HEALTHY COMPANY

Discovery
Corporate and Employee Benefits

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYEES

Mental health is about how we think, feel and act as we deal with life's ups and downs. The state of our mental health helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, make decisions and go about our daily lives.

Things to remember

- Seek the appropriate clinical treatment as you would with any other medical condition
- Speak up early on when it starts to affect you at work
- Take responsibility to get help as needed and something about your role at work

In this toolkit you will find useful tips, pointers and recommendations to better assist you to better manage your own mental wellbeing.

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Watch this 3min introduction to mental health and mental illness.

HOW big is the problem really?

HOW big is the problem in South Africa?

Basic statistics of mental illness in adults

1 in 3
South Africans will or do have a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime

Depression and **Anxiety** are the most common mental health conditions in SA with a recent Wits/Medical Research Council study revealing that **25,7%** of South Africans are most likely depressed

Only
1 in 10
people with a mental health condition get mental health care in South Africa

Mental health and stigma in the workplace

59% Aged 31-50

79% Female

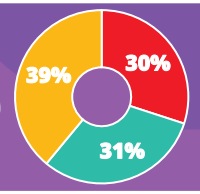
21% Male

Type of Illness

40% Depression	21% Bipolar	16% Anxiety

2 in 3
Disclosed their Mental Health Condition to a co-worker

61%
Disclosed to a Manager / Supervisor

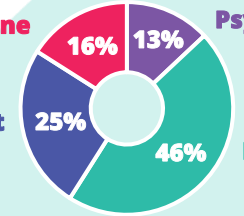


Managers Response to Disclosure
- Positive / Helpful
- Negative
- Indifferent

HAVING A MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS MY:

Relationships	74%
Work Performance	72%
Capability	49%
Leave Days	42%
Promotions	33%

Treatment by a psychiatrist / psychologist



Accessed company EAP services

46% No	21% Yes	33% I don't know about my companies EAP

56% Taken time off work in the last 12 months for Mental Health reasons

I don't know of any colleagues fired due to their Mental Illness **85%**

I fear being discriminated against if I disclose my Mental Illness **19%**

Source: 2017 SADAG workplace survey

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What is the difference?

Mental Health

Each of us experiences mental health differently.

When we don't perform as well as we could and feel we don't have the capacity or energy to keep going at the current pace, it is important to leverage strategies to take control and, if necessary, seek further help.

Refocus on practising healthy habits when you start feeling out of control or overwhelmed.

To sustain positive mental health

- ✓ Get enough good quality sleep
- ✓ Adopt a good diet
- ✓ Keep your alcohol intake low
- ✓ Perform regular physical activity
- ✓ Break down large tasks into smaller ones
- ✓ Breath deeply
- ✓ Try keeping a portion of your day free of appointments and email.

Watch this 5 min introduction to the mental health continuum.

Mental Illness

Mental health exists on a continuum. It is a dynamic, changing state that can deteriorate or improve depending on life circumstances. Mental illness can be temporary and reversible if identified and treated early. The Mental Health Continuum shows common markers of mental health status. Those with mental illness can be helped to function more effectively and fully recover.

	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Mentally Ill
Mood	Normal mood fluctuations; Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/impatient; Nervous; Sadness/ overwhelmed	Anger; Anxiety; Pervasively sad/ hopeless	Angry outbursts/ aggression; Excessive anxiety/panic attacks; Depressed/suicidal thoughts
Attitude	Good sense of humour; Performing well; Mentally in control	Displaced sarcasm; Procrastination; Forgetfulness	Negative attitude; Poor performance or workaholic; Poor concentration/ decisions	Can't perform duties/ control behaviour or concentrate; Engaging in behaviours which appear to be markedly out of character
Sleep	Normal sleep patterns; Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping; Intrusive thoughts; Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep; Recurrent images/nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep; Sleeping too much or too little
Physical Health	Physically well; Good energy level.	Muscle tension/ headaches; Low energy	Increased aches and pains; Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses; Constant fatigue
Activity	Physically and socially active	Decreased activity/ socialising	Avoidance; Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone; Changes to appetite (increased or decreased)
Habits	No/limited drug and alcohol use/gambling	Regular but controlled drug and alcohol use/ gambling	Increased drug and alcohol use/ gambling – hard to control	Frequent drug and alcohol or gambling use – inability to control with severe consequences; Out of character decision making.

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Myths and misconceptions

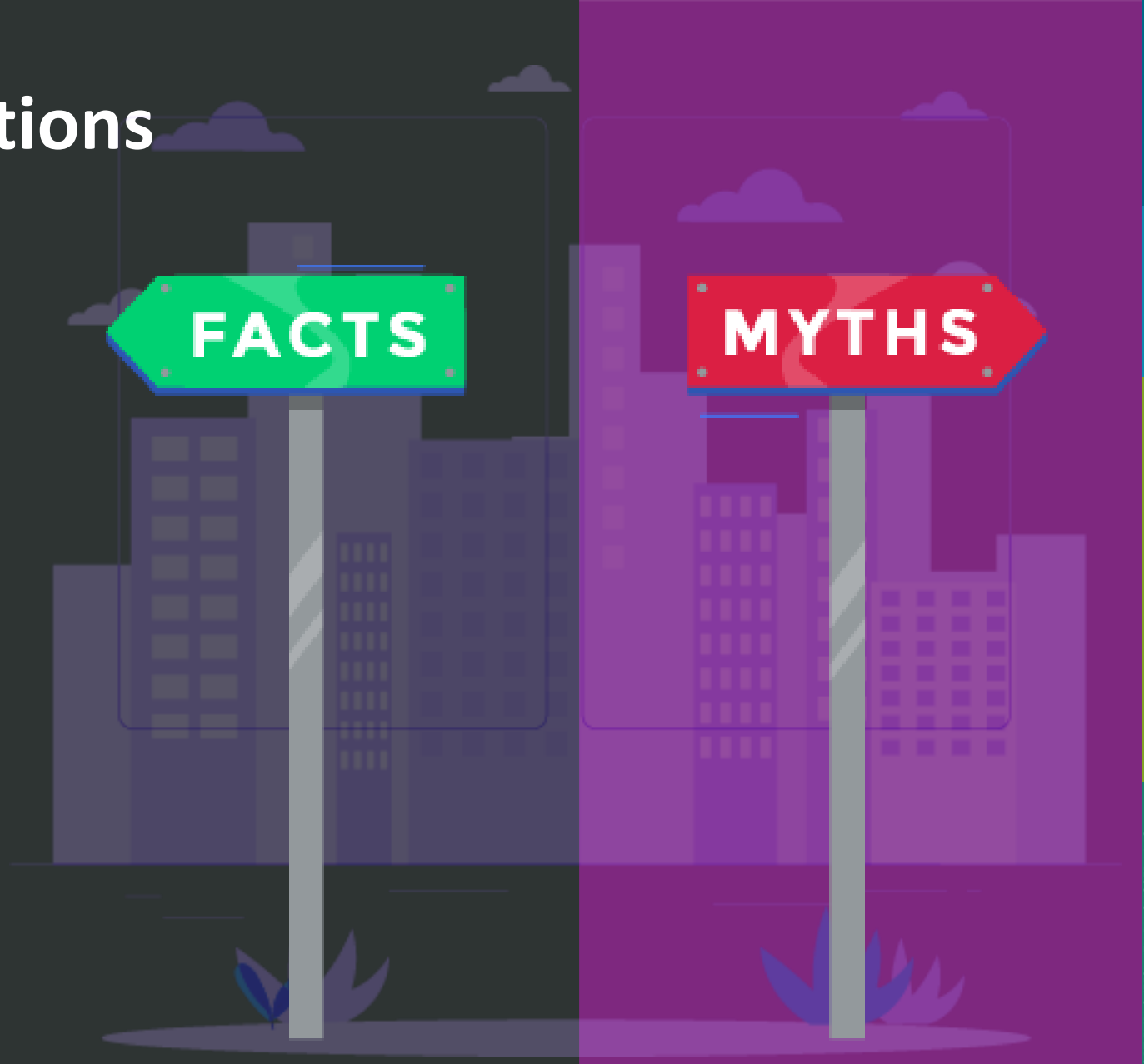
There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach in terms of the help and support required when managing your mental health or supporting someone else.

Most individuals will ask for help with physical injuries but are far less likely to do so when it comes to mental health and wellbeing It's also possible that sometimes people do not relate their symptoms with mental ill health.

Stigma is one explanation. This could be self-stigma, societal stigma or in the workplace.

Examples:

- It is all in your head
- It will resolve on its own
- People should just be strong or try harder
- It is a sign of a weakness
- It only affects certain races/ethnic groups/age / gender groups
- Mental health conditions are character flaws or signs of personal weakness
- People with mental health conditions cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job
- People with mental health conditions can snap out of it if they try hard enough
- Therapy and self-help are a waste of time. Just take a pill
- Booking yourself into a facility for 21 days is the main treatment



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Signs to look out for

Changing behaviour is often the first sign for you to notice that you may need support. Personal life changes or changes at work could be stressful and may trigger mental ill health. Examples are bereavement, trauma, financial pressure, starting a new job, stressful work environments or poor work relationships. You can look out for the following:

- Frequent headaches
- Suffering from frequent minor illnesses, e.g. stomach upsets, flu symptoms
- Difficulty sleeping or constant tiredness
- Being run down / burnout
- Lack of care over appearance
- Sudden weight loss or gain

- Increased errors, missing deadlines or forgetting tasks
- Decline in productivity or quality of work
- Loss of interest -disengaged
- Increased sickness absence
- Working too many hours: first in, last out, sending emails out of hours or while on leave
- Struggling with time management eg late coming

- Irritable, being aggressive or tearfulness
- Being withdrawn, not participating in conversations or social activities
- Increased arguments or conflicts with others
- Indecision, inability to concentrate
- Erratic or socially unacceptable behaviour
- Loss of confidence
- Difficulty remembering things
- Loss of humour

Watch this 5 min video on mental health challenges.

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Mental health conditions: **Depression**

Depression is a feeling of ***low mood that lasts for a long time and affects everyday life***. It can make someone ***feel hopeless, despairing, guilty, worthless, unmotivated and exhausted***.

In its mildest form, depression doesn't stop someone from leading a normal life, but it makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can make someone feel suicidal and be life-threatening.

- **Feeling low, lack of energy**, and poor self esteem
- **loss of interest** and pleasure in usual activities
- lack of appetite and weight loss
- difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- **Reduced work performance eg poor concentration, memory, and decision making**
- It can affect physical health

Watch this 5 min animation that describes depression and its symptoms.

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Mental health conditions: **Anxiety disorder**

Anxiety is what people feel when they are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen or that they think could happen in the future. Occasional anxiety is a normal human experience. But if feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time, they can be overwhelming. *Someone might also experience physical symptoms such as sleep problems and panic attacks.*

There are different diagnoses of anxiety, such as *generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety (social phobia), panic disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*. But it's also possible to experience problems with anxiety without having a specific diagnosis. Anxiety can lead to social withdrawal to avoid many threatening situations, which is also a significant risk factor for developing depression.

- apprehension, fearfulness, or terror
- shortness of breath and tightness in the chest
- palpitations and increased heart rate
- sweating
- shaking, trembling, or dizziness
- fear of losing control or going crazy (and fear of the embarrassment this would cause)
- excessive worry
- feeling restless and on edge
- muscle tension
- physical disorders (e.g. skin complaints, stomach upsets, aches and pains).

Panic attacks at work

Points to remember

1. It will pass
2. Stay with the person and keep them calm.
3. Move the person to a quiet place.
4. Ask what the person needs.
5. Speak to the person in short, simple sentences.
6. Be predictable, and avoid surprises.
7. Help the person focus – use the 3-3-3 method
8. Help slow the person's breathing.

3-3-3 exercise:
Look around you and name three things you see.
Then, name three sounds you hear.
Finally, move three parts of your body - your ankle, fingers, or arm.

Watch this 3 min video for a quick introduction on anxiety.

To understand how anxiety plays out in the brain, watch this 5 min TED video.

Watch this video to understand panic attacks in 3 min.

What is a panic attack?

Sudden, unexpected bouts of intense terror leading to difficulty breathing; rapid, pounding heartbeat; choking sensations; chest pain, trembling; feeling faint. The memory of a panic attack or the fear of having another attack can trigger another.

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Mental health conditions: **Bipolar mood disorder**

Bipolar mood disorder is an illness marked by extreme changes in mood, energy, thinking and behaviour.

It is typically seen as episodes of deep depression and manic highs.

Everyone has variations in their mood, but in bipolar mood disorder these dramatic and rapidly changing mood swings from highs to lows do not follow a set pattern, and depression does not always follow manic phases.

These phases can last for days, weeks or even months. In between, there may be stable times where they experience fewer symptoms.

- Mood swings from an extreme high to an extreme low
- Increase in energy (eg exceptionally high work output), excitement, poor judgement, impulsive behaviour and agitation
- Severe depressive symptoms

For a quick overview of Bipolar Disorder, watch this 3 min video.

To understand Bipolar in more detail, watch this 8 min video

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Substance **abuse**

Drug and alcohol abuse can affect your health, productivity, decision making, morale, security and safety. Spotting signs of potential issues is key.

You may also experience problems in your personal life including emotional and financial strain

This may also affect your mental wellbeing.

- Impaired ability to function effectively and relate to others
- Impulsive and inappropriate behaviour
- Poor concentration, attention and memory
- Taking several breaks, being tardy or absent, not eating, nose bleeds, mood swings, decline in personal appearance or being overconfident

Look at this article for tips on how to deal with substance abuse at work.

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Self-harm and **suicide**

The risk of self-harm is much higher if you have a mental health condition. ***It is impossible to accurately predict who will attempt suicide***, except that past suicide attempts increase the risk of future attempts. Some people with many risk factors will not attempt suicide, while others, who seem to have few risk factors, may shock others with their attempted or actual suicide.

Did you know? There are an estimated 23 suicides per day in South Africa, and for every one suicide, there are 20 attempted suicides every 24 hours in the country. Men are 4 x more likely to die by suicide than women in South Africa (WHO).

Potential risk factors:

- Mental health conditions
- Gender-based violence and abusive relationships
- Physical health conditions like a terminal or a chronic illnesses
- Recent trauma or life crisis
- Work stress, unemployment or job loss
- Relationship challenges
- Financial problems or debt
- Previous suicide attempts and a family history

Warning signs:

- Long-lasting sadness and mood swings
- Withdrawing from others and isolation
- Loss of interest in things they used to enjoy
- Changes in personality, appearance, sleeping and eating patterns
- Self-harmful behaviour
- Putting personal business in order, making a will, visiting friends and family members
- Talking about death

Anyone of any race, age, gender, or socioeconomic status may feel suicidal. Even someone who seems to 'have it all' can be vulnerable to suicide.

Watch this 4 min video on suicide ideation and risk factors that you can look out for.

Learn more about the myths around suicide here.

What can you do to help?

If you become aware of someone who is suicidal, emergency medical care should be sought as a matter of urgency.

If this is another employee, you can call the 24h Healthy Company helpline for assistance on **0800 320 420.**

If outside of the work environment, you can call the SADAG Suicide Crisis helpline on **0800 567 567**

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Multi-disciplinary management for mental health conditions

General practitioner (GP)	Assess, diagnose and treat mild to moderate mental health conditions and refer to specialist when indicated
Counsellor	Provide initial emotional support
Psychiatrist	Specialised medical management of mental health conditions.
Clinical psychologist	Clinical assessment and provide psychological therapy.
Occupational therapist (OT)	Provide assessment and therapy to enable return to functional daily activities and to re-engage in vocational tasks
Social worker	Provide emotional and practical support to individuals and families

No diagnosis

- Look out for patterns of reduced performance /output and frequent time off for various minor illnesses
- Seek support – eg Healthy Company

A person with no diagnosed mental health condition but has poor mental wellbeing

- Implement healthy habits in your everyday life to maintain your mental health

A person with no mental health diagnosis and positive mental health

Mental illness

Mental wellbeing / fitness

A person with a diagnosis of a mental health condition who has poor mental health

- Follow up with your clinical providers
- Stay compliant on treatment
- Discuss support required with your manager

A person with a diagnosis of a mental health condition but who is well managed

- Ensure that you have a support system in place
- Know your triggers and seek help early when required
- Stay compliant on all treatment

Severe diagnosis

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Support for your **mental health conditions** - introduction

While mental ill health is a sensitive and personal issue - like any health problem - most people prefer an open and honest approach.

Shying away from it can perpetuate the fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety. For some people it can feel hard opening up or to trust others, but it is important to identify someone who you will feel safe with to share that you are struggling.

The principle is to seek treatment for mental health conditions in the same way you would for physical ill health conditions.

Accessing support:

It is important to seek help as early as possible when you are not coping.

If you experience the signs and symptoms explained earlier and has never been diagnosed with a mental health condition, consider the following options:

If you already have a mental health diagnosis, contact your treating healthcare providers.

Healthy Company

You can call their 24h toll free number for access to emotional support / counselling

The number is 0800 320 420

Book an appointment with your GP

The GP assesses the severity of the symptoms you are experiencing and prescribe treatment, refer for therapy or escalate care as required.

Healthy Company

Healthy company provides amongst other things emotional wellbeing support to employees and their families.

- 24 hour telephonic support services
- Up to eight face-to-face counselling sessions per episode - national network of clinical psychologists, social workers and registered counsellors
- Scheduled counselling sessions could be at the employee's home / work or virtual.

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Communications around **Mental Health**

If there is little or no communication, misunderstandings and barriers can quickly arise.

"By the time I disclosed my generalised anxiety disorder at work, it was too late. It had spiralled into debilitating depression, and I could no longer even craft a basic email, much less do the rigorous job I was hired for.

My previously high performance had very noticeably suffered, compelling me to nervously share the truth and ultimately forcing me out on a leave of absence."

How to approach a conversation with your manager - practical tips:

- Make your conversation clear and concise by writing out what you would like say and rehearsing it ahead of time
- Don't overshare - only disclose what is required in the work environment and what you are comfortable to share
- Come prepared with practical suggestions for what support you might require in order to maintain your required productivity / work obligations
- Inform management in advance of appointment dates and times
- You can discuss with your leader on what communication would work best for you – to still meet the business objectives, but reduce your anxiety or stress

Disclose your mental health to your leader?

If there's no work-related reason for you to disclose, then you don't have to.

If, however, your state of mind is affecting your work performance, your relationship with your coworkers or any other issue related to your work environment, a conversation may be necessary.

Being upfront about your mental health helps to create an honest and open environment. Disclosing your struggles can actually be a great form of relief. In many cases, once you open up about your mental health challenges you may no longer feel like you're dealing with this alone and provisions can be put in place to support you.

Remember:

- ✓ Always communicate in a timely manner with your manager on any changes in plans or additional time off required.
- ✓ Maintain open and honest conversations with your leader on what is helpful to you and what is possible for business.

Watch this 16 min TED talk on how to talk about mental health without offending everyone.

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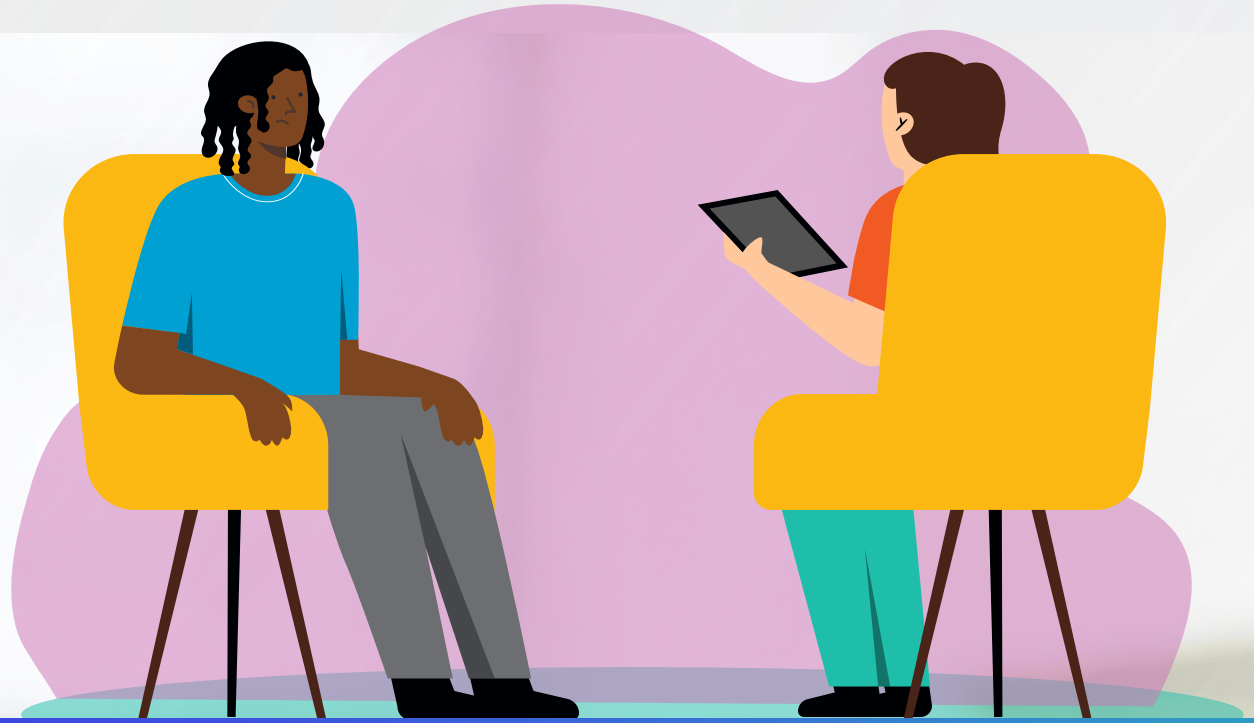

Support in the **workplace**

Introduction:

When a mental health condition is not well managed, it can affect your ability to perform all your work duties.

Most people who experience an episode of mental ill health recover completely. Those who have a chronic mental health condition can be managed optimally with treatment. Both can resume work successfully with the necessary support.

If you have been booked off for some time and returning to work, it is important to have a conversation with your manager / leader you are most comfortable with to discuss any support required on your return.

Things to Remember

- Think of practical solutions on what would assist you to perform your duties optimally. This could for example include how to manage potential triggers or side effects of medication. Use regular check-ins with your manager to discuss any adjustments that might be required.
- Remain compliant on your treatment and follow up appointments. Plan and communicate with your manager when you might require time off to attend these.
- Ongoing and open communication about progress, what works and what doesn't is essential.
- Communicate any recommendations from your clinical team to your manager. The Employee Wellness team can also assist with these discussions.
- Make sure you take responsibility for things that are in your control.

Leave management:

- Employees can use their allocated sick leave when booked off or admitted by their treating clinician.
- If sick leave is insufficient, employees can choose to use any available annual leave.
- Where leave balances become depleted, unpaid leave might be applied.

Watch this TED talk of Mark Bailey – sharing his own experiences with mental health challenges and how managers can address it.

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