



Tips to Help Retail and Hospitality Managers Support Mental Health in the Workplace

During the busy holiday season, the mental health of retail and hospitality workers should be an organization’s central focus.

With all the changes they’ve endured over the past few years, supporting their mental health will help make the workplace safer and healthier for everyone. With that aim in mind, we’ve put together the following tips to help managers support their teams.



Protect workers from physical and mental harm

With the year-end hustle and bustle, customers have been known to take their stress out on employees. When that happens, it’s important that employers and co-workers do their best to protect them, both from physical harm and the psychological stress it may cause. Having clear policies and enforcing them with customers will go a long way toward building trust and confidence while giving you and your team a sense of safety. Additionally, [The Mental Health in Retail Guidebook](#) by Retail Council of Canada has some important guidance about mental health in the workplace and tips for de-escalation during difficult situations.



Connect with resources

Never underestimate the help and support professionals can offer. Share as many resources as possible to help each other during difficult times. Connect frequently to share the supports that may be available inside (e.g., benefits, employee assistance program, peer support) and outside your organization such as community supports (e.g., free resources such as [CMHA Get Help](#)).



Communicate with empathy

When individuals are having difficulty coping with stressors, communicating with empathy is one of the best ways to understand and help them get through it. Speaking clearly is also useful during such times, since processing tasks and large quantities of information can be difficult when people are feeling overwhelmed. This [article](#) in *The Catalyst* offers useful insights on how to communicate with empathy.



Show kindness

Small gestures to you can be big gestures to others. For families struggling to make ends meet, people experiencing loneliness, or employees feeling isolated, knowing that their organization and peers care about them personally can have significant benefits.

Consider giving unexpected tokens of appreciation, such as a cupcake delivery (or a healthy alternative), work-related comforts (think warm, branded blankets), or gift cards. Encourage them to indulge themselves in healthy ways when comfort is needed most.



Consider scheduling and flexibility

While it can be challenging to cover shifts during busy times, see if there are alternative ways to do so. Try being flexible and understanding toward colleagues and co-workers. They too have obligations to family and friends. Keeping that in mind and finding a balance will help to make the season go a lot smoother. Also consider and discuss individual needs with your team to see how they might be accommodated, if possible.

While it's important to focus on getting through the busy months, thinking about long-term supports within your organization can help set up your future success. Our guide, [Building Mental Health into Retail and Hospitality Organizations](#), outlines some foundational pieces for developing a more robust psychological health and safety framework in your organization.



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