

The Elephant in the Room: Let's talk openly about mental health at work



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Agenda Overview

- ❑ Engage in open, stigma-free conversations about mental health that strengthen culture & performance
- ❑ Recognize the signs & impacts of stress, burnout, & psychosocial hazards in the workplace
- ❑ Apply practical strategies to foster resilience & create a psychologically safe environment



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Mental Health

- ❑ A state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community (a positive state that allows individuals to thrive)
- ❑ Includes a person's emotional, psychological and social well-being



Mental Health

- Why are we so hesitant or uncomfortable talking about mental health?





Factors that can contribute to mental health

- Psychological
- Social
- Socioeconomic
- Environment
- Personal history
- Age & gender
- Genetics & other biological factors
- Lifestyle
- Work
- Other stressors
- Lack of support systems



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The Statistics

How many US adults on average experience a mental health illness in a year?

- A. 1 in 250
- B. 1 in 100
- C. 1 in 50
- D. 1 in 25
- E. 1 in 4

23%

Anxiety is the #1 presenting issue reported by U.S. workers

Mental illness: A condition that significantly affects a person's thinking, feeling, mood, or behaviour negatively impacting day-to-day functioning

e.g. anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders, addictive behaviours, etc.

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The Statistics



76% of U.S. workers report minor to severe levels of burnout, depression, or anxiety

90% reported at least minor levels of one mental health challenge

53% of challenges lasted at least 2 months up to an entire year

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80%

People in developed countries will receive some form of mental health treatment in their lifetime



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Who is responsible for mental health?



Individual Organization

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Stress travels easily




Impact of stress on the workplace



Health & Work: Managers & Money Workforce Institute @UKG Mental Report

- 60% Their job is the biggest factor influencing their mental health
- 70% Employees in the U.S. would prioritize good mental health over a high paying job
- 64% Would take a pay cut for a job that better supports their mental health (70% of Managers)



Three small icons are shown: a red sad face, a yellow neutral face, and a blue happy face.

2025 Mental Health at Work Report – Mind Share Partners

Mental health is driving productivity, attrition and attraction in the U.S.


- 82% A company supporting mental health is moderately to extremely important when job searching
- 48% Have left their jobs for mental health reasons



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Mental Stress Injuries

- Longer recovery (median time) 15 x higher
- Higher \$ costs 8 x the cost



Mental stress claims vs all accepted claims

SafeWork Australia 2021 Workers' compensation claims

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The return on investment (ROI)




Companies investing in mental health see payoffs in employee health & retention. Employees are:

- 2 times more likely to report no burnout or depression
- 3 times more likely to report no anxiety
- 2.5 times more likely to be satisfied with their job

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The benefits of investing in PHS & mental health

- Health & Safety
- Organizational excellence
- Sustainability of human capital




Improved:

- productivity
- organizational effectiveness
- worker engagement & morale
- discretionary effort
- recruitment & retention
- creativity & innovation

Reduction in:

- turnover, absenteeism & presenteeism
- workplace conflict & grievances
- **workplace accidents**
- disability & injury rates
- Workers Compensation premiums
- Recruiting and re-training costs



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Mental health:

A prevalent issue that workplaces simply cannot ignore!




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An Occupational Phenomenon



BURN-OUT - A syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed



How can stress be managed?

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Be vigilant looking for signs of stress & burnout



The Ripple Effect

Signs & symptoms of workplace stress & burnout

- Fatigue / exhaustion
- Irritability
- Trouble focusing/ concentrating
- Lack of morale & motivation
- Decreased engagement & productivity or withdrawal
- Absenteeism & presenteeism
- Eroding trust & camaraderie
- Inefficacy
- Cynicism and apathy
- Anxiety & depression

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Be vigilant looking for signs of burnout



Increased risk of burnout, safety incidents and workplace accidents

Signs & symptoms of workplace stress & burnout

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Risks/Impacts of Chronic Stress

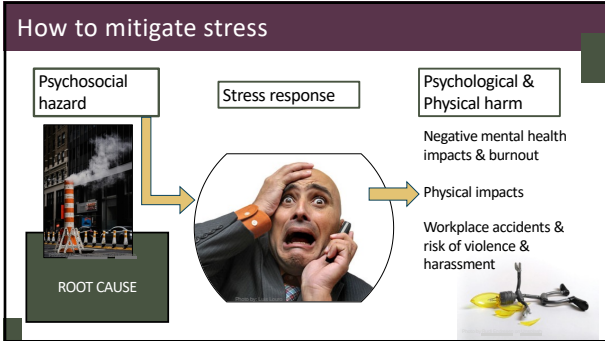


Sleep disturbances, Fatigue, Memory loss, Anxiety, Depression, Burnout, Substance use, Addictions, Workplace violence, Suicide

Hypertension, Cardiovascular disease, Diabetes, Impaired Immune function, Arthritis, Asthma, Migraines, Metabolism issues, Musculoskeletal problems, Digestive issues: IBS, IBD, Ulcers, Chronic pain, Chronic Bronchitis

Workplace accidents

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An Occupational Phenomenon

Burnout isn't a personal failure. It's often an organizational design flaw.

You can't resilience your way out of it. You can only recognize it and choose differently.

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Addressing Psychosocial Hazards

Hierarchy of Controls

Most effective controls: Elimination, Substitution, Engineering, Administrative, PPE (Least effective controls)

Address root causes to eliminate psychosocial hazards

Training policies & programs that identify or address mental health risks

Teach workers resilience & other mitigating skills

Provide mental health support once injury has occurred; Return to work facilitation

Source → **STRESSOR** → Person

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**STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT
WORKPLACE MENTAL
HEALTH**

**STRENGTHEN
RESILIENCE**

Build mental health awareness & provide supports

Create psychological health & safety in the workplace

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Build mental health awareness & provide supports

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

- Normalize conversations
- Mental health training
- Share resources
- Provide supports (EAP, Affinity groups, individual or group coaching, etc.)
- Return to work facilitation

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Strengthen resilience - Be Mindful

What you can do:



- Physical wellness (eat, **sleep**, exercise)
- Wellness self-care
- Connection**
- Healthy thinking
- Have a sense of purpose/meaning
- Seek help when you need it

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Strategies for wellness (self-care) **SLEEP IS ESSENTIAL!!!**

- Meditation
- Mindfulness (apps available)
- Deep breathing
- Seek natural light each day
- **Be near the water**
- Ask for help & support
- Take work breaks
- Reflect on your personal values & strengths
- Explore options (cost/benefit analysis)
- Look for a quick win
- Have a favourite snack
- Brainstorm
- **Go to a movie**
- Stay active
- Focus on solutions rather than problems
- Ask someone for an alternative perspective
- **Make a puzzle or build lego**
- Exercise
- Read for pleasure
- Acupuncture
- Spend time in nature
- **Go for a drive**
- **Listen to music**
- Laugh
- Volunteer to help others
- **Random acts of kindness**
- Exercise
- Play a sport
- Be creative (arts)
- Spend time with loved ones
- Listen to a podcast
- Eat healthy
- Get plenty of quality sleep
- Therapy
- **Get a massage**
- Aromatherapy
- Bake
- Enjoy a quiet place
- Be around people you like
- Play a game
- Go on a vacation
- Take a break from work
- Join a community or support group
- Journal
- Spend time with an animal (pet)
- Delegate tasks
- Take on a new hobby
- Watch tv
- **Go shopping**
- Make a to do list
- Practice spirituality
- **Sing like no one is listening**



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Strengthen resilience - Organizational

What the workplace can do:



- Provide resilience training
- Encourage breaks & recovery
- Support work-life balance
- Promote flexibility & boundaries
- Create redundancies for absences

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Create psychological health & safety in the workplace

Implement a psychological health & safety standard in the workplace

- PH&S Standard (CSA Z1003 or ISO 45003)



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The Psychological Health & Safety Standard

How the work is organized:

- Roles & expectations
- Job control or autonomy
- Job demands
- Organizational change management
- Remote & isolated work
- Workload & work pace
- Working hours & schedule
- Job security & precarious work

Work environment, equipment & hazardous tasks





Social factors at work:

- Interpersonal relationships
- Leadership
- Organizational / workgroup culture
- Reward & recognition
- Career development
- Support
- Supervision
- Civility & respect
- Work/Life balance
- Violence at work
- Harassment
- Bullying & victimization

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Psychological health & safety at work

The aim is not to diagnose the worker, or solve all problems, the aim is to diagnose the workplace to create a psychologically healthy and safe environment where people can thrive

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An integrated, participatory approach

Best Practice



Psychological safety should be integrated into the health & safety efforts and systems of the workplace with active worker participation to be effective and sustainable

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Key take away

Workplace mental health is not a perk; it's a prerequisite for:

- Engagement
- Performance
- Retention
- Workplace culture
- Health & safety

Small actions can create big change



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Call to Action

1. Start one conversation about mental health this week
2. Do one thing to build your resilience
3. Identify one psychosocial hazard in your workplace and take actions to mitigate it

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Take away resource & contact card

getting out of bed (it's not a little bit easier)

you're able to appreciate small, everyday things that bring you joy

your symptoms are becoming less disruptive (even if they're still there)

you're able to focus on more than just surviving (hobbies, fun activities, and something that doesn't sound completely overwhelming anymore)

you have more energy

you're starting to become curious about what the future holds

you're able to attempt things with risk with confidence (or for healthy coping mechanisms (or both combined))

you're able to bounce back (after other setbacks or relapses)

you're building a higher tolerance for discomfort (stress, worry, or pain)

you're starting to feel like you're coping well

signs your mental health is improving

you no longer feel like doing the things that used to bring you joy (even the thought of doing "fun" activities)

you're trying to avoid feelings with things like avoidance, food, substance, shopping, binge eating...

you're struggling with maintaining personal hygiene or keeping your living space clean

having your friends and loved ones look like or share

you're starting to avoid people

you're longer feel "helpful" or "useful" (or you're starting to question about the future, things feel like they have no meaning)

you're experiencing fatigue or lack of energy or motivation

you're experiencing "mind fog" or "brain fog" (like avoidance, food, substance, shopping, binge eating...)

you're struggling with maintaining personal hygiene or keeping your living space clean

having your friends and loved ones look like or share

you're starting to avoid people

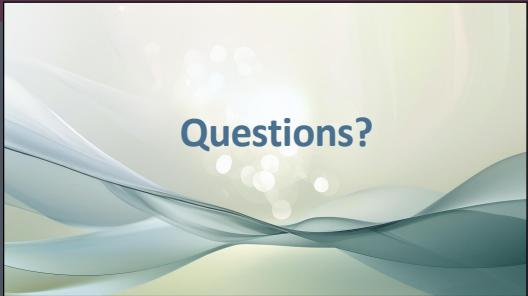
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signs your mental health might be getting worse

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Questions?

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