

Simple Skills to Reduce Staff's Mental and Physical Stress – and How To Introduce Them



Ph: 08 6372 4016
Mobile: 0408 751 379
Email: info@beyondergo.com.au

Website: <https://beyondergo.com.au/>
Postal: PO Box 357, Melville, WA 6956,
Australia

Street: Level 13, Citibank House, 37 St
Georges Terrace, Perth 6000, Australia
ABN 75 168 752 716

Simple Skills to Reduce Staff's Mental and Physical Stress – and How To Introduce Them

Introduction

This article and associated coaching sheet were created in response to growing calls from frontline leaders for practical ways to help reduce the mental stress prevalent in today's screen-based workplaces. This article outlines strategies that provide immediate benefits and, when reinforced over time and used in collaboration with the coaching sheet, support reductions in absenteeism, presenteeism and attrition associated with work-related stress.

Managers and frontline leaders play a vital role in creating a healthy, safe, and wellness business culture. While not expected to take personal responsibility for the health, safety and wellness of staff, it is managers' language, guidance and actions that support staff's ability to build the self-care competencies needed to take greater care of themselves at work.

The Benefits

The research increasingly shows the need and benefits of businesses providing additional mental and physical wellness support to staff, and not just because these programs make good business sense, although...



For every \$1 invested in workplace health and wellness programs, there is a return of \$5.81. That's a return on investment of over 500%.

Put simply, on a personal level, individuals experiencing ongoing stress will also be experiencing headaches, low energy, aches and pains, difficulty focusing, and taking care of themselves or asking for help becomes a low priority.

Sometimes it is only through gentle reminders and developing work habits that help manage mental and physical stress, making these skills commonplace, that individuals reflect on their own stress levels and begin to implement them into their own lives.

Health, safety, and wellness programs that demonstrate managers' value for staff and their commitment to their wellness don't need to be all about ping-pong tables and exciting murals. The ideas and actions outlined in this article are simple, cost nothing, and with the aid of the coaching sheet, will be easy to implement.



Frontline Leader: I'm concerned. Now that I've done a Mental First Aid Course, my team expects me to be constantly alert for signs of distress and have a toolbox full of solutions. This is very stressful.

Answer: It is not your job to take personal responsibility for the mental and physical health of staff. However, managers are well placed to play a significant supporting role in staff well-being.



This outline is not designed to replace a Mental First Aid course. These are simple, no-cost ideas and actions that frontline leaders can immediately and easily implement.

Workplace health, safety and wellness should be a partnership between managers and staff. Management has an obligation to create a safe working environment, and by providing the right support and resources, staff can build the belief, skills and work habits needed to take greater care of themselves. However, even with encouragement and support, ultimately, it's the individual's decision and responsibility to use these resources and build important wellness skills.

The strategies described in this article and coaching sheet are designed to engage and support your staff's efforts to build self-care competencies; the new personal protective behaviours (PPBs) needed in these modern, intense, physically (and often emotionally) demanding screen-based work environments.

What is Stress?

Stress is the mind's and body's way of preparing us to face a challenge. A certain level of stress is necessary not only to function but also to motivate us to reach our full potential. However, too much stress can be a health hazard. The first important step in stress management involves noticing when our stress levels have become unhealthy. Once stress overload is recognised, a range of stress management skills is available to address the problem. (<https://wayahead.org.au/get-the-facts/recognising-and-managing-stress/>)



Simply, two factors affect feelings of stress. The environment around you (e.g. stressful events) and your way of dealing with that environment (e.g. your personality, self-care skills)



Did you know: When we experience stress, our bodies use up enormous amounts of **vitamins and minerals**. That's why we get so tired, irritable and less able to cope with everyday activities.

Coaching Tip: Here is an easy way to introduce mental health care without launching into a mental health discussion, which may be a step too far.

If worried a staff member is experiencing high levels of stress, suggest they look tired, or a little run down. This easily leads to suggesting they may be low in Iron or Magnesium, and a trip to the doctor could be wise.

Now you have shown your concern and helped that member of staff take positive action. ***It is hard to know what steps to take when you are stressed. You are too busy surviving.***

Mental and Physical Stress are Linked

Mental and physical wellness are strongly linked, making it essential to build strategies to manage both.





For example, if you are feeling anxious or nervous before a meeting, your body becomes tense, your breathing quickens, and your brain literally starts going into fight-or-flight mode, which impairs your thinking.

BUT, if you do 20 wall push-ups to get rid of the adrenaline, then take a deep breath and consciously relax, you walk into the meeting feeling calm and focused.

The physical affects the mental, just as the mental affects the physical.

In [Dr Jackson's](#) article on [Unifying the Mind and the Body Through Aerial Therapeutics](#), Sue notes:



"In reality, our minds and bodies are intimately connected, and what happens to one affects the other. If our mind feels fear, our body reacts in kind with an accelerated pulse, sweat and rapid eye movements. If we exercise our bodies, [research shows it can ease symptoms of anxiety and depression](#). More and more health professionals worldwide are recognising the connection between mind and body and refocusing on a holistic approach to wellness. Integration of [mind and body is increasingly seen as a global wellness trend](#)."

Practical Tips and Tools for Frontline Leaders

Supporting Mental Wellness

Building relaxation and mindfulness skills provides significant benefits, including an increased ability to sustain focus and refocus, release stress and reset back to a calm space. These simple skills (which should become everyday work habits) ensure stress does not build into overwhelm throughout the day and help staff leave work pressures at work.

[Dr Jackson](#) recommends simple strategies that managers, especially frontline leaders, can share with teams to help them manage stress. However, Sue notes that while interventions can be implemented at little or no cost, they do require some guidance and support to establish habits.

Supporting Staff at Work

Encourage Mindfulness Breaks: These simple mini- and micro-breaks encourage staff to be mindful of their feelings and take action to release mental and physical stress throughout the day. These short mindfulness breaks help stop stress and tension from building and prevent feelings of overwhelm.

[Click Here](#) / [Download Your Signs of Mental and Physical Stress Handout to Support and Share with your Team](#)



For example, you may realise you are frustrated, angry or anxious. By being mindful of those feelings, you can consciously release the tension, relax and reset. Then think, 'Okay, what is the next thing I want to do?'



This practice may be as **short as a single breath** and as simple as focusing on your breathing for 30 seconds,

Introduce a Formal Practice: Consider offering a [Lunch & Learn](#) or a short 6-week program run by a [Mindfulness Practitioner](#). Initially, it's challenging to know when and how to respond, so providing guidance helps staff reflect on the present moment and take action to reset. This important first step helps avoid frustration and encourages the application of these simple practices in the workplace.

One example of a mindful moment or self-reflection is a practice called 'Cues'



Cues involve taking a moment when you realise you're stressed, anxious, etc. (e.g. after an irate customer or complicated sequence of customer enquiries).

- Settle back in the chair,
- Check in with how you're feeling,
- become aware,
- take the breaths and consciously relax and release tense muscles (focus on shoulders and stomach),
- releasing the negative thoughts, coming back to be calm
- then decide what needs to happen next

Supporting Physical Wellness

General Advice

As mentioned above, there is a strong connection between physical and mental wellness. Taking time to be physically active is an invaluable tool for managing stress. Exercise releases muscle tension, boosting brain function and builds the physical conditioning needed to help avoid aches and pains. Sitting for long periods is surprisingly tiring.

[Click Here](#) | ***Download our easy-to-share ideas and talking points to support Wellness at Work***

While it's important to find an aerobic exercise you enjoy, here are a few good choices if you're looking for inspiration.



- **Dancing** is joyous and social
- **Swimming** is a bilateral exercise and weight-supported. A good exercise for those with injuries, such as bad knees or arthritis. However, avoid breaststroke if you have neck issues
- A **martial art or boxing**, because sometimes you just want to beat the living bejeebas out of something (which is fantastic stress release)
- **Rowing or rowing machine**. Again, great bilateral exercise and rowing uses more muscles in the body than any other exercise
- **Gardening** involves dynamic movement and is very fulfilling, as you feel physically tired and you see what you have achieved
- **Walking in green spaces** relaxes the mind and body. There is something restorative about taking time to immerse yourself in your local park, botanical garden, or state forest, especially when combined with water.



VERY IMPORTANT



- **Don't say**, 'If I have time'. Commit and put it in your diary
- **Routine** is crucial. Make a plan and stick to the plan
- **Start with simple and achievable goals**. As simple and achievable as standing up for your favourite TV program or walking just one block each day
- **JUST START**

Managing Physical Stress to Reduce Mental Stress at Work

A significant factor contributing to mental stress is physical stress and pain.

Professor Alan Hedge's research reveals **that at least 80% of employees in offices, contact centres, and similar settings report aches, pains, and musculoskeletal discomfort related to their work**. I know from **my PhD research** that **over 11% of the contact centre consultants experience chronic pain every day!** That's pain that **DOES NOT** go away after rest.



Chronic pain is costing the Australian economy \$55 billion a year, with \$7 billion attributed to lost productivity, before considering any other health issues or business expenses.

Work Posture Check

Encouraging staff to be mindful of their posture is very important. All ergonomic and wellness recommendations make it possible to avoid discomfort and injury, but only by implementing these recommendations as work behaviours can we prevent aches from developing into muscle pain or injury.



THIS IS IMPORTANT: All the ergonomic and well-being recommendations only make it possible to avoid discomfort and injury. It is only through ensuring staff develop the right self-care competencies that allow them to implement those recommendations as everyday work habits that you give staff the best chance of avoiding musculoskeletal pain or injury.

REMEMBER, physical pain adds to mental fatigue and stress. This, in turn, contributes to increasing levels of absenteeism, presenteeism and attrition.



Introducing the Roll-Reset-Relax

However, a simple set of actions can reduce upper-body discomfort and headaches by up to 50%. I call it the **Roll-Reset-Relax sequence**, and this one helps staff become mindful of their work posture. It releases upper body tension and, importantly, resets their work posture back to a relaxed and neutral position.

The goal of all ergonomic furniture, equipment and recommendations is to ensure everyone can work in a relaxed, neutral work posture. But that posture is hard to achieve or sustain if staff are unaware they are sitting in an awkward position or don't know how to reset to the best possible posture, thereby placing the lowest stress on the body.

The ROLL-RESET-RELAX sequence needs to become an everyday work habit!

This one activity provides immediate benefits, and when staff repeat this regularly (five or six times a day), it supports recovery from current aches and pains associated with work-related mental and physical stress. All managers need to do is share and demonstrate this one sequence with staff and encourage them to repeat it throughout the day.

Easy

Coaching Roll-Reset-Relax

The Coaching Sheet includes a script you can use to introduce this activity to staff.

And here is the link to [download your Roll-Reset-Relax poster](#).



Using the Coaching Sheet

As stated above, managers play a vital role in creating a healthy, safe and wellness business culture. While not expected to take personal responsibility for the health, safety and wellness of staff, it is managers' language, guidance and actions that support staff's ability to build the self-care competencies needed to take greater care of themselves at work.

The Coaching Sheet outlines signs that a person may be experiencing ongoing stress and provides activities and coaching tips for managers, particularly frontline leaders, to share with their staff.

These activities can be utilised in several ways.



- Used as talking points to create awareness and start the conversation
- Becomes a helpful reference if concerned about a staff member
- Share as a handout to all staff during team meetings
- Encourage application by introducing, demonstrating and practising a different activity with staff during a team meeting. This helps break down that barrier of feeling too awkward to try this solo at work (a barrier that is even harder to break down when you are stressed).

Aim for Gold

But do you want to know the GOLD STANDARD? Using an action plan offers businesses the greatest long-term benefits, positively impacting absenteeism, stress, productivity, and attrition.

The very best course of action is to build these activities into an ongoing routine of review, practice and reinforcement.

As with any new work routine or procedure, transitioning to a new workplace is challenging unless there is a clear obligation to implement it. Staff are busy, and old routines are hard to break, even when promoting increased comfort and wellbeing. If used just as a handout at a team meeting with no follow-up actions to implementation, all the handouts will go into a drawer and never be seen again.

Managers and frontline leaders can reinforce the transfer of knowledge by introducing an activity (outlining its purpose and benefits), demonstrating it, then rehearsing the activity with the team, and finally, showing staff that they have implemented the activity as a new work habit.

Remember, Management has an obligation to provide a **safe and supportive work environment**. Part of that obligation is ensuring staff have the knowledge, expertise, and resources needed to take reasonable care of themselves and not do anything that would affect the health and safety of others at work.

[Click Here](#) | **Download your Action Planner**

It's a Wrap

This short outline does not replace a Mental First Aid talk or program. It has been designed to provide managers, especially frontline leaders, with practical ideas and actions to support staff's mental and physical well-being. More specifically, to help staff build certain self-care competencies that allow them to release stress and tension and recentre in a calm space, which increases their ability to care for themselves at work.

These are some of the new ergonomic and self-care competencies staff can and should automatically apply every day, no matter where they work.

We hope you find this article insightful, practical and useful. Everything we do at Beyond Ergo focuses on translating the latest research and recommendations into practical and actionable work skills. **These become new self-care competencies; the new personal protective behaviours (PPBs) staff need to care for themselves**, especially as staff embrace an increasingly complex array of work choices, including activity-based workplaces, telecommuting, hot-desking, sit-stand workstations, multiple screens, mobile devices, and a range of health risks associated with increasingly sedentary work.

Our Purpose | We help businesses improve productivity and labour costs by decreasing work-related pain and risk of injury claims. We achieve this by training individuals in Personal Protective Behaviours (PPBs) that they need for modern mobile and increasingly sedentary computer work.

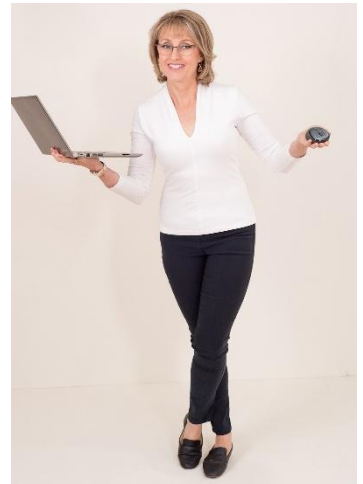
These new multidisciplinary programs go Beyond Ergonomics to build Personalised Ergonomics and Self-Care Competencies for today's mobile, computer-based and increasingly sedentary workforce.



Meet Dr Elizabeth Kirk (PhD)

Dr Kirk built the unique Beyond Ergo program through PhD research at the University of Queensland and in collaboration with major Brisbane-based contact centres.

Grounded in research and informed by client feedback and industry trends, Liz has developed a clear focus on creating programs to ensure that Beyond Ergo training can help as many people as possible reduce chronic pain and the risk of injury.



Reenergize Your Team's Training & Wellness Programs

Most workplace wellness and ergonomic initiatives start with good intentions—but often fade without creating lasting change. That's where [Beyond Ergo](#) steps in.

Our **practical talks and interactive programs** are designed to extend and reenergize your existing training, introducing the new range of **ergo self-care competencies** every computer user needs in today's tech-driven work environment.

Start with our [Lunch & Learn session](#)—a fun, interactive introduction where your team will walk away with:

- ✓ **3 new skills they can immediately apply**
- ✓ Practical strategies they'll feel the benefits of right away
- ✓ Tools to reduce discomfort, boost focus, and improve long-term wellbeing

Help your team build lasting habits that protect health, sharpen performance, and reduce risks at work. Beyond Ergo makes it simple, practical, and effective.

👉 Discover [Lunch & Learn](#) today and give your team the skills that last far beyond the training room.

👉 [Book a call](#) to learn more.

👉 Register for our [practical Newsletter](#) that makes WHS and wellness information for computer users accessible and easy to apply.

Beyond Ergo

Ph: 08 6372 4016
Mobile: 0408 751 379
Email: info@beyondergo.com.au

Website: <https://beyondergo.com.au/>
Postal: PO Box 357, Melville, WA 6956,
Australia

Street: Level 13, Citibank House, 37 St
Georges Terrace, Perth 6000, Australia
ABN 75 168 752 716