

*The crucial connection
between sleep and mental
health at work:
Why it matters more than
you think*



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May 2025

THE CRUCIAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SLEEP AND MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK: WHY IT MATTERS MORE THAN YOU THINK

During Mental Health Awareness Month in May, many of us, especially those working to support employee wellbeing, were taking a closer look at what really supports our teams' mental health. And while we often talk about stress, burnout, and resilience, there's one critical factor that I believe still doesn't get the attention it deserves: sleep.

Coming on the heels of Sleep Awareness Week, now is the perfect time to ask: how well are we - and our colleagues - really sleeping?

Why sleep matters for workplace mental health

It's easy to think of sleep as a personal matter, something employees manage on their own time. But poor sleep doesn't stay home: it walks into the office with us, affects our mood in meetings, clouds our thinking during big decisions, and impacts how we show up for our colleagues.

In fact, a recent Nuffield Health survey of over 8,000 employees found that **74% reported poor sleep quality**, and shockingly, **1 in 10 were getting just 2–4 hours of sleep a night**. With numbers like that, chances are high that many people on your team are running on empty.

Why sleep is a workplace issue

Sleep is about more than just rest - it's about showing up as our best selves. It helps us stay focused, make sound decisions, and manage our emotions. Without it, everything from collaboration to creativity takes a hit.

As sleep researcher Dr. Matthew Walker puts it: *"Sleep is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day."*

Think about your last restless night. Were you patient the next day? Sharp in meetings? Probably not... and your team likely noticed too.

The business cost

This isn't just about personal wellbeing, it's about performance, too. Here's what sleep deprivation is costing businesses:

- **Lost productivity:** According to a RAND Corporation study³, sleep deprivation costs the U.S. loses an equivalent of around 1.2 million working days due to insufficient sleep, due to decreased productivity and higher absenteeism.
- **Poor decision-making:** Sleep-deprived individuals are more likely to make riskier decisions and are slower to recognize their errors.
- **Reduced engagement:** Tired employees are less engaged, more prone to burnout, and less likely to contribute meaningfully to team collaboration.
- **Increased presenteeism:** Employees may show up but underperform due to mental fatigue, affecting not just their output but also team dynamics.

The mental health-sleep loop

Sleep and mental health have a complicated relationship. Anxiety and depression often lead to poor sleep - and poor sleep can worsen mental health. It's a cycle that's easy to fall into and hard to break.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, nearly **half of adults** say bad sleep negatively affects their mental health. And for younger employees, the impact can be even more pronounced. You might not hear about it directly, but it shows up - in missed deadlines, withdrawn behaviour, or short tempers during a tough project sprint.

Taking action

As world events are increasing stress and anxiety exponentially, there's never been a better time for businesses to reassess how they support employee wellbeing. Sleep isn't just a personal matter - it's a workplace issue. By fostering a culture that values rest and recovery, employers can improve morale, reduce sick days, and boost overall performance.

Here's what you can do:

- **Start the conversation:** Normalize talking about sleep. It's not lazy to prioritize rest - it's smart.
- **Review workloads:** Unrealistic deadlines and back-to-back meetings don't help anyone sleep better.
- **Offer education:** Sleep health workshops or digital tools can make a big difference.
- **Lead by example:** Encourage managers to model healthy sleep habits - no more late-night emails!

Because well-rested employees don't just feel better... they think more clearly, collaborate more effectively, and help drive sustainable success!

Want to help your team sleep better and perform at their best?

[Contact us](#) to learn more about our '**Boosting Energy & Productivity Through Better Sleep**' workshops and sleep health training courses and how they can support your organisation's mental health goals this year.

Our sleep specialist: Dr Jill McGary

Jill is a Clinical Psychologist with 28 years of experience in psychological support for people with mental health issues and now runs her own private specialist sleep clinic as The Sleep Doctor. Throughout this work Jill has supported many people who have had sleep problems. She is a member of the British Sleep Society and has supported the Sleep Charity develop a sleep health programme.

Listen to Jill talk about '[Leveraging Shuteye' for Resilience](#)' on this [podcast](#)

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