



My Whole Self

My Whole Self: Healthy ways of working

At Mental Health First Aid England®, we believe wellbeing and productivity fuel one another. People and teams are at their most effective and creative when everybody feels psychologically safe and is seen, heard, and valued. This means being empowered to bring your whole self to work, wherever you are working from.

As the way we work continues to evolve, developing healthy working habits and supporting human connection is more important than ever. As part of My Whole Self, the campaign for workplace culture change, MHFA England® has developed this guide to support you to work effectively whether you are working remotely, on site or, a mixture of the two.

Creating healthy working habits is a shared responsibility between individuals and organisations. While organisations play a crucial role in fostering a supportive work environment, individuals also have a responsibility to care for their wellbeing.

Talk to your manager

The relationship between employee and manager is central to supporting good mental health and wellbeing and an organisation's productivity and performance.

You should invest time in developing a strong connection with your manager. Discussing your preferred ways of working and how work fits around your home life, as well as your employer's policies and expectations, will help build trust and understanding. If your circumstances change, let your manager know so you can work through challenges together and find solutions to suit everyone.



If you are a manager yourself, read our [My Whole Self Managers' Toolkit](#). It is full of tips to help throughout the employee lifecycle, giving ideas and tools to support you in your role.

With the right investment, managers can drive positive transformation in workplace mental health and performance. Read more about our about our manager training [here](#).

Stay connected

Whether at home or in the office, social connection is vital in maintaining wellbeing and promoting good mental health.

Our individual experiences will drive what feels good and helpful for each of us. Some people thrive working remotely, for others, connecting in person, collaborating in a workplace and the need for community is vital.

If you are not physically in work every day, setting aside time for anchor days, team days, and working with other teams is a great way to build cohesion. Making the time to socialise with people across your organisation can help you see the bigger picture, stay connected, and boost morale.

[Visit](#) our My Whole Self pages to find a range of activities you can do with your team to build cohesion, including the My Whole Self Book Club and My Whole Self Desert Island Favourites.

What if you have fully remote staff?

If you have team members who work remotely, think about how you can include them in 'on site' days. Short check-ins with individuals afterwards to share any updates can keep them involved and engaged.



Embrace and understand different working patterns

In today's workplaces, teams are often made up of people who have varying working styles and patterns. Recognising and appreciating these differences is crucial for creating a collaborative and productive work environment.

By understanding your colleagues' ways of working, you can adapt your approach to suit team members' needs and create plans to maximise team productivity. To effectively navigate the spectrum of working styles within your team, we recommend:

- 1. Open communication:** Encourage open and honest discussions about individual working styles, preferences, and challenges. If senior members of staff can also demonstrate these behaviours, it helps to accelerate change.
- 2. Observing and reflecting:** Pay attention to how your team approach tasks, communicate, and plan their time. Having 'shared' calendars allows people to see how you manage your working day and what non-negotiable events you have diarised. Putting the same information in your email signature or Teams status is also a useful way of letting people know your availability.
- 3. Seeking feedback:** Ask your team about their experiences of working with you and suggestions for improving collaboration.
- 4. Setting and sharing expectations:** We know that individuals can thrive with clarity, expectations, and boundaries. You can embrace different working patterns and still be clear about what an organisation needs to meet its operational needs.
- 5. Set core working hours:** This provides staff with workable parameters and shows that businesses do need to consider outcomes and operational needs.



Model effective meeting practice

Days spent in back-to-back meetings can leave people drained, especially if they are online. Ensure that you are planning your meetings effectively, so they contribute to a productive and fulfilling work environment.

Setting meeting parameters is not about avoiding collaboration but rather ensuring that your time is spent on the most valuable activities.

1. Give the meeting, whether online or in person, the attention it deserves

Remove distractions such as email notifications, sidebar conversations or phone alerts. If you are not actively participating in the meeting online, mute your microphone to keep background noise to a minimum.

2. Plan your meetings for optimal success

The Four Ps – Purpose, Product, People, and Process – is a framework designed to guide the planning and execution of effective meetings. Each “P” represents a key aspect that, when carefully considered, can contribute to more meaningful and productive meeting outcomes:

Purpose: Why are we meeting? Clearly defining the purpose of your meeting helps to set the overall direction for the meeting. It answers the question of what needs to be achieved and ensures that the meeting is not convened without a clear goal in mind.

Product: What are we aiming to produce or achieve during the meeting? This involves determining the specific outcomes or deliverables that should result from the discussions and decisions made during the meeting. It helps in setting expectations and measuring the meeting’s success.

People: Who needs to be present and what roles will they play? Appoint a chair to guide the meeting and ensure everyone has a chance to contribute. Clarifying roles ensures that each attendee understands their responsibilities effectively. Politely decline meetings that don’t align with your responsibilities or where your input is not crucial.



Process: How will the meeting be conducted? This addresses the structure and methods used during the meeting. It includes developing an agenda, setting a timeline, and establishing guidelines for participation. A well-defined process helps keep the meeting on track.

By considering the Four Ps, you can create a framework that maximises efficiency, engagement, and overall success. This approach promotes a more strategic and intentional approach to meetings, reducing the likelihood of unproductive or aimless discussions. Regularly reviewing and adjusting these elements can lead to continuous improvement in the quality of meetings within an organisation.

Take regular breaks

Taking regular breaks away from your workstation, whether at home or in the office, is not a luxury. It is a necessity for maintaining your physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. By incorporating regular breaks into your workday, you can reap a multitude of benefits, including improved focus, reduced stress, enhanced creativity, increased productivity, and a more fulfilling work experience.

You could try the following ideas to incorporate breaks into your day:

1. Get up from your chair and stretch your muscles every 20-30 minutes. Perform simple desk exercises or walk around the office to improve circulation and reduce muscle stiffness. Consider using a productivity app that reminds you to take breaks and provides guided exercises or mindfulness prompts.
2. Take some time outdoors or in a nearby open space to clear your mind, refresh your perspective, and boost your energy levels.
3. Set small goals for each break, such as completing a specific task or reaching a certain step count, to maintain motivation and a sense of accomplishment.



Disconnect and recharge for success

Disconnecting from work, is just as important as connecting. Working 'on site' requires us to get dressed, get out and move. It creates a separation between work and home. As well as this, the commuting and socialising that comes with a day at work gives an opportunity to metabolise some of the stresses and strains of everyday working life and connect with colleagues.

If you're working from home, disconnecting is perhaps even more important. When you've finished for the day, pack away your work area and move out of your workspace, if you can. Even something as simple as putting your laptop into a drawer at the end of the day can help you to leave your work behind and switch off.

You could also try removing your work email from your phone to help you disconnect in the evening and encourage people not to respond to emails out of their working hours. Including your work pattern on your email signature is a good way to help communicate your boundaries and the ways you work. For example:

"I work a four-day week with Mondays off."

"I work flexibly. I do not expect you to respond to emails outside of your working hours."

If you are going on annual leave, we recommend removing any apps or accounts that connect you to work, and unfollowing work accounts on social media.



Get moving

Including some movement into your work routine, whether at home or at work, will help maintain your physical and mental health. You'll feel more awake and alert, and your concentration and sleep will improve.

If commuting into the office, why not walk to the station, instead of driving, or walk from the station rather than getting the bus? If you are tired of sitting down, you could make your next meeting a 'walk and talk', either online or in person. Movement is good for your body and mind, and you may even find that a walking meeting can increase your creativity.

Many organisations offer benefits in the form of subsidised gym memberships or exercise classes. Make sure you know what is on offer and use them if you can.

Prioritise self-care

Incorporating self-care into daily routines is essential for creating healthy working patterns. It not only benefits individual wellbeing but also has positive ripple effects on professional performance, relationships, and overall career longevity.

You could listen to your favourite music or podcast, read a book, or get outside and do some exercise. Fuelling your body with nutritious food is also an important element of self-care. A balanced diet impacts our bodies and has benefits for mood and cognitive function. You can read more about self-care [here](#).

Spread kindness

Make the time to do something that will bring joy to a colleague's day. You could drop them a note to say thank you or send them a message to check how they are doing.

If you manage a team, actively acknowledge and celebrate success at the end of projects. Using an online recognition service, such as Bonusly, is also a great way of showing your appreciation of colleagues.



Talk to your MHFAider

If your company has trained MHFAiders®, make a note of their contact details, and don't hesitate to get in touch with them if you need to. They can use their skills to support anyone struggling with their mental health by signposting them to the appropriate support, both in and outside of the workplace. You can read more about our MHFAider training [here](#).

Speak to your HR team or use your Employee Assistance Programme

If you have concerns about your mental health or ways of working and don't feel able to speak to your manager, consider talking to your HR team or contacting your Employee Assistance Programme, if you have one.

Mental health helplines

If you are struggling with your mental health and need immediate support, Samaritans offers free, confidential support 24 hours a day on 116 123.

Shout 85258 is a free, confidential, 24/7 text support service. By texting the word 'SHOUT' to 85258, you will start a conversation with a trained Shout Volunteer.

Find a list of national mental health services and helplines at mhfaengland.org.

If you are concerned about your safety or the safety of others, always call 999.