



NATURE, THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WORKPLACE

This year the Mental Health Foundation have chosen '**Nature and the Environment**' as the theme for Mental Health Awareness Week from the 10th-16th May 2021.

The week is an opportunity to open our eyes to the power of nature. The evidence is clear that access to nature is crucial to our mental health and millions of people have rediscovered this during lockdowns.

As a business it may appear at first glance that you can't get involved but that is far from the truth. You can encourage all your staff, whether working from home, in a factory, out on site or in the community to engage with nature at least once during their working day. It only takes a short amount of time to stand out in the fresh air and simply take notice of what's around you. It might be noticing that all the trees and plants are starting to show green shoots and signs of life after a very long dark winter. Or taking notice of the bird activity as they busy themselves building nests and calling out to each other.

It doesn't matter where you are. There is always something to see in nature. You just have to stop long enough to notice it.

Encouraging staff to have their breaks and take a bit of time to reset themselves will help them better manage their mental wellbeing in stressful times. It increases productivity in the long run and has been shown to decrease absenteeism when staff are encouraged to have take time out of their busy working day.

It's also important that you are confident to **have a conversation about mental health** when you notice a staff member may be struggling in some way. This doesn't have to be difficult and I've outlined some useful tips for you below:

- Find a suitable time and place where you will both be comfortable to speak. Consider getting out of the work environment and going for a walk. This can feel less threatening and helps open and honest conversation to take place.
- Listen and communicate in a non-judgmental way. When we feel like we're being judged we are less likely to be honest about what we're experiencing.
- Be empathetic and take them seriously. Whatever they are experiencing is having an impact on them.
- Keep the chat positive and supportive.
- Give reassurance that there are many sources of support available to them such as HR, Occupational Health, your Employee Assistance Programme if you have one, or NHS services which can be accessed directly, local mental health charities such as HEY Mind and NEL Mind.

More useful resources can be found on the **Take 10 Together Toolkit** on the Mental Health First Aid England resources www.mhfaengland.org.

For more information on how Mindworks can help you to create a workplace where mental wellbeing is everyone's business please contact me Lorraine Hamilton, Head of Training on mindworks@heymind.org.uk.