relationships.

Part of building strong relationships is sharing your thoughts and feelings with others, such as family, friends, trusted work colleagues and business associates.

Some people find sharing personal information a natural and easy thing to do. Others might need support from a health professional or community group in order to feel more comfortable opening up.

“We will have a talk about the day, about what is causing problems....

A problem shared is a problem halved so we see if we can help each other out.’

Karl and Joss, accountants
improving your stress management

- Everyone can improve how they manage stress. Where can you make changes to better manage your stress?
- In order to help you make a change more achievable, you could use the following SMART goal setting framework as a guide.
- If there are a number of issues you would like to challenge, you might consider stress management training or individual counselling to assist you further.

what is SMART goal setting?

**specific** – Write down your specific goal.

**measurable** – Ensure there is a way to measure your progress towards and achievement of your goal.

**achievable** – Is your goal realistic? Are you going to be able to achieve it, even though it might be challenging?

**relevant** – Make sure the goal is relevant to you. What are your reasons and rewards for wanting to reach this goal?

**time limited** – Having a time limit helps you to not over-extend or over-exert yourself while working towards the goal.

an example...

Gavin has not been sleeping well, and feels he is too busy and stressed to fit in any kind of relaxation.

**specific** – Do a 15 minute relaxation/breathing exercise before going to bed.

**measurable** – He aims to do it 5 nights a week.

**achievable** - Easy to incorporate into his routine if he watches a little less TV.

**relevant** – This can help to him to de-stress and improve the quality of his sleep.

**time limited** – He aims to try it for 2 weeks to see if it makes a difference for him.
positive relationships

Business is all about relationships. Whether it’s communicating with employees, clients, suppliers, contractors or members of a family business, effective management of these relationships can reduce your stress, and positively impact your business.

managing emotions through effective communication

Emotions are inevitable in human interaction and the business environment is no different. Communicating when we are feeling stressed can be ineffective, or at worst, abusive. Sometimes we avoid communicating, even when there is an important issue to be dealt with.

People skilled in communication are not only more effective at managing conflict, research shows they are more successful in business.

intrapersonal communication

This involves having an awareness of your own thoughts and feelings and managing them using what is known as ‘self-talk’.

These skills can help you manage your own emotions, enabling you to stay motivated, avoid angry outbursts and adapt to changing circumstances.

interpersonal communication

This involves interacting with other people – how you express your thoughts and feelings and respond to those of others.

These skills can help you give constructive feedback, provide support, and inspire and influence others.

It can be difficult to manage your emotions when dealing with ‘people problems’; but doing so returns dividends in greater staff and customer satisfaction.
your communication style

We all have our strengths and weaknesses when it comes to communicating.

Your answers to the following questions can help reveal the areas of communication that you can work on to build stronger relationships and solve interpersonal problems that might be causing you stress.

When I interact with others...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am usually aware of my own thoughts and feelings.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to stand up for myself.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I let others know that I understand what they say.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can stay calm, even in trying moments.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident managing conflict.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I’ statement formula

I feel __________
when you __________
and I would prefer it
if you would __________

raising issues

Assertive communication is confidently expressing our needs or giving feedback to someone on their behaviour that respects their welfare. It’s communicating in a way that gets the balance right between being a bully or a ‘door mat’.
tips for assertive communication

- Use ‘I’ statements, particularly when you have to say something negative or difficult to say to a colleague. This is less confronting than starting with ‘you’, and helps make them more open to hearing what you have to say.

  “I feel disappointed when you talk to others in the office rather than coming to me when you have an issue.”

- Let them know why their behaviour affects you, and how you could see things being done better in the future. Don’t judge or use labels, and stick to the facts.

  “I feel disappointed when you don’t come to me first with a problem as I can’t do anything to help resolve it for you. In future it would be great if we could deal with things more openly and quickly.”

- Show an understanding of their situation while stating your needs.

  “I recognise that you don’t like the new system, but I’d like you to keep going with it until the end of this project.”

“Sometimes you have to express your displeasure…. It’s about how you approach that sticky situation.”

Andy, cabinet maker
showing empathy

Being a supportive manager is one of the most important ways to enhance the mental health of people you work with.

**tips for active listening**

- Put yourself in the shoes of the other person. Think about what they might be feeling or reacting to. How is their experience different to yours?
- Rephrase the message being communicated to show how you have understood it. If you’ve misinterpreted anything, the person talking has an opportunity to explain things differently.

“OK, so what I hear you saying is that you’re unhappy with the way the matter was handled.”

- If you’re not clear about something, ask for clarification.

“What do you mean when you say...?”

- Pay attention to non-verbal signs, especially if they are telling a different story from what the person is saying.

“So you’re saying that you’re OK with this, but your frown says to me you’re still unsure about something.”

- Respond to any feelings being expressed, not just the content of what is being said.

“I can see that this has made you angry and frustrated.”

- Try to keep your body language relaxed, open and attentive.
- Summarise what you understand to be the important points being raised. This helps tie up multiple threads of a long conversation, and lets the other person know what you’ve understood them to say.

“So you’re unhappy with the ways things were handled, you’d like to see a change in policy, and you think this could’ve been avoided by more consultation?”

Active listening involves putting in the effort to make sure we understand the message being communicated

It’s a great way to make someone feel heard and understood
creating a positive work environment

- Give positive feedback when it’s deserved.
- Reward and celebrate achievements.
- Be approachable and have a process in place where staff or customers feel comfortable raising issues.
- Manage conflict quickly and effectively, using active listening and balanced, assertive communication techniques.
- Create change together – people need to feel in control of what’s happening to them at work, so involve them in discussions about important changes or decisions.

A positive work environment can reduce depression risk – research shows people need to feel supported, fairly treated and in control.

“lt’s very important for each of us to feel like we are valued.”

Di, electrical manufacturing company

improving your relationships

- Although communication can seem like common sense, training in specific communication skills can assist you to focus on ‘tried and true’ techniques.
- Think about areas in which you could make improvements to the way you manage relationships.
- Are there any specific skills you need to develop? Explore the training options available to you.
creating balance

Many people in business say that their business is their life, or that it is impossible to find time for things like exercise, good nutrition, relaxation, hobbies, or time with friends and family - even time by themselves.

The trick is achieving a balance that promotes your overall health and the success of your business.

work vs life outside of work

Your answers to the following questions can help focus your awareness of how much time you have left for yourself outside of work. When the balance isn’t right, something has got to give. Relationships, work and health can suffer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy hobbies or interests outside of my work.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have time to do something just for me every week.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently think about work when I’m not working.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually work through my lunch break.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family is often upset with me about the amount of time I spend working.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tips for not letting work take over your life

- Schedule meetings during core work hours.
- Take regular breaks, do not work through lunch, set an alarm to remind you to take a break.
- Take full holiday leave.
- Do not take work home regularly.
- Set realistic deadlines and deliver on time.
- Restrict overtime hours.
- It’s ok to say no sometimes.
- Put things for yourself on the ‘to do’ list.
- Technology can blur the boundaries between work and home - set a time when your mobile phone or email is switched off.

Long work hours have been associated with...

- Poor psychological health;
- Increased work-family conflict;
- Excessive fatigue;
- Burnout;
- Fatigue, worry, irritability;
- Increased rate of injury. 

“Don’t forget who you are...what you liked before you got into business.... It’s not worth it to lose your identity, and the minute you start to lose that your business starts to suffer as well.”

Bek, bar and restaurant owner
time management

Using effective time management techniques has been shown to be an effective way of reducing your stress and creating time for non-work priorities.

how are you using your time?

Record your activities over a couple of days and look at where your time is going. Are you using your time as effectively as you could be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time and Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>How long did it take</th>
<th>How valuable or important was it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27/02 8.30am</td>
<td>Checking and responding to emails</td>
<td>45 mins</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/02 9.15am</td>
<td>Writing proposal</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/02 9.45am</td>
<td>Interrupted by colleague for informal chat about their project</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

prioritise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task description</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write business strategy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up customer feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invoices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Make the time you DO have work for you. It’s the old saying ‘work smarter, not harder’
**important versus urgent**

Weighing ‘urgent’ versus ‘important’ jobs can help get the balance between always putting out spot fires and making progress on jobs that are key to the business’ goals.

**Important** tasks are ones that help you or the business to achieve valuable goals.

**Urgent** tasks require immediate attention, but may not necessarily progress your goals.

Using this prioritisation system means tasks fall into one of the four following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>urgent &amp; important</strong></th>
<th><strong>not urgent &amp; important</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow time to progress important tasks, leaving some room in your schedule for the unplanned urgent tasks that will inevitably pop up.</td>
<td>Planning ahead on the important, longer-term tasks avoids them becoming urgent!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>urgent &amp; not important</strong></th>
<th><strong>not urgent &amp; not important</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These tasks can be disruptive – can they be delegated or confined to a regular time. For example, set aside specific periods for checking and addressing emails.</td>
<td>Do these tasks really need your attention? Can they be abandoned, delegated or not agreed to in the first place?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Planning your day in advance avoids the need to make lots of decisions on the run*
tips for avoiding procrastination

- Think about why you are putting off something.
- Is it boring or unpleasant? If so, commit to spending small amounts of time each day and make sure to reward yourself each time.
- Is the task overwhelming or complex? If so, see advice, or break it into smaller tasks that you tick off your list more easily.
- We are usually the most mentally alert in the mornings. This is a great time to tackle important, challenging tasks that require focussed concentration. Quarantine this time as generally uninterruptable, but set aside a block of time later to deal with communications.

improving your work/life balance

- What important changes could you make to improve your work/life balance?
- What changes could be made within your workplace to improve the health and wellbeing of yourself and your colleagues?

“It’s about figuring out what you really want...what makes you happy and then taking the steps to make that happen, even if it is just in a small way in your life.”

Sara, on-line weight management consultancy
Some people are naturally more confident, optimistic or resilient than others; they seem to be able to deal with anything life throws them. However, personal strengths such as these can also be developed.

Building up what’s known as your ‘psychological capital’ can enhance your performance, and ultimately your business’ bottom line.

What is psychological capital?

- Having the confidence and motivation to achieve challenging goals.
- Knowing you can effectively map out different ways of reaching your goals.
- Believing that successful outcomes can be credited to your own hard work and personal qualities, not luck, chance, or other outside forces.
- Being able to bounce back from setbacks or failure, and keep going when the going gets tough.

Reflecting on past setbacks and using goal setting techniques to plan for future success can help build psychological capital.
reflecting back

Reflecting on an overwhelming event in the past can help you to be more aware of ways that you have coped before. You can then look at ways of building on these strengths, or identify where to try a new approach.

the following questions will to help you focus your reflection.

Think about a previous overwhelming or difficult event:

- What was it about this event that you found overwhelming or difficult?
- Was it something that came out of the blue, or did the stress gradually build and intensify?
- What did you do to cope?
- How effective do you think these coping strategies were?
- Do you feel you bounced back from this experience? Why or why not?
- How did this affect your confidence?
- Where there any positives in this situation?
- What did you learn from this experience?

“It’s really good not to beat yourself up about if you’ve had a failure in the past, because if you choose to learn what you can from it, it serves you down the track.”

Susan, on-line weight management consultancy
Strategic planning involves identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to your business.

planning ahead

Most new businesses have a strategic plan. However, it often sits on the shelf once the business is more established. Because things get in the way of even the best laid plans, it’s important to regularly review your business goals and come up with strategies for overcoming obstacles to achieving these goals.

tips to help you achieve your goals

- Clearly define your goal.
- List all the possible ways you might be able to achieve your goal. Don’t try to evaluate them at this stage, just try and think of as many options as you can.

  With different pathways identified to achieve your goal, you can easily switch paths if an insurmountable obstacle gets in the way of your first plan of action.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option? For example, what resources (like money, time or manpower) do you need to carry out the various plans? On balance, what seems the best option?
- Decide on a plan of action, and break this down into smaller sub-goals.

  By breaking it down into steps, the overall goal becomes easier to reach and keeps you motivated.

- Write down all possible obstacles that might need to be avoided, overcome or minimised. Map out how you would tackle them if they crop up.

  Spending time identifying potential obstacles in advance better equips us to overcome them and feel more in control if they do occur.

- Review your progress regularly.
- It’s important to stay flexible. If an unexpected obstacle comes up you may need to revisit this process again.

“If you’ve got something that you want to do and you believe in yourself that you can do it, give it 100%, and you’ll succeed, you really will.”

Ben, café and nightclub owner
taking it further

There are a number of ways you can expand on the personal and professional development strategies recommended in the Business in Mind DVD and Resource Kit:

- Seek help from a GP or psychologist in order to improve your mental health and wellbeing.
- Engage a business mentor, or join a business networking group in order to work through business-related problems and explore problem solving strategies.
- Learn more about the topics covered in the Resource Kit through reading and further research, or enrol in a training course to develop specific skills.

The Business in Mind website www.businessinmind.edu.au has a ‘taking it further’ page that contains links to resources to help you make these steps.

references


