

Institute of Animal Technology (IAT)

AWARENESS ON MENTAL HEALTH



Let's Talk 'Mental Health'

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. Both change throughout our lives, and like our bodies, our minds can become unwell.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes mental health as *"a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community"*.¹

Whether you work in your facility with 3 people, 30 people or 300 people, paying attention to your mental health is extremely important! The role and environment in which Animal Technologists work can have an impact on mental wellbeing.

Moreover, poor employee wellbeing is linked to high sickness absence and turnover and poor performance, whereas good employee wellbeing is linked to low sickness absence and turnover and high productivity.

Mental health is sometimes still viewed as being a 'taboo subject' but there are simple steps that can be taken to ensure your facility is mentally healthier. Moreover, there is still a lack of understanding about mental health and misperceptions exist. Mental health issues are often thought to be a sign of weakness, which they are not.²

A better understanding of mental health at work is important because:

- Mental ill health is very common – 1 in 4 will experience it!
- Staff with positive mental health are more likely to work productively, interact well with colleagues and adapt to changes in the workplace.
- Staff supported by their employer are more likely to stay in work or return to work after a period of absence, reducing long term absences in the organisation.
- Staff who feel unable to talk to their manager may attend work when they are too ill to safely carry out their duties, which could be a health and safety risk.
- If mental ill health is not treated, the pressures of it can cause other 'secondary symptoms' e.g. the strain of coping with depression may cause someone to become dependent on alcohol or drugs.³

How can I help myself and my team?

- Take simple steps to ensure a work-life balance is addressed.
- Be open and encourage team discussions in tea rooms and team meetings.
- Go for a walk or organise events as a team (even lunch or breakfast) outside the facility.
- Eat well and drink sensibly.
- Take a break.
- Do something you are good at.
- Accept who you are.⁴



In addition, a Manager could:

- Ensure your staff understand and have some training in mental health awareness to remove any stigma associated with mental health.
- Create a mental health policy and ensure your staff know where to go for support and further information when required.
- Encourage named mental health champions in the workplace who can be approached if an employee does not feel comfortable talking to you as their line manager.

¹ World Health Organisation. Mental health: a state of well-being [Internet]; 2014 [cited 2019 Aug 7]. Available from: https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

² <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/about-mental-health/what-mental-health>

³ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/mental-health-factsheet>

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health>

Haley Daniels – IAT Equality and Diversity Officer



**Mental Health
Awareness**



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If you are interested in becoming part of a Support Group, with peers from within our industry, to look at issues that face techs that could lead to burn out and poor mental health

Then please **REGISTER YOUR INTEREST**



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by contacting the IAT Equality and Diversity Officer
diversity@iat.org.uk

It's good to talk!