

How businesses can support mental health in the Covid-19 workplace

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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While people can handle change, uncertainty can seriously drive up stress and anxiety levels, especially around the world of work. Business for South Africa (B4SA) recently hosted a webinar to help companies navigate and manage the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of their leaders and employees.

The panel, led by B4SA's Judy Nwokedi, comprised Professor Garth Stevens, president of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA); Dr Colinda Linde, clinical psychologist and board member of the SA Depression and Anxiety Group (Sadag); and Cassey Chambers, the head of operations at Sadag,

There are many actions that employees, managers and business owners should take in their normal everyday lives to protect and nurture their mental health. And these still apply in the current circumstances. The B4SA has also published [guidelines](#) on how to deal with mental health issues in the workplace.

Tips

- Be realistic about what can be achieved.
- Keep the hours you work in check and be mindful of work-life balance.
- Stay in touch with family and friends.
- Eat well, prioritise sleep and stay physically fit.
- Try and find time to switch off from technology.
- Monitor warning signs of poor mental health.
- Reach out to mentors and colleagues for support.
- Maintain interests outside work.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Access information and support services.
- Consult your company's human resources or employee assistance programme (EAP) provider, if you have one.

For small businesses owners

The impact of Covid-19 on small business owners is significant. Falling revenue, fixed costs, staffing levels, working from home arrangements for short or extended periods and planning for the future while dealing with the present, are all weighty issues that need to be addressed.

The advice from the experts is to look after your own mental health first, so that you can support your staff.

Supporting employees

- Maintain regular communication with your employees. A routine daily check in is good for you and for them.
- Keep staff up to date about your business' response to the coronavirus outbreak.
- Make sure your staff are aware of the supports that are available to them.
- If you're concerned about a workmate, make sure to check-in, have a conversation with them and encourage them to get the support they need.

Resource

- Cipla Mental Health Helpline (24 hours): 0800 456 789
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0800 567 567
- Dr Reddy's Mental Health Helpline: 0800 21 22 23
- Substance Abuse Helpline (24 hours): 0800 12 13 14
- Cipla WhatsApp Chat Line (9am - 4pm): 076 882 2775
- General SMS Line: 31393
- Substance Abuse SMS Line: 32312
- www.sadag.org
- Facebook: The South African Depression and Anxiety Group

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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