



Easing the “mental load” of workers

As managers already navigating worker challenges brought on by the pandemic, it’s important to also recognize the stress of workers dealing with “mental load.”

This is a familiar situation where one partner in a relationship—often someone with a family—has the invisible extra load of keeping the household running smoothly. Even if the multitude of tasks are delegated, that partner is in charge of the endless planning, scheduling, to-do and checklists, following up, coaching—and suffers all the fatigue and worry that goes with it. While it’s typically more common among women, anyone in a relationship can be overwhelmed with mental load.

Recognizing that even if workers have the same workload as they had prior to the pandemic, “mental load” can add to distraction, anxiety, and feeling burned out, affecting mental health and productivity.

Here is how to support a better work/life balance:

- **Watch for signs of burnout.** These may include missing deadlines/meetings, mood changes, complaints, absenteeism, presenteeism, cynicism, etc.
- **Promote unplugging from work at the end of the day.** This includes limiting checking work emails outside of work hours. If possible, promote a hard stop to the work hours.
- **Limit virtual meetings, where you can.** It can be an easy way to stay in close touch with remote workers, for instance, but try to space them out or limit to 15 minutes where possible.
- **Encourage breaks and taking vacation.** Emphasize the importance of taking time off.
- **Be flexible and adjust work expectations.** Flextime may be an option, if feasible.
- **Model healthy coping, taking care of yourself.** You might mention whenever you are taking your lunch break. In your own life, take time to do a hobby, call a friend, use a fitness video to do some exercise, or lose yourself in a good book. Eat nutritious meals and don’t skimp on sleep!

Refer them to Health Advocate resources. Licensed counselors are available for confidential help with coping strategies and Work/Life specialists can find community resources, including childcare, back-up babysitters, pet sitters, tutors, etc. The website offers articles, tools, and databases on a full range of subjects for additional support.



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