

BUILDING A

# positive place to work

How to build a mentally  
healthy workplace in  
**7 steps**

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# Introduction

The culture around mental health is changing fast. Work to address stigma and a greater openness mean managers' roles are changing and employees' expectations are shifting. A supportive workplace is no longer seen as a 'bonus', but is becoming the new normal. And quite right too. This change needs to be driven from all sides, with senior leaders role-modelling positive workplace principles to build and maintain a culture where everyone really belongs.

Here are my principles for a healthy workplace. Of course there are more - add to my list using the **#PositivePlaceToWork** hashtag :-)

**Dr. Lynne Green** is the Clinical Director for Kooth and healthcare professional with more than 20 years working in the Mental Health Sector.

She is passionate about improving access to mental health support for all ages, and is involved in a number of projects to destigmatise mental health and provide a clear pathway to help and advice when people need it the most.



<https://tiny.cc/drlynnne>  
or search 'Dr Lynne Green'



# Tip One

## Create a workplace where there is both give and take

The phrase “bring your whole self to work” has found its way into the lexicon of UK workplaces. But this call-to-action isn’t a one-way street. Your “whole self” isn’t just the person with ideas and drive. It’s also you when you are struggling, stressed or suffering. Employers need to meet their staff half way.

### Try this:

→ Consider how best to ensure that staff feel able to express any concerns or stresses they may be having. During reviews, how about checking in with how the person is feeling both inside and outside of work? Would they feel able to tell you if they are feeling stressed? If not, how would you know?

→ What signs would you notice? Would changing a meeting every so often to a more “neutral” environment, for example, going for a walk or to pick up a coffee help the person feel more able to open up?



# Tip Two

## Allow Vulnerability

Hardly any of us freely admit ignorance, confusion or weakness. But what if your workplace allowed for that kind of openness?

According to Google's extensive research, the best performing teams operate in an environment where frailty is respected, confusion is shared and there are no stupid questions.

Think about your workplace: is it (psychologically) safe?

### Try this:

→ Consider what could be done to improve this? For example, could there be a place where questions are submitted anonymously? Can this message of vulnerability be accepted, encouraged and communicated through training or a team-building day?



# Tip Three

## Help Employees Belong

Employees who feel valued and accepted will be far more likely to offer their best contribution to the workplace. Tackle absenteeism, presenteeism and staff turnover by fostering a culture where there is genuine worth afforded to every employee.

### Try this:

→ Consider what could help nurture this approach. For example, ensuring positive feedback is shared or that there is a way of communicating when employees have gone above and beyond in their role. This could be an online platform or just within the office environment.

→ Could a staff day or evening out help employees feel more part of the team?



# Tip Four

## Unite Staff Behind a Shared Purpose

Consider asking employees to lead on specific internal projects. This could be defining your organisation's values or scoping out a new business initiative.

### Try this:

→ Would forming smaller working groups to put forward ideas from their team help people to feel more included in the bigger picture? This 'ground up' approach is more likely to create a united team working to a shared and understood purpose.



# Tip Five

## Expect and Celebrate Difference

This may seem rather obvious, but it means really accepting employees as individuals. In relation to mental health, it means having the right support in place, whatever the timing, issue or need. We know that mental ill health is as individual as the person experiencing it; choice and early help are hugely important.

### Try this:

→ Let people know about staff wellbeing programmes or support that they are entitled to. Ensure that cultural differences are respected through, for example, a diversity of holidays being recognised and acknowledged.



# Tip Six

## Get the Basics Right

There are workplace principles which employees should have a basic expectation of. Staff should be treated with respect. More practically, they should be free to leave on time, cultivate a healthy work life balance and feel able to take lunch breaks.

### Try this:

→ If you are worried that a staff member isn't taking these breaks or feels unable to, then have a conversation around this with them. Being flexible when employees have children who need support or need to attend a doctor's appointment is important.

→ It sounds obvious, but clear bullying policies are a must. And make sure you have flexible mental health and wellbeing support available - this really is essential.



# Tip Seven

## Look after yourself

It can be tempting to prioritise your work and others' wellbeing. Don't forget to give time and attention to your mental health and wellbeing. How you do this is up to you, and to some extent depends how well you know yourself. You may like exercising, socialising or meditation. Make time to do whatever you find helpful. And ask for help if you need it.

### Try this:

1. Implement a Leave it and Lunch! Initiative to encourage staff to leave their desks at lunchtime. Consider offering guided meditation or providing a communal lunch in an area where colleagues can talk.
2. Offer yearly manager refresher training, with a strong focus on supporting team members. It's key that managers are able to provide early initial support and that staff feel they can talk openly about their mental health.
3. In your staff survey, include space for suggestions and ideas on mental health and wellbeing support. Consider forming a People's Panel to develop ideas.
4. Offer staff a wellbeing day where they can take a day off to do whatever benefits their wellbeing. Make it optional for them to report back to colleagues, which will encourage others to use their day well.
5. Invest in training a staff member/s to become a Mental Health First Aider, ensuring that they are supported in this role and understand the boundaries they need to be working to.

# Introducing **Kooth Work.**

**Kooth Work has a unique heritage** built alongside the NHS. We've helped over 250,000 children and adults positively manage their mental health and strengthen their mental resilience.

**Our digital platform** is like no other. A choice of therapy is essential for employee engagement - and we've got it all in one handy solution.

**An active community** engages in mental health forums providing peer support to those who have gone through similar situations.

**Thousands of Articles** written by psychologists, psychotherapists and our clinical staff, as well as peer submitted content.

**Remote Counselling** allows a user to start a live chat session with one of our highly trained counsellors. Whether they've had a bad day, or are working through some serious issues - our counsellors are on-hand every day until 10pm.

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