

Getting through EOFY with your health intact

End of financial year is a stressful time for the workplace, and many people underestimate the stress and pressure associated with hard deadlines, according to a prominent mental health advocate.

EOFY is a time of year when people and teams are made accountable for results and time frames have to be met and, as a result, “people feel judged and assessed, [with research showing] a lot of people process that as stress”, said Workplace Mental Health Institute CEO Peter Diaz.

“There is a lot of pressure on people to maximise and close off sales, finalise accounts, get payments in, update and sign off on financials, lodge documents, etc. Many teams, business units and whole businesses are judged on their year’s results,” he explained.

“Many working parts of a business or organisation are involved in EOFY wrap-up. Lots of people work long hours, are under increased pressure to get things done by a certain deadline and to submit and review information to ensure it is correct.”

The long hours, pressure and increased weight of responsibility can affect people in multiple detrimental ways, he said.

“Some people cope with the pressure and then collapse quietly at home. Many people get sick. Others find it difficult to gather up the energy to get back to work or feel enthusiastic about doing their job,” he said.

“This type of effect is called burnout. The more dangerous downside is continued and compounded stress which leads to serious health issues such as heart attacks, stroke, cancer, etc.”

As such, individual workers need to take proactive steps to look after themselves during this period:

Take mini breaks

Do this every hour or every couple of hours, Mr Diaz said. “A brisk walk will get the blood flowing and releases endorphins,” he noted.

Have open, honest communication

“Meet regularly [with co-workers] and talk openly about how you’re coping, and whether there are any issues which are affecting the ability of others to get their tasks done on time – if so, sort and solve those issues,” he advised.

Create a stress-free environment

Make the work environment as stress-free as possible, he suggested.

“Keep loud or long telephone calls to a minimum, wear casual clothes, bring in healthy food for energy snacks,” he said.

Good managers with good leadership skills will also be able to support employees and prevent the development of burnout in the lead-up to EOFY, he

added:

Look for opportunities to introduce movement

This includes standing and different forms of exercise, varying in intensity, for all workers, Mr Diaz said.

“In some workplaces, they’ve introduced standing desks, treadmills, placed photocopiers away from people (so they’ll have to walk). All good ideas to introduce movement and exercise that are conducive to wellbeing,” he noted.

Individual needs

“Be mindful that different individuals need different things,” he mused.

“Where possible, be flexible and accommodate reasonable requests of employees.”

Breed a healthy culture

“Foster a positive culture of camaraderie and a ‘we’re in it together’ attitude,” he suggested.

“Remind people of the bigger picture – that this is only a period of time, and it won’t last forever. It also helps to have something positive to look forward to after this intense period is over.”

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Ultimately, good mental health and wellbeing starts with prevention, Mr Diaz concluded.

“Ideally, a wise organisation will help its staff by caring for them all year round and preparing them for EOFY.”