

# ACCIDENT REVIEW STAFF COMMITTEE

## SAFETY MATTERS NEWSLETTER

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

May 2022



### Safety Risks Associated with Sleep Deprivation and Resulting Fatigue

Sleep is a biological need for life and health. Like the need for food, too little or too much has significant mental and physical health consequences. Most adults need seven to nine hours of good-quality sleep every 24 hours to perform well. When you lose sleep, you build up sleep debt that will seriously impair your performance at work, and the only way to pay off this debt is to get enough sleep. Management may perceive fatigue as a behavioral problem –



- lack of commitment to the job
- poor attitude,
- lack of willpower

Creating a culture in the workplace that recognizes the importance of fatigue management is critical. As we consider the future of work, now is the time for employers to address sleep deprivation and fatigue to support their employees' well-being – and ultimately their organizations' success.

- It has been estimated that 13% of all workplace injuries are related to sleep deprivation and fatigue
- \* And, according to the National Safety Council, highly fatigued workers are 70% more likely to be involved in incidents that result in injury and are nearly twice as likely to die in a work-related incident



This is because mental fatigue leads to distortions that influence decision-making. For example, making decisions automatically, without conscious thought. Our brains are very selective on what to focus on and this is more limited with fatigue. We think we see everything in view, but we don't. We believe we can multitask, but when we try, we make more errors.

Supervisors will likely need to rely on observation and experience to identify when workers are experiencing fatigue and possible presenteeism. Signs of fatigue include –

- acute or chronic sleepiness
- yawning and irritability
- reduced memory or concentration
- low motivation
- making mistakes
- lapses in communication and judgment.



Supervisors should be trained on how to spot these signs and intervene and clearly reinforce with employees that it is their responsibility to arrive at work rested and ready to provide full effort.

Employees having problems obtaining adequate amounts and/or quality of sleep, should follow up with a healthcare provider to seek assistance.\*\*

\*\*The City's EAP is available to employees and their household members (800) 638-3327

Source: PRIMA Article by Mark S. Williams, DC, MBA, DACBOH, MEDICAL DIRECTOR, CLAIMS, THE HARTFORD  
\* Uehli K, Mehta AJ, Miedinger D, Hug K, Schindler C, Holsboer-Trachsler E, Leuppi JD, Kunzli N Sleep Med Rev. 2014 Feb; 18(1):61-73.

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## MENTAL HEALTH CARE



**Mental health** in the workplace should be taken just as seriously as physical health. Organizations can take steps to help limit burnout and other poor mental health outcomes.

The CDC estimates that 40% of American adults struggled with their mental health in 2020, and 71% reported having difficulty managing stress and feeling overwhelmed. With these numbers, it is not surprising that many in the environment, health and safety (EHS) field are beginning to see mental health as an area of great professional concern.

### How to look after your mental health

It is important to take care of yourself and get the most from life. Below are 10 practical ways to look after your mental health. Making simple changes to how you live does not need to cost a fortune or take up loads of time. Anyone can follow this advice. Why not start today?

1. **Talk about your feelings...** Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled.
2. **Keep active...** Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you concentrate, sleep, and feel better. Exercise keeps the brain and your other vital organs healthy and is also a significant benefit towards improving your mental health.
3. **Eat well...** Your brain needs a mix of nutrients in order to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that is good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.
4. **Drink sensibly...** We often drink alcohol to change our mood. Some people drink to deal with fear or loneliness, but the effect is only temporary.

When the drink wears off, you feel worse because of the way the alcohol has affected your brain and the rest of your body. Drinking is not a good way to manage difficult feelings.

5. **Keep in touch...** There's nothing better than catching up with someone face to face, but that's not always possible. You can give them a call, drop them a note, or chat to them online instead. Keep the lines of communication open: it's good for you!



6. **Ask for help...** None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things don't go to plan.

If things are getting too much for you and you feel you cannot cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear. Local services are there to help you, such as the City's EAP.\*\*

7. **Take a break...** A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health. It could be a five-minute pause from cleaning your kitchen, a half-hour lunch break at work, or a weekend exploring somewhere new. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you.

### Give yourself some 'me time'

8. **Do something you're good at...** What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past?

Enjoying yourself can help beat stress. Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it and achieving something boosts your self-esteem.

9. **Accept who you are...** We're all different. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else.

Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence to learn new skills, visit new places, and make new friends. Good self-esteem helps you cope when life takes a difficult turn.

10. **Care for others...** Caring for others is often an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you. It can even bring you closer together.

Ref: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>



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