Manchester, England. 7 October 2022 –Monday 10th October marks World Mental Health Day and employers are doing more than ever before to ensure employees’ mental health is taken seriously.

From duvet days to mental health first aiders, there have been significant changes in attitudes towards mental health at work, with an increased focus on wellbeing.

But what about the C-suite?

Pressures have never been greater on business owners, with the cost of living and inflation rates soaring.

How can business owners and senior leaders maintain their mental health as well as that of their employees?

Bertrand Stern-Gillet, CEO at Health Assured, says: “Over the last couple of years we’ve seen a significant rise in the number of mental health cases, and it’s reported that 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health condition each year. The C-suite is not immune.

“As a leader, being in a position of responsibility and accountability can take its toll when times get tough. And with the predicted cost-of-living impact due to hit businesses in the coming months it’s not surprising that senior leaders are feeling the pressure. There’s also the expectation of absolute dedication to the role and sustained high performance.

“This is why effective planning and organisation are key. Time management is essential when it comes to ensuring that you make time for all areas of your life including work, family, health, and learning.

“It’s about finding the tools that work for you.

“For me personally, I like to get up at 5am and start my day with a run. I then make time to catch up on all my emails before work so that I can spend time with my family when I finish for the day.

“But everyone is different. If your set-up works for you, that’s the main thing. And if it isn’t? Then keep making small changes until you find what does.

“You don’t give up in business and it’s important to have that same perseverance and tenacity when it comes to looking after your mental health. A healthy culture starts at the top. After all, if you are overwhelmed and struggling as a leader then that will trickle down, impacting both your business and your employees.

“Looking after your mental health is a continuous process that involves time and attention. Since the pandemic, Health Assured has seen a 37% increase in calls to our helpline. When external pressures and stresses arise, it’s important to prioritise mental health and look after your wellbeing.”

Here are my top 5 tips for improving your mental health:

1. **Stay on top of your finances**

Money worries can be a trigger for stress and anxiety. Over the past year, we’ve seen financial-related calls to our helpline increase by 82%.

Financial pressures can quickly seep into other areas of life, so ensure you stay on top of your budget if possible. Sit down at the start of every month and work out your incomings and outgoings. Set a budget and try your best to stick to it. You’ll feel more in control of your budget and life - especially with the pressure of the rising cost of living.

1. **Talk to others**

Don’t suffer in silence. The ups and downs of life take their toll. At some point, everyone needs someone to lean on. If you bottle your emotions up, over time they can become even more unmanageable. Talking to others helps relieve these feelings, allowing you to take a step back, reflect and gain some perspective. If you don’t feel like you have anyone you can talk to, try writing your feelings down on paper.

1. **Physical health matters**

The mind-body connection is real. Keeping active, eating well, and getting enough sleep can play a part in promoting mental health. When you feel healthy in the body, it translates to a happy mind. Setting and accomplishing physical health goals will also boost your self-esteem.

1. **Mindfulness**

If you’re feeling overwhelmed, pay attention to how you’re feeling right now. Mindfulness is about focusing on the sights, sounds, thoughts, emotions, and sensations you experience. Mindfulness can involve various things, such as breathing exercises, meditation and other practices that help you relax your body and clear your mind. Some people find that taking this time allows them to ride the ups and downs of emotion with more ease.

1. **Immerse yourself in an activity**

When we’re in a ‘flow state’, we have an uninterrupted focus on the activity we are completing. Mind chatter calms, and we become mentally quiet. There’s peace in our minds. Even if for a short time. Spending time in these no-mind states can do wonders for your mental health. It could be reading, painting, doodling, playing your favourite sport or doing a jigsaw puzzle. These small moments of enjoyment and relaxation can help you relax and unwind – taking your thoughts away from any worries you may face.

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Notes to editor

Health Assured is the UK and Ireland’s largest independent and award-winning employee assistance programme (EAP) provider. Every day, we offer specialist support to over 15 million lives.  
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