

Employee blog – Mental Health

The following health and wellbeing blog has been prepared by TAL for Mental Health Month. It is available for Employer partners to use in white-label format for communications and is designed to provide information for employees on positive ways to support their mental health.

-BLOG-

Staying connected to yourself and others (even when you're busy)

Life is becoming busier. Work is busy, and the pressure is on to achieve more and more. Achieving a balance between work, personal responsibilities, family and a social life is getting trickier.

You feel like you don't have time to stop for a lunch break or to cook dinner, let alone meet up with friends, relax or do something fun. There are only 24 hours in a day and, when something has to give, that something is often the stuff you need more than ever.

Why do you need to connect to yourself and others?

Social support is one of the most important factors in having a healthy and happy life. Being connected to people makes us feel safer, comforted, valued and needed. These social connections are also proven to be strong protective factors against mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

In fact, the benefits of staying connected with others are amazing. Being around people we connect with increases the release of oxytocin. This has a calming effect which counteracts the stress response. It helps calm our nervous system and prevents us from releasing stress chemicals into our body.

Connecting with yourself can be even harder, however the benefits of this can increase your happiness, productivity, purpose in life and physical and mental health and wellbeing.

How to stay connected:

1. Let go of the 'stuff' in your life

We are often filling our lives up with things we perceive as important. There may be tasks or activities within your day that aren't necessary. Stop filling up your time with more 'things' and instead, take time out for yourself to do something that's really meaningful.

2. Prioritise relationships

Have a good look around you. Who's there? Who makes you feel great to be around? Who are your greatest supporters when times are tough? Who cheers you along when things are going well?

When it comes to relationships, it's often good to focus on quality rather than quantity, especially when you're feeling pushed for time.

Set yourself a challenge to do something to strengthen your most important relationships every week. That could mean a phone call or even a quick text message or it could mean something like meeting up for a meal, exercising together or enjoying a mutual hobby. It's important to look after yourself and your family, friends and work colleagues.

3. Make a plan

If you really want to create more time in your life, you need to be honest about where your time is currently spent. Write up a schedule to see where you are spending most of your time, and then some of the less important things can be replaced with reconnecting with people.

4. Extend your friendship circle

Although it's often seen as more difficult to make friendships as an adult than it was during childhood, all hope is not lost. You can create opportunities to establish new positive relationships and try and get into regular contact with groups of people. Join a local community group, take up a new hobby or volunteer for a cause that's important to you.

5. Practise mindfulness

Arguably the most effective way to connect with yourself is through a mindfulness or meditation practice. This helps you stop and really think about who you are, what you're doing and just be in the moment. It's an important stress release avenue as well as a great way to check in with how you're feeling about yourself and your life.

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