

Importance of Self-Care in The Workplace

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Introduction

In today's constantly evolving work environment, productivity demands and the need to meet deadlines in shorter timelines than previously are placing workers under so much pressure. Individuals get employed, focus majorly on work, and leave other aspects of life unattended. Nevertheless, the practice of self-care at work is very crucial, specifically to improve the employees' health, and the duration of work, and reduce cases of stress. When workers and employers appreciate the value of caring for one's health, the whole company benefits from a healthier workforce. Importing self-care practices into the workplace will be a way of enhancing the productivity as well as strength of the workers. This paper discusses the importance of managing self-care while at work, the challenges faced, and how to encourage a self-care culture.

Importance of Self-Care in The Workplace

Decreased Stress and reduction of Burnout. Stress at the workplace is prevalent and if not tackled it results in burnout, which is a condition that occurs when one is overly stressed. These negative factors including burnout, always cause the level of job satisfaction to decrease, and there is an undesirable turn on health. Burnout has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that leads to increased detachment from one's work (WHO, 2020). Practices that entail using time and energy on one's self help reduce pressures, correct work overload and increase emotional health through activities such as Meditation and exercise. These practices assist the employees in managing the stress they encounter in their positions thereby making the work experience more sustainable.

Efficiency and effectiveness. It has been established that organizations gain high results when they promote personal well-being among workers. Self-care helps an individual not to get easily bored or lose focus, hence recharging is healthy. In a study by Gonzalez-Mulé and

Cockburn (2020), the authors pointed out that people who effectively take breaks and manage stresses are likely to perform well, innovate and facilitate problem-solving within the organization. Happiness at work results from the optimization of cognitive functions that includes memory and decision-making as a result of self-care that benefits the whole organization (Gonzalez-Mulé & Cockburn, 2020).

Improved Mental Health. The APA pays considerable attention to mental health problems in the workplace because stress and anxiety can evolve to severe mental health disorders like depression (APA, 2019). Supporting the need to embrace emotional health enables the employees to be aware of their well-being, seek medical assistance when necessary and also emulate habits that ease their mind. Consequently, the power of stress is reduced among workers, and they are better placed to address any emerging issues.

Better Physical Health. Self-care involves consuming healthy nutrition, exercising and taking adequate sleep for a body to be considered healthy. Failure to adhere to these aspects may result in chronic diseases including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, among others, factors that lower productivity standards in the workplace. Such problems can be avoided by implementing physical self-care promotion policies in the workplace, which may include; provision of gym facilities, conducting walking meetings and provision of healthy foods in the facility. Healthy staff are less likely to call in sick and will be more productive throughout the day as compared to sick staff (Schwartz, 2018).

Improved job satisfaction and Staff Morale. When self-care support is provided, the employees feel more comfortable being at work and, thus, they tend to be more productive. According to research, it is indicated that, when employees feel that they are being cared for, and

that they have the resources to support a positive wellbeing, then they are likely to be committed to their organizations and thus rarely look for other employment elsewhere (Coulson, McKenna, & Field, 2008). Positive work culture that involves self-care as a value adds a social identity to employees and provides them with a reason to embrace their work hence satisfaction in their work.

Challenges employees face in workplace self-care practices

Stigma Around Self-Care. In various organizations, self-care is seen as a weakness to stress, and thus it has negative connotations. Some of these interventions can be considered as leisure and, therefore, one could be deemed as being lazy by not working or not fully being committed to work. Employees may develop an attitude of fear of castigation by colleagues or supervisors and, as such, they avoid practicing basic self-care.

Lack of Institutional support. Unfortunately, self-care initiatives, in most cases, cannot be provided without the support of the organization in which the professionals are employed. Employers who fail to offer mental health support, let alone the possibility of flexible work schedules or breaks, will essentially dissuade their workers from seeking help. When self-care is not visible as part of the company culture, persons are likely to compromise on their health and hence suffer from chronic diseases – physical and mental (Pignata et al., 2017).

Constant connectivity and technology. The increasing decentralization of work and digital communication leads to the blurring of the physical timelines between work and personal life. Some of the dilemmas that can be observed among many employees include always being available outside business hours, in other words, the “always-on” culture. It is challenging for workers to plug off from the workplace and engage in other non-work-related activities. When

there is blurring of the line between available work time and personal time, there can be negativity arising from stress, burnout, and poor work-life balance (NIOSH, 2021).

Heavy Workload. One of the challenges to self-care in the workplace is the heavy workload that makes it difficult to afford time and efforts for self-care. People at work tend to take fewer rest periods, work extra hours, forego meals in an endeavor to meet specific deadlines. Such a culture results in overworking and causes the workers to become mentally weary and less productive. Pignata et al, (2017) opined that the majority of workers suffer from burn out due to the intensity of work coupled with shortage of time for rest. These workers are usually forced to work even when they are sick or feeling like they can barely make it to work, thus passing through a cycle of stress and inefficiency.

Strategies to promote self-care in the workplace

Promoting Work-Life Balance. Proper management of worker's time is very important in order to ensure their health is not affected. It also remains an employer's responsibility to encourage work-life balance for its employees by providing the opportunity to work from home, flexible schedules, or shorter workweeks. NIOSH (2021) also notes that it is possible to discourage burnout by encouraging employees to draw lines between working time and personal time. Another perk that we find vital for happy workers is the work-life balance, since employees with working schedules that allow them to attend to their households' needs are happier.

Encouraging Regular Breaks. Consequently, to enhance self-care, most employers should recommend their employees to engage in breaks regularly in a day. A good break can range from five to ten minutes and help lead to better concentration, low stress ranges and hence better productivity (Schwartz, 2018). Organizations should be able to set policies which will require employees to rest to avoid fatigue due to working for long periods of time without breaks. As

one can only imagine, even small things like going out for some fresh air or walking around the office for a couple of minutes can work wonders for one's mind and body.

Encouraging Physical Activity. A significant part of people's daily lives should be spent performing physical activities as it works against stress and enables people to become happier, healthier, and more productive. It is vital that employers assist in improving physical self-care, for example through availing of on-site gyms, organizing of group exercises or administration of wellness programs. Some are as simple as suggesting employees use standing desks or having meetings where people walk around; even these can go a long way to improving the health and energy levels of the employees (Coulson et al., 2008). Other key benefits that can be derived from physical activity at the workplace include better mood, concentration and improved physical health among the employees.

Sharing Mental Health Information. Business entities or companies should develop means through which the psychological health of the workforce can be enhanced. Granting workers a chance to speak with counselors, access mental health days, or use an emergency alert paging system can be helpful when professional assistance is needed. Besides, having programs on how to manage stress, on mindfulness, relaxation, etc., can help restore control over one's mental state (APA, 2019). It also helps when the support is available and easily accessible, because the employee will have something to work on, irrespective of the issues they are faced with.

Building a Corporate Culture. It takes appropriate workplace culture to promote self-care. Managers themselves should take care of themselves as they try to get their workers to do so. People respond well to transparency, and if bosses come out strong with the vehicle that well-being is important and that there should be no stigmatization of employees who take time off for

health issues, this will go a long way in ensuring that people prioritize their health (Schwartz, 2018). Through promoting self-care practices at the workplace, one can change the culture to make the employees become important assets.

Conclusion

It cannot be emphasized enough that self-care is crucial in today's workplace. Self-care prolongs working capacity, reduces fatigue and stress levels so that the workers feel the positive impacts of a healthy work-life balance. Employers are the chief architects of an organized system that promotes self-care and when people are empowered into taking care of their bodies, minds and spirits, they are likely to be more productive and loyal to their employers. As the dynamics of the contemporary workplace changes, it will be creakier and crucial to embrace self-care practices for sustainability and employee engagement.

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