

# WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT FOR JEWISH EMPLOYEES



# WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

*This workplace toolkit has been developed by Jaydene Tucker, Organisational Psychologist with the support of Shalom. This resource is a guide for managers and should be used in conjunction with your organization's specific policies and procedures to support Jewish employees.*

## Supporting the Mental Health of Israeli and Jewish Staff During the Israel Crisis

The recent conflict in Israel has heightened emotional and psychological challenges for many, including Israeli and Jewish employees. As a manager, it's essential to provide a supportive workplace environment that acknowledges and addresses their mental health needs during these trying times.

### Impacts to Mental Health

Situations such as the crisis in Israel are likely to impact people in different ways. Being aware of these potential effects is crucial for understanding their needs and offering appropriate support. Staff may experience a range of difficulties including:

**Emotional Distress:** Individuals may experience feelings of fear, sadness, anger, or helplessness, which can affect their overall emotional wellbeing.

**Increased Stress and Anxiety:** The ongoing conflict can lead to heightened stress and anxiety among your employees, affecting their ability to concentrate, sleep, and make clear decisions.

**Impact on Personal Relationships:** Strained personal relationships due to differing views on the conflict can affect employees both at work and home.

**Conflict within the Workplace:** Differences of opinion among employees about the conflict may lead to conflicts in the workplace, adding to stress and anxiety.

**Fear of Discrimination:** Employees may fear discrimination, bias, or harassment based on their background or beliefs, which can contribute to their stress.

**Cultural Isolation:** Your Jewish staff may feel isolated if they perceive a lack of understanding or support, contributing to feelings of vulnerability.

**Work-Related Challenges:** Concentration difficulties, absenteeism, or decreased productivity may emerge as employees struggle to cope with the crisis.

**Feared or Actual Grief and Loss:** The conflict may result in worry about, or actual personal losses, such as the loss of friends or family members, which can lead to grief.

**Coping Mechanisms:** Some employees may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance abuse or overworking to manage their stress, leading to further mental health issues.

### **Providing Support to Employees**

Recognising these potential impacts is essential for proactively supporting your Israeli and/or Jewish staff's mental health during this challenging period. Creating a safe and empathetic environment can make a significant difference in their wellbeing and overall workplace satisfaction. Some ways you might go about this includes:

**Being Informed:** Stay informed about the situation and its impact. Both at a global but also a local level. Understand the complexities of the conflict, its historical context, and the potential emotional toll on your Israeli and Jewish staff.

**Be Supportive and Empathetic:** Show empathy and support by displaying awareness of the crisis and acknowledging the potential impacts it could have. Express your concern for their wellbeing and be available for one-on-one conversations when needed.

**Open Communication:** Encourage open and non-judgmental communication. Let employees know they can discuss their feelings without fear of reprisal. When engaging in conversation, focus on listening to them, rather than dismissing what they are saying or trying to provide quick solutions.

**Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offer flexibility in work arrangements. Understand that your employees might need time off, a modified schedule, or remote work options to cope with stress or attend to personal matters.

**Monitor Workload:** Monitor workloads to prevent burnout. Be mindful of the additional stress employees might be experiencing and distribute tasks accordingly. Consider that some tasks may take longer than usual.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** Promote your company's EAP or mental health resources. Ensure employees know about these services and how to access them confidentially. If you do not have an EAP, encourage employees to obtain a Mental Health Care Plan from their GP.

**Training on Cultural Sensitivity:** Provide training on cultural sensitivity and diversity. Make sure your team understands the nuances of different backgrounds and perspectives to prevent any potential biases.

**Respect Religious Observance:** Recognise Jewish holidays together with other religious holidays on the calendar. This demonstrates an understanding of their faith and shows respect for their beliefs and demonstrates diversity and inclusion for all belief systems.

**Encourage Self-Care:** Promote self-care practices. Encourage your staff to take breaks, practice mindfulness, and engage in activities that promote wellbeing. Consider role modelling self-care to demonstrate its importance.

**Check-In Regularly:** Regularly check in with your Israeli and Jewish staff, even once the news and media hype has dissipated. Showing ongoing support sends a powerful message that their mental health is a priority and that you understand there may be outstanding impacts.

**Address Discrimination or Harassment:** Have confidential reporting mechanisms in place and act promptly if any discrimination or harassment occurs. Ensure that your workplace remains inclusive and free from bias.

By following these steps, you can create a supportive work environment for your Israeli and Jewish employees during the Israel crisis. Recognising and addressing their mental health needs will not only benefit them individually but also contribute to a healthier and more productive workplace for all.

## **SYDNEY JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN OFFER SUPPORT OR INFORMATION**

**Jewish Care**

**Website:** [jewishcare.com.au/](http://jewishcare.com.au/)

**Phone:** 1300 133 660

**Executive Council of Australian  
Jewry (ECAJ)**

**Website:** [ecaj.org.au](http://ecaj.org.au)

**Phone:** +61 2 8353 8500

**NSW Jewish Board of Deputies**

**Website:** [nswjbd.org](http://nswjbd.org)

**Phone:** +61 2 9360 1600

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