

MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

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Supporting Employees:

- Awareness
- Compassion
- Practical Response



CONTENT WARNING

This presentation includes discussion of suicide, crisis, and emotional distress. 988 is available 24/7 by call or text.



WHY PEOPLE STAY QUIET

- Fear of being judged or treated differently
- Worry about job security or opportunities
- Not wanting to be a burden to their team
- Uncertainty about whether anyone will really listen
- Not having the words to explain what they are feeling

MORE COMMON THAN WE THINK

- [1 in 5](#) (21%) U.S. adults experience mental illness each year.
- [1 in 6](#) (16.5%) U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.
- [50%](#) of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24.
- Suicide is the [2nd leading](#) cause of death among people aged 10-14; the 3rd leading cause of death among those aged 15-24 in the U.S.; and the 12th leading cause of death in the U.S. overall.
- The average delay between onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is [11 years](#).

[Mental Health By the Numbers | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)



YOU DON'T NEED A DIAGNOSIS TO HELP

Managers are not expected to identify what someone has — only to recognize when someone may be struggling and respond with care.

- Anxiety may look like worry, tension, or trouble focusing
- Depression may look like withdrawal, low energy, or hopelessness
- Trauma may look like irritability, fear, or being easily overwhelmed
- Many conditions affect mood, behavior, sleep, and communication

The name does not matter. Your response does.



WHEN A CONVERSATION MAY BE NEEDED

These are not bad days. These are patterns worth paying attention to.

- A noticeable shift in mood, attitude, or energy that persists
- Increasing withdrawal, silence, or disconnection from the team
- Trouble focusing, following through, or keeping up with work
- Emotional reactions that feel out of proportion or out of character
- Changes in appearance, attendance, or engagement
- Something just feels *off* — and it has been for a while

Pay close attention when changes are sudden, severe, or involve safety concerns.

THE EMPLOYEE YOU MAY NOT THINK TO CHECK ON

Mental health challenges do not always look like a crisis.

- The high performer who suddenly seems detached
- The reliable employee who starts missing small things
- The team member who is more irritable, withdrawn, or overwhelmed
- The employee who says “I’m fine” but clearly is not themselves
- The manager who is struggling too, but keeps pushing through



WHAT PEOPLE MAY BE CARRYING OUTSIDE OF WORK

Mental health struggles rarely come from just one thing.

Often, it is the weight of multiple stressors at the same time.

- Burnout and constant pressure
- Financial or family stress
- Grief, trauma, or health concerns
- Conflict, harassment, or feeling isolated
- Trying to hold it together at work while life is heavy outside of work



WHEN YOU NOTICE A CHANGE – STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Sometimes you will need to open the door first.

- Speak privately and respectfully
- Lead with what you have observed, not what you assume
- Be clear about work expectations while leaving room for support
- Ask what would help them be successful
- Listen without trying to diagnose or fix everything



WHEN AN EMPLOYEE OPENS UP – RECEIVING WHAT THEY SHARE

Sometimes they come to you first. That moment matters.

- Listen without judgment or interruption
- Do not minimize, compare, or rush to solve
- Ask what they need right now
- Involve HR when leave, accommodation, or safety may be involved
- Follow through — check in after the conversation ends



WHAT TO SAY – AND WHAT TO AVOID

Do say:

- “I’ve noticed a change and wanted to check in.”
- “I care about how you’re doing.”
- “Here’s what I’ve observed at work.”
- “What support would help right now?”

Avoid saying:

- “What diagnosis do you have?”
- “Why are you acting like this?”
- “You don’t seem that bad.”
- Anything based on rumors, assumptions, or personal judgment



SUPPORT CAN LOOK DIFFERENT

Helping does not always mean having the right words. Sometimes it means connecting the employee to the right kind of support.

- Time away from work when needed
- Workplace support or accommodations
- Employee Assistance Program resources
- HR guidance and available community resources

When you are unsure of the next step, HR is your partner — you do not have to figure this out alone.



THIS IS HARD ON MANAGERS TOO

Supporting someone in distress can take a toll.

- You may feel pressure to say the right thing
- You may carry worry after the conversation ends
- You may feel responsible for fixing what you cannot fix
- You may experience compassion fatigue over time

What helps:

- Set healthy boundaries
- Partner with HR and other resources
- Remember your role is to support, not rescue



NATIONAL AND STATE PROGRAMS & RESOURCES



SAMHSA: SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

- SAMHSA's National Helpline: [1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](tel:1-800-662-HELP(4357))
- TTY: [1-800-487-4889](tel:1-800-487-4889)
- Also visit the [online treatment locator](#) (provided on the handout)
 - [Home - SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)
- Send zip code via text message: [435748](sms:435748) (HELP4U)



NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESS (NAMI)

- <https://www.nami.org/Home>
- More than 600 local Affiliates
- 49 State Organizations
- [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis \(treatment plan template\)](#)
- NAMI HelpLine:
 - 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
 - Text: 62640
 - Email: helpline@nami.org
 - Chat: [Nami.org/help](https://www.nami.org/help)





SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE CENTER

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

- www.sprc.org

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988

- 988lifeline.org
- Chat option found on the webwide
- TTY users: dial 711, then 988
- Other Resources:
 - Spanish Language
 - Disaster survivors
 - Native Americans and Alaska Natives

Veterans Crisis Lifeline: 988

- [Home \(veteranscrisisline.net\)](http://Home(veteranscrisisline.net))
- Dial 988 then Press 1
- Text 838255
- Chat option on the website

OTHER CRISIS LINES & RESOURCES

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)
 - Text: “Start” to 88788
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-hope (4673)
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance: 800-826-3632



CALLING 911

- Generally a last resort
- Only if the employee is agitated and threatening harm to themselves or others
- Notify the operator that this is a psychiatric or Mental Health emergency
 - ask for officers trained in Crisis Intervention or trained to assist people experiencing a psychiatric emergency.

WHAT MANAGERS CAN DO EVERY DAY

- Notice changes early
- Ask, don't assume
- Listen without rushing to fix
- Do not minimize what someone is feeling
- Help connect people to support

WHAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TODAY

- You do not need to have all the answers
- You just need to notice, respond, and connect
- One conversation, handled with care, can make a real difference
- You are not alone in this — and neither are your employees

