Help Employees Maintain Positive Mental Health during the COVID-10 Outbreak

Many of your employees may experience a feeling of stress, anxiety and concern related to the coronavirus outbreak. As more and more people physically isolate or enter quarantine, supporting employees during this difficult time can be key to helping employees with their mental health while building a level of trust.

Here are some tips to help promote positive mental health:

1. Encourage your employees to stay connected with friends, family and coworkers through e-mail, social media, video conferencing and telephone. Think of it as physical isolation while maintaining social relationships. At times of stress, we work better when we know we are not alone.

2. Encourage those working from home to try and maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific hours for work, a consistent schedule, and if possible, a designated work area. This allows "work" to feel more like work.

3. Keep things in perspective. Remind employees that this is a temporary period of isolation and their efforts are helping the greater community.

4. Encourage employees to take regular breaks. A quick walk around the block, playtime with the kids or indulging in a healthy snack can make a world of difference.

5. Kindness and patience go a long way. We are all adjusting to this new normal and each person operates differently. Make time to talk and be supportive of your employees' current needs and concerns.

6. Be flexible, reassuring and understanding. If you have employees who normally struggle with their mental health, they will likely require additional support.

7. Utilize resources at your disposal. Does your organization have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place? Remind staff that the EAP is there if they need support. Nothing in place? Take advantage of local crises or distress resources and centres which are readily available.

8. Take care of your own mental health. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep. Being good for your employees' means being kind to yourself.

This article was prepared by Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS). For more checklists and tips for working at your home office, check out the COVID-19 resources at www.wsps.ca, or contact us at customercare@wsps.ca.