

## 5 ways to support remote employees

Most employees working from home say they experience negative mental health impacts, including isolation, loneliness, and difficulty getting away from work at the end of the day. It can be stressful because of blurred boundaries, long hours online, disconnection from coworkers and substandard workstations. As a leader, you have a pivotal role in maintaining team productivity while also keeping employee well-being in mind. You are responsible for identifying signs of distress and connecting employees to resources. In a virtual work environment, you also need to create an environment that makes it okay to talk about mental well-being.

### 1. Demonstrate empathy

Take time to understand what your team needs to feel supported, motivated, and engaged. Often, showing appreciation for employees can go a long way toward helping them feel heard and understood. The following actions can signal your support:

- + Show empathy for your employees in one-on-one conversations about how they're feeling about their work pace and volume
- + Offer flexibility whenever possible
- + If an employee is showing signs of distress, do more listening than talking
- + Stick to open-ended questions and statements like, "What's going on for you?" and "Tell me more about that."



#### Tips for leaders:

- + Demonstrate empathy
- + Lead by example
- + Encourage social connections
- + Address stress and burnout
- + Remind employees of their benefits



## 2. Lead by example

Because leaders are used to demonstrating productivity and confidence, they may not naturally gravitate toward discussing their own challenges, but it's exactly this tactic that helps employees feel more at ease.

When you mention what's been challenging for you, or how you're trying to balance work and home responsibilities, it can help employees feel like they can open up about those issues, too. If your toddler pops in during a video meeting and you can acknowledge it without needing to apologize for it, it's a sign that they don't need to, either.

## 3. Encourage social connections

Remote work can mean fewer opportunities for the type of casual social interactions that happen every day in a physical workplace. This can spur feelings of isolation and disconnection, which add to stress levels and raise the risk of burnout. To mitigate this, check in casually with each team member throughout the week about how they're doing. Consider holding brief coffee chats that focus less on work and more about connecting as a team. Encourage employees to get involved in social opportunities within the organization, such as signing up for a volunteer event or joining an employee resource group.

## 4. Address stress and burnout

Burnout is a response to prolonged exposure to job stressors and include exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. It arises when an employee has an unsustainable workload, lack of control, insufficient rewards to their efforts, lack of support, lack of fairness, or mismatched values and skills. As a leader, it's important to check-in with your team and have an open dialogue on how they're feeling. Monitor their workloads and encourage flexible scheduling when possible. Ask how they prefer to be recognized and acknowledge their accomplishments. Remind employees to prioritize self-care by utilizing their paid time off and well-being benefits.

## 5. Remind employees of their mental well-being benefits

Encourage employees to utilize the tools and resources available to help them manage stress, build emotional resilience, practice mindfulness, and find happiness.

At Providence, we offer solutions across the behavioral health continuum. Members have access to everything from self-help tools to 24/7 crisis support. We make it easy and affordable to access help, virtually and in-person.

**Want to learn more about how you can support workplace mental well-being?  
Our team will be glad to help!**

[WorkplaceWellness@providence.org](mailto:WorkplaceWellness@providence.org) | [ProvidenceHealthPlan.com](https://www.providencehealthplan.com)

