

# Mental Health Guide for Managers

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# Harvard's Commitment to Mental Health

Goal: Be aware of people you supervise, consider broad context of MH and be mindful of your own experience.

1 in 5 U.S. Adults are living with mental illness.

74% of employees say its appropriate to discuss mental health concerns at work. 58% feel comfortable doing so.

Source: NAMI 2024, Gallup 2024



# Stats for Mental Health in the workplace

A survey of U.S. workers showed that **1 in 5** rate their mental health as fair or poor. (National Council of Mental Wellbeing, 2024)

**64% of Managers** say that mental health affected their job last year, (**57% for non-managers**). (Gallup 2023)

**35 Million** workdays are lost each year due to mental illness. (Lyra 2023)

**39% of employees** worry that informing their organization of a mental illness will have a negative impact on them in the workplace. (American Psychological Association, 2024)

**70%** of people indicated that their manager had the greatest impact on their mental health, which was on par with their partner. (Workforce Institute, 2023)



# What is Mental Health?

# Mental Health and Mental illness



## Mental Health

Encompasses overall emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

“Mental Health is a state of wellbeing that enables people to cope with life stressors, realize their abilities, learn and work well and contribute to their community.”

- World Health Organization



## Mental Illness

Diagnosable psychiatric conditions that affect thinking, mood, behavior and actions.

Most Common in the workplace:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Substance Use
- Attention Deficit Disorder

# Mental Health Continuum

## SELF CARE & SOCIAL SUPPORT

## PROFESSIONAL CARE

### HEALTHY

Normal Functioning

Normal mood fluctuations.  
Takes things in stride.  
Consistent performance.  
Normal sleep patterns.  
Physically and socially active. Usual self-confidence  
Comfortable with others.

### REACTING

Common & Reversible Distress

Irritable/Impatient.  
Nervousness, sadness, increased worrying.  
Procrastination, forgetfulness. Trouble sleeping (more often in falling asleep) Lowered energy. Difficulty in relaxing. Intrusive thoughts.  
Decreased social activity.

### INJURED

Significant Functional Impairment

Anger, anxiety. Lingering sadness, tearfulness, hopelessness, worthlessness.  
Preoccupation. Decreased performance in academics or at work. Significantly disturbed sleep (falling asleep and staying asleep).  
Avoidance of social situations, withdrawal.

### ILL

Clinical Disorder. Severe & Persistent Functional Impairment.

Significant difficulty with emotions, thinking High level of anxiety, Panic attacks.  
Depressed mood, feeling overwhelmed Constant fatigue. Disturbed contact with reality Significant disturbances in thinking  
Suicidal thoughts/intent/behaviour.



# Common Misperceptions about Mental illness

“People can snap out of it.”

“Medication doesn’t work.”

“Mentally ill people are violent.”

“As long as I can continue doing...., I am ok.”

“I have to know exactly what to do when someone is struggling with mental health.”

“People with mental illness are lazy, weak, etc.”

“You will become addicted if you take an opiod medication.”

“It can’t happen to me.”

“It’s all in someone’s head.”

“It’s not a medical disorder.”

“Once people have a mental illness, they can never recover.”





# Manager's Role

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# Your role....



## Show awareness

Check in with employees in a regularly scheduled meeting.

Express what you have observed or noticed in their behavior or affect.



## Start the conversation

Set aside time to speak with them privately.

Express your concern

Listen without interrupting.



## Consider options and consult with others.

Might this apply to Disability, FMLA., or other resources at Harvard? Try to remove administrative barriers.

- Reach out to HR
- Call KGA.



## Direct them to resources.

Explain that you are aware of a resource that could be helpful.

Give contact information and ways to be in touch.

# Follow-up

Make sure to check back in with the person to see if they made a connection in a timely manner.

Ask how else you can be helpful.

Ask what you can continue to do as a manager to support them in their role and work responsibilities.





# Signs and Behaviors

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# Signs and Behaviors

## Work Changes

Decreased Engagement

Lack of Collaboration

Problems concentrating/making decisions

Decreased Productivity

Unusual communication style

Absenteeism, presenteeism, late

## Mood/Attitude Changes

Fatigued/exhausted

Moodiness or quick to temper

Cynicism

Looking tearful

Deteriorating or disheveled appearance

Withdrawn

# Signs and Behaviors in virtual environment

Changes in Appearance

Tone of Voice

Engagement in meetings



# Small Breakout Discussion: Two Case Examples

## Instructions:

- Read Case studies
- Select who will report back to large group
- Choose 1 case to start discussing.
- If time permits, do the 2<sup>nd</sup> one.

## Goal:

Consider signs of concern, discuss ways to respond including your empathic response.

## Small Breakout Discussion: Two Case Examples

Hope has been having trouble maintaining emotions at work and often appears tearful and sullen. When a manager approaches, she learns that the employee's mother has a brain tumor, and the employee is caretaking for her mother and her two young children.

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Tom is normally a great contributor who performs well, gets along well with colleagues, is punctual, and fully engaged in their role. Lately, however, you, their manager, notice that they are arriving to work late, checking their phone more frequently, and appearing tense. During meetings, you sense that they are eager to leave quickly and move on to the next task. In your conversations with them, they provide short, concise answers to questions without expanding, which is unlike their typical behavior.





## Handling the Conversation around Mental Health

# Goals of Conversation



Set aside time privately 1:1

Listen with compassion

Ask for clarification

If true, reassure them their job isn't at risk

Discuss privacy concerns

Explain that you will explore any relevant policies and/or benefits that might be available.

Plan a time to follow-up.



## What to do and say...



Essentially you are communicating....  
“My job, as your manager, is to help you meet the demands and support you in your role. How can I best do that?”

Sensitively ask if you can touch base with them.

Express gratitude and thanks

Use Validating phrases and questions such as...

“It sounds like a tough time right now.”

“I am sorry this is happening.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“What are you hoping for?”

“What would a good outcome look like for you?”

# Try to avoid Saying....

“It could be worse.”

“Just deal with it.”

“Snap out of it.”

“Everyone feels that way sometimes.”

“We’ve all been there.”

“You’ve got to pull yourself together.”

“I know just how you feel.”

“It’s not as bad as you think.”

“It’s all in your head.”

“You have a lot to be grateful for. Focus on that.”

“Everyone goes through something. You’ll be fine.”

“Just push through it”

“Maybe try thinking happier thoughts”

# What to Say instead....

“Thank you for telling me.”

“What can I do to support you?”

“I’m sorry to hear this is happening for you. It must be so tough.”

“We don’t have to talk if you don’t want to and I’m happy to just sit here with you.”

“I can’t exactly know what you are going through, but I have some idea.”

“Can I tell you about some of our employee benefits that could help?”





## Top 2 FAQ From Managers

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## Manager FAQ #1:

**How do you manage a mental health concern that is also a performance related issue?**



# Handling MH and Performance Concerns



- Consult with HR and KGA.
- Consider how you might handle it if it were a physical illness and performance issue.
- Be mindful and manage your own relationship with the situation.
- Have regularly scheduled check-ins.
- Provide consistent feedback about what's going well and where there is a specific concern for work responsibilities.





## Manager FAQ #2:

**How do I maintain and respect boundaries with employees and still perform my role as a manager?**



# Setting Boundaries with respect

## Stay engaged

Pay attention when employees speak and listen first.

## State clearly what you can and can't do.

“I can see you are going through a lot now and I'd like to support you as a manager. How best can I do that?”

## If someone is unloading a lot of personal information.

“You deserve to have someone that you can talk to about all this. I am not trained to do that, have you considered getting a consult with the EAP? I think it might be helpful to get connected. Would you like my help to do so?”

**Then,** How as a manager can I support you in your work responsibilities here?”



# In Summary



## Supportive Behaviors

- Communicating regularly and Listening
- Practical Support with job/role
- Role modeling
- Reducing stigma



## Responsive Behaviors

- Recognizing early warning Signs
- Acknowledge and connecting with employee.
- Providing Resources
- Follow-up



**Time for your questions**

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# THANKS!

## Resources

\*HU Resource Page

KGA: Your Employee Assistance Program

877-327-4278

[My.kgalifeservices.com](http://My.kgalifeservices.com)

Org. Code: Harvard

# Primary Characteristics of Burnout

## Physical and Emotional Exhaustion

- Appears physically fatigued
- Takes longer to get things done
- Physical symptoms/illness
- Increase in anxiety/depression symptoms
- Increased Irritability

## Feelings of Cynicism/Detachment

- Loss of interest and motivation in projects
- Searching for ways to get out of doing work.
- Using excuses to get out of meetings
- Lack of trust from co-workers.
- Missed appointments, calling in sick often/leaving early.

## Ineffectiveness/lack of accomplishment

- More time spent working but feeling as if nothing is accomplished.
- Incomplete and work that is below standard.
- Feelings of apathy, comments like, “What’s the use?”

# Burnout Strategies to support employees...

- Demonstrate Compassion and Empathy to the individual and their unique situation.
- Consider modifiable conditions for burnout and determine what instrumental support is available.
- Modeling healthy self care by using PTO and scheduling breaks.
- Acknowledge and appreciate both team and individual efforts.





## Manager FAQ #1:

How do I recognize  
burnout ?