



# The workplace mental health playbook

Practical strategies, scripts &  
templates to build a mentally  
healthy workplace—starting today



# If you know your employees are struggling, but you're not sure what to do next—this playbook is for you.

Mental health isn't just an HR initiative—it's a daily practice that impacts every employee, in every role. Whether your team works in an office, on the front lines, in a manufacturing facility, or in customer service, wellbeing needs to be built into the way people work—not just something they're expected to figure out on their own.

This playbook gives you a behind-the-scenes look at what leading HR teams are doing to build mentally healthy, high-performing workplaces

Inside, you'll get practical, real-world strategies designed for both desk-based and shift-based employees, including:

-  **Done-for-you scripts** to help managers check in on employees—whether in an office or on the floor.
-  **5 workplace culture shifts** that prevent burnout before it starts—for both knowledge workers and frontline teams.
-  **The “No-Stigma” mental health policy template** (copy-paste into your HR guidelines).
-  **A 7-day action plan** with customized actions for both office and shift-based teams.

The best workplaces don't just offer mental health support—they embed it into the way they work.

This playbook will show you how.



# 1 The “what to say” playbook (scripts for HR leaders & managers)

Talking about mental health at work can feel uncomfortable—but it doesn’t have to. Many managers want to support their teams but don’t know what to say or worry about saying the wrong thing. This play gives you ready-to-use scripts so you can check in on employees with confidence, encourage mental health breaks without stigma, and create a culture where people feel safe speaking up.

Use these simple, effective phrases to start the conversation—because sometimes, one sentence can make all the difference.

## Checking in on an employee who seems burned out? Try this:

 “Hey [Name], I noticed you’ve been a little quieter than usual. No pressure to share, but if there’s anything on your mind, I’m here to support you.”

## Encouraging employees to take mental health days? Try this:

 “Just a reminder—our PTO includes mental health days. No explanation needed. If you need a reset, take it.”

## Responding when an employee opens up about stress? Try this:

 “Thanks for sharing that with me. I know that wasn’t easy. Let’s figure out how we can make things more manageable for you.”



## Bonus: The 2-Minute Mental Health Check-In Script

Most employees won't initiate a conversation about their mental health. So, let's make it easy for managers to do the check-in for them—in just two minutes.

Train managers to use this 3-question check-in every two weeks.

### The 2-Minute Mental Health Check-In Script:

 “Hey [Name], I just wanted to check in—not about work, just about how you're doing. No pressure to share, but:

**Question 1:** On a scale of 1-5, how's your stress level right now?

**Question 2:** Is there anything I or the team can do to better support you?

**Question 3:** What's one small thing that would make your workload feel more manageable?”

**Why this works:** When check-ins become routine, employees feel safer speaking up—before burnout happens.



## 2

# The 5 workplace shifts that prevent burnout before it starts

## Health declines and healthcare costs continue to rise

You can't fix burnout with one-off wellness initiatives.

Real change happens when mental health is baked into the way your workplace operates—not just something employees have to figure out on their own.

These five shifts make mental wellbeing a normal, expected part of your company culture so employees feel supported before they reach a breaking point.

Each shift comes with a quick win to help you get started today—because preventing burnout shouldn't feel like extra work.

### 1. Normalize mental health days

- **For office workers:** Adjust PTO policies to explicitly include mental health.
- **For shift workers:** Implement self-managed shift swapping so employees can take mental health time without losing pay.

**Quick win:** Let employees swap shifts without needing to disclose a reason (to reduce stigma).

### 2. Implement a “deep work” block on calendars

- **For office workers:** Block 2 hours per week for uninterrupted focus time.
- **For shift workers:** Implement quiet recovery zones in break rooms where employees can take 5–10-minute reset breaks between tasks.

**Quick win:** Designate a “reset station” in the break room with noise-canceling headphones, hydration, and a calm space.



### 3. Set clear boundaries around after-hours work

- **For office workers:** Establish a “No-Expectations After Hours” policy.
- **For shift workers:** Ensure predictable scheduling to reduce stress from last-minute changes.

**Quick win:** Give employees at least a week’s notice for schedule changes whenever possible.

### 4. Train managers to spot & respond to burnout

- **For office workers:** Provide mental health check-in scripts.
- **For shift workers:** Equip managers with non-verbal burnout indicators (e.g., fatigue, withdrawal, increased errors).

**Quick win:** Train managers to use a 30-second check-in at shift start:

 “Hey [Name], before we dive in, how are you feeling today? Anything I can do to support you?”

### 5. Make mental health support easy to access

- **For office workers:** Pin mental health resources to Slack/Teams and email signatures.
- **For shift workers:** Post QR codes in break rooms that link to mental health resources (so employees can access them via phone).

**Quick win:** Create pocket-sized resource cards with crisis hotlines and EAP info for employees to keep.



# 3

## The “No-Stigma” mental health policy template

A workplace mental health policy only works if employees actually feel safe using it.

This plug-and-play policy ensures that mental health support is:

- Clearly communicated
- Accessible without fear of judgment
- Built into your company culture

**Copy-paste this into your HR guidelines:**

At [Company Name], we believe mental health is just as important as physical health.

- **Mental health days are PTO** – Employees can take time off for mental health reasons, no questions asked.
- **No career penalty for seeking help** – Using mental health resources will never impact performance reviews or career growth.
- **Confidential support is available** – Employees can access [List of mental health resources] at any time, with full privacy.
- **Managers are trained to support mental health** – Every manager at [Company Name] receives training on how to recognize and respond to burnout.
- **Mental health breaks are encouraged** – Employees are empowered to take short breaks to reset when needed.

Need support? Reach out to [HR Contact] or visit [Internal Mental Health Resource Page].

**Quick Win:** Share this policy in your next all-hands meeting to reinforce a no-stigma culture.



# 4

## Supporting mental health in a shift-based or customer-facing workplace

Mental health support shouldn't depend on having a desk, a laptop, or a flexible schedule. Employees in manufacturing, retail, healthcare, and other frontline roles face unique stressors—physically demanding work, intense customer interactions, and unpredictable schedules.

This play ensures that mental health strategies are realistic and actionable for employees who don't work in an office.

### 1. Build “wellbeing moments” into the workday

Shift workers can't always step away for a long break, so wellbeing needs to fit into short, natural pauses.

**Quick win:** Encourage 60-second reset breaks between tasks:

- Deep breaths before starting a new patient round.
- Stretching at the start of a shift.
- A quick hydration break between customer interactions.

### 2. Train supervisors to check in—without disrupting workflow

Frontline workers don't always have time for a sit-down check-in, so managers should use quick, in-the-moment check-ins.

**Quick win:** Use the “One-Minute Mental Health Check” during shift transitions:

 “Hey [Name], I know today's been busy. Quick check-in—how's your energy level? Anything I can do to make your shift easier?”



### 3. Offer mental health support that doesn't require a computer

Many workplace resources are digital-first, which doesn't work well for employees who don't sit at a desk.

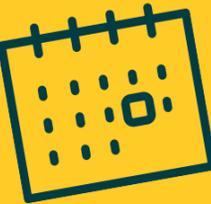
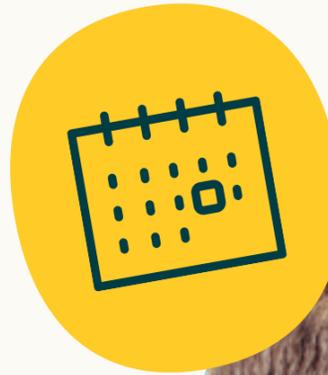
**Quick win:** Create audio-friendly mental health tips that can be accessed via a recorded phone line, short videos in break rooms, or a WhatsApp group.

### 4. Recognize and reduce stress in high-pressure jobs

Customer-facing employees often deal with difficult interactions, angry customers, or physically demanding work.

**Quick win:** Create a "cool-down" zone in break rooms where employees can step away for a few minutes after a stressful interaction.





# 5

## Your 7-Day mental health action plan

Making wellbeing stick isn't about doing more—it's about building small, daily habits that last.

This one-week action plan helps you build momentum by making mental health support visible, accessible, and actionable—without overwhelming your team. Each day includes a simple, high-impact step that reinforces a culture of wellbeing and shows employees that mental health isn't just a buzzword—it's a priority.

Follow this plan as a jumpstart to long-term change or repeat it regularly to keep mental health at the forefront of your workplace.

### Day 1: Make mental health support accessible

**Action:** Ensure employees know where to find mental health resources.

- **For office workers:** Send a company-wide email or Slack/Teams message reminding employees about mental health benefits and resources. Pin these resources in Slack, Teams, or your HR portal.
- **For shift-based Workers:** Post flyers with QR codes in break rooms that link to mental health resources. Give pocket-sized resource cards with hotline numbers and support options.

**Why:** Employees can't use resources they don't know exist or can't access easily.

## Day 2: Equip managers with the right words

**Action:** Train managers to check in on employees in a way that feels natural and supportive.

- **For office workers:** Share The “What to Say” Playbook and train managers to use the 2-Minute Mental Health Check-In in 1:1s or team meetings.
- **For shift-based workers:** Teach managers to use the One-Minute Mental Health Check-In during shift transitions: “Hey [Name], I know today’s been busy. Quick check-in—how’s your energy level? Anything I can do to make your shift easier?”

**Why:** When managers lead the way, employees feel safer speaking up before burnout happens.

## Day 3: Reduce overload & protect breaks

**Action:** Create space for recovery to reduce stress and cognitive overload.

- **For Office Workers:** Implement a company-wide “deep work” block (2+ hours per week with no meetings or Slack/Teams messages).
- **For Shift-Based Workers:** Create “reset stations” in break rooms with noise-canceling headphones, hydration, and a 5-minute micro-break area. Encourage quick 60-second reset breaks between customer interactions or tasks.

**Why:** Small moments of recovery prevent burnout and improve focus.

## Day 4: Create a no-stigma communication space

**Action:** Open a safe space for employees to talk about mental health challenges and wins.

- **For office workers:** Launch a “Vent & Reset” Slack/Teams channel for employees to share challenges, wins, or mental health check-ins.
- **For shift-based workers:** Set up an anonymous suggestion box in break rooms for wellbeing feedback. Supervisors should also check in casually at the start of shifts: “What’s one small thing that would make today’s shift easier for you?”

**Why:** Normalizing everyday conversations about mental health reduces stigma.



## Day 5: Check in with employees anonymously

**Action:** Gather feedback to understand how employees are feeling.

- **For Office Workers:** Send an anonymous pulse survey via email or your HR platform: “On a scale of 1-5, how’s your mental health this week?”
- **For Shift-Based Workers:** Use paper surveys in break rooms or allow employees to text responses anonymously to HR.

**Why:** Regular check-ins help HR spot trends and take proactive action before issues escalate.

## Day 6: Host a “Mental Health AMA” (Ask Me Anything) session

**Action:** Give employees a safe space to ask mental health-related questions and learn about available support.

- **For office workers:** Host a live virtual Q&A session with a mental health expert or HR leader. Allow employees to submit questions anonymously.
- **For shift-based workers:** Hold a short 15-minute “Huddle Chat” before or after a shift where employees can ask wellbeing-related questions.

**Why:** Interactive sessions help demystify mental health support and encourage employees to seek help when needed.

## Day 7: Reinforce the culture shift

**Action:** Celebrate small wins and publicly reinforce mental health policies.

- **For Office Workers:** Share employee testimonials or success stories about using mental health resources. Highlight mental health policies in an all-hands meeting or company newsletter.
- **For Shift-Based Workers:** Recognize employees who model wellbeing behaviors (taking breaks, supporting teammates, speaking up about stress). Share a success story during shift meetings to normalize mental health conversations.

**Why:** Sustained culture change happens through repetition and reinforcement.





# Two ways to build a healthier workplace

You now have the scripts, strategies, and policies you need to start building a mentally healthy workplace—one that supports every employee, whether they work at a desk, on the front lines, or in a customer-facing role.

Now, you have two options:

## Option 1: Do it yourself

Take the step-by-step strategies we've laid out and start implementing them on your own. These plays work—companies that make mental health a core part of their culture see higher retention, stronger engagement, better performance and [lower costs](#).

## Option 2: Get an experienced partner to help

If you want to move faster, with less trial and error, we can help. For the last 20 years we've been working with HR leaders from growing start-ups to global companies with thousands of employees to implement, scale, and sustain mental health initiatives—without adding extra work to their plate.

[Schedule a call today](#) to see how we can help you turn these strategies into action.

**Better mental health starts here. Let's build it together.**

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