Mental Health in the Workplace: The Critical Role of Managers

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Learning Objectives

1   Understand mental health and mental illness from an occupational health perspective.

2   Understand how managers and front-line supervisors can support and promote mental health in the workplace.

3   Identify the warning signs associated with deteriorating mental health.

4   Learn how managers can recognize warning signs and provide support to employees experiencing declines in mental health and well-being.

Case Study 1

You've been managing Andrew for nearly five years. He has demonstrated an exceedingly high work ethic, is devoted to his work, and seems to enjoy working on the team.

You have found that he is approachable, professional, and good at his job.

Yet, you've noticed a few incidences over the last few months where Andrew has seemed impatient and short-tempered when dealing with his coworkers.

Yesterday you overheard him angrily telling a colleague, "Can't you handle that on your own? I have enough of my own work and don't have the time or energy to deal with you!"

What do you do?

1) **What behavioral changes have you observed?**

2) **Do you think these changes indicate that Andrew is experiencing a mental health problem? Why or why not?**

3) **As his manager, what should you do?**

4) **How can you best support Andrew, moving forward?**

What is mental health?
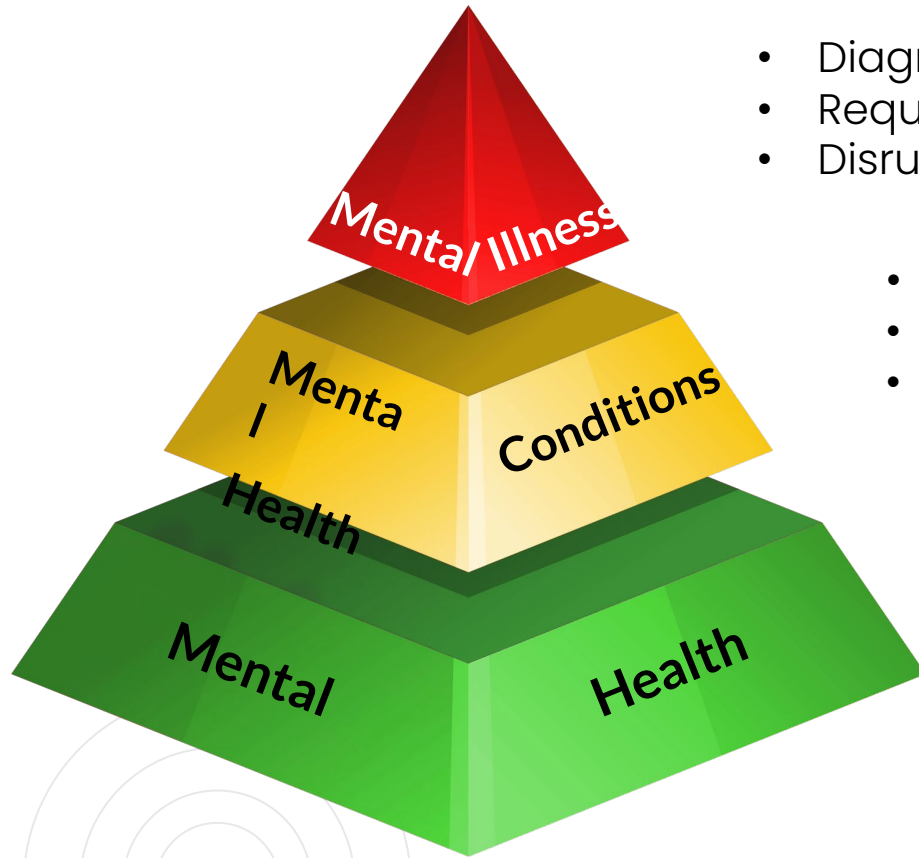
- Diagnosable illness
- Requires professional intervention or treatment
- Disrupts one's life, work, and/or relationships

- Compromised health and wellbeing
- Distressing and cognitively taxing
- If recognized, can be alleviated through support and professional help

- Not just the absence of illness
- State of positive wellbeing
- Ability to perform, cope, and adapt normally

Mental Illness

Mental Health Conditions

Mental Health

Mental Health Conditions: Who do they affect?

1 in 5 people

in the United States will experience a significant mental health problem or illness each year

1 in 3 people

will be diagnosed with a mental illness at some point in their lifetime

1 in 5 people

report that the pandemic has significantly worsened their mental health

...EVERYONE

Work and Well-being

Work well-being = experience of positive perceptions and the presence of constructive conditions at work and in other areas of life that enables workers to thrive and achieve their full potential

Physical Work Environment

Workplace Policies

Work-Life Balance

Worker Well-being

Workplace Culture and Norms

Compensation

Social Support

Work Roles and Tasks

92% of workers said it is very (57%) or somewhat (35%) important to them to work for an organization that values their emotional and psychological well-being.

Only 43% reported that their employer offers health insurance with coverage for mental health and substance use disorders.

77% of workers having reported experiencing work-related stress in the last month

Only 29% reported that their employer offers an employee assistance program.

92% said it is very (52%) or somewhat (40%) important to them to work for an organization that provides support for employee mental health.

Financial costs of poor employee mental health

- Depression is the <u>leading cause of disability</u> in the United States

- The cost of **untreated depression** alone to the U.S. economy is <u>$210.5 billion annually</u> in absenteeism, medical costs, and lost productivity

- Estimated cost of job stress ranges from <u>$221.13 million to $187 billion</u> based on a 2017 published analysis
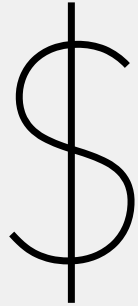
Human costs of poor employee mental health

4 in 5 employees
report that work stress affects their relationships with friends and family

12+ million adults
in the United States have serious thoughts about suicide each year

Only 46.2%
of U.S. adults with mental illness received treatment in 2020

17.7 millions adults
 in the United States experienced delayed or cancelled mental health support, and nearly 5 million were unable to receive any support at all

Only 38% of employees
report feeling comfortable with using mental health resources of services provided through their employer (e.g., EFAP/EAP)

**Only 1/3 of employees say their company leadership speaks openly about mental health and well-being**

–**Mental Health America's Mind the Workplace 2022 Report**

How work can harm employee mental health and well-being

- Low employee control over work

- Low pay

- High uncertainty – role ambiguity

- Low social support (especially from supervisor)

- Negative social interactions, abusive supervision

- Low job security

- Poor work schedules and low control

- Unfair treatment

- High job demands

12

Negative influences of job stress on mental health
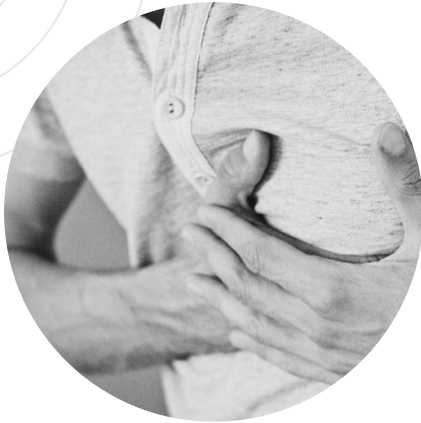
Cardiovascular Disease

Depression

Type 2 Diabetes

(Ganster & Rosen, 2013)

Negative effects associated with job stress

Family Conflict

Marital Stress

Decreased Satisfaction

Work-Life Conflict

Negative Crossover

Absenteeism

Turnover

Decreased Commitment

Lack of Engagement

Performance Issues

Burnout

Cardiovascular Disease

Diabetes

Psychological Distress

Musculoskeletal

Substance abuse

Decreased safety

Suicidality

How work can help protect worker mental health?

- o Social connectedness and belonging

- o Purpose and meaning

- o Schedule and routine

- o Financial income
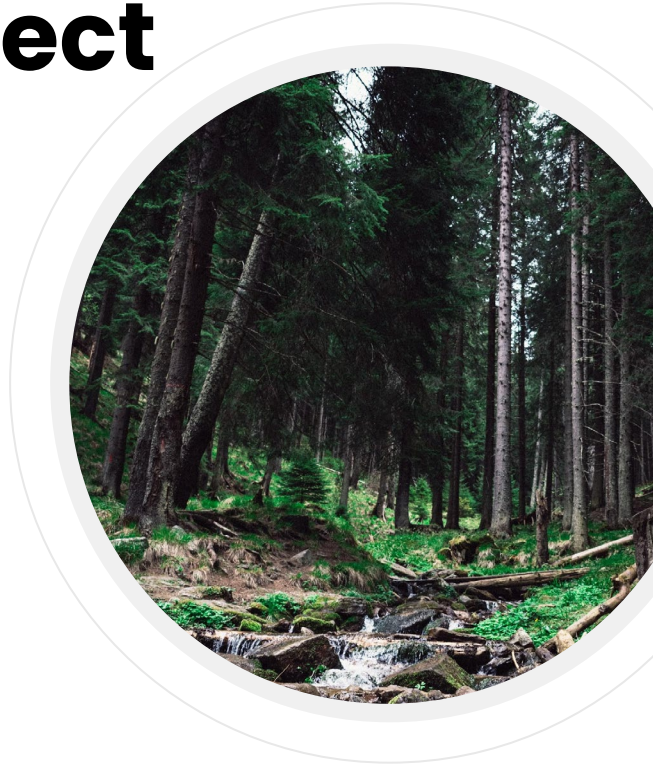
The Missing Link:
The Role of Supervisors

80% of managers

believe it is part of their job to support worker mental health and well-being.

65% of managers

believe they could be more effective at their job if they had training related to supporting worker mental health and well-being.

YET

only 30% of managers

have been trained to support worker mental health and well-being.

16

What strategies can managers use to protect workers' mental health and well-being?

What managers can do...reduce stressors!

- Reduce high job demands

- Increase worker job control

- Increase worker pay

What managers can do...

increase support!

Social Support

Why Target Social Support At Work?

- Social support and social integration are associated with better health and longevity.

- We spend much of our waking hours involved in work, thus, the workplace should be a primary intervention target.

The Importance of Social Connections

- Social Connections are significantly tied to psychological and physical health

- Social isolation, loneliness, interpersonal conflict are all related to poor   psychological health

- Social connectedness is related to suicidality

22

Proactive and Responsive Support

Proactive Support

- Emotional Support
- Instrumental Support
- Role Modeling
- Reducing Stigma

Responsive Support

○ Recognizing Warning Signs

○ Taking ACTion

○ Offering and Facilitating Resources

23

Emotional Support

What you do to help your workers feel heard, and to show that you understand their family and personal demands.

<u>Emotional Support</u>: What you do to help your employees feel heard, and to show that you understand their family and personal demands.

- Increasing face-to-face contact with each employee.

- Communicating genuine concern about your employees' lives and well-being.

- Expressing empathy, understanding, or offering assistance when an employee shares a personal challenge.

- Expressing appreciation for your employees' service and their contributions to the team.

- Making sure that you have the time with your employee to engage in an emotionally supportive conversation.

- Asking open-ended questions about an employee's emotional health, physical health, and general well-being
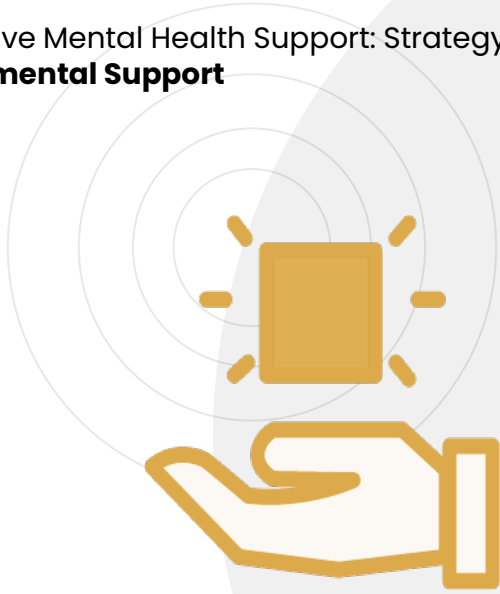
Instrumental Support

Making practical arrangements so workers can meet both ongoing demands and, at times, unexpected family or personal demands.

Instrumental Support: Making practical arrangements so Soldiers can meet both ongoing service demands and, at times, unexpected family or personal demands.

• Providing clear guidance on available resources.

• Matching your employee with another employee who has overcome similar challenges (e.g., debt, divorce).

• "Going to bat" or supporting employees when communicating with upper management.

• Publicly supporting your employees' seeking behavioral health care.

• Adjusting employees' duties to avoid conflicting with family responsibilities or outside challenges.

• Identifying areas of inexperience to educate your team on healthy coping skills.

Role Modeling

Demonstrating by example that you are taking care of your own personal well-being.

<u>Role Modeling</u>: Demonstrating by example that you are taking care of your own personal well-being

• Approaching required mental health related training with support and optimism.

• Allowing employees time off to seek treatment or get behavioral health support.

• Sharing your own or your mental health' success stories.

• Walking the talk—demonstrating that you are taking care of your own mental health by reducing your own stressors at work, not working excessive hours, and engaging in non-work activities.
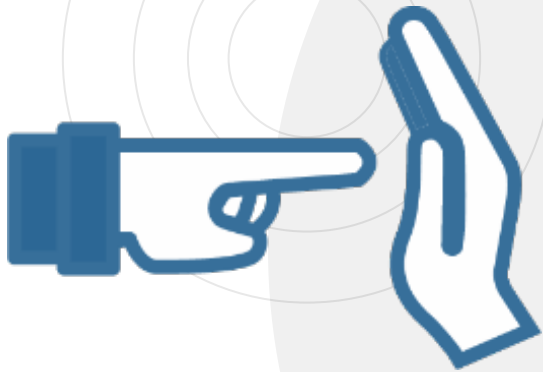
Reducing Stigma Associated with Seeking Help

Communicating that it is safe and healthy to seek help and support.

30

Reducing Stigma Associated with Seeking Help: Communicating that it is safe and healthy to seek help and support.

• Ensure that when employees seek help and are provided with treatment plans, there is little impact to the team.

• Seek help yourself when needed.

• Know about the mental health resources available to your employees such as EAP, community resources, and make appropriate referrals when necessary.

• Set the tone that it is ok to seek help when in need.
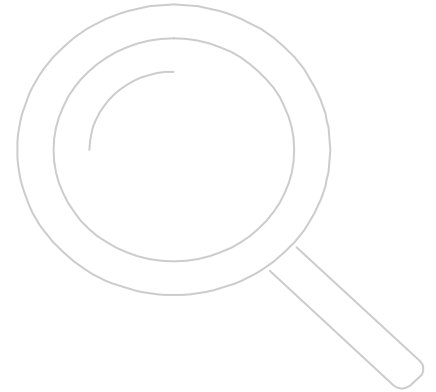
Benefits of being proactive

Decreases   **Increases**

	Behavioral Health
Personal Stress	Flexibility
	Camaraderie
Injury at Work	
	Organizational Commitment
Relationship Conflict	
	Team Cohesion
Parental Stress	Workplace Safety
	Relationship Satisfaction

How to be responsive

Start with awareness

Recognize warning signs

Take ACTion

Awareness

Recognition

Warning Recognition: Warning signs that a leader might notice when a Soldier is struggling.

- Performance: Not performing to usual standards or missing deadlines, falling out of runs, etc.

- Distress: Decreased physical fitness, being uncivil or rude, talking about how stressed they are.

- Social Withdrawal: Pulling back from co-workers, not doing the "normal" social things they used to do.

- Attendance: Disengaging from the workplace, lateness, getting sick frequently.

- Extreme Behavior: Expressing thoughts about suicide, expressing desire to hurt oneself or others.

MODULE 3 Mental Health Responsive Behaviors

WARNING SIGNS

Performance
- Missing important deadlines
- Forgetting tasks
- Experiencing declines in performance

Attendance
- Increases in sickness
- Arriving or starting work late
- Falling asleep at their desk

Distress
- Repeatedly mentioning excessive stress
- Being uncivil or rude to others
- Crying at work

Extreme Signs
- Expressing thoughts about or intent to harm oneself or others
- Heavy drinking or coming to work under the influence

Social Withdrawal
- Disengaging from co-workers
- Declining invitations to socialize
- Eating alone during lunch

Employees may experience
- Declines in personal hygiene
- Sleep problems
- Negative relationships with family

37

Awareness leads to Action

AWARENESS

Improved Literacy

Reduced Stigma

Increased Confidence

ACTION

Recognize

Decide

Assist or Direct

Accommodation

Return-to-Work

38

Early Intervention: Supporting your employees to seek out and use the resources available to them.

- Attend: Recognize the warning signs, pay attention to your employees by asking them how they're doing, pay attention to their body language when they respond, get to know your employee versions of "normal".

- Communicate: Openly discuss available resources, focus on behavior patterns, and use open-ended questions that directly address specific concerns.

- Touch Base: Encourage employees to contact the EAP, suggest specific resources, and always follow-up to make sure the employee is getting the resources and support they need.

How to Support Employee Mental Health: Key Lessons

LESSON #1: Detection is NOT diagnosis.

LESSON #2: Treat people as people—Get to know your employees and their "version of normal".

LESSON #3: As a leader, focus on:
- Performance
- Workplace
- Behavior

LESSON #4: Openly communicate about mental health, mental health problems, and available resources.

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Teaching leaders to improve the health, safety, and well-being of employees across industries, through evidence-informed strategies.

AVAILABLE TRAININGS

https://www.supportiveleadership.org/

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

988

Available 24 hours. Languages: English, Spanish

Thanks!

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National Emergency Mental Health Hotline: 988

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yourworkpath.com (tools and toolkits)

soundcloud.com/occhealthsci (podcast)

blogs.ohsu.edu/occupational-health-sciences

Thanks!

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