



Mental Health  
Commission  
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# ONBOARDING

*“Now that the team is rarely in the same place at the same time, bringing someone new into the fold feels like an uphill battle. I worry about my new staff feeling isolated and unprepared.”*

## 1

### Create a welcome package with an onboarding plan

While it may seem obvious, creating a detailed employee onboarding plan can go a long way toward alleviating stress for new team members and others involved in the process, especially in a virtual setting.

Try developing an onboarding “syllabus” that maps out their rough schedule for training, meeting team members, and tasks for any free time (recommended reading materials, HR training, etc.). If possible, try to introduce some fun into the proceedings, like a virtual scavenger hunt with a small prize at the end (no one wants a game without a prize!).

## 2

### Set up a buddy system

Assigning an onboarding buddy can be a great way to help new team members build social connections, understand their roles in the broader team context, and learn the ropes outside of formal training. Buddy systems have also been shown to **boost productivity and increase satisfaction** with the onboarding experience. For experienced employees, serving as an onboarding buddy can be an excellent opportunity for growth and the development of managerial skills.

## 3

### Invite the new person to a variety of meetings

Even if the purpose of a meeting is not directly related to the new person’s role, **involving them in a group discussion is a great way to help them become part of the team.** Encourage them to ask questions and share any ideas that come to mind (being careful not to pressure them to do so — listening and observing is still beneficial). Including new employees in a variety of meetings will also help them meet new colleagues and build important social connections.



## 4 Arrange individual or small group meetings

Early in the onboarding process, encourage or arrange individual meetings with team members so the new person can get to know people individually or in very small groups. New team members may not feel confident reaching out themselves, and more seasoned employees may not have considered the challenges they face.

**While setting up initial meetings may seem awkward, it can be very helpful for building relationships.** Think of them as the virtual way of going for a coffee.

## 5 Bring the team together over shared interests

**Set aside time for your team to bond over their personal hobbies and interests.** Doing so will help new team members build relationships with colleagues and help team members get to know them in return.

If some members enjoy trivia, for example, consider hosting a virtual trivia challenge. If others prefer crafting, everyone could work on their crafts and chat during a designated meeting time. Whatever the specifics, keep an ear out for common interests that could help bring the team closer together.

## 6 Make yourself available for frequent check-ins

When someone is new to the team, especially in a remote environment, **frequent communication is key.**

In addition to scheduling times to meet, do your best to be available for impromptu check-ins as well, even if it's an informal email exchange or a virtual chat to answer a question. The more supported the person feels early on, the more likely it is they will develop the skills and confidence to flourish in their new role.



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