

Mental Health Awareness and Communication Skills

ENHANCING LITERACY, EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

Introduction

- Mental health affects workplace well-being and productivity.
- Communication helps reduce stigma and support employees.
- This session covers:
 - Mental health literacy
 - Effective communication
 - Addressing sensitive issues

Impact of Mental Health in the Workplace

- Employees: Increased stress, absenteeism, low productivity.
- Organizations: Poor teamwork, high turnover, increased costs.
- Solution: Promote awareness and open communication.

Mental Health Literacy

Mental health literacy is an understanding, shared by employees and managers, of what it means to feel and function well within the organization.

Core Components:

- Understanding the importance of mental health (e.g., knowing your why and asking your leaders to know that why)
- Recognizing early warning signs
- Decreasing stigma (e.g., encouraging leaders to share how they've managed their own mental health)
- Knowing how, when, and where to seek support (e.g., consistently communicate where employees can access resources and normalize their use of them)
- Knowing how to support others in the organization who are facing challenges.

Enhancing Mental Health Literacy

The recent Deloitte report highlights a wide gap between how leaders and employees feel about mental health support. 91% of C-suite leaders think their employees believe they care about their well-being, but only 56% of employees believe their executive's care.

- Establish a psychologically safe environment at your workplace
- Practice thoughtfulness during mental health conversations
- Help your managers know when to direct employees to appropriate resources
- Create an organization-wide action plan for making employee well-being a priority
- Help develop a wellness culture

Increasing Mental Health Literacy

Individual level	Leadership level	Organizational level
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equipping employees with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and address mental health challenges.• Promoting help-seeking behaviors and access to interventions.• Training centered on resilience-building, emotional intelligence and stress management can be beneficial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively promoting mental wellness and leading by example.• Consider embedding mental health literacy into leadership training and ongoing development.• Investing in leadership training programs that emphasize empathy, active listening and effective communication .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrating comprehensive education programs, fostering a supportive culture and garnering leadership support.• Regular check-ins, employee surveys and feedback mechanisms.• Early intervention efforts, resilience-building initiatives and effective leadership practices, workplaces can cultivate a culture of well-being.

Why Communication Matters

- Good communication reduces stigma and supports well-being.

Barriers to communication:

- Fear of judgment
- Lack of awareness
- Workplace culture discouraging openness

Best Practices for Communicating Mental Health Support

- Start During Onboarding
- Use Multiple Communication Channels
- Train Managers to Advocate for Mental Health
- Host Wellness Events
- Acknowledge Mental Health Awareness Days
- Share Employee Stories
- Emphasize Confidentiality

Essential Communication Skills

- Active listening: Eye contact, paraphrasing.
- Empathy: Recognize emotions, validate feelings.
- Non-judgmental language:
 - Say: 'I hear you, and I appreciate you sharing.'
 - Avoid: 'Just get over it.'

Facilitating Open Dialogue

- Some actionable strategies for both managers and employees to cultivate this culture of openness:

1. Lead by Example

Managers: Your actions speak volumes. Share your stories, whether it's about managing stress, seeking support, or practicing self-care. This vulnerability can encourage team members to do the same.

Employees: Consider sharing your experiences in appropriate settings, like team meetings or one-on-ones. By doing so, you can help normalize the conversation and encourage others to express their thoughts and feelings.

2. Create Safe Spaces

Managers: Establish dedicated times for open dialogue, such as regular check-ins or mental health forums. Ensure these sessions are confidential, allowing employees to share their concerns without fear of judgment.

Employees: Advocate for these safe spaces. Encourage your peers to participate and remind them that it's okay to voice their concerns in these settings. Be an active participant, showing support for others who may need it.

3. Use Technology Wisely


Managers: Leverage communication tools that facilitate open dialogue, such as anonymous surveys or mental health apps. These platforms can encourage team members to share their feelings more comfortably, especially if they're hesitant to speak up in person.

Employees: Engage with these tools and encourage your peers to do the same. Sharing feedback through anonymous channels can be a less intimidating way to voice concerns and suggestions.

4. Provide Resources and Training

Managers: Equip your team with resources such as workshops, mental health days, and access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Training sessions on mental health awareness can help demystify the topic and provide practical tools for both recognizing and addressing mental health issues.

Employees: Take advantage of the resources available. Encourage your colleagues to participate in training and workshops. Sharing insights from these sessions can further foster a culture of understanding and support.



A Cultural Comparison on Mental Health Perception and Stigma

Cultural Group	Perception of Mental Illness	Impact on Stigma
Asian	Seen as a sign of personal weakness or failure of self-control	Stigma leads to family shame, discourages help-seeking
African	Attributed to spiritual or supernatural causes	High stigma levels, deter individuals from seeking psychiatric help
Arab	Viewed as a form of divine punishment	Significant stigma, leads to delayed or avoided treatment
Latin American	Attributed to personal weakness or lack of willpower	Stigmatizes individuals, discourages them from seeking psychiatric care
Western	Misconceptions about danger or unpredictability	Results in social exclusion and discrimination

Promoting a Healthy Workplace Culture

- Implement flexible work policies.
- Encourage stress management activities.
- Involve leadership in mental health initiatives.