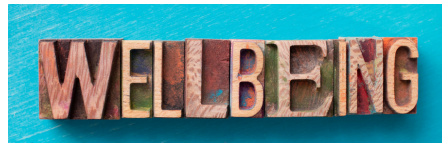


Welcome to another edition of 'Astute Safety Thinking' In this month's edition:

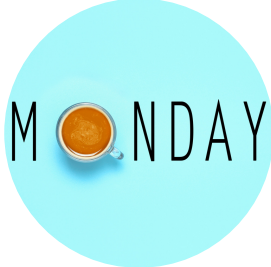
- Wellbeing.
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Blue Monday in 2023 falls on January 16th. Did you even know there was a 'Blue Monday?'

The Blue Monday concept surfaced in 2005 during a press release from British Travel company Sky Travel, during a PR stunt to encourage people to book a holiday.

The date was described to be the gloomiest day of the year. The many factors included weather, debt, monthly salary, time since Christmas, time since failing new year's resolutions, low motivational levels, and feeling the need to take action.



Whatever the time of year or day it is important to check on your colleagues, including the ones that always appear happy and smiling. Foster an open and honest dialogue so people feel that they can talk and will not be judged or reprimanded but will feel listened to and cared about.

With that in mind take a read of the advice for Managers and employees on Mental ill health matters.

Advice for Managers on mental ill health conditions

As a manager, you may have employees who experience mental health difficulties. As soon as you notice that an employee is having difficulties, talk to them – early action can prevent them from becoming more unwell.

If the person does not want to speak to you, suggest they speak to someone else, for example, someone from your employee assistance programme, occupational health team or their GP.

Managers should concentrate on making reasonable adjustments at work, rather than understanding the diagnosis. Their GP, medical support or occupational health should be able to provide guidance on what you can do to help them.

If an employee goes off sick, lack of contact or involvement from their manager may mean they feel isolated, forgotten, or unable to return. You can reduce the risk of them not returning to work by:

- Keeping them informed about what is going on, including social events
- Reassuring them early on and throughout their absence.

Use scheduled work meetings, appraisals, or informal chats about progress to find out more about any problems an employee may be having. You could have health and safety as an agenda item at meetings. As well as things like display screen equipment assessments etc, this can be used for stress or mental health issues.

If you have specific concerns about someone's health, talk about these at an early stage. Ask questions in an open, exploratory, and non-judgemental way. These conditions affect people differently, so making adjustments to their job could relieve symptoms. You should be positive and supportive while exploring the issues and how you can help.

If a person has been off sick, you should discuss their return to work and reintegration into the workplace beforehand. A written plan can help. You both might want to agree when they have reached the stage of 'business as usual.' At this point, you can use existing management processes to review their performance, needs and work plan.

If an employee gets upset, talk to them, reassure them, and tell them that you will give them all the help and support available. Explain that things will go at a pace that suits them. If you are in a meeting with them, ask if they would like someone else with them.

Advice for Managers on mental ill health conditions continued

Try to be sensitive to the level of information the person can cope with. In the middle of a crisis, they may not be able to think clearly and take in complex information, try to stay calm.

Problems can build up over time and while you may feel pressure to do something, it might be better to take some time to think about options properly. Agree with the person about which issues are most urgent. If the session is not helpful for the person or you, rearrange it for when they are less upset. If the problem carries on, you should encourage them to seek help, for example from occupational health or their GP.

A much smaller number of people will experience more severe anxiety or depression. These can be associated with episodes of 'mania,' which can include:

- extreme, heightened activity
- psychosis
- loss of touch with reality
- hallucinations
- distortion of the senses



In these rare instances, an employee may behave in ways that impact colleagues or clients and you should keep your responsibilities to all employees in mind.

Take the person to a quiet place and speak to them calmly. Suggest that you could contact a friend or relative or that they go home and contact their GP or a member of their mental health team, if appropriate. You may be able to make an appointment and go with them to the surgery if they want you to.

If someone is experiencing hallucinations or mania, they may not take in what you are saying. In this case, they will need immediate medical help. If an employee is disturbing others and refuses to accept help, seek advice from:

- your occupational health provider
- the person's GP
- the NHS – call 111
- or call an ambulance.

Managing a person with an ongoing illness

Most people who have ongoing mental health problems continue to work successfully. But when someone needs support, managers can work with them to ensure flexibility to suit their health needs.

People with mental health problems should be treated in the same way as any other member of staff unless they ask for help or demonstrate clear signs that they need it. It is discriminatory to make assumptions about people's capabilities, their promotability or the amount of sick leave they may need because of their illness.

Coping strategies

Most people are encouraged to develop a coping strategy as part of their care. This often involves noting signs of a possible relapse and taking pre-emptive action, such as cutting down on work, being careful about drinking alcohol, taking exercise, and finding time to relax. You must support the employee at this first warning stage. Small, inexpensive adjustments may well prevent a more costly period of illness.

Advance statements

Some people find it useful to draw up an 'advance statement' which explains how they want to be treated if they become unwell. The statement can cover practical arrangements such as details of the people who need to be contacted or provided with information. It might be helpful to draw up an advance statement which relates to the workplace. It could include:

- signs that indicate the person is becoming unwell
- who to contact (a close relative, care coordinator or GP)
- what sort of support is helpful and what is not

If an employee draws up an agreement with you, you should put the statement into practice to maintain trust.

Guidance and support

Advice and support are available for those at work who have experienced mental health issues, and for their employers. There are several specialist organisations that can provide guidance and support. For further information please visit <https://www.hse.gov.uk>

Advice for employees with mental health conditions

If you already feel under pressure, it is hard to distinguish when 'stress' begins to affect your condition, making it worse or bringing on an episode. Many of the symptoms of stress and mental health conditions are similar. The main differences are the severity and duration of the symptoms and the impact they have on your everyday life.

Most people with mental health problems are diagnosed and treated by their GP and continue to work productively. Evidence shows that staying in work can be a great help to those affected.

Take action at an early stage

If you feel you have a problem, the sooner you do something about it, the better – it can stop you from becoming more unwell. Line managers and colleagues can also play an important role in identifying when colleagues are behaving out of character, so it is best to be cooperative if your line manager approaches you with concerns.

Help your manager to identify problems and needs

It might be that certain tasks, work environments, times of the day or being part of a particular team are linked to your issues. If you feel you have a mental health problem, it is a good idea to raise it with your line manager, HR department or someone else in the workplace.

You could make use of scheduled meetings, appraisals, or informal chats about the progress that you have with your manager – these can give you both a chance to talk about any problems you have.

Remember

- Stress and mental health conditions do not affect everyone in the same way
- Your employer can make adjustments to ease your problems, but only if you give them a better understanding of your situation
- Discussions can be positive – you can work out how your employer can help you

If you are returning to work after illness

Most people who have had an illness will recover and return to work. But if you have had time off sick, you should talk to your manager and agree on a plan for your return to work before you come back. You may reach a stage in your recovery when you can return to work before you are a hundred per cent ready for 'business as usual.' This can mean you need some support or changes in your role or work to make your return easier. You should talk to your manager and work together to meet your needs. A written plan may help you both agree when you have reached the 'business as usual' stage.

If you remain unwell despite support, you should get help. Consider asking for a referral to your organisation's occupational health department, if it has one, or see your GP. Your condition may be covered by the Equality Act 2010, which requires your employer to make reasonable adjustments to help you get back into work. But if you do not discuss these issues honestly, your manager is unlikely to be able to help you.

If you are going through a hard time and would like to talk to someone there are organisations that can help. For further information please visit <https://www.hse.gov.uk>



Why Astute Safety Consulting?

We have teamed up with VideoTile learning and offer many online courses. Two of the courses available are:

Developing a Workplace Mental Health Policy.

When people have good mental health, they are more likely to fulfil their potential. That means they enjoy work and cope easily with work situations. They have a happy family life and good social relationships. This course covers the steps that organisations should consider when developing and implementing a comprehensive workplace Mental Health Policy.

Approved by CPD IISRM 20 MINS

Managing Occupational Health and Wellbeing

This course explains the key elements, procedures and activities involved in successful Occupational Health and Safety Management in the workplace. The course show how professional Occupational Health and Safety Management benefits individuals and organisations

For further information please visit: [here](#), to browse our training modules.



Demolition firm and director prosecuted after 20-Year-old Labourer crushed.

A demolition firm has been fined and one of its directors ordered to do 250 hours of unpaid work after a 20-year-old worker was crushed.

Ace Demolition Services Ltd had been contracted by Southend Borough Council to demolish Futures Community College, in Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-on-Sea.

Shannon Brasier, who was 20 years old at the time, was working with a colleague to load a fuel hose into the rear compartment of a 21-tonne excavator, when the excavator moved round and crushed her between the excavator and a mobile fuel tank.

Ms Brasier, from Dagenham, suffered life-changing injuries, including to her neck, skull, and face, which she was fortunate to survive.

HSE inspector David Tonge said: "This incident could have so easily been avoided. While there were a number of shortfalls, this incident ultimately occurred due a failure to keep the workers away from the excavator. "Duty holders must ensure that individuals are segregated from vehicles and construction machinery."

Click [here](#) to read the full article.

Company fined £800,000 after employee suffers serious burns

A chemicals company has been fined £800,000 after a worker suffered life-changing injuries in an explosion.



The employee of International Paint Limited spent eight days in intensive care on life support and has been left with all-over body scarring, partial blindness to one eye, hearing damage, and damage to a knee and shoulder. Read the full article [here](#).

Health board fined £160,000 after employees diagnosed with Hand Arm Vibration.

Powys Teaching Health Board required its employees to routinely operate handheld power tools such as lawn mowers, strimmers and hedge cutters without carrying out an assessment of the risks from exposure to vibration. Read the full article [here](#).



Why Astute Safety Consulting?

Why Manage Safety?

Imagine the cost of non-compliance

Thriving businesses manage health and safety because it is one of the key elements that makes them successful. Managing safety is the law. Quite simply, keeping on the right side of the law and out of court leaves you free to focus on running your business and reduces the risk of increasingly heavy fines, as well as protecting your reputation.

Managing safety improves your business' overall safety and reduces workplace accidents and injuries. There will be fewer accidents, fewer people will get hurt and need time off, managers will spend less time investigating accidents, employee engagement improves and productivity increases.

We should all expect to be able to go home at the end of our working day without being injured or our health made worse just because of our work. It is immoral to put people at unnecessary risk. Your policy shows employees that you genuinely care about their well-being.



Burns Night - January 25

Burns Night is celebrated in honour of the Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796). He is best known for writing the new year's anthem "Auld Lang Syne," which is traditionally sung at the stroke of midnight when New Year's Eve becomes New Year's Day. Many Scots celebrate Burns' Night by eating haggis, a savoury pudding made from sheep puck and other ingredients and reading the poet's works aloud with company. They will often feature a bagpiper or traditional Scottish music.

Make the astute choice and let Astute Safety Consulting help your business today.

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