



Social Connections Toolkit

Connecting work, home and community

Welcome to the Social Connections Toolkit. Use this guide to help you to understand and initiate positive social connections - they keep us happier and healthier throughout our lives.

Feeling close to (and valued by) other people is a fundamental human need. Without it, we don't function well in the world... and this goes just as much for our work lives.

No matter your age, gender, background or role, social relationships are crucial for promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

When social support acts to help maintain good physical and mental health, it appears to buffer against the full impact of mental and physical illness. The result at work is the prevention of injury and illness generally.

So, good supervisory support and leadership at work can encourage wellbeing, reduce absences and increase productivity.

Social factors and returning to work

After an illness, trauma, accident or workplace injury, social factors play a big role in returning to work. In fact, did you know that social isolation and low levels of social support is associated with the worsening of a host of medical conditions? That's why the idea of "all work and no play" is being challenged.

Social connections at work matter

Fostering social connections in the workplace is about focusing on the positive impact that social support at work can have on employees and organisations.

It's a simple idea, social connections encourage engagement within the workplace, promote overall wellbeing and ultimately help build work environments where employees reach their potential. Workplaces that understand this can benefit through improved safety and increased productivity.

“Did you know?”

Regardless of age, gender, role or background, social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and act as a buffer against mental health issues.

(Yep, everybody!)



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Why initiate and grow social connections?

Creating socially connected workplaces

Socially connected workplaces benefit everyone. Healthy relationships are the fundamental driver of positive human behaviour and this translates directly into productive and safe workplaces.

When people are connected, they feel they belong. They have more tolerance and more capacity to accept differences in thought, culture, ethnicity. And more than that, socially connected individuals and communities, whether at home or at work, have increased capacity to celebrate this diversity.

In the new era of work, the range of skills required are immense. Promoting connection and a sense of belonging will lead to the full engagement of workers, and an increased focus and desire to do well. These are critical factors for attracting talented and committed people to your organisation.

However, words are not enough – practical actions need to be taken by every level of the organisation.

“Social Connections?”

Understanding social connectedness, shows how it’s important for workplaces.

Social connection is the experience of feeling close and connected to others. It involves feeling cared for, and valued, and forms the basis of interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

This sense of belonging can make work feel like a community. Positive social connections encourage workers to collaborate with managers and colleagues, to be more involved in the planning of work and to be more aware of the needs of others.

Positive social connections, or meaningful relationships, are built on:

- Trust
- Integrity
- Good communication
- Appreciation
- Empathy/Care
- Fun
- Authenticity
- Support.

(All good stuff!)



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The benefits of social connections

Research has shown that strong social connections in the workplace have a positive impact on workers' mental, emotional and physical health, leading to improved outcomes for businesses.

Business benefits:

- Higher engagement and productivity
- Lower absenteeism
- Greater loyalty
- Less likelihood of injury
- Quicker return to work rates for the sick and injured.

Individual benefits:

A Harvard longitudinal study of adult development found that close relationships, more than money and fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives, this results in:

- Higher self-esteem and empathy
- Lower rates of depression and anxiety
- Better emotional regulation.

Connected co-workers

“I spend most of my time at work”

We spend about a third of our lives at work. For this reason, it's imperative that employees are encouraged to build meaningful relationships with their co-workers.

“I'm here to work not make friends”

Once the workplace culture changes to one that supports social connections, employers can expect to see a marked increase in staff engagement and productivity.

We are hardwired for social connections

We are fundamentally social creatures and once employees have meaningful connections their health flourishes along with their work performance. Mental health claims cost more to employers than physical injury claims.

What you'll find inside this toolkit

This Social Connection Toolkit aims to help employers, managers and workers create workplace environments that promote positive social connections.

Use this guide and the downloadable practical resources to help build an engaging, strong and socially connected workforce. Our toolkit is based on tried and proven research to provide you with practical steps that show:

- How leaders can shape a workplace culture that supports social connections
- How to achieve and maintain a socially connected workplace
- How to use low cost / no cost strategies for social connection

- How to use social connections to improve return to work outcomes for injured employees.

Social Connections Toolkit resources include:

- Educational poster aimed at workers
- Event invite poster
- Wellbeing poster
- Employer/Manager information
- A4 injury prevention and A4 recovery fact sheets
- Social Connections Calendar
- Social Connections PowerPoint presentation and template.



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