



TIPS FOR SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

THIS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING



Stress, Anxiety, Depression: What it Looks Like at Work and How to Provide Support

Work can be stressful, and so can homelife. When they interact and overlap, as they do in a work-from-home arrangement, we may find ourselves feeling overwhelmed. That stress can trigger anxiety.

The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Manual defines anxiety as a feeling of worry or dread caused by perceived threats in the environment. About 18% of the population lives with an anxiety disorder, making it a fairly common experience.

Feeling sad from time to time is not unusual either, but if it persists for longer than usual, it may be worth taking a second look. Depression is also common, with at least one in 10 people experiencing it in their lifetime.

Signs and symptoms for anxiety and depression can vary for each person and may look different when at home or at work. Some common ones are:

- Irritability
- Changes in self-care/appearance
- Increased substance use
- Indecisiveness
- Thoughts about death or suicide
- Low energy
- Sleep changes
- Feeling hopeless or helplessness

At work, that might translate into missing deadlines, procrastinating, arriving late, making frequent errors and low energy.

It's important to know how to recognize the signs that someone may need extra support, so you can check in with your colleagues and employees to make sure they feel well and comfortable. Get the conversation started with some of these phrases from the MHFA at Work curriculum:

- “Is something bothering you?”
- “Would you like to talk?”
- “I’ve noticed you’ve been more quiet than usual. Are you OK?”

When having this conversation, remember to always listen nonjudgmentally and try to have resources readily available to offer if your coworker needs more support. Though we spend a lot of time at work, we are more than our job titles. Your mental health matters, even at work.

You can #BeTheDifference for your colleagues and employees by knowing the signs, checking in and listening to the needs of those around you.

RESOURCE GUIDE:

Mental Health First Aid USA. (2020). Mental Health First Aid. Washington, DC: National Council for Mental Wellbeing.



Social Isolation and Loneliness: Its Impact and How to Provide Support

We will all likely experience a time when we feel lonely, or maybe even isolated. It is crucial to understand when and how to provide support to a colleague or employee who may be experiencing these feelings.

Loneliness and social isolation are not exactly the same – according to the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) at Work curriculum, loneliness is an emotion in which a person feels solitary. Although loneliness is a common human emotion, long lasting feelings of loneliness can be harmful to your health. Social isolation is the absence of social interactions, social support structures and engagement with wider community activities or structures. It can be voluntary, like someone taking some time to themselves, but it can also be involuntary, created or imposed by marginalization or discrimination by families or communities.

Both loneliness and social isolation can be linked to causes, including social factors, life events or transitions; changes in personality or psychological responses; health and environmental factors. No matter the cause, the consequences can damage physical as well as mental health.

If you notice someone having difficulty focusing, behaving more lethargic than usual, or experiencing social withdrawal, try these tips from MHFA at Work:

1. **Show empathy and be available.** Showing empathy and listening nonjudgmentally can be a great place to start these conversations in the workplace. This person is likely feeling overwhelmed or anxious about their circumstances, and a genuine conversation will help them feel less alone. You can start by saying, “Would you like to talk?” or “I’ve noticed you’ve been more quiet than usual. Are you OK?” It helps to have resources available to give them too, when appropriate.
2. **Stay connected.** At a time when virtual meetings and calls are the norm, it’s important to make sure than you really check in with your employees and colleagues to make sure they are OK. Schedule a virtual coffee or debrief to chat about anything and everything – sometimes the concern stems from something outside of work, and keeping an open line of communication will help people feel heard. Zoom, Slack, Microsoft Teams and Skype are all great options for staying connected with people you may not see every day.
3. **Encourage staff to reach out.** Now is the perfect time to emphasize that there are resources, opportunities, and educational tools to help your staff or colleagues foster their mental health and learn something new. This may be a new online resource, positive email or education about their health insurance plans. Remind them that it is OK to reach out if they need help.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot, and no one should have to go through these challenges alone. Using these tips will help get the conversation started, build trust among your staff and colleagues and foster a workplace culture that emphasizes the importance of mental health. Open communication and being empathetic show that together, we can #BeTheDifference for each other in the workplace.

RESOURCES:

Mental Health First Aid USA. (2020). Mental Health First Aid. Washington, DC: National Council for Mental Wellbeing.



National Support Resources

- **The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Helpline**
 - » 800-662-4357 (HELP)
 - » www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
- **National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)**
- **National Institutes of Mental Health**
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
 - » Free and confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
 - » 800-273-8255 (TALK)
 - » In Spanish: 800-628-9454
 - » For those who are deaf or hard of hearing: 800-799-4889.
 - » www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- **The Crisis Text Line**
 - » Text “MHFA” to 741-741 for free, 24/7 crisis counseling.
- **The Lifeline Crisis Chat website**
 - » Chat with crisis centers around the United States.
 - » www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat
- **The Trevor Project**
 - » Specializes in supporting the LGBTQ community.
 - » 866-488-7386
 - » Text “START” to 678-678
 - » www.thetrevorproject.org



Social Media Template

This Mental Health Awareness Month, we invite you to share your experience with MHFA at Work. Tell your story with these sample social media language and graphics, internal email template and newsletter article template.



SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

We're excited to spend Mental Health Awareness Month with @MHFirstAidUSA at Work! The events of the past year have been challenging, and we are proud to support the mental health of our employees. Learn more about how you can #BeTheDifference for your employees and colleagues: MHFA.org.

Mental Health Awareness Month is special this year. The ongoing pandemic has tested our resilience, but with @MHFirstAidUSA at Work, our employees have the skills and resources they need to support their mental health and each other. At <company name> we're celebrating all we have overcome and will continue to support the wellbeing of our employees. Learn more at MHFA.org!



SAMPLE TWITTER POSTS

We're thrilled to spend #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth with @MHFirstAidUSA at Work. The training teaches participants how to notice mental health concerns in the workplace. This past year has been challenging, but we are able to #BeTheDifference when we support each other.

<company name> is proud to spend #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth with @MHFirstAidUSA at Work. This program trains employees to spot mental health concerns in the workplace and equips them with skills to offer support and resources. Together we can #BeTheDifference!



Internal Email Template

Subject: <company name> Marks Mental Health Awareness Month with Mental Health First Aid at Work

Body:

We're thrilled to be observing Mental Health Awareness Month with you. The events of the past year – especially the COVID-19 pandemic -- have not been easy, and we are proud to support your health and wellbeing through it all.

<Company name> believes your mental and physical health is a top priority, and we want to reassure you that you do not have to struggle with challenges alone. We're proud to be trained in Mental Health First Aid at Work, and we will always make every effort we can to support your mental health and offer resources if you need them.

Mental Health First Aid at Work teaches the importance of spotting behavior changes, substance use concerns, and mental health crises in the workplace. It also teaches you how to be an effective listener so you can offer support and resources when appropriate. So far, we have trained <# of staff trained> <company name> staff in Mental Health First Aid at Work.

We are so grateful for your incredibly hard work this past year and we are proud to support mental health in the workplace. Because of you, we can #BeTheDifference.

Learn more about Mental Health First Aid at www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org.

Newsletter Template

<company name> is excited to observe Mental Health Awareness Month with Mental Health First Aid at Work. This past year has presented many challenges, and we are proud to support our employees' mental wellbeing with this evidence-based program.

“<boilerplate quote about how MHFA at work has helped company>”

MHFA at Work training teaches the important steps of recognizing when a colleague is struggling, listening nonjudgmentally and offering support. It guides participants to create individualized self-care plans and provides resources for those who may be struggling. Trainees learn about mental health and substance use issues that impact all workplaces and learn key elements of responses that are practical, culturally responsive and supportive of help-seeking and recovery. This information helps build resiliency in the workforce.

To date, <company name> has trained <# of staff trained> in Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid at Work is helping us develop a healthy, skilled and productive workforce. As with CPR, employees learn Action Plans to help their colleagues and coworkers who may be facing a mental health problem or challenge. The training is available with in-person and virtual options.



Graphics

#BeTheDifference

In Your Workplace With

MHFA at Work

 **Mental Health FIRST AID**
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

With MHFA at Work,

employees learn how to

support colleagues

who might be facing a

mental health crisis.


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Graphics

This Mental Health Awareness Month,
we choose to support

**EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH
WITH MHFA AT WORK.**



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WORK-LIFE BALANCE: Finding Harmony in the Everyday

- ❏ Rethink your **time management** and get **organized**.
- ❏ Set manageable **daily goals** – try to not overwhelm yourself.
- ❏ **Delegate some work** if you're feeling overly stressed or anxious.
- ❏ Make the most of your "**office time,**" and save the rest for **tomorrow**.
- ❏ **Reward yourself** for each completed task.



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