



Actions for small business owners to improve their mental health and wellbeing

This guide has been developed to help identify how you're coping with stressors in your business and what actions you can take to alleviate them.

Mental health is not a fixed or static state. Experts often explain it by talking of a continuum, where positive mental health is at one end, represented by feeling good and functioning well, through to severe symptoms of mental health conditions at the other end. Ultimately, it's important to try to stay 'in the green'. Taking action will not only be good for you personally, but for your business as well. Refer to the actions and links below and over the page from the section you feel reflects your current state of mind.

Positive, healthy functioning

Personal signs

- Common fluctuations in mood
- Physically and socially active
- Few sleep difficulties
- Calm

At work signs

- Easily concentrates on the task at hand
- Punctual
- Achieves deadlines
- Pays attention to detail
- Has high work standards
- Sociable with colleagues, customers and clients
- Engaged in meetings
- Consistent performance
- Solutions focused
- Meeting regulatory expenses and promptly paying employee wages and service providers

Actions to take

Personal solutions

- Improve understanding of the warning signs of poor mental health and [find tips](#) on how to maintain good mental health outside work.

At work solutions

Small business case study and practical tips videos

- Find [practical tips](#) to create a mentally healthy small business
- How to [look after yourself](#) as a small business owner
- How to [look after your staff](#) as a small business owner

Small business owners without staff

- Linda's story – [Staying connected](#)
- Sandy's story – [Being your own boss](#)

Small business owners with staff

- Gary's story – [Involving your staff for better results](#)
- Richenda's story – [Creating a positive culture](#)
- David's story – [Creating a flexible workplace](#)

Business and legal essentials

- Seek out business advice early – find [services in your local area](#)
- Invest in a business mentor – find [mentors in your local area](#)
- Understand your [legal obligations](#)
- Understand your [WHS rights and responsibilities](#)

Plan for the future using the following templates:

- [Personal wellbeing plan](#)
- [Workplace wellbeing plan](#)

Personal signs

- Irritable
- Nervous
- Procrastinating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Withdrawn
- Increasing alcohol use
- Low energy
- Angry
- Anxious
- Forgetful

At work signs

- Difficulty concentrating
- Not meeting deadlines
- Attention to detail is less than usual
- Less engaged in meetings than usual
- Lower than usual work standards
- Often anti-social with colleagues, customers and clients
- Slow paying regulatory expenses, employee wages and service providers
- Negative and not solutions focused

Actions to take

Personal solutions

- Assess your mental health and wellbeing with the [anxiety and depression checklist](#)
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Develop interests outside of work
- Eat well, prioritise sleep, stay physically fit
- Monitor [warning signs](#) of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Utilise low intensity mental health support services available in your area
 - Those in serviced areas get six free sessions with a Beyond Blue [NewAccess coach](#).
 - For those in areas where NewAccess isn't available find information on other [free low intensity services](#).

At work solutions

- Be realistic about what you can achieve
- Organise your business systems
- Understand that others know small business isn't easy
- Keep the hours you work in check
- Invest in the right gear and equipment
- Talk to banks, ATO and creditors
- Seek out business supporters
- Persevere with your [Personal wellbeing plan](#)
- Find [dispute resolution support](#) in your local area
- Talk to a [financial counsellor](#)
- Use tools to help you [meet your tax obligations](#)
- Find [free legal advice](#) and support in your local area
- Get free [help with your finances](#)
- Find [financial counselling](#) in rural areas
- Get support for [drought affected small businesses](#)

Personal signs

- Angry outbursts/ aggressive
- Extreme anxiety/ panic attacks
- Depressed
- Suicidal thoughts
- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Physical illnesses
- Constant fatigue
- Socially withdrawn
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Other addictions

At work signs

- Difficulty performing duties at work
- Difficulty controlling behaviour at work
- Inability to concentrate on the task at hand
- Withdrawn from colleagues, customers and clients
- Not paying regulatory expenses, employee wages and service providers
- Absent from work

Actions to take

Personal solutions

- [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) – 1300 22 4636
- [Lifeline](#) – 13 11 14
- [SANE](#) – 1800 187 263
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) – 1300 659 467
- [Men's Line Australia](#) – 1300 78 99 78
- [Alcohol Drugs Information Service](#) – 1800 250 015
- [National Debt Helpline](#) – 1800 007 007
- If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call **000** (triple zero) or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

At work solutions

- Refer to your [Workplace wellbeing plan](#)
 - Who can take over your business if you are unable to work?
 - What is your return to work plan?
 - If you don't have a [Workplace wellbeing plan](#), once you have sought support and are moving back into the green (positive) end of the continuum, consider developing one to help better manage future stressors in your business.