

Mental Health Awareness Week 2024

This week, 13 to 19 May 2024, is Mental Health Awareness Week, which aims to provide an opportunity to focus on achieving good mental health.

This year's theme is "Movement: Moving more for our mental health."

Working in the legal sector can be rewarding, but it is also demanding. Factors such as workloads, long hours, client demands and emotionally challenging cases can, for some people, lead to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and stress. Being active can play an important role in maintaining good mental health, yet finding the time for regular movement and exercise can be a struggle for many of us.

The conversation of tackling mental health challenges in the legal sector has been thrown into the spotlight in recent months. Here, we have provided some tips and guidance to help make movement part of your regular routine when you work long hours and have a busy schedule.

1. Conduct walking meetings or standing discussions instead of traditional seated meetings. This will promote movement and encourage creativity and productivity.
2. Consider a more active commute, such as walking or

cycling to/from the office.

3. Try to stand up more throughout your day and take the stairs when you can.
4. Make sure that you take your lunch break and use part of it to engage in some form of movement, such as a short brisk walk.
5. Make an effort to get out of the office. If possible, find a place with some greenery where you can disconnect for a short time.
6. Working from home can make it more difficult to get up and moving, but small changes such as getting up frequently to stretch and move about can be very effective.
7. Re-arrange your work station so that the items you need throughout your day are further out of reach. This will force you to get up more often to, for example, drink water or collect printing.
8. Schedule exercise into your calendar – if you put aside time for exercise it can actually help increase your productivity.
9. Think about creating an exercise group with your work colleagues or sign up to a fitness challenge together.

Promoting and supporting movement and exercise in the

workplace creates a positive work environment, so it is crucial that employers focus on employee health and wellbeing. Not only will this help improve mental health, brain function and productivity, but it will also boost team morale, reduce stress levels and increase job satisfaction, which can attract and keep top talent. Embracing strategies to create an active workplace culture is key.

BDBF has already got a number of initiatives in place that help promote good mental health in our workplace.

These include:

- a flexible approach to working in the office, which allows our lawyers to choose the days on which they come in (in addition to anchor days) and means that there is a regular rotation of who is in the office and who works from home;
- a chart that is circulated throughout the week and a colour coded diary system so that we can easily see who will be in the office on which days;
- a group WhatsApp what where we discuss non-work-related matters;
- birthday cards and gifts sent to our homes on our birthday day off;
- weekly team meetings where every member of the firm updates the group on how busy they are, what they are working on and can raise any issues with their cases or

workload;

- monthly supervision meetings with a partner to discuss the progress of current cases and workload;
- an open door/phoneline policy where team members can speak to each other in person or on a video call/phone call at any time during the working day;
- weekly communal lunches in the kitchen area for those working in the office, giving the team a chance to socialise during the day;
- participation in group fitness challenges, such as the London Legal Support Trust's 10km London Legal Walk and the Standard Chartered Great City Race;
- monthly massage service;
- private medical insurance, including access to a same day GP;
- regular hybrid "know how" meetings and training sessions where people are able to contribute remotely and in person;
- strategy day/team building exercises; and
- quarterly whole team social events.

Of course each business and each workplace is different, so the key is finding what initiatives work best to promote positive mental health in your team – maybe take a short walk to discuss it.

BDBF is a leading employment law firm based at Bank in the City of London. If you would like to discuss mental health at work, or any issues relating to the content of this article, please contact info@bdbf.co.uk, or your usual BDBF contact.