

Mental Health Awareness

Presented by ComPsych® Corporation

STAY AHEAD of Work-Life Challenges



Agenda

- › Mental health in the workplace
- › Common reactions to mental illness
- › How to be supportive
- › How to respond to suicidal thoughts



Facts About Mental Health

1 in 5 people will experience some type of mental health issue

Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes or heart disease

1 in 25 will experience a serious mental illness that will substantially impact their work performance and capacity to function in life

Substance abuse and alcoholism will impact about one in 10 people

About half of all people think about taking their own life at some point



Definition of Mental Illness

- › Significant behavior or pattern of behaviors that are associated with distress or impairment in daily functioning
- › Mental illness can be related to physical or biological factors
- › Mental illness can be worsened by severe stress and social isolation
- › Symptoms of mental disorder can be influenced by cultural, religious and ethnic factors



Signs of Possible Problems

- › Persistent anxious, depressed or irritable mood
- › Highly reactive mood – e.g. happy then angry then sad
- › Withdrawn and isolative
- › Lethargic, unable to self motivate
- › Deterioration of personal hygiene
- › Using illegal drugs or alcohol at work
- › Interpersonal problems and/or excessive conflicts
- › Bizarre and/or irrational thinking
- › Antisocial acts – stealing, lying, threatening or intimidating behaviors
- › Suicidal thoughts and gestures



Questions

What would do you if you saw someone one sneezing?

What would you do if you knew someone had been in the hospital for a heart problem?

What would you do if you saw a co-worker crying?

What would you do if you knew someone had been hospitalized for depression?

Would you give advice?

Would you ask about how they were doing?

Would you pretend nothing was wrong?



Common Responses to Illness

Judgement - behaving dismissively, gossiping, exclusion

Frustration and Anger – blaming, conflict, disrespectful behavior

Confusion and Fear - avoidance

Compassion – support and possible enabling



Judgement

“If that were me, I’d never do that! They should be able to control themselves”

Signs: Being dismissive of someone, complaining, gossiping

Why it happens :

- Ignorance of that person’s situation or what they are experiencing
- Unrealistic expectations of the other person
- A belief in your superiority to the other person
- A belief that you don’t need to learn anything else
- A belief that you can’t really help the situation

Let Go of Judging

Be aware of doing it

Ask yourself:

“What expectations do I have that are unrealistic?”

“What can I guess about what the other person is really going through?”

“What do I appreciate about the other person?”

“Was there a a time when I was going through something similar?”

“How can I help? What does this person need? “



Frustration and Anger

“They are behaving that way just to get a rise out of me!”

Personalizing their actions, they are doing it intentionally

Recognize it's not personal

Their behavior is an extension of their own problems

You just happen to be the person that they are interacting with at moment

Ask yourself:

‘Why would a decent reasonable person behave this way’



Confusion and Fear

“What happened? Why are they behaving that way? Is it something I did?” “Will I make it worse by talking to them?”

You don't know what to do and you fear the consequences of getting involved

Strong emotions and unusual behaviors cause immediate distress in most people

People seek explanations: *“Why is this happening? Who is to blame? When will someone do something to fix this? Why isn't anyone doing something about this?”*

Ask instead: “What can I do in this situation? How can I use my skills to ease the tension?”

“What” or “How” questions promote problem solving responses

Activity: Changing the Question

Instead of “Why” “When” or “Who” – Change the questions below to begin with “What” or “How” and include an “I”

Example: *“Why are they acting so strangely?”*

“What can I do to understand better what is happening?”

1. *“Her behavior is inappropriate. Why is this being permitted here?”*
2. *“Someone should do something. When will it end?”*
3. *Why doesn’t anyone else care?*
4. *“Who is responsible for intervening?”*
5. *Why do I have to attend this training?”*

Compassion

“I can imagine this must be difficult for them”

Compassion is a product of empathy with someone who is in pain

Be supportive but recognize you cannot fix the problem or relieve their pain

- Don't argue about how bad things are or challenge expressions of hopelessness
- Don't insist that depression or sadness are the wrong feelings to be experiencing
- Don't expect to “cheer up” a depressed person
- Don't become angry even though your efforts may be resisted or rejected
- Avoid critical or shaming statements
- Avoid becoming an enabler by taking on their responsibilities or covering up for performance issues

Comments to Avoid

"I know how you feel"

"I've been there"

"Look at what you have to be thankful for"

Don't offer a pep talk

Resist telling them how strong they are

Avoid saying things like, *"Be strong for..."* or *"Don't cry"*

Statements that begin with "You should" or "You will."

Don't try to be profound:

"There is a reason for everything"

"God will never give you more than you can handle."



Appropriate Comments

“I wish I had the right words “

“How are you feeling?”

“I feel your pain”

“I’m here for you”

“Although I can’t know exactly how you feel, I understand how difficult this must be for you.”

“We all need help at times like this, I’d like to help”

“Would you like to talk?”



Being Supportive

- Listen; acknowledge feelings of sadness, grief, anger and frustration
- Emphasize that professional help is available as needed
- Stress confidentiality
- Be supportive of counselor or doctor suggestions
- Take seriously any suggestion or talk of suicide

Warning Signs of Suicide

Talking or writing about death or dying or making comments like “What’s the point of living?” “Life is meaningless” or “No one would miss me if I were gone”

Threatening suicide

Seeking lethal means such as saving pills, buying or asking to borrow a gun

Giving away possessions

Asking about details of their life insurance policy, especially as it relates to cause of death

Showing interest in end-of-life affairs such as making a will or discussing funeral preferences



What to Do

If someone is thinking about suicide, the situation must be taken seriously!

- Ask – ask the person about suicidal thoughts
- Agreement – get their agreement to accept help
- Arrange – help them to connect with resources

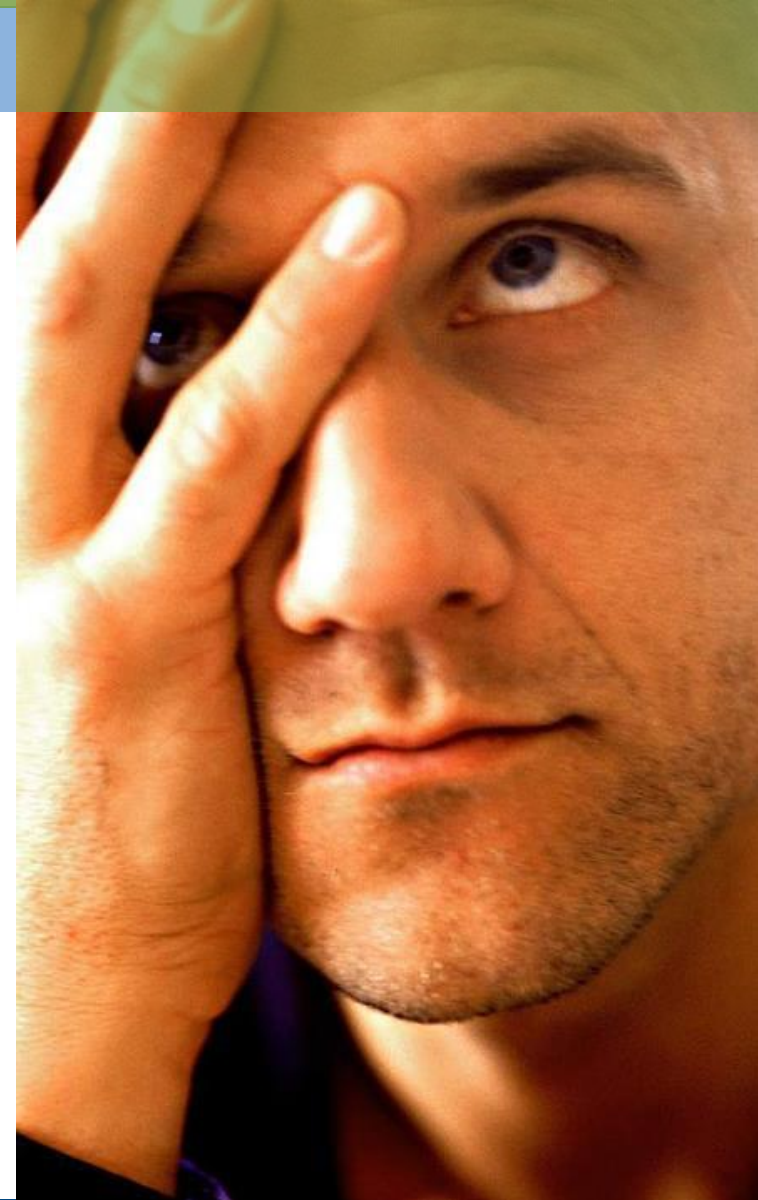


Ask

- If the person appears to be withdrawn and depressed but has not mentioned suicide, ask about how they are doing?
- Let them know that it's okay to share their feelings with you. Let them know that you want to help
- Listen attentively. Do not interrupt. Do not tell them how to feel. Do not challenge their feelings
- If the person brings up the subject of not wanting to live, do not hesitate to ask if he/she is thinking of suicide
- Talk openly about suicide; you need to know as much as possible about what is going on
- If they express suicidal thoughts ask when and how he/she plans to commit suicide
- Don't keep someone's suicidal plans a secret

Get Agreement

- Take as long as you need to listen and fully understand how they feel and what they are thinking
- Get them to agree to accept help and to agree not to harm themselves until they do
- Ask “Will you agree to speak to an EAP Counselor?”
- If they agree, call immediately



Arrange

- Arrange to have someone with them; don't leave the person alone
- If you believe them to be at imminent risk (organized plan, means and intent) contact your emergency services
- If the person is not at imminent risk (no plan or intent to harm self – only passing thoughts) help arrange professional help through Guidance Resources
- Arrange a safety plan which may involve the employee calling their doctor or counselor, going to the hospital or calling emergency services if they can not keep themselves safe



Helpful or Not Helpful?

1. “This may be a silly question, but you aren’t suicidal, are you?”
2. “That’s not true. Your family loves you very much. Your death would be devastating”
3. “When you’ve felt depressed in the past, what has helped you?”
4. “Everyone has problems like that. You’ll get through it, don’t worry so much.”
5. "Just think -- there are others who have it much worse than you do."
6. “I know you feel miserable now, but with help the way you’re feeling can change”
7. “If you kill yourself you will go to Hell”
8. “What has been keeping you alive until now?”
9. “How are you thinking of killing yourself? Do you have a plan?”
10. “You are important to me. Your life is important to me”
11. "Maybe I don't understand completely how you feel, but I want to help."

Final Comments

Be aware of your emotional reactions

Seek counseling for yourself to better equip you with working with others who may have mental illness

Mental health issues can and should be addressed openly and respectfully

Confidential resources are available to all employees in addressing personal issues

Open communication prevents stigmatization and creates a supportive work environment



When to Seek Additional Help

There are additional resources for awakening the passion in your life on www.guidanceresources.com

Check it out!

Call ComPsych® GuidanceResources®
Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!