



# **MENTAL HEALTH: A GUIDE FOR MANAGERS AND LEADERS**

**PRESENTED BY YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE  
AND WORKLIFE PROGRAMS**

March 26, 2025

# OBJECTIVES

- Define mental health vs. mental illness
- Review mental health facts, common misconceptions, contributing factors, and barriers to getting help
- Identify signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and suicide
- Discuss mental health's impact on the workplace and your role in supporting your employees
- Suggest strategies for expressing compassionate concern

## SECTION 1

# MENTAL HEALTH

- Definitions
- Misconceptions and facts
- Contributing factors
- Barriers to getting help

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

A state of emotional and social well-being, in which a person can:

- Fulfill their potential
- Have a sense of purpose
- Contribute to their community
- Engage in productive activities
- Cope with the normal stresses of life
- Maintain healthy relationships

# WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

A collective term that refers to all diagnosable mental disorders

## These conditions involve:

- Significant changes in thinking, emotion, or behavior
- Distress or problems functioning in social, work, or family activities

## Mental illness can take many forms:

- From very mild, only interfering in daily living in very specific areas
- To severe that a person may need to be hospitalized

# MISCONCEPTIONS

## People with mental health issues:

- Are “crazy”
- Can’t function in society or at work
- Are weak, ineffective, or incompetent

## Mental health issues:

- Happen to “other” people
- Are obvious, and you can tell who has them and who doesn’t

# FACTS

## Mental illness is:

- **Common**

Nearly one in five U.S. adults experiences mental illness in a given year

- **Treatable**

Many conditions can be managed with therapy, medication, lifestyle changes, or a combination

- **Not a sign of weakness**

Results from a complex mix of genetics, brain chemistry, trauma, and environmental factors

- **Early intervention improves outcomes**

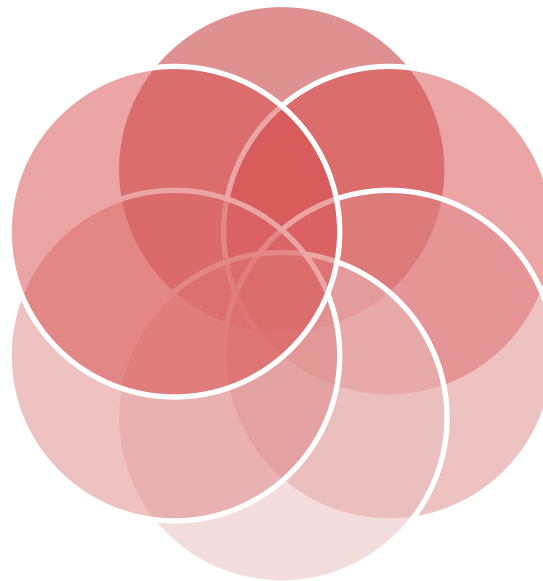
- **People with mental illness can lead successful lives**

# CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

**Social isolation and loneliness**

**Physical health issues**

**Genetic predisposition and family history**



**Lifestyle choices**

(including alcohol and drug use)

**Stressful life events**

(e.g., death of a loved one, illness, separation, job loss, financial issues)

**Traumatic events**



# POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO GETTING HELP

- Social stigmas
- Worry of jeopardizing success and career advancement
- Concerns about being treated differently or fired
- Fear of being seen as incompetent or inadequate
- Feeling guilt, shame, or embarrassment
- Finding it tough to ask for help



## SECTION 2

# ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, AND SUICIDE

Signs and symptoms

# ANXIETY: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

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Tenseness, nervousness,  
and restlessness

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Uncontrollable compulsions  
or obsessions

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Persistent worrying

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Panic attacks

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Intense, irrational fear of  
everyday objects and  
situations

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Phobias and feelings of terror

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Hyperventilation, muscle  
tension, trembling

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Sleep issues

# DEPRESSION: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

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Changes in sleep patterns or appetite/weight

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Difficulties with attention, memory, concentration, and decision-making

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A persistent, unusually sad mood

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Tiredness, fatigue

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Loss of interest in previously-enjoyed activities

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Increased physical health complaints, aches, and pains

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Slowed thoughts and actions

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Lowered self-esteem

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Feeling of emptiness, helplessness, guilt, or hopelessness

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Irritability or anger

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Alcohol or drug abuse

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Suicide ideation or attempt

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# SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

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Spoken or written messages about death, dying, or suicide

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Sudden changes in personality, behavior, or mood

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Decline in work performance, missed deadlines, or careless mistakes

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Withdrawing from or skipping events or meetings

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Expressing feelings of hopelessness

(i.e., no reason for living, lacking a sense of life purpose)

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Showing extreme anger, irritability, or sadness

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Neglecting personal appearance or hygiene

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Increased absenteeism or tardiness

## SECTION 3

# MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

- Impacts
- The manager's role
- Expressing compassion

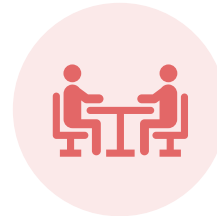
# IMPACTS ON THE WORKPLACE

- Insubordination, lack of cooperation
- Decline in productivity, morale, or motivation
- Accidents on/off the job, compromised safety, increased distractibility
- Complaints from customers or coworkers citing challenging interactions
- Susceptibility to burnout and turnover
- Increased absenteeism or presenteeism
- Lack of employee engagement in activities and work

# THE MANAGER'S ROLE



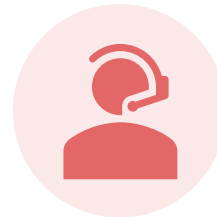
Observe and document any changes



Discuss your observations with the employee



Offer support, information, and resources



Encourage the employee to seek help



# EXPRESSING COMPASSIONATE CONCERN

- Plan and practice what you want to say
- Be direct, clear, and concise, while also showing care and empathy
- Approach the conversation from a place of care and concern
- Acknowledge the challenge up front: *“I know this is hard...”*
- Actively listen
- Keep your emotions in check
- Repeat your intention for the conversation as often as needed



# SUMMARY



# RESOURCES

## Books

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for Employers and Employees**
  - Gill Hasson and Donna Butler, 2020
- **The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth**
  - Amy Edmondson, 2018

## TED Talk

- [Why We All Need to Practice Emotional First Aid](#)
  - Guy Winch

## Websites

- [Mental Health America](#)
- [Mind Share Partners](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)

## Podcasts

- [The Mindset Mentor](#)
  - Rob Dial
- [The People Managing People Podcast](#)
  - Becca Banyard
- [WorkLife](#)
  - Adam Grant

# THANK YOU



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