

TIP SHEET

Dealing with workplace Anxiety

Speak to a wellbeing expert





Anxiety. It's a growing crisis. One that's been exacerbated during the pandemic. You may be asking what it is anxiety? It's a very human thing and is linked with our biological make-up. In short, it's our body's natural response to danger, that feeling of adrenaline that triggers our fight or flight response. Anxiety disorders and attacks come into play when the body throws this out of proportion, sometimes even when there's nothing to panic about. Symptoms can include racing heartbeat, shortness of breath, dry mouth and sweating.

To better understand those who face the crippling effects of an anxiety disorder, it's crucial to differentiate it from your everyday stressors, such as feeling nervous for a presentation or having butterflies before a meeting. These are normal human responses. Anxiety disorders come in when you begin to experience anxiety on a more than average amount. The disorders can create a debilitating effect on a person and leave them struggling to complete typical day to day tasks, which may lead them to feel excluded and add fuel to how they are feeling.

Anxiety disorders can manifest themselves in a few different ways. Below are a few common types and their effects:

Generalised Anxiety Disorder: People with GAD are constantly worried about something, leaving them unable to enjoy daily life.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder: OCD is a draining and debilitating disorder, which involves recurrent thoughts and behaviours.

Social Anxiety Disorder: This is where people are terrified of how people perceive them and face crippling anxiety when in social situations.

Other types include, phobias, PTSD and panic disorder.



Workplace anxiety, in particular, has rocketed. Employees and managers are searching for solutions wherever they can, with the latter turning to digital solutions to help better equip themselves to manage their employees. Online learning platform Udemy for Business stated that demand for their anxiety management classes increased by almost 4,000%.

Workplace anxiety can affect and be manifested in several ways:



Symptoms of work anxiety

- Excessive and irrational worrying
- Concentration problems
- Insomnia
- Excessive sweating
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Headaches
- Feeling 'on edge'



Effects of work anxiety

- A decline in job performance and quality
- Reduced job satisfaction
- Adverse effects on personal life
- Feeling alone and isolated
- Developing a clinical level of anxiety, i.e. a disorder.

85%

of people say mental health issues at work (i.e. anxiety) affect their home life ([Oracle](#))

76%

of people believe their company should be doing more to protect the mental health of their workforce ([Oracle](#))

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The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that anxiety and depression disorders cost the global economy US\$ 1 trillion each year in lost productivity ([World Health Organisation](#))

How you can help

As managers, with anxiety manifesting itself in various ways, you may be asking, what can I do to help? Here are a few tips.



1

Have regular check-ins

As a manager, sometimes it can be a little daunting to broach the topic of mental health. However, you'll be surprised how many employees would welcome the discussion. Numbers show that [58% are comfortable with their manager](#) proactively asking them about their mental health. It's vital to let them know that you'd like to check in about how they're feeling and assure them that you're having this conversation with everyone within the wider team. This way, any anxiety issues regarding performance aren't exacerbated, nor do they feel singled out. Try to make this a regular occurrence, too. Breaking past that barrier may feel awkward, but it is enriching. Remember, how someone feels today is not how they'll feel tomorrow.



2

Be compassionate

To some reading this, it may sound clichéd, but small regular doses of compassion can go a long way. Jane Dutton, a professor at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and co-author of *Awakening Compassion at Work*, states that "[compassion fatigue is real](#), with many managers stepping up during the pandemic to take on the additional responsibility of caring for their team." However, she explains that being a compassionate manager has a two-way benefit. Being present for your team and employee, and being compassionate also 'lifts up the giver' and strengthens everyone.



3

Connect your employees with the right resources

Sometimes you may not have all the answers, and that's alright. However, it does mean you can steer your employees in the right direction as to where they can find solutions and help. Understand what resources your organisation has available via any healthcare benefits portal, which could cover mental health matters. Elsewhere if you also have a dedicated health and wellbeing platform, similar to [GO Challenge](#), you could explain to them the benefits of creating small daily habits and the community they can be a part of to help them on their journey.



4

Mental health first aiders:

With evidence showing that [anxiety in workers is up by 55%](#), organisations will do well to start looking into creating mental health first aiders. Businesses have long championed having team members trained in first aid for physical health. However, as the growing mental health issues grow, having a dedicated mental health first aid team would be a progressive step for a modern organisation. Having employees trained in asking the right questions, being able to spot early signs of anxiety, and being a safe haven outside of managers and the team where people can access or speak to about any mental health issues or next steps could be beneficial for all employees.



Because health is personal™

Health and wellbeing can play a crucial role in helping to deal with anxiety. Taking part in a wellbeing challenge or programme can help your employee feel empowered, enhance social connections and create healthier habits. Why not reach out to a member of our team and find out how Virgin Pulse can help you and your business deal with workplace anxiety.

Contact us

Learn more at personifyhealth.com/global/en
Find us on [facebook](#) | [twitter](#) | [linkedin](#)

