

Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health

Starter Kit for Promoting Physical Activity for Managers and Supervisors

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Ministry of
Social Affairs and Health



Physical activity is at the core of work ability

Physical activity is strongly linked to work ability, rest and recovery and the functioning of work communities. While many organisations already support physical activity through various benefits and services, in daily life physical activity is often limited, especially in remote and hybrid work. In most cases, this is not due to a lack of interest or knowledge among individuals, but rather how our work and related daily practices are constructed.

It is a good idea to systematically manage the promotion of physical activity. At best, everyday practices that match the nature of the work, such as workday structuring, meeting practices, breaks and remote and hybrid work practices, encourage employees to engage in diverse physical activity. Work and physical activity are not mutually exclusive, but instead support each other.

It is important to talk about physical activity in a way that factors in the different starting points and life situations of employees and the premises set by work. When the focus is on common practices and work structures, physical activity appears as a natural part of everyday life rather than as the individual's personal matter.

This guide provides supervisors and teams with two practical tools and conversation starters that can be used to support physical activity as part of daily life.

“If the aim is to create actual impacts, raising awareness is not enough on its own. We need concrete, inspiring actions and ways to participate.”

– Director, expert organisation

“We have a great need for organisation-wide practices. Support for physical activity must not be left as a project for individual supervisors.”

– HR Director, expert organisation

Food for thought

Physical activity as part of management

How do you see the role of physical activity in the structures that support well-being and work ability in the work community?

How is physical activity managed?

Is physical activity a topic of discussion or an area actively managed in your organisation?

Tools 1+1

Manager's self-reflection and team discussion



Self-reflection is the manager's main tool - also in the promotion of physical activity

The **self-reflection tool** helps you stop and reflect on your relationship with physical activity and your role in enabling physical activity.

Supporting physical activity at the workplace is part of effective everyday management. It is reflected in how, in your role, you affect the ways of working, the daily rhythm and joint practices – and in how you use these to make room for physical activity in the work community.

Self-reflection helps you to understand how your own approaches and management practices affect your team's ability to engage in physical activity alongside work.

The aim of this task is to help you identify which practices currently support an active daily life and which parts of your activities or work structures have development potential.

Making physical activity part of culture - team discussion on the promotion of physical activity

The **team discussion tool** helps you to start a conversation in your team about the attitudes, expectations and ideas related to physical activity. What kind of physical activity is possible in your work, what kind of physical activity employees would like to engage in at work, and what sort of support is needed for this?

The discussion map allows you to select themes and guide the conversation based on your team's needs. You can discuss one or several themes at a time. Make sure to reserve around 30 minutes for discussing each theme.

The group size depends on facilitation capacity: if no one serves in the role of a facilitator, the discussion is best managed in groups of 4–5 people.

The discussion aims to help you identify and document issues that are important to the team and to select 1–2 development ideas to be introduced for everyday use.

See the task templates on the following pages.

You can either print the templates or use them digitally. However, more important than completing tasks is taking time to reflect on these things together and making physical activity a shared topic of conversation. Small insights and actions towards more active workdays!

Self-reflection: Manager as a promoter of physical activity

<p>To what extent is there currently room for physical activity at work and in workday structures – in my work and in the daily work of my team?</p>	
<p>What kinds of practices support/prevent activity at work and in work-related situations (e.g. commuting, meetings)?</p>	
<p>What expectations does my team have for the promotion of physical activity?</p>	
<p>In my own role, how can I increase physical activity and make physical activity a natural part of workdays – also in remote and hybrid work?</p>	
<p>What kind of support is currently available to me in promoting physical activity? Who can I collaborate with to promote physical activity at work (e.g. colleagues, supervisor, HR, occupational safety and health)?</p>	
<p>What small, concrete change or action could I try to implement this week to support physical and overall activity in my team or daily practice?</p>	
<p>Will I systematically monitor the situation and development of physical activity?</p>	

Team discussion: Work community as a promoter of physical activity

<p>Current state of physical activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does everyday activity and physical activity look like in our organisation? • What different ways of physical activity do we want to enable? • What kind of physical activity is valued in our organisation and how is it supported? 	<p>Physical activity in everyday work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our understanding of the role that physical activity plays in well-being at work? • How is physical activity or inactivity reflected in our everyday work and the well-being of our team? • What ways of physical activity do we want to promote as a work community? 	<p>Taking diversity into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should we take into account the requirements of different work tasks? • How should we accommodate people in different life situations and different levels of functional capacity? 	<p>Introducing development ideas to daily practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which aspects and development ideas do we intend to introduce to our daily practice based on this discussion?
<p>Motivation for physical activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivates us to engage in physical activity or increase activity at work? • What structures or routines do we need to support more active workdays? 	<p>Strengths and obstacles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our team’s strengths or obstacles from the perspective of physical activity? • How can we develop as a team? 	<p>Developing things together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities do we have for participating in the development of physical activity? • How can we make sure that the ways of physical activity are developed together? 	
<p>Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we strengthen an atmosphere where everyone dares to engage in physical activity in their own ways? • How can we make sure that no one feels pressured or excluded? 	<p>Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we challenge our own assumptions about physical activity – for example, “I don’t have time for it” or “it is not part of my job”? • Are there some barriers we may have not noticed? • How can we make sure that we hear different perspectives and needs? 	<p>Monitoring and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of information or competence related to physical activity do we need more of? • Where do we get feedback on everyday physical activity, and how can we utilise it? 	

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The Starter Kit for Promoting Physical Activity was inspired by the Starter Kit for the Future Leadership, which provides managers and work communities with tools for building future leadership.

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