

FITMINDS - A NEW TAKE ON HEALTH PROMOTION

Icon Water

FitMinds is a mental health promotion initiative focused around completing the 'HeadGear' mobile app's 30 day challenge.

HeadGear is a smartphone-based mental health promotion app developed by the Black Dog Institute, found to improve personal resilience, improve overall wellbeing, prevent depressive symptoms and case depression in working adults (Deady et al., 2020).

HeadGear's 30 day challenge involves completing daily tasks that might simply include watching a short, app-based video, game, reading or activity – each relating to mindfulness, self-awareness and mental health promotion. Alongside completing these daily tasks, FitMinds participants have been placed into small 'connect groups' of 5-6 people, each with a FitMinds Champion. These groups aim to encourage support, engagement with the challenge and other people, with casual catch-ups planned for each week whether online or in person.

FitMinds represents a new take on mental health promotion, which with a dispersed workforce due to COVID-19 makes it possible to access an evidence-based mental health improvement program in the palm of your hand.

Background

With 45% of all Australians experiencing mental illness in their lifetime and less than 40% of these people seeking professional help (Black Dog Institute, 2016), it is imperative that organisations embrace their role as a "priority setting for health promotion into the 21st century" (WHO | "Workplace Health Promotion", 2020).

COVID-19 has made group-based activities highly limited at best. With this in mind, Icon Water sought to understand a best-practice method of engaging workers with a mental health improvement initiative. The HeadGear app, developed by the Black Dog Institute was found to improve personal resilience, improve overall wellbeing, prevent depressive symptoms and case depression in working adults (Deady et al., 2020).

The primary challenges with this style of program is continuing engagement throughout the 30 day challenge, which is why in addition to simply completing the daily smartphone-based

activities, Icon Water chose to group people together and increase weekly health communications to participants throughout the duration of the program.

Pending the success of this pilot trial, Icon Water seeks to rollout the program to a wider portion of the workforce.

Implementation

Icon Water's pilot trial of FitMinds launched on 30 September for a month, with 16 participants from its Digital Technology Group participating, including Chief Technology Officer, Tony Pollock who is also the Live Well Health Framework's Supporting Healthier Minds executive sponsor.

Participants have each downloaded the free smartphone application HeadGear on their devices and will endeavour to complete daily tasks throughout the challenge. Each day participants will receive a mobile phone notification to engage with and complete the task, which may entail a short video, activity or reading.

Participants have been placed in 5-6 person 'connect groups', each with a FitMinds Champion to support their ongoing engagement with the challenge and connection with each other. Participants have also been instructed to plan ahead 10-20 minutes each day to complete the short 5 minute activity and reflect upon the task, learning and personal experiences before proceeding to apply what they have learnt for the day and past days. An example of one day's tasks is a simple deep breathing technique, guided by the app for broader application in real-world settings when stress or anxiety is rising for individuals.

A pulse survey will be sent to each participant at the middle of the challenge to gain early insight into how they are finding it, and to encourage their ongoing participation. A second survey will be conducted upon completion of the program, which will provide learnings and testimonials to guide further implementation and rollout.

Benefits and outcomes

While the benefits are yet to be seen as the program is still underway, Icon Water will look to the results of the randomised, controlled trial undertaken by Dedy et al (2020), which found that HeadGear's 30 day challenge led to improve personal resilience, improve overall wellbeing, prevent depressive symptoms and case depression in working adults.

Icon Water is pleased with the initial uptake of 16 participants from the Digital Technology Group. Pending feedback and primarily qualitative testimonials from these participants, it is hoped that FitMinds presents an effective and new way of promoting mental health in the workplace.