

Top tips to **REDUCE STRESS** in a **REMOTE TEAM**

There are a few simple things you can do to make a big difference to the stress your team members may be experiencing.

Workplace stress is something that we all experience from time to time in our daily routines. However, with the Coronavirus pandemic forcing many people to work from home, managing employee stress levels from a distance presents an entirely new challenge. With our working environments now separated, it has become much more difficult to recognise any clear signs or symptoms of stress from your employees.

From living alone to worrying about vulnerable family members, many employees will be struggling with their own battles. It's vital, therefore, that strong communication levels are maintained across your organisation so that people feel they are receiving adequate support from their employers.

While stress can affect people in different ways, there are some simple and effective ways you can help to reduce stress and make your employees feel heard and understood.

Conduct daily video catch-ups

One of the biggest struggles many of us are currently facing is a significant reduction in our physical company – and this lack of social interaction can have a detrimental effect on our mental health. In our normal office environment, we're used catching up with colleagues over lunch or stopping for a five-minute natter by the coffee machine. These breaks in our day naturally help to lower our stress levels as we take this time to lift our heads away from any intense tasks. However, with these interactions now removed, the pressure from dealing with work alone from our homes can easily escalate our stress levels.

Try scheduling in a daily catch up with your team each morning. These don't have to take up much time, and they don't even have to be work-related. Use them as a chance to check in with each other and talk about what you did the night before. Maintaining these normal conversations with your team will help to reinforce that your colleagues are there to help and support each other.

You could even encourage those across different departments to connect more often. Friendships

Chris Griffiths



naturally tend to form between colleagues across different areas of an organisation, so encourage people to set up after-work video calls with their close co-workers to keep their spirits up.

Schedule in one-to-ones

While some may keep their stress bottled up, it can arguably be easier for managers to identify when a member of their team is experiencing high levels of stress when they can physically see them in the office. This means that maintaining stronger levels of communication with your teams is therefore vital to ensure that you stay aware of your employees' state of mind.

By scheduling in one-to-one catch-ups with

individuals outside of your regular team meetings, you are giving your employees the opportunity to express any worries they may be unwilling to share with the larger team. Reaching out in this way will help your colleagues get any worries off their chest. It also helps to ensure that each member of your team feels valued and appreciated, by providing a window of communication for them to feel comfortable with sharing how they feel.

Encourage regular breaks and holidays

When people overwork, this can very quickly lead to a high rise in stress, which can ultimately result in people burning out and making themselves ill. Taking regular breaks throughout the day not only helps to ease stress, but also keeps people motivated and alert, so they can power through their tasks in shorter, but more powerful bursts. Encourage your employees to factor in breaks when setting their daily schedule. Even popping to the kitchen to make a coffee will help employees to step away from their screen and refresh their mind.

Encourage your employees to also continue using their annual leave. Taking holidays may fall behind on many people's to-do lists right now, and understandably so. When we think of taking holidays from work, this is usually to go away on a break or to visit family and friends. With this off the cards, many people may be neglecting their annual leave allowance. Remind your team about the importance of using their holidays to enjoy some rest – something that they may need now more than ever during this current crisis.

Maintain a consistent structure

While working from home, it can be easy to feel like your personal and professional lives are blurring into one. It's therefore important to ensure employees are establishing a consistent structure in their day. With our time spent commuting to the office now taken away from us, you may notice that employees are working longer hours than usual with this extra added time. While this can be great for extra productivity, it's important to ensure that employees don't let their work seep too much into their personal time. Getting the rest they need in the evenings will



give them the energy they need to approach the next working day at full steam.

Recognise the importance of praise

Keeping your team's motivation levels up goes hand-in-hand with helping them to manage their stress. Make sure to drop your colleagues regular messages and maintain a consistent flow of communication. A simple, "Thank you," to someone after completing a piece of work will go a long way in boosting your team's morale and give them the motivation to keep going.

Remind your team that it's okay to not feel at their maximum productivity levels right now. Many people are likely to be feeling anxious and it's important to remember that some employees may be struggling with isolation more than others. By providing continuous feedback and offering praise on a job well done, you will help your employees feel valued and that the work they are doing from a physical distance is not going unnoticed.

Stress affects us all in different ways, and with teams across the world adjusting to a new way of working together, ensure that your employees are considering their work-life balance and are not suffering from stress in silence. ■

Chris Griffiths is a productivity expert and the developer of ayoa.com - an intelligent digital workspace which allows teams to manage meetings, build plans, and action tasks – all in one app.