

Engineer your water cooler on the road to reopening

Employees in the hotel sector who have been homeworking, furloughed and swivelling between opening and closing for a year, were advised to “engineer a water cooler moment” by bestselling author and psychotherapist Daniel Fryer.

Speaking to over 1,000 people during The Fatigued Employee webinar, hosted by workplace mental health organisation This Can Happen, Fryer encouraged creating a more familiar work environment. One way to overcome the fatigue created by the past year. He said: “We’re constantly pumped in red alert mode and we’re at the end of our tether.”

Fryer advised the hotel sector to support employees’ mental health to help them deal with stresses and anxiety and help them deliver the service they pride themselves on when travel restarts.

Employees in the hotel sector have been particularly vulnerable to burnout during the pandemic, with the sector subject to constantly-changing restrictions and the risk of unemployment. Fryer advised employers: “Please lower your expectations of your staff, just for a small while.”

He added: “We have been coping with a crisis for a year. People are clinically and chronically fatigued. People are approaching burnout or are burning out. Be kind, be understanding, be supportive. Put supportive measures in place. Don’t expect everybody to hit every target and deadline. Don’t expect them to adapt immediately to new initiatives. In fact, save any new initiatives until the crisis has abated.

“Remember that your staff are experiencing the same stresses and strains that your guests are experiencing. As you train your staff to be more mindful of your



guests, be more mindful of your staff.”

Recent weeks have seen hotel companies act to support employees’ physical health. Accor has said that it plans to pay for all of its employees to be vaccinated by late summer, Deutsche Hospitality has instigated free rapid testing for all its front-line staff and Marriott International has created the Vaccination Care Programme, which will provide a financial award to US and Canadian associates who get vaccinated.

The hotel has led industry with these initiatives, but, as hotels start to, hopefully, reopen, employees will also need mental health support.

Fryer said: “Hotel employees, from front of house to the board room, have been under tremendous pressure in the past year. The sector is used to giving that

bit more and to giving part of themselves with it. The hospitality sector thrives on service, on being hospitable. But people can’t give that extra when they have been wrung out, it’s time to think of mental health alongside the physical.”

Remember that your staff are experiencing the same stresses and strains that your guests are experiencing. As you train your staff to be more mindful of your guests, be more mindful of your staff.