4 Steps to Implementing a Safe Health Culture for Remote Work

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Thanks to the ongoing pandemic, many companies and professionals have resorted to working from home. However, just because everyone is indoors doesn't mean all health risks are eliminated. In fact, Thrive Global has outlined some of the most common health problems remote workers face daily such as lower back pain, eye strain, and lack of sleep. Additionally, a separate study on The Conversation informs that remote workers also face a lot more stress, anxiety, and burnout.

For managers and team leaders, the challenge lies in taking care of your workers' well-being, especially now. Otherwise, it could lead to lower productivity and morale. That being said, here are four steps to implementing a safe health culture for remote work.

Ensure they follow ergonomic practices

Posture is something that can easily go unnoticed when you're working, especially if you're just at home. As noted on Pain Free Working's article on the importance of ergonomics, keeping a healthy posture while at work helps prevent serious injuries in the long run. To start, monitors should be at eye level, feet should be flat on the floor, and chairs must have back rests for support. Reminding your team of these necessary cues shows that you continue to look out for them, despite the physical distance.

Give them the opportunity to socialize

Faced with limited avenues for social interaction, Buffer's 2020 State of Remote Work report found that 1 in 5 remote workers often feel lonely. To prevent this from happening, give them an avenue to socialize. While dinner nights and weekly hangouts are temporarily out the picture, you can still do some fun bonding activities online, like playing online games, streaming a film together, or even having virtual coffee breaks via video

conferencing software. It's a nice reminder that they aren't alone, and that colleagues are there if anyone needs someone to talk to.

Set strict working hours

One of the downsides to remote working is the tendency to work longer hours. To this end, it helps to set strict working hours in a day. This doesn't have to mean sticking to a 9-to-5 schedule like traditional office settings, but simply ensuring that they don't work more than the required hours is enough. Time tracking software such as Hubstaff and Clockify lets you monitor timestamps. This way, you can gently remind them to take a break when they go overboard. Moreover, one of our *9 Steps To Improving Safety Culture* is to 'practice what you preach'. If your team sees you faithfully clocking-out when it's time, then they are more likely to follow your example.

Host live exercise classes

One of the biggest challenges of working at home is staying active. To promote the importance of physical activity in the virtual workspace, it's recommended that you introduce an exercise program to help them get started. You don't always need to enlist the help of a professional trainer. For instance, one of OH Partners' 'most athletic teammates' leads a 30-minute workout every week. You can also refer to free online fitness classes offered by gyms like Planet Fitness and Movati Athletic to conduct your own session. It's always more motivating to exercise with peers, than by yourself.

Building a safe health culture in the virtual office takes time, but it's definitely an investment every remote company should be making. Your team will be more productive and happier in the long run.

Post written for safetynow.com

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