



mind🍏pples

Thriving minds

An employer's guide to promoting
mental health and wellbeing at work

In association with



The case for wellbeing

Wellbeing drives performance

The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as a dynamic state in which individuals can **realise their potential**, cope with stress, work productively and innovatively, and contribute to their communities.¹

The performance of any business depends on **the minds of its staff**. If people are not in good mental shape, they lose productivity, **make mistakes**, and struggle to collaborate. It's bad for them, and bad for business.

Staff are 12% more productive in a positive mental state,² improved health and engagement can boost sales by 20%,³ and investments in staff engagement and wellness can show an ROI of 9:1 in Year One alone.⁴

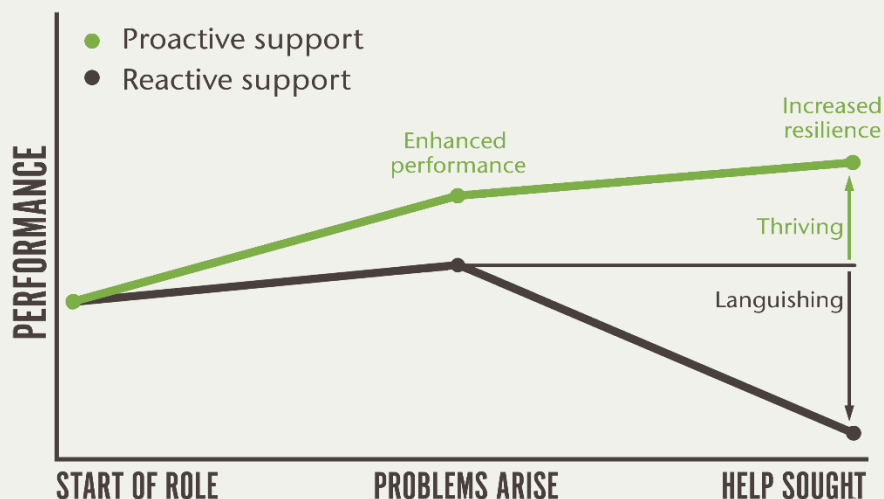
Promoting wellbeing at work isn't just an ethical imperative: it **gives businesses the competitive edge**.

A matter for everyone

Mental health is often seen as a matter for experts, something best left to occupational health or specialist care. **Managers may feel uneasy** talking about difficulties, and staff may be reluctant to come forward.

These reactive services are vital, but often come too late to **help people stay well** in the first place, leading to long periods of languishing and poor performance before they seek the help they need.

We urgently need to do more to encourage a **culture of smart, sustainable working** in our businesses. If we want people to talk about problems with their minds, first we need to get them **talking about their minds**.



Mindapples takes a **proactive, inclusive approach**, in which everyone can join a conversation about being at their best. By teaching people about their minds early, before problems arise, employers can promote a culture of **personal responsibility and individual autonomy** that builds healthy, high-performing teams.

¹ WHO (2013)

² Oswald, Proto & Sgroi (2012)

³ Barber, Hayday & Bevan (1999)

⁴ Mills et al (2007)

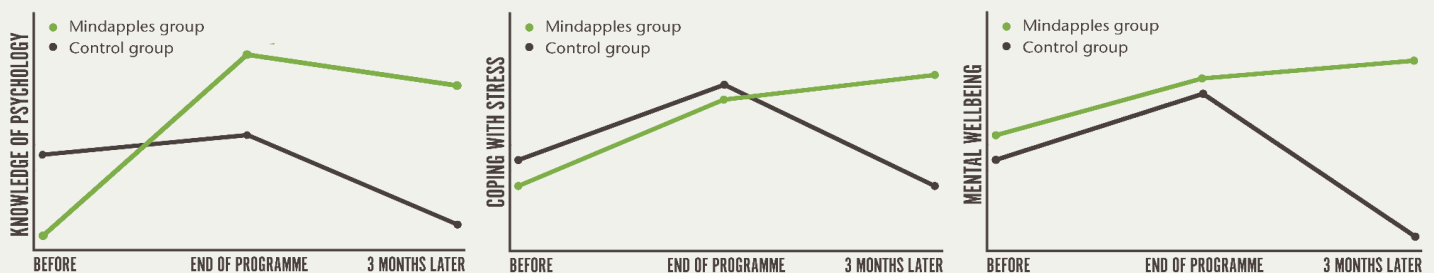
Promoting mental wellbeing

Learning about our minds

Mental health is now discussed more openly in society, but many of us **still know very little about how to look after our minds**. Discussion of the mind is limited to conversations about illness, and all too often, people need to get sick before they are taught about staying well.

If we understand our minds better, **we can make more informed decisions** about our life, work and relationships. Psychologists call this ‘**mentalisation**’: the ability to understand what’s going through your mind and explain your behaviour. It can improve your decision-making, health, self-efficacy and relationships.

Mindapples has been testing this approach since 2011, and we have good evidence that it works. The University of York conducted controlled trials on our training. In two separate studies, they found **statistically significant increases** in knowledge of the mind, ability to cope with stress, and mental wellbeing.¹



A non-prescriptive approach

The goal of promoting wellbeing, then, isn’t about telling people what to do, but **talking to people** about what works for them, and helping them to **meet their own needs**.

The process for doing this is very personal: **each of us needs to try things out and see what works**. You learn a concept about the mind, reflect on how it relates to your own experiences, hear what other people think about it, and then use what you’ve learned to make **better observations, and more informed choices**.

What’s more, despite growing evidence that our daily actions affect our mental health, academic opinion varies on what people should do to look after their minds. Basic elements like **sleep, diet, water and exercise** are important, but so too are daily **breathers and restorers** to stay calm, positive and mentally rested.

Research by Sarah Pressman and colleagues² found that people who do regular enjoyable activities tend to be happier, suffer less depression and stress, have lower blood pressure and enjoy better physical health. Scientific research can give us options, but each of us needs to **find our own ways to wellbeing**.

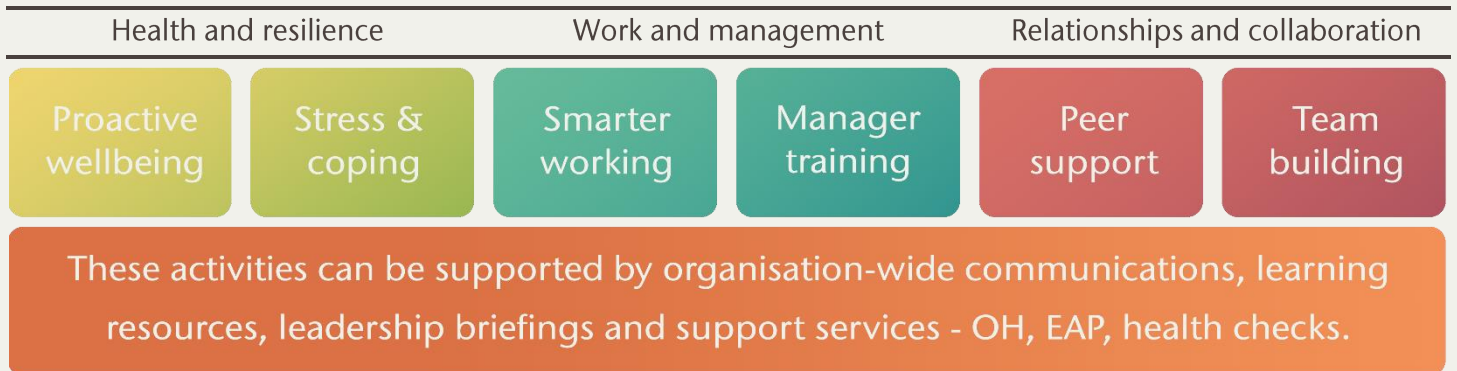
¹ Webber, M., Murdock, A. & Scott, C. (2015). *Evaluation of Mental Effectiveness Training Pilot*. York, University of York.

² Pressman, S. D., Matthews, K. A., Cohen, S., Martire, L. M., Scheier, M., Baum, A. & Schulz, R. (2009) Association of Enjoyable Leisure Activities with Psychological and Physical Well-Being. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 71, 725-732.

What employers can do

Wellbeing programmes often focus on health behaviours and stress, but there's a lot more you can do.

Getting the basics right is important, of course, so providing information about looking after your mental health, and what to do if you feel stressed or unwell, are essential for a healthy, high-performing workforce. Just as important, though, is applying some of these principles to working practices, helping staff and managers improve processes, manage their time and workload, and keep their minds sharp and effective. This is a collective activity too, so working to improve team dynamics, develop supportive cultures and help staff help each other, can also have a big impact. All of this can then be supported with organisation-wide communications, reactive services, employee assistance and other vital ingredients for a healthy organisation.



Here are a few suggestions for specific ways you might promote these themes in your organisation:

1. Organisation-wide surveys

Rather than starting with tips and advice, start by asking questions and find out what people want.

- Mindapples approaches this by asking people the '5-a-day for your mind', using mindapple cards, digital surveys and even Mindapples Tree installations in foyers and cafeterias, to find out what people do that is good for their minds. Ask people what works for them, and use that information to design communications campaigns that are relevant for your organisational culture.
- You can also run surveys asking people about their wellbeing, work-life balance and other key factors affecting how they feel at work, and then use these to inform your approach. We recommend the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale for assessing the wellbeing levels of staff, and Mindapples offers a free survey of attitudes to mental health and wellbeing too. Please contact us for information.
- Management surveys and team assessments can also help identify particular pinch points and quick wins. Use tailored surveys to find out what stops people looking after their minds, identify stress points and ask people for specific feedback on what might help them and their teams.

Top tip: Remember to take action based on people's feedback, and to communicate clearly how their responses have been used to make change. Make sure you have the support of the organisation to do something with what you learn, otherwise you may create false hope and resentment.

2. Create a supportive culture

Campaigns and services targeted at everyone set an inclusive tone and can help create a supportive culture across the organisation. The goal of these interventions is to make mental wellbeing feel relevant for everyone inside and outside work. Here are a few ways to get people talking about their minds:

- **Launch events** can get people talking and promote other services too. You could bring in an **external speaker** to get people excited about looking after their minds and sell the benefits of wellbeing. You could also run a **panel event** with people inside and outside the organisation, to talk about the issues faced and what people can do to tackle them.
- **Wellbeing days** can help showcase the services that are on offer, and provide a good way to bring in other organisations, charities and healthcare partners to talk to staff and share their knowledge.
- **Lunch and learns** and staff training programmes can provide an ongoing focus for communications activity, and help people improve how they work. Topics can be broad ranging, from sleep, diet, water and exercise, to the importance of taking daily breathers to stay calm, positive and mentally rested. Short classes tend to work best, such as one-hour seminars over breakfast or lunchtime.
- **Team away days** provide a great opportunity to reach large numbers of staff in one sitting, so suggest to team leaders and L&D partners that they might want to have a wellbeing session in their away days or offsites. An hour or two of engaging content about wellbeing can get the team talking, and encourage other teams to sign up for similar sessions too, spreading the word further.
- **Internal communications** can reach all staff with key messages and set the tone for the organisation. Intranet and newsletter content that promotes key messages and shares interesting ideas for working smarter and more sustainably can keep the conversation going. We also recommend Q&As, guest posts or even video interviews with senior leaders, to ask what helps keep them healthy and effective.
- **Promote a healthy workplace** – it doesn't need to cost a lot! Swap sugary snacks in the kitchen for a fruit bowl or bring in a blender so employees can make smoothies. If gym membership is out of budget, how about setting up lunchtime or after-work running and walking clubs?

Top tip: momentum is key to culture change, so make sure you have lots of follow-up information and planned activities to promote at each event, to turn initial excitement into ongoing engagement.

3. Communicate your programme and employee benefits

Employees are often not aware of the benefits they can access, and failing to tell them can be money down the drain. Make sure staff know about what's on offer, from wellbeing events to staff rewards and benefits:

- Familiarise yourself with your **employee benefits** (e.g. flexible working, volunteer days, cycle to work scheme, gym membership) and make sure these are communicated.
- **Highlight existing support services** available to employees. Use your internal communications channels to promote the Employee Assistance Programme, health checks and other health benefits.
- Use **posters** as visual displays to remind employees of specific benefits available.
- If you have an **intranet**, run regular features on employee benefits and wellbeing initiatives.
- Provide regular **updates for managers** and outline benefits as part of your induction and on-boarding process for new starters.
- Introduce discussion in **staff meetings** to promote mental wellbeing – and use opportunities to check in with employees about how they're getting on.
- Make sure your employee benefits and wellbeing services are listed in your **employee handbook**.

Top tip: promoting staff benefits is a rolling process, not a one-off. People may not remember what's available unless they have regular reminders, so make it an ongoing habit to tell staff the support on offer.

4. Support key groups

Targeted interventions can help meet the needs of particular groups, and provide tailored support to those who need it. Here are a few key groups you might want to target:

- **New starters:** the best time to set the culture and working practices of an organisation is when people start. Consider adding some training or e-learning materials to your induction programmes, and messages from senior leaders, about what the organisation is doing to promote smart, sustainable working – and how everyone can contribute to that.
- **First-time managers:** becoming a manager can be stressful, so support people early by training them to manage their teams safely and effectively. Make sure newly-promoted managers receive support, information and training to help them promote healthy working practices for them and their teams
- **Line managers:** these are the people at the forefront who know their team, workloads, and individual situations. It's important for line managers to feel confident in spotting the signs of a struggling employee, and promote good habits of smart, sustainable working. Mindapples provides training to help line managers motivate staff, manage stress in their teams, and foster creativity and collaboration. You may also be able to work wellbeing into your organisation's management training scheme.
- **High-pressure teams:** teams experiencing restructuring, downsizing or high workloads can all benefit from tailored support. Speak to individual team leaders to find out what they are most worried about, and then provide training and tip sheets that help them, and reinforce organisational messages.
- **Redundancy and career transition:** when people are moving to new roles or leaving the business, it can be important to help people stay well during the change, and figure out what they'd like to do next. Motivation, stress management and career support can all help people stay healthy and positive.

Top tip: these targeted interventions are best done in the context of an organisation-wide programme, to ensure people don't feel singled-out or criticised. Talking about our minds is important for everyone.

5. Recruit champions

You may have people within your organisation who are particularly enthusiastic about mental health and wellbeing, so make them part of the solution:

- **Involve people** who are passionate about mental health and wellbeing in your promotional communications, by asking them to share tips and interviewing them about what helps them stay healthy and effective. Videos work particularly well, and can be good fun too.
- **Promote volunteering:** helping other people is great for building confidence and understanding things better, you consider engaging staff in volunteering for mental health organisations, to help them practice their skills and bring knowledge back to the organisation.
- **Wellbeing champions:** you can harness the enthusiasm of colleagues by training them to be mental wellbeing champions. Mindapples provides a two-day training course to give people a basic knowledge of mental health and wellbeing, and support them to share this with colleagues and teams. They can support staff one-to-one, run targeted sessions and help with communications.
- **Mental health reps:** reactive support helps too, so consider training managers and staff representatives to respond to issues and emergencies. There are lots of providers that run courses to train people within the organisation spot the symptoms of mental health issues, offer initial help and guide a person towards support.
- You may also like to **appoint a Board member** or senior member of staff to champion the mental health agenda, as they can raise the issue at the highest level of the business. Communications from senior leaders can encourage attendance at sessions and help put wellbeing on the corporate agenda.

Top tip: wellbeing isn't a one-size-fits-all business, and often advice from colleagues and leaders can work better than centralised messages from the organisation. Give everyone a chance to share their wisdom.

Things to remember

You might want to run organisation-wide campaigns to shift the overall culture of the organisation, or small discussion groups so key groups can get more support. You might want to help individuals one to one, through coaching, mentoring or counselling, or empower managers to support their staff.

Whatever your approach, your task is the same: to share knowledge of the mind as clearly, concisely and accurately as possible, and create a supportive environment in which people can reflect on what these insights might mean for them. You might also want to ask people to set goals or try things out, but the most important thing is that they can understand and remember what was discussed. If people understand the knowledge, they will be able to relate it to their experiences and continue to learn for themselves.

Mindapples' five principles for promoting mental health

Talking about our minds doesn't have to be difficult! Here are a few things we've found can make a big difference when talking to employees (and the public) about mental health and wellbeing:

1. **People's opinions matter.** Scientific knowledge can tell us the general trends and underlying structures of our minds, but if these disagree with our own experiences, that matters - and the science may not apply in the way we previously thought. Always show respect for people's opinions, and try to avoid telling people they're wrong. That means you also need to ask this from your participants too: if two people disagree, that's fine! Life is complicated, and we all see things differently.
2. **Language matters.** Many of the problems we have talking about our minds stem from misunderstandings about the words we're all using. Watch out for specific words that are key to how you understand the topic, and make sure everyone understands them. Most disagreements are the result of people using the wrong words, and giving the wrong impression, so mind your language.
3. **Privacy is precious.** Whilst it's valuable for people to contribute, don't feel you need to force people to share. People can have all kinds of reasons for not wanting to share what's on their minds, and often it's because they've hit on something particularly personal or important to them. Your aim should be for a safe space in which people feel safe to share, but don't feel pressured to do so.
4. **Curiosity is brilliant.** You might think you've got all the answers, but of course our minds are really complicated, and we're discovering new things all the time. Present what you know, and take a genuine interest in what other people know too. If we make a space to share what we've each figured out, our knowledge grows together.
5. **Questions are more interesting than answers.** Having the knowledge is fine, but the best way to engage people in a subject is to ask them a really good question. If you ask people questions, you are giving them an active role in figuring things out; if you only give them answers, they often don't know what to do. Start by asking people what they think, and then share your knowledge with them - and encourage them to do the same.

Remember too that **you are a role model**. People will be learning not just from your words but from your actions: if you know the content and apply it yourself, this will be obvious for participants. Share your own experiences and those of leaders and managers wherever possible, and give people a practical demonstration of how to put ideas into practice. How you behave, individually and as an organisation, will affect how people learn, and how they feel. You model the spirit of the programme in your own attitudes and mental health, so make sure you practice what you preach.

Something on your mind?

What is Mindapples?

Mindapples is a charitable enterprise founded in London, UK, in 2010, that promotes public understanding of the mind and better mental health for everyone. We provide corporate talks, training and e-learning to help everyone look after their minds and improve their health, work and relationships. Our charitable arm works with partners and funders to deliver awareness campaigns and public education programmes to a wide range of audiences, and sells event toolkits, books and learning materials to help people promote wellbeing.

What qualifications are needed to promote wellbeing?

You don't need to be a doctor or psychologist to promote mental wellbeing, any more than you need a degree in infectious diseases to teach people to wash their hands. Just make sure you're not setting yourself up as an expert, but as someone sharing interesting content. It also helps if you can talk about how you apply the principles to your own life and work, so start by trying things out and sharing what works for you.

Do people need to share private information?

No, this isn't therapy and this isn't about dealing with difficult problems or past traumas. This is about making space for people to explore how they think and feel in everyday situations. Techniques for managing your mind may be useful for people dealing with difficulties, but there's no obligation for people to share anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Talking about our minds doesn't have to be personal.

What if someone gets upset?

You aren't responsible for people's emotional issues, but you are responsible for establishing a safe space for people to talk to each other, and signposting people to further support if they need it. You're not required to be an expert in mental illness; just listen and try to help that person figure out what they need and where they can go for help. If people are in distress or need urgent help, good places to direct them (in the UK) are:

- their GP, who can help them access healthcare services like therapy and medication.
- the Mind infoline (0300 123 3393 weekdays 9am - 6pm, or info@mind.org.uk) can provide information on mental illness support services.
- the SANeline 0300 304 7000, 6pm – 11pm daily, can also help in times of crisis.
- the Samaritans, who offer people to talk to and listen to what's on your mind, 24/7, all year round. They are amazing. 116 123 (UK), 116 123 (ROI), jo@samaritans.org.

Think about which other non-clinical services might help people too. Sometimes people don't need clinical care, they just need something constructive to do that makes them feel a little more in control, understood and connected to the people around them.

Where can I find out more about mental wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing is a vast subject and you could spend years reading about it, so we've put together a couple of handy guides containing the knowledge we've found most helpful for looking after our minds:

- *The Mind Manual* (Hamlyn 2018) by Andy Gibson is Mindapples' illustrated guide to managing your mind through the ups and downs of life.
- *A Mind for Business* (Pearson 2015), also by Andy, is a guide to managing your mind at work, and is based on Mindapples' successful professional training programmes.

The logo for Mindapples, featuring the word "mindapples" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a solid black apple silhouette. The background is a light green color with a white curved shape on the right side.

mindapples

Love your mind

Want to know more?

We're here to help. Please do get in touch with us and we can give you more advice about promoting mental health and wellbeing for your staff and communities, and send you information on our campaign toolkits, tree hire, keynote talks, staff and management training, wellbeing champions courses, and e-learning.

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