



ENGAGING STAFF

The aim of a workplace health and wellbeing program is to support all workers to make healthy lifestyle choices. The best way to do this is to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Typically, workers who are already making healthy choices are the easiest to engage so you will need to ensure that those who are less healthy and more resistant to change are not overlooked when engaging workers in your program.

What motivates workers?

People are motivated to be healthy for different reasons. Those who are eager to make healthy lifestyle changes may be motivated by information about the benefits of physical activity, healthy eating, reducing alcohol consumption and quitting smoking. For others, knowledge about healthy choices will not be enough to motivate change.

It is important to consult with staff to identify what motivates them and the things that stop them participating. Common motivations include weight management, stress reduction, improved sleep, injury minimisation to maintain employment and being a good role-model for children. Even workplace incentives and comradery can motivate some staff to become involved in your program.

Changing behaviour

Choosing the right strategies for your program, like introducing a new policy or making changes to the environment, can positively influence all staff, even those who appear disengaged. For example, if a workplace introduced a healthy catering policy and swapped the biscuit jar for a fruit bowl, the eating habits of all staff will be positively influenced.

There are many models that describe how behaviour change occurs. A particularly useful one for the workplace setting is the Stages of Change Model.¹ The five stages of change described in this model are as follows:

1. Pre-contemplation: the worker is not aware that their behaviour is unhealthy or are not interested in changing
2. Contemplation: the worker is weighing up the pros and cons of changing their behaviour
3. Preparation: the worker is planning on changing their unhealthy behaviour
4. Action: the worker is in the process of changing their unhealthy behaviour
5. Maintenance: the worker has adopted the new healthy behaviour and ceased the unhealthy behaviour (> 6 months)

Often, workplace health and wellbeing strategies target those in the latter stages of change (preparation, action and maintenance) through activities such as exercise classes. However, the challenge is to identify strategies that will target and engage those in the earlier stages (pre-contemplation and contemplation). Workplaces have the most to gain from improving the health of staff in the earliest stages, as these are usually the least healthy within the workforce.

The following table demonstrates each stage of change and the workplace strategies that can be utilised to support workers to move towards the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.

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| Stage of change | Workplace strategies | Physical inactivity examples |
|---|--|---|
| Pre-contemplation: unaware of unhealthy behaviour or not interested in changing | Awareness raising Self-monitoring Healthy policies | Take the stairs poster Provision of pedometers Active transport policy |
| Contemplation: considering changing unhealthy behaviour | <i>In addition to all of the above</i> Healthy environments (infrastructure & facilities) | End of trip shower/change facilities Pool bikes Sit-stand workstations |
| Preparation: planning to change unhealthy behaviour | <i>In addition to all of the above</i> Providing education | Sedentary behaviour education session Provision of physical activity brochures |
| Action: process of changing unhealthy behaviour | <i>In addition to all of the above</i> Providing opportunities and activities to participate in | Lunch time walking group Standing or walking meetings |
| Maintenance: adoption of healthy/cessation of unhealthy behaviour | <i>In addition to all of the above</i> Supportive workplace culture | Active social activities (i.e. Friday after-work lawn bowls instead of drinks) |

Program promotion

Promotion is essential in raising awareness, generating staff interest, motivating staff to participate, advertising specific event details and keeping staff involved throughout the program. Some suggestions for program promotion are listed in the table below.

| Print promotions | IT and online methods |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Create some eye-catching posters and place them in high-traffic areas » Include a message in your staff newsletter » Place a flyer in staff pigeonholes or with payslips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Include a message on your intranet » Email staff and set calendar reminders about events » Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to notify staff |
| Staff or toolbox meetings | Program launch |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Talk to staff at regular whole team meetings or catch-ups » Utilise champions to spread the word (e.g. managers or enthusiastic staff members) » Share any success or positive stories a staff member has experienced, with their permission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Get support from senior management, or invite an interesting guest speaker » Provide a healthy breakfast, lunch or morning tea » Give away healthy incentives, such as pedometers, to encourage attendance |

1. Prochaska, J.O. & DiClemente, C.C. (1982) Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: theory, research and practice*, 19: 276-288.

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