

10 Simple Steps To Improve Workplace Mental Health Today



Who we are

Life First Then Work helps companies turn mental health from a legal obligation into a competitive advantage.

We deliver practical culture change, peer-led support and lived-experience insights that reduce burnout, boost retention and build workplaces where people want to stay.

We offer one-off sessions, pilot workshops and leadership strategy sessions but we're clear about one thing:

Awareness alone won't change a culture.

Real impact comes from consistent action, peer connection and embedding support into everyday working life.

Why this matters

Most workplaces don't ignore mental health out of malice – they ignore it out of habit. We've built work cultures where stress is glorified, boundaries are blurred and silence is often mistaken for resilience. But here's the truth: if you want your business to thrive, your people need to thrive first.

Poor mental health is costing UK businesses an estimated £56 billion a year¹ in absenteeism and presenteeism (employees coming to work despite being unwell or otherwise unable to perform their duties effectively). This negatively impacts productivity and business performance. The estimated cost to society in the UK is £300 billion².

Too often, however, the response is surface-level: a poster here, a wellbeing day there.

These gestures are well-meaning, but they don't stick. That's because culture doesn't change from the outside in. It changes through everyday habits, small shifts and leaders who are willing to go first.

You don't need a massive budget to start improving mental health in your workplace. You need intent, action and a commitment to doing things differently – even in small ways. That's where this guide comes in.

These 10 simple changes are practical, low-cost and high-impact. They're designed to be used by anyone, whether you're a team leader, HR or just someone who cares. Every idea here is based on real workplace insight, not theory. And each one is a stepping stone to building a workplace where people feel safe, supported and able to bring their best – not just what's left.

Mental health isn't just a wellbeing issue – it's a leadership issue, it's a culture issue. But when you get it right, it becomes a performance advantage.

¹ Deloitte (2022). *Mental Health and Employers: The Case for Investment – Pandemic and Beyond*. <https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-zone2/uk/en/docs/industries/energy-resources-industrials/2023/deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2022.pdf>

² Centre for Mental Health (2020). *Mental Health and Productivity Commission: Final Report*. <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/the-big-mental-health-report/>

Part one: the everyday game-changers (1–5)

Small shifts, big impact – start here

1. Ditch back-to-back meetings

Give people 10-minute breathers between calls. They'll return clearer, calmer and more focused. Breaks boost brains.

2. Start meetings with a real check-in

Not just “how is everyone?” Check in on humans, not just tasks. A mentally healthy workplace starts with a conversation.

3. Make lunch breaks a culture norm and encourage micro-breaks

If your team eat at their desk every day, that's not culture – that's quiet burnout. These are people, not machines.

Even a 2-minute reset (walk, stretch, deep breath) matters.

4. Make mental health visible

Talk about it and post about it from the top down. Normalise the conversation and break the stigma. Mental health is health.

5. Lead with vulnerability

When leaders go first, others follow. Talk honestly about stress, boundaries or what's helped you.

**THIS IS HOW IT
STARTS – WITH THE
BASICS WE OFTEN
IGNORE.**

Part two: building a culture that sticks (6–10)

Go beyond the surface – shape long-term change.

6. Create psychological safety

Make it safe for people to speak up without fear of judgement or career risk.

7. Make “are you okay?” mean something

Train your people to listen beyond “I’m fine.” Real support starts with follow-up, not just a question.

8. Praise effort, not just output

Celebrate healthy boundaries, not burnout. Shift the culture, celebrate consistency, openness and learning. Model balance over bravado.

9. Give people autonomy over their schedule

Micromanagement kills trust, productivity and efficiency. Let people own how they get the work done – they’ll surprise you.

10. Ask for feedback, then act on it

Show people their voice matters by making visible changes based on what they say.

**YOU DON'T BUILD
CULTURE IN A DAY –
BUT YOU BUILD IT
DAILY.**

Bonus Steps

11. Make support part of the rhythm

One-off check-ins are nice. A regular, low-pressure rhythm of support is better.

Try short weekly “pulse points”, group check-ins or open conversations that let people feel seen – without needing to raise a hand.

Support should feel normal, not like a special event

12. Actions speak louder than policies

You can have all the wellbeing policies in the world – but if your culture doesn’t back them up, they help nobody.

Build signals into your team habits that say: “It’s safe to speak up and someone’s got your back.”



What's next?

Small actions lead to big shifts. By taking these steps, you're already helping to build a healthier, more supportive workplace. You don't need to overhaul everything overnight – just keep the momentum going.

Want a bit more support?

We help businesses turn these simple steps into real cultural change with:

- ☒ Workplace-friendly tools
- ☒ Flexible awareness sessions
- ☒ A peer support programme that actually sticks
- ☒ A paid one-day Pulse Check to see what's working and what's missing

☎ Book a 15 minute call – [start the conversation](#)

📧 Or email - [here](#)

Bonus tools coming your way

I've included a free bonus poster too, which will land in your inbox tomorrow to help you get started. If you'd like to explore how we can build this out further, let's talk.

Thanks for showing up for mental health at work. It matters — and so do you.