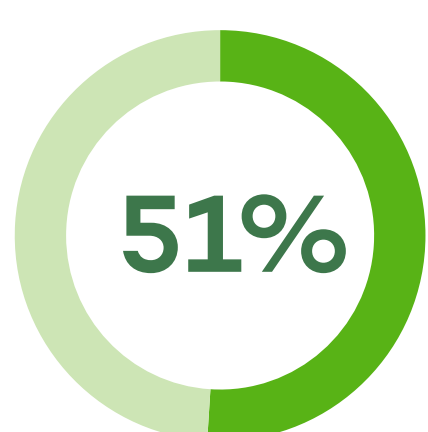


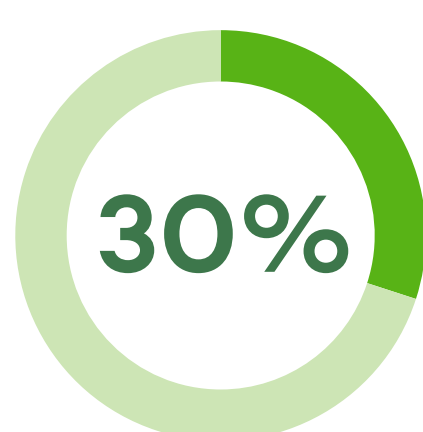
MENTAL HEALTH CHARTER 2025

This Mental Health Charter is developed for organisations and individuals working in the marketing and communications industry across the GCC.

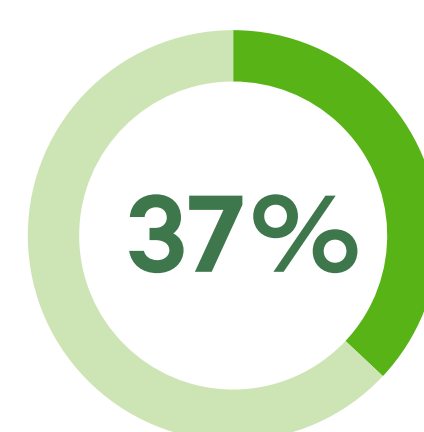
In the 2024 PRCA MENA mental health survey of mar-comms professionals:



say the workplace
exerts a 'strong
influence' on their
mental health



say they have
experienced a mental
illness (a sharp rise
from 10% in 2021)



report that
discussing mental
health at work feels
inappropriate.

Poor mental health in the workplace affects focus, productivity, and retention. But when organisations invest in well-being, they strengthen employee engagement, attract talent, reduce turnover, and lay the foundations for sustainable business growth.

Under four pillars, with actionable, supporting solutions, this flexible roadmap is aimed at inspiring a fresh approach to workplace wellbeing and how we support the people who power our fast-paced and demanding industry.

PILLAR 1: CULTURE & WORKPLACE FOUNDATIONS

A healthier workplace starts with intention.

It begins with small, deliberate shifts - like setting clear boundaries and having a shared understanding of when the workday starts and ends. Respecting time means protecting energy, focus, and well-being. If work consistently spills into evenings or weekends, it's a sign that expectations need to be rebalanced. Urgency should be the exception, not the norm.

Flexibility isn't a luxury - it's a necessity.

Parents and caregivers may need space to manage personal commitments. Early-career employees might thrive with more autonomy and output, rather than time logged. When we allow people to shape their day around what matters - wellness, learning, creativity - we build trust, and trust fuels performance.

Transparency keeps us aligned.

Regular check-ins. Honest feedback. When we surface concerns early, we prevent burnout. When we adjust expectations, we unlock potential. Fair systems and clear signals lay the foundation for a culture that lasts - one that supports people and strengthens the organisation.

We can establish Culture and Workplace Foundations by:

- 1

Setting Clear Work Boundaries & Communication Norms

Ensure shared understanding about working hours, where possible limit after-hours communication to urgent cases, and equip managers to model these boundaries and behaviours.
- 2

Implementing Flexible Working

Introduce tailored – yet fair and consistent - options such as hybrid work or adjusted schedules when needed, encouraging gradual use to build acceptance and normalise flexibility.
- 3

Institute Transparent Feedback & Workload Reviews

Schedule regular check-ins and quarterly reviews to monitor workloads, gather feedback, and make practical adjustments in line with business needs.

PILLAR 2: TRAIN THE FRONT LINE

Mental health is everyone's job, especially leadership.

Managers are often the first line of support, and that makes training essential. When we equip leaders with the right tools, we intervene early and build lasting cultural change.

Most employees turn to their manager when things get tough however many don't feel equipped to respond effectively.

Surveys show that informal support is the default - and only 42% of those who need help actually seek professional care ([*2025 NAMI Workplace Mental Health Poll*](#)).

Training helps managers spot the signs: stress, burnout, mental health struggles.

It gives them the confidence to act, not just react. And when employees feel seen and supported, they show up stronger and more focused.

We can train the front line by:

1

Offering Leadership Mental Health Training

Partner with experts to deliver structured workshops for managers, including role-playing, practical conversation scripts, and real workplace case studies. Partner with a certified provider to offer Mental Health First Aid training courses to project leads and senior management.

2

Giving Managers a Guide for Mental Health

Create interactive, step-by-step guides with check-in templates, escalation procedures, confidentiality tips and a library of resources for managers that are designed to offer support, educate and inspire business leaders. [*See link below to LightHouse Arabia tools.*](#)

3

Planning Skill Audits & Refreshers

Conduct quarterly surveys to assess confidence and deliver targeted refreshers, keeping skills and awareness up to date.

PILLAR 3: NORMALISE THE CONVERSATION

Mental health should be as safe to talk about as physical health - without stigma or fear.

But right now, 32% of professionals worry that opening up could damage their career (*PRCA MENA mental health survey, 2024*). That silence delays support. It fuels burnout. And it costs us and our industry.

When leaders speak openly - about pressure, boundaries, and seeking help - it sends a powerful message and culture shifts.

Supportive conversations should be part of everyday work, offering active listening without judgement, using neutral language and providing solutions. They should never be tied to performance reviews.

We need to change the inner dialogue from **"I'm weak for struggling"** to **"It's strong to ask for help."** When mental health conversations are safe and stigma-free, problems surface early, support is timely, and teams feel heard and they stay engaged. Silence costs people and performance. Open, non-punitive dialogue protects both.

We can normalise the conversation through:

- 1 Leadership-Led Dialogue**
We encourage senior leaders and managers to openly share personal examples and include mental health in one-on-ones, team meetings or town halls.
- 2 Structured Check-ins & Anonymous Feedback**
Schedule regular well-being check-ins and provide anonymous channels for employees to share stressors safely.
- 3 Training on Safe, Neutral Conversations**
Train managers, team leaders and HR on active listening, empathetic responses, and neutral language, ensuring confidentiality.

PILLAR 4: MOVEMENT AS MEDICINE

Movement reduces stress, lifts our mood and builds resilience.

Regular physical activity can ease anxiety, sharpen focus, and help us sleep better. It's one of the most powerful tools we have for mental health - and it's free.

Walking just 7,000 steps a day can lower the risk of depression by 31%

(JAMA Network Open). The World Health Organization highlights that regular physical activity can reduce symptoms of anxiety, enhancing brain health and improving overall well-being. Exercise releases endorphins (nature's mood boosters), improves memory, attention, and problem-solving. It helps us connect, whether through team sports or shared goals and it builds confidence. According to the *Mayo Clinic*, exercise helps prevent and improve many health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes, and arthritis.

Regular engagement in movement, exercise and sports has been shown to improve cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that physical activity can help keep thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp as you age, and can also reduce your risk of depression and anxiety.

Regular physical activity can also help regulate sleep patterns, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Achieving goals in sports, whether it's improving personal performance or participating in competitions, can boost mood, provide a sense of community, whilst also improving self-esteem and confidence.

Let's make movement part of our culture. For fitness, for focus, for our future.

Encourage movement:

Every day

Integrate short, active habits into the workday and gradually build participation through team initiatives and competitions.

By Providing an Annual Sports & Wellness Allowance

Consider offering employees a yearly budget for sports and wellness activities, encouraging participation, reducing burnout, and reinforcing the value of physical and mental well-being. Provide access to a variety of sports, community initiatives and activities led by certified coaches, supporting different fitness levels and interests.

This mental health charter will only thrive through the strong collaboration and mutual commitment of clients and agencies, working hand-in-hand towards its success.

Today, I take the pledge to commit to better mental health standards for me and those around me. [\(Click Here\)](#)

Tools and References:

- [Lighthouse Arabia](#) – Corporate education and Skill Building (such as webinars / first aid / mental health champion and leaders courses) as well as its [Library](#)
- R U OK? <https://www.ruok.org.au/work>
- Every Mind Matters: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>
- Pura App – A collaboration between PureHealth and SAKINA offering virtual mental health services including access to licensed psychologists and psychiatrists as well as wellness resources (covered by Daman insurance).
- [Mentl Awards](#) – see those organisations and individuals leading the normalising of mental health
- [PRCA Mental Health Report 2024](#)
- World Health Organisation - [Doing What Matters in Times of Stress](#)
- [Sahatna app \(Department of Health – Abu Dhabi\)](#): A digital platform enabling residents to check-in on their mental well-being through confidential, guided self-assessments to support access to early, stigma-free care.

This document has been produced as a result of The Marketing Society's Scholarship programme and is developed in partnership with mentl, MEPRA and PRCA MENA. It is intended as guidance and does not substitute professional support.

mentl

مبرة
mepra



The 2025 Mental Health Charter was developed by Isabel Calandrini, Kimberly Rodejo and Nathalia Tawil with mentorship from a judging panel including Scott Armstrong (mentl), Emma Cantwell (The Marketing Society), Kate Midttun (MEPRA) and John Rynehart (PRCA MENA).