

Micro-Habits for Busy Managers – Tiny Shifts That Improve Team Wellbeing



Managers rarely have the luxury of adding another hour to the day. Most are balancing competing priorities, responding to unexpected issues, and making dozens of decisions before lunch. When wellbeing appears on the agenda, it can easily feel like another responsibility requiring time that simply isn't available.

The good news is that many of the behaviours that support wellbeing don't require lengthy interventions. They happen during everyday interactions: conversations before meetings begin, the way feedback is delivered, how decisions are explained, and whether people feel noticed, listened to and included.

Behavioural science tells us that small, repeated actions shape culture far more effectively than occasional grand gestures. Teams learn what matters by observing what their manager consistently does. Here are several micro-habits that can make a meaningful difference.

Start conversations with the person, not the task

Many workplace conversations begin with a project update, deadline or problem to solve.

Taking thirty seconds to ask a genuine question about how someone is doing can change the tone of the interaction considerably. Questions such as:

- "How has your week been?"
- "How are things going at the moment?"
- "Anything you need from me today?"

don't require long discussions every time. They simply signal that the individual matters as well as the work.

Of course, this only works if managers are genuinely interested in the answer. If someone hints that they're struggling, acknowledging it and following up later demonstrates that the question wasn't simply a routine greeting.

Notice effort as well as outcomes

Recognition often arrives once a project has been completed or a target achieved.

Yet many people spend weeks solving problems, supporting colleagues and persevering through challenges long before the final result becomes visible.

Commenting on those behaviours reinforces the habits organisations usually want to see repeated. Examples might include:

- "I noticed how you kept everyone updated while things were changing."
- "You handled that difficult conversation thoughtfully."
- "Thank you for helping the new starter settle in."

Specific recognition is more meaningful than general praise because it tells people exactly what made a positive difference.



Make participation easier

Inclusive teams don't emerge by accident. Managers influence whose voices are heard every day.

Some people naturally contribute quickly. Others think before speaking or prefer time to process information.

Simple adjustments can help everyone participate. For example:

- circulate discussion topics in advance where possible;
- invite views from people who haven't spoken yet without putting them on the spot;
- allow a few moments of thinking time before asking for responses;
- provide opportunities for people to contribute after meetings if they prefer.

These habits improve decision making as well as inclusion because managers receive a broader range of perspectives.

Reduce uncertainty wherever possible

One of the biggest sources of workplace stress is uncertainty.

People generally cope better with difficult news than with prolonged ambiguity.

Managers cannot always provide complete answers, particularly during organisational change, but they can explain what they know, what they don't yet know, and when they expect further information.

That transparency reduces unnecessary speculation and helps maintain trust.

Even a brief update saying, "There isn't anything new to share yet, but I wanted to keep you informed," is often preferable to silence.

Pay attention to small signs

Managers don't need to become counsellors.

They do, however, spend more time with their teams than almost anyone else and are often well placed to notice changes.

Perhaps someone who normally contributes frequently has become unusually withdrawn. Someone who is typically organised starts missing deadlines. Someone who is usually calm appears frustrated or unusually tired.

These observations don't automatically indicate a wellbeing issue, but they create an opportunity for a supportive conversation.

A simple, private comment such as, "I've noticed you don't quite seem yourself this week. Is everything okay?" can open the door if someone wants to talk.

End meetings with clarity

Many meetings finish as people rush to their next commitment.

A one-minute summary can reduce confusion and unnecessary follow-up. Before closing, check:

- What have we agreed?
- Who is doing what?
- Are there any concerns before we finish?
- Does anyone need additional support?

This habit supports wellbeing because uncertainty and duplicated work create avoidable pressure.

Help people feel that they belong

Belonging has become an increasingly important topic in organisational psychology. People are more likely to contribute ideas, raise concerns and collaborate effectively when they believe they are accepted members of the team.

Managers influence this through everyday behaviours:

- Acknowledging different perspectives.
- Giving credit fairly.
- Avoiding inside jokes that exclude others.
- Checking that remote participants have opportunities to contribute alongside those in the room.

Individually, these actions may appear modest. Collectively, they shape whether people feel included.

Be consistent

Behavioural science consistently shows that habits develop through repetition. One supportive conversation every few months has far less impact than small positive interactions happening every week.

When managers respond predictably, people know what to expect. They become more willing to ask for help, admit mistakes and share concerns because previous experiences suggest they will be treated fairly.

Model healthy boundaries

People pay close attention to what managers actually do.

If emails regularly arrive late at night, annual leave is never taken, breaks are skipped, or people apologise for being ill, teams often conclude that these behaviours are expected.

Managers don't need to be perfect role models, but demonstrating reasonable boundaries gives others permission to do the same.

That might include taking lunch away from the desk, ensuring people use their annual leave, or modelling healthy boundaries about email traffic outside working hours.

The behaviours managers normalise become part of the team culture.

Finish conversations well

People frequently remember how an interaction ended.

Before finishing a one-to-one or informal discussion, consider asking:

- "Is there anything else you wanted to cover?"
- "What's your next step?"
- "Is there anything I can help remove or make easier?"

These questions encourage ownership while reinforcing that support is available if needed.

Small habits create lasting cultures

Organisations often invest considerable time designing wellbeing strategies, employee assistance programmes and awareness campaigns. These all have an important role to play.

But even more powerful than this are the hundreds of weekly interactions managers have with their teams. None of these behaviours need significant additional time, and their value comes from being repeated consistently until they become part of "how we work round here".

Get in touch:

Keystone Training Ltd

www.keystonetrainingltd.co.uk

0330 133 8190

hello@keystonetrainingltd.co.uk

