Creating a Culture of Wellbeing in Your Practice in 6 Key Steps

The nature of veterinary work means that many teams work in challenging conditions and stress levels can be unacceptably high. However, creating a culture in which each member of your team is engaged, motivated and equipped to perform at their best is certainly possible.

**STEP 1**
Be open in discussions with your team to de-stigmatise the issue of mental health
- Aim to create a supportive, open environment, in which their psychological safety is assured
- Set clear boundaries
- Help them to manage their time and take designated breaks. When they’re off-duty, make sure they ARE off-duty!

**STEP 2**
A collaborative team is a happy team
- Aim to ensure optimal use of your team’s combined skills and experience
- Lead by example in recognizing successes
- Encourage constructive discussions around challenges and debriefs on difficult cases

**STEP 3**
Physical exercise is a fantastic stress-buster
- Provide facilities to enable team members to take exercise during their breaks
- Offer a ‘quiet room’, separate to the staff room
- It gives team members a space in which to relax during or after a busy shift

**STEP 4**
Keep your HR processes up to date
- Ensure all team members are familiar with them
- Make sure that regular one-to-one meetings are diarised for every team member
- Use them to discuss performance and set goals, give encouragement or raise concerns

**STEP 5**
Buddy schemes help new team members feel they have someone to turn to
- They’re ideal for new graduates who can shadow their buddy for a period of time
- A mentor program can also positively impact the experience and confidence of your team
- A mentor will provide valuable support and guidance for those working at any level

**STEP 6**
Research shows that helping others makes us happier
- Offer your team one paid day off a year to support the charity of their choice
- Or invite the team to select a charity of the year
- Run fundraising events throughout the year to support the chosen charity

This resource was created following a panel discussion entitled ‘Practical tips on how to implement wellness in the veterinary practice’ during WSAVA 2023. We thank all participants for their contributions.

*Check this link for more resources to help you from the WSAVA’s Professional Wellness Group, including the WSAVA’s Professional Development and Personal Wellbeing Certificate.*