

# THE WELLNESS HUB

## SOCIAL CONNECTION

MENTAL WELLNESS EVERY DAY



# SOCIAL CONNECTION

In this instance, social connection does not refer to how strong the Wi-Fi is! We are talking about how we feel connect emotionally, spiritually and morally with others, and what common ground we may share that fosters a relationship. 2020 saw an unprecedented amount of global and national change owing to the pandemic. Routines were disrupted across all spheres- home, work and social. These factors combined with a focus on business improvement and growth make it easy to forget the successes achieved to date, particularly under challenging circumstances.

There is a large body of research that suggests there are numerous benefits to creating a culture where 'wins' are celebrated (1) and these include the following it increases retention of staff (2) and plays a significant role in increasing productivity, boosting team cohesion and encouraging employees to work together (3). Feeling a sense of belonging can reduce episodes and severity of depression too (4).

A study also found that celebrating success with our colleagues creates feelings of inclusion, creativity, collaboration and appreciation. These all support a calmer workplace; increase resilience, enabling managing stress even in challenging times (5). The feeling of belonging and contributing to business success means staff are also more likely to be innovative (6). Small wins are particularly effective as they support the progression principle (a feeling of making meaningful progress where each step contributes to the overall objective) (7). Let's put this in the context of the brain and how it can benefit the organisation.

- *Recognition- supports wellbeing and business growth*

There is a boost of oxytocin and endorphins. These boost wellbeing and support a growth mindset.

- *A pleasant conversation*

Boosts serotonin and increases motivation, ability to manage stress and staying focused on solutions.

- *Positive interactions*

Creates dopamine to boost access to the prefrontal cortex where critical thinking happens and problems are solved. It also creates healthy behavioural patterns.

In contrast, the stress neurochemical is reduced and fosters the development of trust and building relationships. These positive neurochemicals support the rewiring of the brain, and individuals feel capable and resilient (see Visualisation and brain waves section for further details).

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Here are some ideas for promoting successes in the workplace:

- *Sharing a story:*

Sharing an experiential narrative can help colleagues to learn from each other and share knowledge. This can serve to remind staff of the 'common why' (8).

- *Handled well:*

Not all wins need to be success stories. Having the opportunity to recognise skills such as perseverance can be just as important as achieving a tangible outcome. It fosters a supportive culture.

- *Make a difference to others*

An important aspect of social connection is creating a safe and empathetic space where colleagues can take the time to support each other. This may mean recognising their stress cues and 'checking in' on them. It could be as simple as going for a walk and a cuppa. Acknowledging kindness leads to further kindness.

- *Values*

Celebrating wins that are clearly linked to the organisational objectives can help to remind colleagues again of the 'common why'. Furthermore, it reminds them that success and strengths are interwoven into the work culture and structure - appraisals such as wider communication and team meetings etc.

- *Social space*

Creating such a social space enables relationships to flourish and colleagues to have a better understanding of each other.

- *Schedule sparkle time*

Scheduling time or a set agenda item at team meetings to share wins- no matter how small. These could be written up and displayed in a shared space for the week.

- *Recognise preference*

Whilst some colleagues enjoy being thanked in a team meeting, others appreciate a small note. Effective communication relies on knowing how the recipient would prefer to receive the information. Furthermore, celebrations and successes being acknowledged should be inclusive and not rely on the 'one-size-fits-all' approach as this may trigger feelings of overwhelm and discomfort (9).

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## References

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