

Mind Matters:

5 Ways to Reduce Stigma and Promote a Mentally Healthy Workplace

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **depression and anxiety disorders alone cost the global economy approximately \$1 trillion per year in lost productivity.** At the same time, the National Alliance on Mental Illness cites that roughly 60% of employees with mental health issues don't seek help due to fear of stigma. So, what can employers do to support their employees' mental well-being in a way that cares for the individual and provides positive business impact? **Use these five tips to inspire actionable next steps.**



1 Offer Educational and Training Opportunities for Both Employees and Managers

Employers can provide workshops or webinars to increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues. These sessions can focus on recognizing signs of distress, reducing stigma, promoting open communication, and offering guidance on how to support colleagues who may be experiencing mental health challenges.

Bonus tip: consider offering separate educational tracks—one that focuses on employees as individuals and another tailored to managers and how they can promote the mental well-being of their team.

2 Foster a Culture of Openness

Encourage open discussions about mental health. Implement policies that allow employees to take mental health days when needed without fear of judgment or retaliation. Emphasize that mental health is just as important as physical health. Consider offering an Employee Resource Group (ERG), which can provide a safe space for employees to connect, share experiences and offer mutual support — further fostering a stigma-free environment.

Incorporate mental health discussions into regular team meetings or town halls. By normalizing these conversations, it becomes easier for employees to share their experiences with one another and seek help without feeling judged.

3 Implement and Continually Assess Mental Health Benefits

Offer mental health support programs such as employer-sponsored care, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), counseling services, or access to mental health resources. These programs can provide confidential and professional assistance to employees struggling with mental health issues. And remember, one size doesn't fit all. By providing a variety of resources, it's more likely individual employees can find the right support at the right time.

Finally, avoid a "set it and forget it" mindset. It's not enough to simply make these benefits available. Employers should continually educate employees on the resources available to them and continually assess their effectiveness. Consider success metrics that include utilization, employee satisfaction, evidence-based health outcomes (e.g., reduction in PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scores), and financial outcomes such as impact to overall healthcare spend.

4 Enhance Policies to Promote Mental Health

Regularly review existing policies and procedures to ensure they support employees' mental well-being and make necessary changes to reduce potential stressors and barriers that may contribute to mental health stigma in the workplace. Ideas include allowing breaks for mental health during the workday, providing areas to de-compress, incorporating policies that promote work-life balance, and/or providing paid time off for specific needs such as mental health appointments.

By clearly communicating the organization's commitment to mental health support through internal communications, newsletters, or policy handbooks, you can ensure that all employees are aware of the available resources and the company's stance on mental health.

5 Tailor Your Mental Health Program to Employee Needs

Ensuring that your diverse workforce feels supported in an accessible way is critical to enhancing employee innovation and productivity. Incorporating mental health as part of your diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) initiatives should be a key part of your workforce well-being strategy, as recommended by [the US Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being](#).

Consider focused interventions that align with defined identities and different socioeconomic statuses, ensuring solutions are accessible. For example, consider elements such as language or transportation barriers, ability and willingness to pay out-of-pocket for services, or tech-savviness if considering online/virtual solutions.

For More Information

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