

When Should Your Employees Go Home?



4 practices to discourage presentee-ism in your workplace.

Presentee-ism can be a tangible threat to your bottom line. The baby-boomer workforce is aging, individuals with disabilities are more prevalent in the workplace and people are afraid to not show up to work for fear of losing a job. Presentee-ism is a growing workplace concern due to these three factors.

Presentee-ism does not just refer to an employee with the flu who shows up to work and spreads germs. Presentee-ism refers to the employee with high blood pressure, diabetes, mental illness, heart disease or a number of other chronic conditions or serious illnesses who shows up for work when he is not managing his health well. When employees with chronic health conditions are feeling well, they make valuable contributions in the workplace. Not only does an employee with an illness or disability belong in the workplace, he or she has an obvious right to be there. However, it may be that an unwell employee costs his organization more if he shows up to work rather than stays home to manage his illness or disability.

Employees who are feeling unwell simply do not perform at their best. They can be slower, more emotional and prone to making mistakes. Moreover, a sick employee who shows up at work can make himself sicker ultimately resulting in more time away and possibly increased health costs.

4 Practices to Discourage Presentee-ism

1) **Create an atmosphere of acceptance and communication:** Many people come to work when they are ill for a variety of reasons including fear of repercussions, concern about a lack of understanding, belief they will be considered unreliable and, as a result, given fewer responsibilities and lack of understanding about their illness. When managers are proactive in demonstrating the importance of managing health related issues and encourage employees take time off work when they are struggling with their health employees may feel more welcome to take time off and take care of their health.

2) **Encourage participation in and promote employee health and wellness programs:** Provide information to employees about the costs of presentee-ism and the benefits of a healthy working environment. Offer proactive programs and information to help employees manage their health concerns. An organization that invites participation in wellness programs invites healthier practices by their employees

3) **Manage Employees Workload:** If you are aware of an employee's illness you may provide them with more work when they are healthy and enable them to work on fewer projects or work fewer hours when they indicate their health is waning. The reality is that someone with health concerns may need to be managed slightly differently compared to other employees. Flexibility is possible with planning

4) **Train and Reward Managers For Recognizing and Managing Illness:** It can be very difficult to train managers to recognize every potential illness of course, but you can train managers to recognize changes in performance and workplace functioning. They will also need training in how to address the issue with employees in a non-judgmental and proactive way. Do not forget to build into the managers performance reviews rewards for their ability to assist employees with managing their illness while remaining productive

Don't let presentee-ism cost you. Encourage healthy practices among your workers and get the word out about the cost, including financial, productivity, and health wise of employees who are coming to work when they should be taking care of their own health.