Enhancing Well-being at the Workplace: Tips for a Happier and Healthier Work Life

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In today's fast-paced and demanding work environments, well-being has become crucial for individuals and organizations. Psychological well-being, generally defined as a subjective experience of positive emotions and satisfaction with life, is foundational to optimal human functioning and closely linked to positive work outcomes; individuals with higher levels of well-being are more engaged, productive, and satisfied with their jobs (Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). Well-being at work goes beyond monetary compensation as research indicates that income alone is insufficient for attaining high levels of well-being. Evidence drawn from worldwide representative data shows that income satiation occurs at $95,000 for life evaluation and $60,000 to $75,000 for emotional well-being (Jebb et al. 2018). In other words, income level only boosts life evaluation when it is under $95,000 a year and emotional well-being when it is below $60,000 to $75,000 a year.

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There are several crucial and effective paths leading to well-being at work: finding meaningful work that aligns with one's values, interests, and skills (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), achieving work-life balance, where individuals can effectively manage their personal and professional lives (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), and building healthy and positive relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2002). This article explores these evidence-based strategies aimed at improving well-being at work.

Tip #1 – Practice life crafting

Life crafting refers to intentionally designing and creating a work and life that aligns with individual needs and preferences (De Bloom et al., 2020). It involves taking stock of individual needs (e.g., physical exercise, relationships, work achievement) and making deliberate choices about how time is allocated to work, family, hobbies, and personal growth. Recognizing the importance of individual needs and actively ensuring they are fulfilled can lead to higher levels of well-being. This may involve negotiating flexible work arrangements, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-care activities.
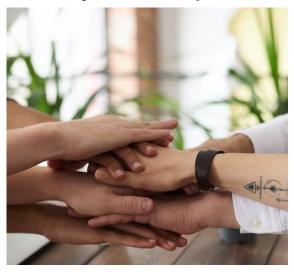
Tip #2 – Engage in a variety of personal well-being practices

Engaging in personal well-being practices is essential for maintaining a sustainable work-life balance. Mindfulness, rest or sleep, physical exercise, and psychological detachment from work are four exemplar practices that have been shown to significantly contribute to well-being. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, help reduce stress, improve focus, and enhance overall mental well-being (Keng et al., 2011). Adequate rest and sleep are vital for cognitive functioning and physical recovery, while regular exercise boosts mood, reduces stress, and improves overall health (Mammen & Faulkner, 2013). Regular physical exercise during leisure time has significant benefits not only for physical health but also for positive mood and life satisfaction (Wiese, 2018). Finally, engaging in activities that help to mentally detach from work (i.e., playing with children/pets, watching TV) help individuals to recover from stress and bounce back to challenges at work (Sonnentag et al., 2012).

Tip #3 – Nourish supportive and healthy relationships

As social creatures, humans have an inherent need for meaningful relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Cultivating deep, meaningful connections, rather than focusing on the quantity of relationships, is key to enhancing well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Building and maintaining a circle of trusted friends and colleagues provides a support network that contributes to long-term emotional well-being. It is important to remember that it takes time and intentional efforts to foster these relationships through regular social interactions and shared experiences. Examples of social connectedness include sharing meals, engaging in hobbies together, and celebrating important events.

Prioritizing well-being is fundamental for individuals and organizations. Income alone is insufficient to achieve high levels of well-being, as finding meaningful work and maintaining work-life balance are both crucial factors. Life crafting allows individuals to intentionally design their work and leisure time to align with their needs and interests. Engaging in personal practices to recover and detach from work such as mindfulness, sleep, and exercise is essential for higher well-being. Lastly, nurturing deep, meaningful relationships also plays a vital role in promoting well-being. By implementing these strategies, individuals can create a happier and healthier work life, leading to improved overall satisfaction and performance.

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