



Workplaces both physical and virtual display the power of connection. People having a laugh together in the office, stopping to listen to someone who needs a hand or sharing stories enthusiastically over lunch. It is great when your workplace comprises a team of people that truly value each other and show a genuine interest in getting to know one another. This is an important part of culture and one that provides a sense of community and wellbeing.

Important tips for leaders and managers:

- The importance of the relationships that are formed amongst your teams and the sense of wellbeing which can be derived from strong and healthy connections at work cannot be underestimated. Research tells us that a primary factor which buffers the effects of stress and mental health symptoms and indeed promotes longevity is a sense of belonging and being part of a community.
- Some might suggest that social connection is not a workplace issue and is something that can be left to after-work activities and weekends. However, our workplace relationships are one of the primary factors influencing our wellbeing. After all, many of us spend a lot of time at work and may spend more time with colleagues than anyone else in our life. Poor working relationships, conflict, job isolation, and perceived lack of support are all factors that lead to stress, absenteeism, and high turnover.
- The need to maintain a well-connected team is essential when it comes to managing an employee who is experiencing mental health symptoms. Given the prevalence of mental health issues in Australia, it is likely that at any given time, someone in your team will either be experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety or vulnerable to developing symptoms. Get to know your team so that you notice early on if someone doesn't quite appear to be themselves. Do what you can to keep a conversation going with them. Offer support and let them know they are an important and valued part of your team.
- It can be a common misconception that when a person is going through mental health issues, they will be better off taking leave and returning to work once they have recovered. However, for some, work can be a reason for people to get up in the morning. As well as creating a sense of purpose and being a source of meaningful activity, work is a way to maintain connection and to feel that you still belong. Rather than taking time off work, it may be that a few simple adjustments to their working conditions would help your employee to remain at work, and more importantly, stay connected to the team and aid their recovery. This is likely to have added benefits for the rest of the team rather than having a colleague take leave when they may, in fact, still be capable of doing the majority of their job.

If you need some support, please reach out to us here at AccessEAP through the Manager Support Hotline. As always, as your EAP we are here to support your people whatever the nature of their concerns, please contact AccessEAP on **1800 818 728**.

