MetLife | Return to Health

Supporting Employee Mental Health
Call Centers



Stress and burnout are some of the most common causes of absenteeism and lost productivity within the workplace.

In addition to employee wellness effects, this can adversely impact deadlines, performance guarantees, and business operations.

Common causes of stress and burnout may be directly related to the work environment. Being aware of these stressors allows the supervisor to implement changes that support employee well-ness. This toolkit provides tips that can be utilized by supervisors to identify possible causes of employee stress in call centers and ways reduce stress to prevent disability leaves.

Common causes include:[1]

- Lack of resources for the employee
- Unclear job expectations
- Workplace dynamics
- Inconsistency in intensity of job demands
- Lack of social support
- Poor work-life balance

Working in a call center environment may result in additional stressors due to:[1]

- Emotions of customers
- Lack of predictability
- Employees not recognizing the importance of their work to the organization as a whole

Helpful reminders supervisors can provide to customer facing employees:[4]

Don't take it personally. Customers are not upset with you, and your goal is to help them find solutions.

Utilize coping strategies. Stretch between calls, change positions, listen to relaxing music, or use a stress ball during calls.

Take breaks. Use the time to eat and drink or take a walk outside.

Use guided imagery exercises. Picture a relaxing place or utilize meditation and deep breathing which can help you feel calm and re-center between calls.

Utilize Employee benefits. Utilize Employee Assistance Program and other health and wellness benefits, if available.

13 Ways Employers Can Help Employees Manage Stress:[3]

Optimism and support from supervisors and colleagues can decrease emotional discomfort in the workplace. Training programs to support emotional skills, training for supervisors, increases in job autonomy, and improved work-life balance can enhance employees' emotional wellness.[2]

Allow autonomy - although scripts are necessary, utilizing them as a guide allows a more natural interaction with customers.

Permit flexible work schedules that incorporate work from home time throughout the month or varying shifts.

Training should be frequent and ongoing, including computer/software, company purpose and core values and how to handle customer calls.

Invest in technology that can simplify processes and result in greater productivity and improved customer experience.

Create tools to monitor employee time and set reasonable expectations based on data collected to support time management.

Recognize employees through a recognition platform that can be utilized to celebrate achievements like meeting metrics, positive customer reviews, or supporting peers.

Support employees on an individual basis by verbally acknowledging work efforts, offering suggestions, engaging in conversation, and providing constructive feedback.

Create clear, measurable performance expectations to ensure job responsibilities and performance indicators are explained and understood by employees.

Ensure ergonomically correct workstations and properly functioning equipment (i.e., computers and headsets).

Encourage breaks and recommend activities like stretching, walking outside, visiting with coworkers, or having snacks and drinks to increase energy. Discourage the use of mobile devices as this can increase stress.

Provide tips that can be used at work as well as outside of the work environment (i.e., fitness or stress reduction workshops, emotional wellness resources, nutrition information).

Encourage employee engagement with peers and other staff members such as managers. Engage employees in projects and/or implementing new ideas.

Have fun, plan office parties to bring the team together and take time for team building and other activities to engage employee.

The information contained herein is for purely informational purposes only, and is not intended to present medical, occupational, or therapeutic advice.

1. WHY ARE CALL CENTER JOBS STRESSFUL? (linkedin.com)
2. Emotional well-being and discomfort at work in call center - PubMed (nih.gov)
3. What is Call Center Stress and How to Manage it (2022 Guide) (timedoctor.com)
4. 31 Tips for Working in a Call Center | Indeed.com 6 June 2025

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