ENSURING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF EMPLOYEES ON-SITE
– A CASE STUDY BY 1TO1HELP

A case study to illustrate the effectiveness of 1to1help’s intervention in managing psychological distress among employees posted on-site.
Our client company, a multi-national accounting firm with offices across Europe and the United States, approached us for help to address delays in on-site projects and employee absenteeism.

For the client, like most of the multinational companies, onsite visits or teams that are required to relocate for months on end to work on projects at a client location was a useful business tool. For employees too, receiving an on-site opportunity is considered to be a recognition of their work and an opportunity to gain experience or prove themselves.

Our client reported that over a period of time, they have had cases where employees posted on site reported emotional or behavioral disturbances so extreme that they had to be recalled back to their base location, often without completing their on-site assignments. These included cases of anxiety, depression and even reports of suicidal ideation. They noticed that these incidents were reported across teams and the employees in question were often quite seasoned worker, sometimes with many years of onsite experience behind them.

As retaining and protecting these resources while on-site soon became a top priority for our Client, and approached 1to1help for EAP solutions.

“Projects on client sites, especially overseas projects are very crucial to company’s business growth. Employees who are sent on these overseas assignments have a very key role to play, therefore if the employee is unable to be physically or mentally well to perform, it impacts the project timelines and the brand of the organization. It is important for organizations to take care of the mental and physical well-being of the onsite employees,” added 1to1help Director Archana Bisht.

ABOUT THE CLIENT/CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY:

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PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The client presented the following challenges and required solutions to address the issues:

- Projects being cancelled or stalled due to productivity issues
- Absenteeism and unexplained leave is taken by employees even once they have been recalled back from the onsite location
- Instances of depression, anxiety and other severe mental health disorders reported by employees at work which in turn affected productivity
Case Study

SOLUTION:

On presented with the challenges by the Client, our counsellors visited the organization to investigate the actual problem behind symptoms shown by the employees. Analysing the situation, we found that:

** Employees who were sent onsite were not provided with sufficient training to make them aware of how the on-site travel may affect their mental health.  

** Being away from home, their usual routine and support systems can all make a person more vulnerable to stress and to developing mental health disorders like anxiety and depression.  

** There is a need to provide training to employees to raise awareness of how travelling onsite for an extended period of time could impact their mental health.  

** These employees needed specific interventions to better equip themselves to handle the stress of being onsite and to help them become more psychologically resilient.  


Our intervention model was therefore aimed at creating awareness of mental health in the context of an on-site, and also at helping each employee build their psychological immunity to stress and other mental health conditions.

**ACTION:**

Our model consisted of group therapy sessions. Group Therapy offers the benefit of support from individuals facing similar challenges, a chance to build social skills, and the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others who may have already experienced and dealt with the psychological challenges of being part of an on-site project.

Typical challenges faced were:

1. Homesickness
2. Being uncomfortable in a new culture (for example, including having to adjust one’s food habits and languages spoken)
3. Adjusting to the style of communication preferred at the onsite location (for instance, being more assertive and direct in communicating workplace demands in a European location as compared to being more formal and passive while doing the same with colleagues in India)
4. A sense of loneliness at not having friends, family or familiar coping patterns around when you have a bad day at work (going to your usual gym, favorite restaurants, having access to places and hobbies that keep you relaxed when in your base city).
Each of these things is typically described as stressors that tend to draw on an individual’s emotional coping resources. If these stressors intensify and the individual does not have adequate support, the likelihood of them developing signs of mental illness increases. Our first step was to psycho-educate employees on this link between stressors, lack of coping resources and the development of mental health concerns.

Through techniques such as Role-Play exercises and Exposure Therapy, each client is allowed to confront their apprehensions at being on-site, and the group (lead by the counsellor from 1to1help) provides support and suggestions as to how the person can cope.

Each employee was also given Individual sessions where the counsellor worked one on one with the employee to explore vulnerabilities to particular mental health concerns. The counsellor would then work with the employee to develop a set of behavioural, cognitive and emotional techniques to cope with any anticipated challenges that the on-site opportunity may bring.

Additionally, the employees had ready access to the online repository of reading material as well multi-channel counselling service as a part of 1to1help’s EAP solution.
RESULTS:

- We identified that the delays, absenteeism, and issues in productivity during an on-site posting were the result of psychological stress that employees were experiencing as part of the on-site posting.

- Our intervention equipped employees with the skills to both recognize stressors and maladaptive coping patterns while on-site.

- We also equipped them with more adaptive, functional set of cognitive and emotional coping resources to better manage the stress of being on-site.

- Following the introduction of 1to1help’s On-site Readiness Intervention, our client company reported improvements in employee productivity and decrease in the instances of distress reported from employees at on-site postings.

- This then allowed them to keep to deadlines and project commitments made by the client to their own clients while ensuring the mental health of their employees.

- As per 1to1help’s Clinical Head Ellen Shinde, “This uniquely designed group intervention used the advantages of group work, as well as elements of psycho-education regarding self-care, emotion regulation, accessing support network, and identifying signs of increased distressed in self. These have gone a long way in helping individuals living and working in contexts that are remote to adjust well, as well as remain productive.”
ABOUT 1TO1HELP:

1to1help.net Pvt. Ltd. is a pioneer and leader in EAP (Employee Assistance Program) industry in India with a reputation for quality and integrity. Currently 1to1help.net services close to 160 multinational and reputed organizations across India with total employee strength of over a million.

It is managed by a team of qualified and experienced Counselling Psychologists. 1to1help has provided support to several multinational and large Indian corporations in the area of Sexual Harassment Prevention. 1to1’s vast experience in working with diverse clients makes them uniquely qualified to provide corporate as well as the individual’s perspectives, both of which are essential to provide a balanced approach.