

# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS POLICIES

## Staff - Mental Health and Wellness

### The importance of looking after your mental health

Fernwood Fitness is proud to be a mentally healthy workplace and understand that looking after emotional and mental wellbeing is just as important as ensuring good physical fitness for long term health.

We are also aware that stress and anxiety rates in Australian women are the highest they have ever been and despite being expert's in health and wellness, fitness industry workers are among those most affected by physical and emotional burnout. It is not uncommon for fitness trainers and instructors as well as sales and customer service staff, in their best efforts to support members on their health and wellness journey's, to sometimes fail to look after their own health and wellness needs.

In May 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) formally acknowledged Burnout as a syndrome; adding it to the International Classification of Diseases. WHO states:

*"Burnout is a syndrome resulting from chronic work stress that has not been successfully managed and is characterised by three dimensions:*

- 1. Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion*
- 2. Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativity or cynicism related to one's job*
- 3. Reduced professional efficacy".*

Burnout can have serious consequences, for long-term mental, emotional and physical health. Though not a diagnosable mental illness, burnout has been linked to depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, fatigue and decreased work performance.

### What causes fitness industry staff to burn out?

1. Poor schedule boundaries (taking on too many hours / working back-to-back/split shifts)
2. Not taking enough time for fun, rest and relaxation
3. Not getting good quality / quantity of sleep
4. Falling out of love with what they do

### How to avoid burnout and care for yourself in the work place.

#### 1. Prioritise healthy basics

Fitness professionals are brilliant at helping others stick to healthy lifestyles, yet sometimes in the process forget about their own balance. Make your health a priority and ensure nourishing your mind and body with wholesome foods, stay well hydrated and take time to recover. Not just for your own training, but a busy working day as well.

## **2. Prioritise sleep health**

Good sleep is just as important to long term health as nutritious food and clean water. During sleep we recover and rejuvenate and prepare for the next day. Getting 7-9 hours of uninterrupted quality sleep and waking feeling rested are some key indicators you have good sleep health. These days, technology and time spent on social media and deter us from healthy sleep. Limiting phone and TV time in the evening and turning to reading in low light instead is a fantastic way to help wind down in the evening.

## **3. Take time to 'fill up your cup'**

It's not just sleep we need to fully recover from a physically and mentally demanding day, we also need fun and to balance our lives with non-work-related activities. It is important to actively schedule time for fun and recreation, quality time with loved ones and engaging in hobbies that bring you joy.

## **4. Leave work at work**

Part of being able to keep on top of your mental and emotional wellbeing is to be able to set yourself boundaries, switch off from work when you leave. Wellbeing is about balance; imaging your life as a wheel, when all areas are balances, the wheel can run smoothly.

## **5. Practice mindfulness**

Meditation and other mindfulness practices are proven to reduce mental and emotional stress, boost emotional intelligence and physically help to relax and rejuvenate. Mindfulness describes simply being as oppose to doing. Being in nature, being in the moment, letting go of attachment to outcomes and are all mindful practices that can help reduce stress and anxiety. Guided meditations using Apps such as Insight Timer are also a great way to 'just be'.

## **6. Practice self-care and self-compassion.**

As women, we are often better at caring for others than ourselves. When we practice self-care and self-compassion, we allow ourselves the space and time to care for ourselves, the way we would others. Three qualities that are inherent in fitness professionals are also the qualities often seen in those susceptible to burn out. They are: 'perfectionism', 'people pleasing' and 'work-a-holism'- not just in the workplace, but in other areas of life too. Part of self-care is having the ability to say no to taking on too much, to slow down and step back before burnout sets in. Self-compassion helps us to let go of self-judgment.