



Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland

## Mental Health Tips for Employers: An Occupational Therapy Perspective

Occupational therapy is a health care profession concerned with a person's independence in and satisfaction with the everyday activities and roles that give meaning to our lives. The workplace can impact on mental health in many ways including the physical and social environment, organisational factors, job conditions and security, and personal factors. Mental health problems can result from prolonged stress and lead to reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, faulty decision making and low motivation.

To protect the mental health of your employees there are several things you can do including:

- **Comfortable Environment:** Create a working environment with sufficient light, ventilation, space, heat and reduced noise. Give employees control over these factors where possible so that they are comfortable.
- **Vary Jobs:** If some jobs are boring or petty alternate these among employees where possible.
- **Healthy Diet:** Ensure the staff canteen offers nutritious and healthy meal options.
- **Regular Training and Support:** Provide training and support for all employees to reach their full potential. Foster an environment of shared support and learning
- **Communicate:** Have a transparent system of communication and consultation. Listen to employees and value their involvement. Be flexible and open to new ideas. Keep employees informed during times of change. Being unsure is more stressful than having accurate information, even if it is bad news.
- **Appraise:** Provide regular appraisal on performance and set goals with employees for professional development. Have defined career paths and promotional opportunities for employees.
- **Give Responsibility:** Ensure each employee has clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- **Have Fun:** Encourage social networking among staff. Start up a social committee or company sports team and be inclusive in this. Celebrate the achievements of employees both within and outside the workplace.
- **Policies:** Provide clear policies on harassment and bullying and ensure these are enforced appropriately so that all employees feel safe and secure in the workplace.

If any of your employees have a mental health difficulty and are seeing an occupational therapist the occupational therapist may recommend meeting with you to discuss the specific needs of that employee in the workplace. If you would like to contact an occupational therapist to discuss your particular work place you can find a list of occupational therapists at [www.aoti.ie](http://www.aoti.ie)