

# Workplace wellbeing

Tips for employees



Mentally healthy workplaces matter. They're good for people, and they're good for businesses

When we're healthier and happier we're more productive, take less sick days and are less likely to quit our jobs.

Workplaces are increasingly getting behind workplace wellbeing, but there's a lot of work to be done.

There are many strategies backed by evidence to get the most out of your job and workplace. You can do this through job crafting, harnessing passion, and (where possible) getting management on board.



## Strategy 1: Job crafting

### The power of personalising our work

Job crafting is an approach you can use to take charge of your own workplace wellbeing. It involves strategies shape your job to align with your strengths, values and interests through three different ways:

- tasks
- relationships
- beliefs and thoughts.

**Task crafting:** Changing aspects of how we perform work, including re-designing, adding or removing tasks

**Relational crafting:** Building new connections, or increasing or decreasing our engagement to shape our connections in the workplace

**Cognitive crafting (beliefs and thoughts):** Reframing how you think about work, including its value, purpose or the meaning it brings to you personally and professionally

# Job crafting in action

## 1. Know your strengths

What are you good at? If you're not sure, take a strengths survey such as [Values in Action \(VIA\) Character Strengths](#) survey or [Gallup's CliftonStrengths](#) assessment. From here, look at how adapting your tasks, relationships or thoughts could draw on these strengths more in your role. This can benefit you and your organisation.

## 2. Get creative

Job crafting is all about creating new habits and approaches to how we work.

You could try:

- taking steps to learn new things about your co-workers each day ([relational crafting](#))
- changing when you work on different types of tasks to match your mental ups and downs ([task crafting](#))
- each day, reflecting on the impact of your work – who does it help and how? ([cognitive crafting](#)).

## 3. Be selective

Job crafting isn't a one-size-fits all approach. Think of job crafting like being adaptable and proactive, using the tools that are available to you in your environment.

In some workplaces, input from employees may not always be welcomed, or there may be little autonomy to change the tasks involved in your job. In these scenarios, cognitive crafting is likely to be more practical and helpful. Or try some playful work design where you embed fun or challenge as part of the existing task without compromising professionalism or quality.

## 4. Gather support

Involving your supervisor or management can lead to additional support for job crafting in your workplace. While not every workplace will be open to this idea, showing how these tactics benefit other people in your team or the organisation can help make the case.

## 5. Collaborate

Think about the people you work with or have previously worked with. Don't be afraid to adopt some of their strategies if they could also work for you. Starting a conversation with colleagues about making meaningful contributions and changes, or better using each other's strengths, can have a positive impact on your working environment.

## 6. Celebrate and reflect

Change doesn't always have to be drastic to have a positive impact. Feeling good is motivating – by achieving and celebrating wins, however small, you're more likely to persist.



**Mohamed**, who works in a busy office, tries to reduce the amount of time spent on emails by setting himself the challenge of responding fully with no more than three sentences.

**Kate**, a delivery driver, mentally identifies the quickest route to the next drop off before checking if she was right in the maps app.



**Steve**, a store cashier, experiments with different ways of greeting customers with the aim of getting a smile from every customer.



## Strategy 2: Channel healthy passion

### Embracing the love and drive you have for your work

Passion is what drives and fuels us. When aligned, or in harmony with our inner goals and values, passion contributes to wellbeing. All consuming, or obsessive passion, can sometimes be helpful, however can often conflict with other areas of life, and increase the risk of stress and burnout.

You can experience both harmonious or obsessive passion at the same time, or interchangeably at different periods. While a more obsessive passion may be helpful at times, it's important to consider whether it comes at a cost or the impact it has on other areas of your life.

### How to avoid obsessive passion

#### 1. Be mindful

How aware are you of how you feel about your work and your work behaviours? Ask yourself: What type of passion is driving my work and is this healthy? How does my work impact on other areas and relationships in my life? If your answers to these questions are pointing towards obsessive passion (see the table), it's time to develop some work-life balance strategies.

#### 2. Setting boundaries

Proactively committing to activities that distance you from work can help create more balance with other areas in your life. For example, taking a lunchtime walk with a friend, or signing up for a fitness class in the evening to prevent late nights spent working.

#### 3. Counteract obsessive passion with life crafting

Prioritising and being deliberate with our leisure time and social connections can balance our passion for work, and also have a positive impact on our wellbeing more generally, including protecting against burnout.

## Is it harmonious or obsessive passion?



### A harmoniously passionate worker

- ✓ Freely chooses to engage in their work, rather than feeling an uncontrollable urge to do so.
- ✓ Loves their job and experiences sustained enjoyment and concentration from working each day.
- ✓ Is able to mentally "switch off" after work, and enjoy engaging in hobbies, sports, or spending time with family and friends.
- ✓ Has a secure sense of who they are, what they want, and what they can achieve, and work does not overpower other areas of their life.



### An obsessively passionate worker

- Feels an uncontrollable urge to engage in their work.
- Struggles to separate themselves from work, or mentally switch off from work, even though they may enjoy their job.
- Might frequently bring work home with them, work late into the night, potentially to the point that it impacts their sleep and others areas of life.
- May use work as a self-protective strategy or a source of pride, and as such;
- May react defensively when criticized and when things go wrong.



## Strategy 3: Healthy risk taking

### Feeling psychologically safe at work

A psychologically safe workplace enables people to take interpersonal risks such as speaking up, asking for help or taking initiative.

Leadership and management play a significant part in creating and supporting this at work. But everyone has a role to play.

So even if your boss isn't on board, you can still proactively support psychological safety with your colleagues, peers, or anyone you manage.

### Leading by example

Here are some ways you can put your psychological safety first.

- Take ownership of mistakes, as this can contribute to a workplace culture where learning, growth and innovation are valued.
- Approach problems or mistakes as something to “solve” rather than looking to place blame.
- Invite feedback and constructive criticism to encourage collaboration.
- Ask for and offer help with challenging projects.
- Take time to discuss and reflect on what you’ve learnt and how it might be applied to the next project.



To read our employee tip sheet visit [psychweek.org.au/2021-resources](https://psychweek.org.au/2021-resources)

### Seek support

If you feel the stress and emotional and mental challenges associated with your work is getting too much, a psychologist may be able to help. Psychologists are highly trained and qualified professionals skilled in helping people with a range of mental health concerns, including the psychological difficulties that can come with working and your workplace.

If you are referred to a psychologist by your GP, you might be able to get a Medicare rebate. You may also be able to receive psychology services via telehealth so you don't need to travel to see a psychologist. Ask your psychologist or GP for details. There are number of ways to access a psychologist. You can:

- use the Australia-wide [Find a Psychologist™](https://findapsychologist.org.au) service. Go to [findapsychologist.org.au](https://findapsychologist.org.au) (within “search by issue” you can go to the “work/ community” list and select “work stress”) or call 1800 333 497.
- ask your GP or another health professional to refer you.



CENTRE FOR WELLBEING SCIENCE

The APS has partnered with the University of Melbourne's Centre for Wellbeing and Science which has conducted research into employee wellbeing amongst Australian workers across different industries. The research has informed the guidance in this information sheet. To read the full report and more resources on workplace mental health and wellbeing, visit [psychweek.org.au/2021-resources](https://psychweek.org.au/2021-resources)



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