

Tip sheet

Mental health awareness



Mental health is more than the absence of illness – it's a state in which individuals realise their own potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and make a contribution to their community (WHO, 2014).

Mental wellbeing (flourishing) is more than just feeling happy; it's when you feel good, function well, have satisfaction with life, are developing as a person and have strong relationships (MHFNZ, 2017).

- People with mental illness can and do work and even flourish
- Mental illness is treatable
- People with mental illness have the same intellectual capacity as anyone else (Sane, 2016).

What is stress?

Stress is an internal response to an interaction between a person and their environment. It's a feeling of not being able to cope with the demands of everyday life and work, causing a person to feel that physical or psychological demands exceed their ability to cope.

What is depression?

Depressive disorders come in different forms with a variety of symptoms and severity.

Major depression interferes with your ability to work, sleep, eat and enjoy once-pleasurable activities. A less severe depression involves long-term symptoms that do not disable, but keep you from functioning at full steam or feeling good.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal response to a threat (whether perceived or actual). Panic attacks may come on for no apparent reason or only under certain circumstances.

It is estimated that 30% of the population will experience at least one panic attack but only 2% develop a panic disorder.

Recognising signs of mental illness at work

- Absenteeism
- Uncharacteristic poor work performance
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Emotional outburst
- Poor concentration
- Low engagement
- Low morale
- Lack of cooperation
- Increased accidents/safety problems
- Making excuses for missed deadlines

Creating a mentally-healthy workplace

- Show empathy to others
- Be discreet and keep personal information confidential
- Enquire as to the wellbeing of others
- Encourage a positive workplace culture
- Encourage leave to be taken
- Treat all staff with respect, equality and fairness
- Take action if workplace wellbeing policy is not being followed.

Showing empathy

Empathy can be developed by:

- active listening;
- opening up to the other person emotionally;
- being mindful;
- offering help to those around us;
- withholding judgment;
- challenging our own biases and prejudices;
- put ourselves in others' shoes;
- treating others with importance and respect.

When professional help is needed

Remember: **Early intervention** can make a big difference; prevents escalation into an uncontrollable situation; more effective in fewer professional sessions; limits the impacts.

Practice the 5 Ways to Wellbeing



Stress busters

There are simple things which make us more resilient to stress.

- Talk about your feelings/thoughts
- Take regular exercise
- Practice relaxation/meditation
- Eat a healthy diet
- Moderate your alcohol intake
- Use your annual leave
- Enjoy hobbies/interests/sports
- Enjoy friendships
- Have fun
- Get good regular sleep
- Have a good work/home balance.

Contact

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