Mental health awareness in the workplace
Objectives

- Review statistics of mental illness in the workplace
- Provide tools to support someone with a mental health issue
- Practice hard conversations
- Offer resources for support
Self-care and confidentiality

Today’s presentation may bring up strong feelings. Feel free to take steps to care for yourself. If you need to step out of the room or take a break, please do so.

If someone shares a personal experience, please keep that information private.
Mental health statistics

- About 1 in 5 Americans will experience a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year\(^1\)
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.\(^2\)
  - Suicide is the second cause of death for people between the ages of 10 and 34.
  - The fourth leading cause of death for people aged 35 to 54.
- Mental health conditions are the leading cause of disability in the United States\(^3\)
- Untreated mental illness costs the nation $105 billion annually\(^4\)

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\(^1\)[Learn about mental health](https://www.cdc.gov) CDC. Accessed December 2020.


\(^4\)[Untreated Mental Health Disorders Result in Exorbitant Costs for Individuals, Businesses](https://www.cdc.gov) Accessed December 2020
You don’t need to be a therapist to help

You can support someone by:
• Listening
• Withholding judgment
• Connecting the person with appropriate resources

When in doubt, offer support and a listening ear. Leave advice to the experts.
Things to say (and not say)

Don’t say
• “There’s always someone worse off than you.”
• “No one ever said life was fair.”
• “Stop feeling sorry for yourself.”
• “You need to snap out of it.”
• “Have you tried just being happy?”
• “I know how you feel.”

Say
• “I’m here for you”
• “You’re important to me.”
• “Let me know if you need to talk.”
• “Come talk to me anytime.”
Scenarios

1. Split into groups
2. Read the scenario
3. Discuss how you would handle the situation
4. Role play a conversation with the distressed person
Scenario 1

You work with Sally, an employee who has been with your organization for the past two years. Sally has always been a good worker.

Recently, Sally has been showing up to work late. She’s missing assignments and was caught sleeping at her desk. Her clothes are often messy, and she has lost a lot of weight. She is often found crying in the bathroom or staring into space. Other workers tell you Sally is having relationship issues.
Scenario 2

Joe is a combat veteran who recently joined your team. He’s a great worker and everyone really likes him.

Joe was working in his cubicle when you walked up and tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention. Joe responded by jumping out of his chair, grabbing a stapler, and holding it up like he was going to hit you with it. You felt like Joe looked through you for several seconds before he recognized you and put the stapler down.
Scenario 3

Lately, your workplace has been very stressful. There’s a big proposal coming up and everyone has been working extra hard.

Lori just returned to work from maternity leave. She often talks about how she can’t do it all. She says she’s worried something might happen to her baby while she’s at work. But she’s also afraid of getting fired. She complains about an upset stomach and says she’s constantly worried about what bad things might happen.
Scenario 4

Tom is a great employee who’s been with your organization for about six months. He’s an avid hunter and always talks about taking his kids fishing.

You’ve heard that Tom’s ex-wife is moving out of state with the kids. Tom says she’s trying to make sure he doesn’t see his kids anymore. He’s been acting depressed and says things like, “If I don’t get to be a dad, what’s the point in living?” You’re walking by his desk and see that Tom is packing up his family pictures and personal items. He tells you he’s “just wrapping up some details.”
When you’re worried about suicide

• Ask openly if the person is feeling suicidal
• Make sure the person isn’t left alone
• Provide the contact number for the Suicide Hotline
  - 1-800-273-8255
• Help the person identify resources and people who will be supportive
Ask the hard questions

Ask the person directly about suicide

• “Are you having suicidal thoughts?”
• “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
Suicide myths

• People who talk about suicide won’t really do it
• Nothing will stop a person who is suicidal
• Talking about suicide might give someone this idea
A person may be suicidal if he or she:

- Talks about committing suicide
- Experiences drastic changes in behavior
- Withdraws from friends and/or social activities
- Loses interest in hobbies, work, school
- Prepares for death by making final arrangements such as a will
- Gives away prized possessions
- Has attempted suicide before
- Takes unnecessary risks or engages in self-destructive behavior
- Has had recent losses
- Is preoccupied with death and dying
- Loses interest in personal appearance/hygiene
- Increases use of alcohol or drugs
- Is suddenly happier and calmer following a period of depression
Keeping the person safe

Don’t:
• Agree to keep suicidal risk a secret
• Leave the person alone
• Dare the person to go through with it
• Use guilt or threats to try to prevent suicide
  - “You’ll go to Hell.”
  - “You’ll ruin everyone else’s lives.”

You may need to call 911 when:
• The person is threatening to engage in suicide right away
• The person has immediate access to means (guns, weapons or drugs)
• The person is behaving aggressively
• The person is in a different location from you
Who are Management Consultants?

- Highly trained and experienced management consultants
- Masters’ level clinicians
- Experienced in dealing with crises, threats of violence, suicide or trauma
- Available through the EAP 24/7
Resources

• 911
• Suicide prevention hotlines
• Employee Assistance Program
• School or university services
• Primary care physician
• Mental health professionals
• 311 for local resources
• Pastor or clergy
Providing ongoing support

• Keep listening
• Let people improve at their own speed
• Set aside your own expectations and judgments
• Be present
• Ask what you can do to help
• Convey hope
• Educate yourself about mental health issues
Self-care

• Take time for you
• Talk about your feelings with a trusted person
• Ask for help
• Be realistic about what you can (and cannot) do
Thank you for attending!

All calls are confidential, except as required by law.

Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however it is subject to change.

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