

GUIDANCE NOTE – MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

1 MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health:

- includes our emotional, psychological or emotional health, and social well-being and affects how we think, how we feel, how we behave, how life affects us and how we handle the normal stresses of life;
- determines how we engage / relate with others, and the choices we make;
- is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community; and
- is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING

We all have mental health the same way that we all have physical health, and just like physical health there are things that we can do to look after our mental health, even when we're not experiencing difficulties. The term 'mental wellbeing' describes our mental state - how we are feeling and how well we can cope with day-to-day life. Good mental wellbeing is about having feelings of contentment and enjoyment, but it also includes things like:

- feeling relatively confident in yourself and having positive self-esteem;
- building and maintaining good relationships with others;
- feel engaged with the world around you;
- living and contributing productively;
- being able to cope with the stresses of daily life; and
- adapting and managing in times of change and uncertainty.

Our mental wellbeing isn't always the same; it can change depending on what's going on in our lives and how well we're able to look after ourselves. Also, our mental health and wellbeing isn't only 'good' or 'bad', it's a spectrum and might change on a daily basis.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Our mental wellbeing affects how we feel about all areas of life and so looking after it can really improve the way that we feel every day. This can be really helpful at times when we're not feeling our best and can help us to be more able to cope when we face challenges. Your mental state not only controls your consciousness, but also determines how your body functions. Stress, grief and depression can have a negative effect on your mental health. Studies have shown that serious mental illnesses can lower life expectancy by 10 to 15 years. It's important to make sure we look after our mental health, as it this can improve our overall wellbeing.

MENTAL WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

We can spend up to one third of our life working and therefore it is important to understand how working can impact our mental wellbeing and health. Spencer Ogden employees and contractors may be required to work long or antisocial hours or work away from home and job stress and other work-related factors can negatively affect our mental health, possibly triggering a mental health condition or causing an existing condition to worsen. It is important to understand how this can impact our wellbeing and ensure measures are taken to look after our mental

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health. While much of our working environment is determined by others, individually we can take steps that will help to protect and enhance our mental health and wellbeing.

2 HOW CAN WE LOOK AFTER OUR MENTAL WELLBEING?

There are lots of ways that we can look after our mental health and wellbeing; different techniques work for different people but there are some basic things we should all try, including:

KEEPING ACTIVE WITH EXERCISE

Because physical activity keeps you physically strong and has been shown to reduce or prevent stress and anxiety and improve mood. Regular exercise is a great way to look after our wellbeing and exercising outside is especially good. At least 30 minutes of exercise, three times a week, is ideal. Go for a walk or unwind with yoga. It is better to do moderate exercise regularly than to have a heavy workout occasionally.

STAYING HYDRATED

Not drinking enough water can have a negative effect on our mood so it's really important to stay well hydrated; everyone is different, but most people should try to drink around 1.5-2 litres of water a day.

EATING WELL

Good nutrition is a natural defence against stress. Begin your day with a nutritious breakfast, preferably of wholegrain cereals and fruits, and take balanced meals throughout the day. Eating a balanced diet is a really important foundation for good mental wellbeing because it gives your brain and body the fuel they need to function well. There are some key foods that you can eat to boost your mood and energy levels. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna and mackerel, cut the risk of dementia and mental decline.

DRINKING SENSIBLY

If you have emotional problems, seek support from family and friends, or get professional help. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and drugs as they provide only temporary relief from stress and unhappiness and **are not the solutions to problems**. It's not a good way to deal with problems and often leaves us feeling worse in the long term. If you choose to drink alcohol then try to stick within the recommended low risk guidelines and have plenty of days without drinking each week.

SLEEPING WELL

Apart from leaving us feeling tired, poor sleep can lead to worry, negative thoughts, and feelings of depression and anxiety, and all of this can make it even harder to sleep. Try to get 7-8 hours of sleep a night. You are more alert and less prone to stress after a good night's rest. Getting enough sleep can also improve your memory.

PROBLEM SOLVING

We all have times when we have low mental wellbeing, and it can be useful to think about whether there is anything in particular that is having a negative effect on us. You could also try tracking your moods to help you to work out what positively and negatively affects your mental wellbeing; then you can take steps to avoid, change or prepare for situations than have a negative effect.

SPENDING TIME WITH OTHERS

Connecting with other people is great for our wellbeing and stimulates the brain. A study in the US found that talking to another person for just 10 minutes a day improves memory scores. It can give us a sense of belonging, help to create a support network and give us people to talk to and have fun with. Helping a friend or family member, or doing community work helps you to take the focus away from yourself. In turn, you will

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feel more positive and less helpless. Doing something for others is the best remedy when you're feeling down. The more you interact with others, the faster your brain will work.

RELAX, HAVE FUN AND LAUGH

When we feel busy or stressed it can be difficult to let ourselves relax and have fun, but it's really important for our wellbeing, so we should build 'down time' into our lives rather than see it as a luxury. Take a break to do something that you find relaxing or fun, something you're good at or something new. Making time to relax can have a really beneficial effect on mental wellbeing. Engaging, by playing ideally in a group, mind-boggling games involves a combination of memory, decision-making and strategizing, which keeps the brain active and prevents dementia and will boost interaction. Laughter is the best medicine. Laugh yourself silly and have fun whenever you can. Laughing can help to keep the doctor away because humour activates the brain's reward and pleasure centres, generating emotions and relaxing the mind.

SHIFT YOUR MINDSET, MAKE A LIST

Make a list of goals and check them off when they are completed. This will help you tackle things one at a time. Seeing problems as opportunities or focusing on the positive can also help to reduce stress. Stress cannot be avoided, but you can learn to manage stress

LEARN A NEW SKILL OR HOBBY

Learning to play a musical instrument, acquiring computer skills, starting a new hobby or learning to cook a new dish can help keep your brain active and healthy.

3 RECOGNIZING ANXIETY, STRESS AND DEPRESSION

Common signs of anxiety, stress and depression can include:

COMMON SIGNS OF ANXIETY

- Feeling restless or worried
- Having trouble concentrating
- Having trouble sleeping
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations

COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS

- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Problems with memory
- Problems concentrating
- Change in eating habits
- Feeling nervous or anxious
- Feeling angry, irritable or easily frustrated
- Feeling burned out from studying or work

COMMON SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- Withdrawing from other people
- Feeling sad and hopeless
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Trouble making decisions
- Being restless, agitated and irritable
- Eating more or less than usual
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble with memory
- Feeling bad about yourself or guilty
- Anger and rage
- Feeling that you can't overcome difficulties in your life
- Trouble functioning in your work or in your personal life

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. For example, you may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam or having a medical test or job interview. During times like these, feeling

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anxious can be perfectly normal. But some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives.

STRESS

Stress is good if it motivates you but it's bad if it wears you down. Many factors can contribute to the stress you experience, and this stress can cause changes in your body that affect your overall physical, mental, and emotional health.

DEPRESSION

Depression is more serious and long-lasting than stress and requires a different kind of help. The good news is that depression is a highly treatable condition. However, it's not something you can snap out of by yourself, so it's important to get help. How do you tell the difference between stress and depression? Both can affect you in similar ways, but there are key differences. Symptoms of depression can be much more intense. They last at least two weeks. Depression causes powerful mood changes, such as painful sadness and despair. You may feel exhausted and unable to act.

DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE

Get support, whether from family, friends, or a trusted online community. A heart-to-heart talk with someone you trust can help you get rid of toxic feelings and may even give you a fresh perspective. **IF THESE STEPS DON'T BRING RELIEF, OR IF YOU ARE STILL UNABLE TO COPE AND FEEL AS IF THE STRESS IS AFFECTING HOW YOU FUNCTION EVERY DAY, IT COULD BE SOMETHING MORE ACUTE AND CHRONIC--LIKE DEPRESSION. DON'T LET IT GO UNCHECKED!**

4 WHAT TO DO IF A CO-WORKER SEEMS DEPRESSED

If you suspect a colleague may be suffering from a mental health issue and it's affecting your work, here's some advice:

DON'T MAKE A KNEE-JERK DIAGNOSIS

It's human nature to try to find a pattern and label it but a lot of people jump to the conclusion that something's wrong before they have all the facts and our speculations are often misguided. Don't feel like you have to label every behaviour you don't understand.

LOOK AT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOUR

Sometimes one of the best signs that something serious is going on with a colleague is whether their behaviour is affecting the way others conduct themselves around the workplace. A clue can be that the people around the individual are reacting and behaving differently, reacting to the emotional tone of the other person.

KNOW THE LIMITS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP

If you suspect your colleague might be struggling with a mental health issue, think about whether you're the right person to say anything. If you have a close friendship with your co-worker, this may be appropriate. But if you don't, think carefully about what you want your role to be. As a manager, if the person's behaviour is affecting their or others' work, you have an obligation to say something. If you're a peer or a direct report, and you don't consider the person a friend, then it's probably not your place to address it. That doesn't mean you can't offer guidance if your colleague asks for it, but just be cognizant not to overstep boundaries.

MAKE AN OBSERVATION

If you decide to broach the subject, don't come out and ask, "Are you depressed?" The individual may not be ready to talk about it. Instead, make an observation focused on the impact their behaviour is having on the work, on you and on others. Then give the person the opportunity to

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respond and share with you what's going on. Be sure to follow the person's lead. If they open up let them decide how much to tell you. If they don't want to talk then don't push.

LISTEN

One of the most helpful things you can do for someone struggling with a mental health issue is to listen. If your colleague decides to open up about their issues just sitting down and listening to them can be helpful. You can offer your own experience if it's relevant but do not tell them what to do and do not make it about you. Just listen.

WHEN TO TALK TO SOMEONE ELSE

Generally, you want to keep your observations and discussions confidential, but there are two situations in which you may want to enlist the help of others. The first is when the behaviour is so unpredictable you are worried they might put themselves or others at risk. The second is when you believe talking to the person directly would put you at risk. Perhaps you're worried about their reaction or you worry it will change your working relationship. That's where you should talk with HR or the person's manager, if you feel that third party will handle it appropriately and confidentially. Always express your concern in terms of the impact on work.

PUT BOUNDARIES UP IF NECESSARY

There can be downsides to offering help. It's fine to have a conversation but if the person keeps coming back to you for advice and support you need to be ready to steer the person toward professional help if that's what they need.

CREATE A CARING CULTURE

If you are a manager, focus on fostering a safe environment where people can talk about these sorts of issues. If people aren't getting their work done or are preventing others from doing so, you have a responsibility to do something about it. You can talk to the person, explain the impact on the work, and ask how you might help. You might refer the person to your employee assistance program or ask your HR department for help.

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

DO:

- Make observations about how your work is being impacted and let the person respond;
- Listen in a non-judgmental way;
- Get support from others if you feel the person is in danger or if you feel your job is at risk.

DON'T:

- Jump to conclusions about what's going on — it's not always a mental health issue;
- Push your colleague to share personal details — what they want to share is up to them;
- Become the person's de facto therapist; point the person to professional help.

5 HELP AND SUPPORT

Acknowledging when you are experiencing mental health issue and seeking help can be difficult. The mental health system can be complicated, and it can be hard to know where to go for support but telling someone you are struggling is the first step toward feeling better. Spencer Ogden encourages the use of supportive mental health specialists as necessary and have listed below contact details of reputable support lines and agencies in our key office locations that you can contact as a first step in getting support. Also listed below are emergency contact details for agencies that can provide an immediate, urgent response in a crisis situation.

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IN CRISIS? IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN CRISIS NOW, SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY. CALL AN EMERGENCY SUPPORT 24-HOUR CRISIS CENTRE OR DIAL YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE.

EMERGENCY SERVICES numbers in our country office locations:

Australia:	000
Germany:	110 or 112
Hong Kong:	999
Malaysia	999
Singapore:	999
United Kingdom:	999 or 112
USA:	911

A definitive list of emergency numbers by country can be found here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emergency_telephone_numbers

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT LINE FOR CONTRACTORS WORKING OUTSIDE THEIR HOME COUNTRY: If you are a Spencer Ogden contractor working outside of your home country or offshore, you can contact our international support line 24/7 provided by Chubb on (0044)207 173 7796. If you are working outside of the UK, the Chubb app can be downloaded onto apple or android smart phones and web calls can be made via the app (we appreciate that some of our contractors work in remote locations and so we advise you download the app before commencing an assignment).

CRISIS SUPPORT LINES AND ORGANISATIONS:

Listed below are names of support lines in our key office locations and agencies that may be able to assist you, do not hesitate to contact them.

The Samaritans – United Kingdom

Phone: (00 44) 116-123

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

jo@samaritans.org

Emergency services- 999

Suicide Prevention Lifeline – United States

Phone: 1-800-273-8255

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Emergency services - 911

Lifeline – Australia

Phone: (00 61) 13 11 14

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

Emergency services -000

Samaritans of Singapore – Singapore

Phone: 1800 221 4444

pat@sos.org.sg

<https://www.sos.org.sg/>

Emergency services - 995

The Samaritans- Hong Kong

Phone: 2896 0000

<https://samaritans.org.hk/>

Emergency services- 999

TelefonSeelsorge - Germany

Phone: 0800 111 0 111

<https://www.telefonseelsorge.de>

Emergency services – 112

Befrienders - Malaysia

Phone: 60379568145

<https://www.befrienders.org.my/>

sam@befrienders.org.my

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