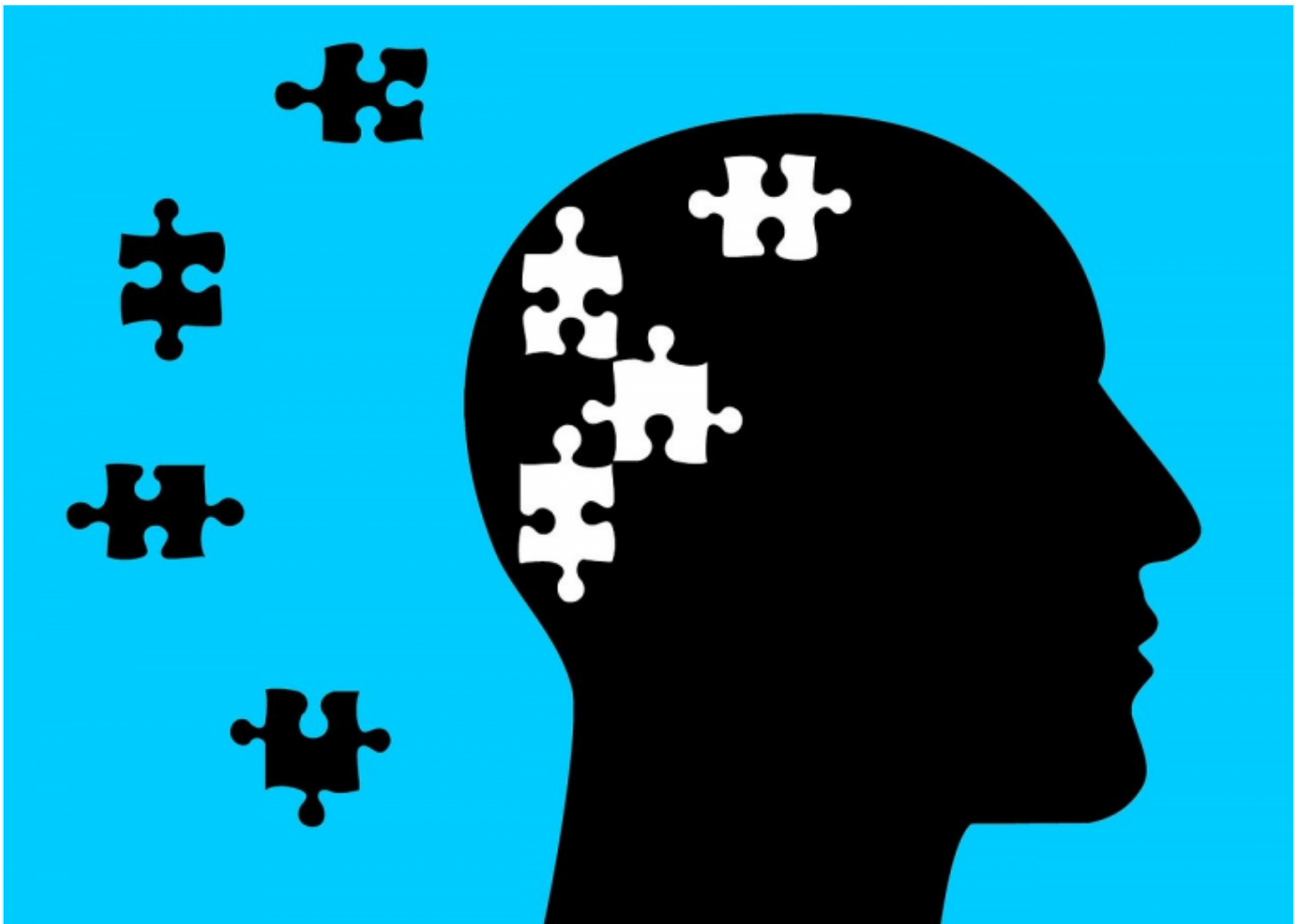


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conversations with clients and juggling life at home, tax preparers need more support than ever before. This support can come in a variety of ways like adjusting benefits packages and incentives, for example, that encourages employees to prioritize mental wellness.

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Between the long hours and heightened stress, tax season is the busiest time of the year for accounting and tax professionals. Often deemed a “marathon”, issues like

burnout ravage accounting and tax firms during this time. This year, however, is

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Between new tax laws and changes as a result of COVID-19, the lack of in-person conversations with clients and juggling life at home, tax preparers need more support than ever before. This support can come in a variety of ways like adjusting benefits packages and incentives, for example, that encourages employees to prioritize mental wellness.

Benefits like flexible working hours, paid time off, and access to mental health resources can help employees adjust to the “new normal” and avoid further stress or burnout. In addition to benefits, it's also important for firms to reassess staffing plans and address related challenges. Firms can explore alternative [staffing solutions](#) by bringing in consultants or temp workers to alleviate overwhelming workloads.

In light of unprecedented change, leaders should motivate their staff to do the following:

1. Prioritize Personal Health

To help avoid burnout and weakening immune systems, tax pros need to make self-care a priority. Exercising and eating well-balanced meals can give much-needed energy boosts while reducing stress and anxiety. Companies can seamlessly implement wellness programs by allotting a couple of hours per week for employees to use to exercise, go for walks, meditate or partake in other healthy activities at their discretion. Giving employees the flexibility they need to adjust to their new day-to-day can further alleviate stress.

With many working from home, it's important for employees to establish a dedicated workspace by finding ways to separate it from non-workspace. Additionally, leaders should encourage teams to take breaks throughout the day and fully unplug at the end of the workday to decompress. To do so, companies may want to consider implementing red and green time, with red representing a time each day when non-

urgent communication stops so that employees avoid feeling like they're "at work"

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As the world navigates the unknown, it's important to be flexible and exercise patience when managing staff. It's easy to make mistakes during this time, especially when stress levels are at an all-time high and situations change daily. Remember that feeling stressed is perfectly okay and part of human nature. Everyone's situation is unique, and every workday looks different, so flexibility is key in times of crisis.

Likewise, staff should exercise patience with leaders. A way to help this is by being honest in communication. Management should be honest if they don't know the answer to a particular question and reaffirm to staff that the situation is changing daily. This, in turn, will signal to employees that management is doing the best they can with the information they have thus far.

3. Encourage Socialization

With the majority of offices continuing to work from home, it's easy to miss the casual social interactions an office environment can provide. Encourage teams to take advantage of communication channels like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, phone calls and texting for their daily dose of social interaction. Virtual team lunches, coffee breaks or happy hours can also help break up the day, encourage collaboration and provide a much-needed mental break or support system. However, internal teams should avoid going overboard and overcommunicating as staff can quickly become fatigued between multiple channels and notifications.

4. Offer Support

Everyone has a different moment in time when this affects their productivity and mental health – and leaders should be able to sense it. As this happens, reach out to the individual and offer help or lend an ear. Listen to employees vent or discuss their problems, without making any assumptions with regard to particular mental health conditions. Provide individual check-ins with employees to discuss workloads or any issues at hand.

Business is anything but usual right now and this year's tax season is no exception.

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