

Mental Wellbeing at WIN

How can WIN promote a positive supportive culture around mental health?

To have a more diverse committee (representation of men). – ANONYMOUS

Open discussions around mental health issues. Normalising discussions surrounding struggles that we are all dealing with. – ANONYMOUS

Removing any stigma around people wanting to take 'Mental health days'. – ANONYMOUS

Should include mental health/check in with how you are doing/work life balance - as a default option in the PDR/GSR – ANONYMOUS

Telling people that mental health days exist! – ANONYMOUS

more encouragement for vacation days from WIN/NDCN, as psychiatry do this – ANONYMOUS

zoom fatigue - knowing that having 5+ zoom meetings a day can be too much, so more awareness of this and how to overcome would be really helpful – ANONYMOUS

Being explicit that members in the group (i.e. post-docs and other Dphil students) are there to support one another. – ANONYMOUS

Hearing from senior members talk openly about their experiences of struggle and how they came through – ANONYMOUS

Being clear that you can always approach a senior member in a similar academic position (i.e. post-doc or student) whenever you have an issue with your line manager or supervisor. Being clear that senior member has the authority to escalate the matter (or advice you to escalate the matter) if appropriate. – ANONYMOUS

WIN are doing well already in this very difficult time. From organising games nights and to sessions like this, I really feel listened to, thank you. – ANONYMOUS

Advertise small data analysis projects, where people can get involved across groups, so that we get to see other faces than just our own group and can break a vicious cycle of no new ideas/no motivation/ no new data – ANONYMOUS

How can your colleagues help you stay connected and supported while remote working?

Meeting people in real life, in a socially-distanced manner. – ANONYMOUS

Improve cross-communication with people in your group, especially with people we don't work directly with. – ANONYMOUS

Using one of the software packages that recreates the office so you can meet people and chat when they are on their breaks so recreates the office environment of random social interactions, e.g. gather town. This will help creativity. – ANONYMOUS

Better promotion of slack and stress it is not just for EDI – ANONYMOUS

Labs with lots of analysis projects advertise internally to get support from people looking for things to do; WIN collaboration competition – ANONYMOUS

I think the WIN has tried to do a lot (e.g. games nights, socials, online gatherings after courses) and should be given credit for all these efforts. We're all suffering from a bit of zoom fatigue so attendance at all these events have dropped. Are there other creative ways for us to go about this? – ANONYMOUS

PIs may encourage the organisation of non-scientific lab meetings, such as "coffee breaks" or "lab drinks". – ANONYMOUS

The idea of virtual working spaces mentioned by Heidi is great – ANONYMOUS

Increased virtual interaction with other WIN members can be greatly helpful to many people, but I think it might be good to not make participation an expectation (and thereby increase the amount of time spent behind a screen for people who might rather not be screenbound even more) – ANONYMOUS

What academic workplace practices need to change to promote mental wellbeing? What works well?

Create social groups of random researchers from different groups in WIN to have coffee breaks together to encourage people to get to know each other from wider WIN (smaller groups) – ANONYMOUS

Academia generally has an emphasis on "productivity" even if it is at the expense of one's mental/physical health. Reframing this or eliminating this thought process is important.. – ANONYMOUS

How can WIN support PIs practically with delivering research outputs when a team member is off ill and the work still needs to get done to meet fellowship goals on time – ANONYMOUS

Reduce the _incoming_ stress, rather than placing the onus on people to _manage_ their stress. – ANONYMOUS

More support with finding funding and stop of short term contracts – ANONYMOUS

Clarity about milestones that need to be achieved at each career point to help dissolve stress around "am I on target?" etc – ANONYMOUS

Explicit mention/agreement on no expectation to reply to emails out of working hours – ANONYMOUS

Or while on annual leave – ANONYMOUS

with virtual conferences, treating people like they are 'at a conference' rather than expecting people to work as normal plus be at a conference – ANONYMOUS

seconded - More support with finding funding and stop of short term contracts – ANONYMOUS

Give formal recognition for work in addition to academic work and provide funding to do this – ANONYMOUS

giving people desk / office space to attend virtual conferences. watch parties to get together and view conference content – ANONYMOUS

Also wrt more funding/short-term contracts, has consequences for supervisor-supervisee relationships. Stress for supervisee that supervisor's contract ends before theirs and uncertainty for future of that relationship and how it will affect support/projects – ANONYMOUS

It might be useful to also focus on the positives of being in academia: flexibility and not many people telling you what to do! – ANONYMOUS

What mental health information/resources would help to support each other effectively?

PI training: how to refer people on who are struggling with mental health – ANONYMOUS

Having designated "agony aunts" who can escalate stress/mental health/work issues, if needed (eg someone outside the direct chain of command for the student/postdoc in question) – ANONYMOUS

It could be made clearer what MH resources are already available, and where – ANONYMOUS

If we were to run training re. mental health in the workplace what would you like to be covered?

PI training in managing group members: how to balance being supportive against the need to be productive – ANONYMOUS

One of the problems at the moment is that a lot of mental health 'support' / 'training' from the university focuses on you as an individual dealing with stress. This is important in some ways but when it is repeatedly the focus of events it gets tiring to see, that no one is acknowledging or trying to deal with the source of stress and putting all the onus on you to cope. (not sure which pad to put this in, but need to make sure don't just exacerbate this issue) – ANONYMOUS

Discussion of MH beyond work place stress/anxiety. – ANONYMOUS

Training for PIs on how to most sensitively handle staff/students who are dealing with mental health issues and for this training to be specific to academic/research environments (and not industry-focussed training as our demands and deadlines and burdens are different..) – ANONYMOUS

a mindfulness course offered by WIN would be helpful – ANONYMOUS

or mindfulness events – ANONYMOUS

Guidance for supervisors to talk about MH - how to balance asking for personal issues and showing support – ANONYMOUS

Designated meetings (every month-or-so) with PIs about your 'general' (non-academic) life might also be good, since potential MH issues are often not touched upon in academic discussions – ANONYMOUS