



Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

**A handbook for everyone in the road
transport, logistics and warehousing
industries.**

2021 – 2024



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The purpose of this handbook

We all need to care about our mental health.

This handbook aims to help all road transport, logistics and warehousing workers understand mental health and wellbeing, and take action to be their best. Use this guide to effectively gain the knowledge and confidence to maintain good mental health and support the mental health and wellbeing of others.

A **worker** is defined as anyone who works in the large road transport, logistics and warehousing industries that supports the 52,000 small, medium and large businesses. This includes permanent, part-time, casual or contract workers, remotely placed workers and owner / operators in the industry. This guide is equally relevant for people leaders, because they too are workers in our industry.

Workers can use this handbook to:

- improve your understanding of mental health and why it's important to maintain it
- get helpful tips on how you can support and improve your mental health and wellbeing
- understand how you can support a workmate you are concerned about
- understand what mental health and wellbeing supports and resources you can access to get help for yourself and to help others.

Please note this resource should be considered in addition to your existing workplace mental health and wellbeing policies and programs.

Why mental health and wellbeing is important?

Your personal mental health plays a critical role in how you feel, think and work. Looking after your mental health can lead to many benefits in your personal and working life – such as improving your physical health, the quality of your relationships, your work performance and your overall enjoyment of life. We also have a role to play in supporting others and helping to create a psychologically safe and thriving workplace. It's how we'll get the best out of ourselves and each other.

The benefits of mental health and wellbeing:

- You will cope better emotionally with day to day challenges.
- You will concentrate better, make clearer decisions and be more productive.
- You will be physically healthier and less stressed.
- You will connect better with loved ones and workmates .
- You will be less distracted by work and life demands .



More than 8 Australians take their own lives every day.

ABS, 2018



of all claims for mental health conditions in the transport, postal and warehousing industries were due to 'vehicle incidents'.

Safe Work Australia, 2018



Truck drivers had the highest number of reported suicides than any other profession.

Victorian Coroner's Court, 2015

Drivers who have been diagnosed with depression are



more likely to be involved in a crash.

Meuleners, 2018

Half of road transport, logistics and warehousing workers experience a mental health condition.

38.2%

say their work caused or worsened that condition.

83%

of people took action in the last month to see how someone was going.

2 in 5

Australians report leaving a job because of a poor mental health environment.

Safe Work Australia, 2018

9 in 10

Australians in the workforce believe mentally healthy workplaces are important.

Beyond Blue

1 in 5

Australians will experience a mental health condition.

ABS, 2018

68%

are aware of R U OK? campaign and feel confident on how to have a conversation with someone who might need help.

Meuleners, 2018



Understanding the basics

What do I need to know?

Our self-awareness and ability to reflect on what's going on inside and outside us is really important when it comes to looking after ourselves.

While you don't have to diagnose your own mental health or that of your workmates, it will help everyone to feel supported if you remember the following three key principles.

1. Act with care and compassion

Help create a supportive workplace by being civil and respecting your workmates.

2. Get to know your people

Have regular wellbeing check ins with your workmates to build trust and positive relationships.

3. Notice changes in behaviour

These include those in yourself and your workmates. You don't need to diagnose yourself or others, but you can look out for signs that either yourself or your workmates need help.

How to think about mental health

You can view mental health on a continuum from thriving to unwell. Depending on your circumstances in your life at any given time, your state of mental health may be located at any point along the continuum below.

THRIVING

UNWELL

Optimal mental health

Mental health concern

Mental health condition

**Positive and healthy
functioning at work
and home**

**Mild or temporary
impact on functioning
at work and home**

**Moderate to severe
impact on daily functioning
at work and home**

Your own mental health can change over time. What we term as mental health risk factors cover a range of personal and work-related challenges, events and circumstances.

When exposed to these risk factors you might experience mental health symptoms or your wellbeing is impacted in some way. You might have trouble functioning as you normally would at work and at home.

The right support at an early stage can help you start feeling more like yourself.

It's important to be aware of the risk factors within the road transport, logistics and warehousing industry. Some of them might affect you. Discuss ways to manage these risk factors with your workmates or people leaders and take action to look after yourself and support others'.

How to notice changes in behaviour

Look out for the signs of mental health challenges, both in yourself and your workmates.

The diagram on the following page can help you identify different behaviour changes. If you or your workmate is experiencing a mental health challenge you can see how the behaviour appears more obvious as the concern becomes more serious. Use this list of behaviours to see if you or your workmates need support.

If you are concerned about your own mental health or feel a workmate might have some issues, ask yourself:

On average over the last two weeks, where would I place them on the continuum on the next page? What are some of the behaviour changes I have noticed?

If you place yourself at the half-way point or further to the right, it's a good time to seek support.

If you place your workmate at the half-way point or further to the right, it's a good time to check in with them.

Mental health behaviour symptoms continuum

THRIVING

UNWELL

| Optimal mental health | Mental health concern | Mental health condition | Mental health condition |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Normal or consistent mood – Good sense of humour – Good energy levels – Performing their job well – Normal sleep patterns – Physically fit and well – No or limited alcohol use or gambling – Demonstrates appropriate workplace behaviours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Irritability and impatience – Forgetfulness – Trouble sleeping – Difficulty managing thoughts and emotions – Muscle tension/ headaches – Increased fatigue – Decreased activity/ socialising with co-workers – Regular but reasonable alcohol use/gambling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Difficulty managing emotions – Worrying – Pervasively sad/hopeless – Negative attitude – Poor performance/ overworking – Poor concentration/ decisions – Restless, disturbed sleep – Increased aches and pains – Increased fatigue – Avoidance and withdrawal – Increase alcohol use/ gambling is hard to control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emotional outbursts such as aggression – Excessive worrying – Depressed/ suicidal thoughts – Can't perform work duties or control behaviour – Sleeping excessively or not at all – Constant physical illness/impairment – Constant fatigue – Not socialising or communicating – Alcohol or gambling addiction |

Key industry risk factors for industries include:

High job demands – These include the pressure to meet tight deadlines, low levels of control and decision-making.

Actions you should take:

- ✓ Speak up. Discuss the impact of job-related risk factors on yourself and your workmates. Tell your supervisor when you feel you are unable to meet the deliverables of the job or need support on shift.

Long hours, shift work and fatigue – Shift work with rotating rosters, as well as long hours with prolonged concentration, can lead to sleep disturbance and fatigue.

Actions you should take:

- ✓ Comply with WHS legislative policies and procedures on fatigue, shift work etc. Learn about and use the support options available for your work environment and discuss the impact of these risk factors with your supervisor (people leader) and ways to address them. Share knowledge and strategies with your workmates on how you cope with long hours, shift work and fatigue.

Isolation and social disconnection – Those who work remotely are isolated in their roles, sometimes limiting their access to social support. This can impact their mental health and wellbeing through increased loneliness and disconnection from friends and workmates.

Actions you should take:

- ✓ Create a network of support with your workmates to improve social connections. Share your knowledge of ways to cope with working alone.
- ✓ Help improve social support by connecting regularly with your workmates either digitally, by phone or in person.

Trauma and critical incidents – Exposure to critical incidents is a common risk for both road transport and warehousing workers. This can lead to trauma for victims and witnesses.

Actions you should take:

- ✓ Use the 5 steps (outlined under Supporting a Workmate) to support a workmate you are concerned about. Seek immediate support if you have been involved in or witnessed a critical incident.

Addiction and excessive behaviours – Increased or excessive alcohol consumption, drug use and/or gambling are commonly used by workers as ways to cope with job-related risk factors. All of these can have a further negative impact on mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Actions you should take:

- ✓ Understand what positive self-care activities are available and practise them. They will help build your resilience and coping skills. Follow policies, procedures and the behaviour expected of you. Access related services and resources when you need them.

Mental health stigma – A culture of stigma that challenges or prevents us addressing mental health persists within the industry. This can lead to workers not feeling safe to talk about their concerns or to use existing mental health and wellbeing resources.

Actions you should take:

- ✓ Speak openly to your supervisors and workmates about mental health and wellbeing. Treat your mental health in the same way as your physical health. Access mental health and wellbeing resources, and encourage your workmates to do the same.

Making a commitment to discuss and respond to mental health and wellbeing for the team as we do with physical health was a quick win to reduce stigma in our shed. We put posters up in the break room to remind us to think about and promote mental health and support workers in the same way we would if they had a physical injury. If one of our workers was injured from a heavy equipment accident, we wouldn't ignore it or let them struggle if they were not okay – we should be able to talk about mental health problems in the same way.

– Stephen, warehousing supervisor



Supporting a workmate

The benefit of regular check ins

- You'll increase trust and connection with your workmates. This will help them feel more comfortable to reach out if they are struggling.
- They will increase your understanding and awareness about your workmates' baseline behaviours, e.g. what is their usual work style? How do they normally deal with work issues and challenges?
- You'll notice the changes in behaviour, which may indicate you need to provide support.

Whether you work as a full-time, part-time, casual, contractor or sub-contractor, getting to know your workmates is one of the most effective ways to support their mental health and wellbeing. Try taking the following actions to get to know them.

The five steps to effective check-ins

1 – Getting ready

- ✓ **Check in with yourself**
Make sure you're in the right frame of mind to have the conversation.
- ✓ **Know how to connect**
Think about the best place to talk about a personal or work-related concern. Ask yourself: "Is it quiet and private? Will they feel physically and psychologically safe?"
- ✓ **Prepare yourself**
Think about what you want to say. Be clear on why you are concerned about your workmate. What have you noticed that concerns you? Understand what tools and support you can share with them once you understand what the challenge may be.
- ✓ **Understand your role and impact**
Approach the conversation with the right mindset – you are there to listen and don't need to bring solutions or have the answer in that moment.

Sometimes you might feel nervous or uncomfortable in discussing mental health and personal matters with your workmates. Remember, it's best to be yourself and speak to them in a way that you feel comfortable. They'll see this as showing care and compassion.

2 – Ask "are you OK?"



Act with care and compassion

Let them know you are concerned about them and you are there for them.



Demonstrate good intent

"I wanted to let you know I'm concerned about you. How are you going?" or "I noticed you didn't seem yourself and I just wanted to check in to see if you were OK".



When they say "I'm not OK"

Let them know you are there to listen to them and that you can share some supports and resources if they are ready. "If you would like to talk I'm here", or "I understand you might be going through a tough time".

- "How are you going at the moment?"
- "You haven't seemed like yourself lately. Is everything OK?"
- "How's the family going?"
- "Last time we spoke I noticed you were under a bit of pressure. Are you OK?"

3 – Listen without judgement



Be open

Let your workmate share as little or as much as they want to. Respect it might be hard to share sensitive or personal information. Show you are there for them. "I can see how difficult this is for you. I'm here to listen if you change your mind" or "I respect your privacy. I can share some support services if that would help?"



Normalise the situation

Let them know it's normal to experience changes in mental health and mood from time to time.

4 – Encourage them to seek help



Ask them what they need

“What supports or adjustments will help you manage being at work at this time? Who are you comfortable speaking to about that?”



Sharing resources

Whether or not they share their concern with you, it is a good idea to introduce some support and resources that they can use when they are ready. “It might be helpful to speak to someone else” or “Can I give you the details of some resources to consider?”

5 – Follow up with action



Let them know you care

Offer to check in with them shortly after your conversation. It’s better if you don’t leave too much time between check ins as they may need your help. “How about we speak again and see how you’re going?” or “I’d like to give you a call and check in by the end of the week. Is that OK?”

Noticing a workmate is struggling and talking to them at an early stage can make a real difference and demonstrates that you care. It may be the reason they seek help.

Try not to become frustrated or disheartened if your workmate doesn’t open up. It may take time for them to feel comfortable or to realise they are not coping and need help. Let them know that you are there should they need to talk.

What not to do

When you're having a conversation with a workmate about their mental health, there are some things it's important to avoid doing and saying.

- X** Don't put them under pressure.
- X** Never tell them to "snap out of it", "toughen up", "get their act together" or "cheer up".
- X** Don't assume they just need to stay busy or provide them with solutions without first asking for permission.
- X** Avoid using words that suggest you are making a judgement, such as "good" or "bad".
- X** Don't ignore the fact that they might be struggling and assume the problem will go away.
- X** Don't keep it to yourself. If you don't think you can support your workmate, help them reach out for assistance.



Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

Check in with yourself

When we improve our self-awareness, we take important steps towards managing stressful situations, taking care of ourselves and others.

A quick and easy way to check in with yourself is to use a rating scale like the one below.

THRIVING

NEEDS SUPPORT



To complete your self check in, consider the industry risk factors to your level of mental health.

Ask yourself the following questions and rate yourself using the continuum left:

Work demands

“How am I managing my workload at the moment?”

“Do I understand what I have to do each shift?”

Fatigue and hours of work

“What impact are my working hours having on my work, personal life, and overall mental health and wellbeing?”

“How can I better manage the fatigue I am feeling?”

Working remotely

“Do I feel connected to the workplace or my workmates?”

Isolation and social disconnection

“Are there times I feel lonely at work?”

“How can I feel more connected to my workmates?”

Personal and home factors

“Is there anything going on at home affecting the way I work?”

What rating did you give yourself?

Referring to the scale above, what number most related to you? If you have given yourself a rating of 6 or more, consider seeking support and having a chat to someone. This might be your people leader or a professional health expert e.g. your GP and or other support services such as Beyond Blue.

You might also benefit from taking action and implementing a personal self-care plan, to assist you with this.

The following section is a good place to start.

Take action

Managing your energy

We all have the responsibility to look after the mental health and wellbeing of ourselves, our families, our workplaces and our workmates.

The following exercise can help you identify which areas of your life need focus. You can then start creating self-care habits and behaviours to help renew your energy where you need it most.

Please tick the statements that are true for you on the following pages to work out your overall energy and areas you need to focus on.

1. Body

I don't regularly get at least seven to eight hours of sleep, and I often wake up feeling tired.

I frequently skip breakfast, or I settle for something that isn't nutritious.

I don't exercise regularly enough to feel healthy and energised.

I don't take regular breaks during the day to truly renew and recharge, or I often eat lunch on the road if I eat it at all.

2. Emotions

I frequently find myself feeling irritable, impatient or anxious at work, especially when work is demanding.

I don't have enough time with my family and loved ones, and when I'm with them, I'm not always really with them.

I have too little time for the activities that I most enjoy.

I don't stop frequently enough to express my appreciation to others or to recognise my accomplishments and blessings.

3. Mind

I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time, and I am easily distracted during the day.

I spend much of my day reacting to immediate crises and demands rather than focusing on activities that I enjoy and support my wellbeing.

I don't take enough time for personal reflection.

I work in the evenings or on weekends, and I almost never take a break.

4. Connection

I don't spend enough time at work doing what I do best and enjoy most.

There are significant gaps between what I say is most important to me in my life and how I actually allocate my time and energy.

My decisions at work are more often influenced by external demands than by my personal values.

I don't invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference to others or to the world.

How is your overall energy?

Total number of statements checked: _____

Guide to scores

0 – 3: Excellent energy management skills

4 – 6: Reasonable energy management skills

7 – 10: Energy management deficits

11 – 16: Seek support to develop better energy

What do you need to work on?

Number of checks in each category:

Body _____

Emotions _____

Mind _____

Connection _____

Reflecting on your results, consider the below self-care strategies to help you renew your energy where you need it the most.

1 – Body

Manage sleep and stress: Regular exercise, nutrition and relaxation can help improve sleep quality.

Develop a targeted physical activity program

That is flexible for your work hours and helps you manage fatigue.

Don't forget to breathe!: Control your breathing by inhaling slowly and deeply through your nose, and exhaling through your mouth. Do this for several minutes and you will start to feel better and more relaxed in your head, heart and body.

Exercise, nutrition and balance.

Move and stretch: Change posture throughout the day.

Control your media intake: Schedule some time to 'switch off' and take a break from your phone and media exposure.

Take leave: Be aware of your entitlements and take opportunities – make plans for long weekends and book a holiday.

Take breaks throughout the day: B.g. going for walks in to the kitchen to make a cup of tea/coffee or rest stop.

Develop healthy habits and routines: Start simple, do what is enjoyable, make a plan and stick to it. Make swaps, plan ahead, make time for things you enjoy, reward yourself and don't beat yourself up if you miss a day.

Stay hydrated: Have water accessible and remember to have regular sips.

2 – Emotions

Be aware of your feelings, thoughts and behaviours:

Being aware of the 'here and now' can help you feel calm and reduce stress. Pay attention to:

- 1) what you are feeling (e.g. 'I am feeling anxious')
- 2) what thoughts you are having
(e.g. I am worried that I won't meet this deadline)
- 3) how you are behaving in response to your thoughts and feelings (e.g. I am restless and agitated by small things that wouldn't normally bother me).

Identify your triggers and know when you are most vulnerable: Pay attention to situations that give you a strong emotional response to identify patterns.

Share your thoughts and feelings with people you trust to gain perspective and support.

Be kind to yourself and others: Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile or a kind word.

Laughter/smiles/jokes/humour: Spending time on things that make you laugh is good for your mood and mental health.

Manage personal boundaries: Making self-care a priority will help you be more aware of your limits. Give yourself permission to say no.

3 – Mind

Practise self-compassion: Avoid negative self-talk and blame by treating yourself as though you were talking to a close friend – comfort and soothe, motivate and encourage yourself when you are struggling.

Adopt a growth mindset: People who believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through time and effort are more likely to learn and improve.

Be flexible in your thinking: As humans we naturally try to categorise things as black or white, but thinking this way can be unhelpful as most situations in life have shades of grey. Thinking about something in a different way and trying new ways of doing things can increase effective problem solving.

Focus on the things you can control: Focus on your own behaviours and accept limitations e.g. "I can't control certain things".

Practise gratitude and positive thinking: Reflect on two things that you are grateful for and two things that you are looking forward to each day.

4 – Connection

Stay connected: Talk to your friends and family about how you feel, and allow time to spend with the people you care about.

Be present: To really connect with people, we have to be present. Try to truly listen, without any judgment or intention to respond.

Access support services: Talk openly about support services and share your experiences of resources and services like counselling, doctor etc.

Connect with workmates: Create regular opportunities for team de-briefings and peer support groups.

Connect with purpose: Discuss challenges, and focus on what makes work meaningful, rewarding and enjoyable.

Share positive experiences: Sharing your knowledge and coping skills will give you a chance to help and support others. This can increase emotional support for all people and can be personally rewarding.

Be compassionate and caring in your interactions: Show you care and want to support your people by having regular wellbeing check ins and asking 'are you OK'?

Ask for help: Utilise and acknowledge the assistance provided by others.

Help others: Research indicates that helping others increases our happiness, provides a sense of meaning, increases feelings of competence, improves our mood and reduces stress.

Self-care strategies to better mental health

Additional practical skills and resources to support you further can be found by accessing the 5 Ways to Wellbeing website:

www.5waystowellbeing.org.au

What are 2-3 self-care actions or goals you would like to start with, based on the four self-care strategies (emotions, head, connection, body)?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



You should now go and try to implement these and check in with your people leader or workmate to discuss how this went. Did it improve your mental health and wellbeing?

Getting help

For access to direct mental health related support services, we welcome you to contact one or all of the following organisations should you need to talk to someone or want to help someone.

Police, Fire or Ambulance (emergencies only)

000

People with a speech or hearing impairment can use the One Zero Six (106) text based service.

Beyond Blue

1300 224 636

www.beyondblue.org.au

(24 hours per day, 7 days per week)

Relationships Australia

1300 364 277

www.relationships.org.au

The Black Dog Institute

1800 353 636

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732

www.1800respect.org.au

Mens Line Australia

1300 78 99 78

www.mensline.org.au

Sane

1800 18 72 63

www.sane.org

Crisis Support Services

Lifeline

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Discuss with your people leader what supports your workplace offers.





healthyheads.org.au