HEALTHY COMPANY

Discovery
Corporate and Employee Benefits

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT FOR LEADERS

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.

As a leader, you play an important role. You can:

- Create an environment where people feel able to discuss their mental health without judgement
- Support your team's wellness proactively for the benefit of business and the employee
- Be mindful of stigma associated with Mental Health Illnesses

In this toolkit you will find useful tips, pointers and recommendations to better assist your team.

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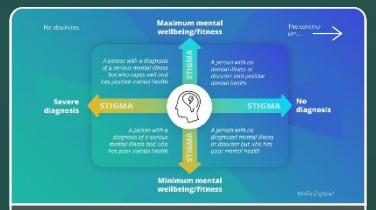

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Watch this 3min introduction to mental health and mental illness.

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

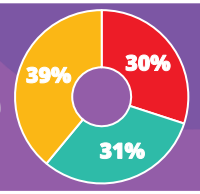
21% Male

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

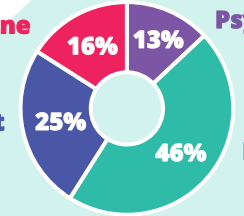


Managers Response to Disclosure
- Positive / Helpful
- Negative
- Indifferent

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.

When you practice a healthy lifestyle as a leader, you model healthy habits to cope better during challenging times.

>> Identify the healthy behaviour you want to implement

>> Identify the barriers to implementing and continuing this behaviour

>> Make a plan to overcome those barriers.

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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The role of leaders

There is no 'one-size-fits-all" approach to what to do when someone requires help and support managing their mental health.

As a manager you play an important role in helping to create a supportive and open environment where employees feel able to discuss their mental health and wellbeing in confidence and without judgement. Common sense and empathy are key.

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. Stigma is one explanation, and it's also possible sometimes people do not relate their symptoms with ill health. There is also fear of discrimination, losing your job and being overlooked for career progression.

Myths / misconceptions

- It is all in your head
- It will resolve on its own
- People should just be strong
- It is a sign of a weakness
- It only affects certain races/ethnic groups/age 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

Signs to look out for

Changing behaviour is often the first sign for you to notice that a person 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
- An employee who is usually punctual, arriving late

- 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 issues.

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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.

How to support at work: Watch this 5 min video on the effect of the workplace on depression.

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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

How can you help?

1. Stay with the person and keep them calm.
2. Move the person to a quiet place.
3. Ask what the person needs.
4. Speak to the person in short, simple sentences.
5. Be predictable, and avoid surprises.
6. Help the person focus – use the 3-3-3 method
7. 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 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 employee health, productivity, decision making, morale, security and safety. Spotting signs of potential issues in the workplace is key.

Signs of employees who may be abusing drugs or alcohol may show in inappropriate behaviour, performance challenges, absenteeism and even workplace accidents. It may also affect employee mental wellbeing.

These employees also tend to experience problems in their personal lives including emotional and financial strain.

- 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
- History is an important contributor. 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 an employee who is suicidal, emergency medical care should be sought as a matter of urgency. You can call the 24h Healthy Company helpline for assistance (0800 320 420).

Once the employee is receiving the appropriate clinical care, please refer all these staff members to the Employee Wellness team before they return to work.

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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
- Refer to the Wellness team

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

- Create a psychologically safe environment
- Build trust and open lines of communication
- Identify and resolve any problems early

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

- Refer to the Wellness team as soon as possible
- Work with the Wellness team to find the best way to support the employee while maintaining business needs
- Respect confidentiality

Severe diagnosis

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

- Normalise conversations around their mental health condition
- Be mindful of any behavioural or work performance changes
- Make it easy for them to seek help

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How to support employees with **diagnosed 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 help to perpetuate the fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety. For some people it can feel hard opening up, so as a leader, creating a safe environment and making the first move to start the conversation can be key.

The principle is to treat someone who is absent because of a mental health condition in the same way you would treat anyone who is off sick - with honesty and empathy.

Setting the scene

- Creating a psychologically safe environment
- This is built and sustained over time
- Leading with empathy
- Frame conversations in a supportive, positive and open manner in the context of exploring issues and working out how you can help.
- Maintain confidentiality
- Discuss a requirement to share any information with the individual to maintain trust.
- If there is a requirement for more detailed clinical information, this can be obtained from the relevant clinicians in consultation with the Employee Wellness team.

Early intervention

Be aware that a sudden dip in performance or punctuality or increasing absenteeism might be signs of a deeper underlying problem.

Regular one on one discussions, coaching sessions, work planning sessions about progress are the kind of everyday management process that provide neutral and non-stigmatising opportunities to talk about any problems employees may be experiencing.

It is inappropriate and unhelpful to take a hard-line approach. You need to talk about the issue at an early stage, but ask questions in an open, exploratory, and non-judgemental way.

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How to support employees with **diagnosed mental health conditions** - conversations

Tips for starting these conversations:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- What support do you think might help?
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- I've noticed you've been arriving late recently, and I wondered if you're okay?
- You seem to be a bit down/ angry/ frustrated. Is everything okay?
- I've noticed the reports are late when they usually are not. Is everything okay?
- Have you spoken to your GP or looked for help anywhere else?

What not to say!

- You're clearly struggling. What's up?
- What do you expect me to do about it?
- Everyone else is in the same boat and they're okay. Why aren't you?
- Why can't you just get your act together?
- Who do you expect to pick up all the work?
- Your performance is really unacceptable right now – what's going on?
- No one ever said life was fair?

Listening in a non-judgemental way requires three key attributes:

- Acceptance
- Genuineness
- Empathy

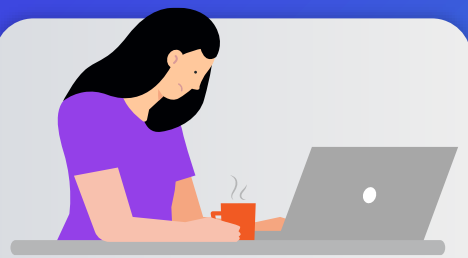
Consider why they might be reluctant to talk:

- Are they worried about being judged, or that they might lose their job?
- Is it really safe to be open with you?
- Will you treat any disclosures they make empathetically and positively?
- Previous experiences in the department and possible perceptions
- Deal with hurtful gossip or bullying promptly and effectively.

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

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

How to support employees with **diagnosed mental health conditions** - Practical support



Work performance challenges

When a mental health condition is not well managed, it can influence an employee's ability to perform all their work duties optimally.

Addressing matters in a reasonable way will assist in reducing the stress for both the employee as well as the leader.

Things to Remember

- A lack of contact or involvement can make employees feel less valued. If there is little or no communication, misunderstandings and barriers can quickly arise.
- The principle is to treat someone who is absent because of a mental health condition in the same way you would treat anyone who is off sick - with honesty and empathy.
- People may request no contact because they feel anxious or ashamed about the way that they feel and are behaving – be sensitive in your approach
- If they are too unwell to be contacted directly, try to communicate with a next of kin.
- Don't put pressure on the person to divulge personal or medical information. It is up to them whether they disclose.

Where to start – access to clinical care?

- Start by asking an employee if they are already seeing a clinician or taking treatment. If so, it might be ideal for them to engage with this provider.
- If the employee is not accessing any clinical care at present, it might be worth encouraging them to make an appointment with their regular GP. If they don't have a regular GP, referral to a premier plus GP would be good.
- A referral to Healthy Company could be helpful to provide initial containment and counselling support. Further psychological support might be indicated and would be provided via their medical aid benefits.

Leave management:

- Employees can use their allocated sick leave when booked off by their treating clinician.
- If sick leave is insufficient, discuss with the employee if they would like to use any available annual leave.
- Where leave balances become depleted, this can be discussed with the Employee Wellness team to determine if Group Life benefits could be applicable or for recommendations on any special arrangements.

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Return to **work**

Most people who experience an episode of distress or mental ill health recover completely and can resume work successfully. Effective planning by the employee and leader, will increase the likelihood of this happening, as will supporting and monitoring the employee during the early stages of their return. Managing someone's mental health and employment, including their recovery, typically involves collaboration between the manager, HR, Wellness and the GP / clinical team.

- Ideally, set up a discussion with the employee before return or on the day of return to work
- Depending on the severity and type of diagnosis and the length of absence, involve the Wellness team in planning for the return to work.
- Consider possible triggers in developing a return-to-work plan
- Clinical steer from the relevant treating providers might be required in developing the plan. The wellness team can assist in obtaining and interpreting the clinical information.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Most adjustments are based on “common sense” following a frank and open discussion between yourself and the employee about what might be helpful and possible.

Every 'reasonable adjustment' is unique to the individual's needs and abilities and what the business can accommodate.

Accommodations should be agreed upon, not imposed, and they must work for everyone - the employee, the business, and the rest of the team.

Be creative and practical.

Some mental health conditions can be episodic, so it might be better to agree certain adjustments on an ad hoc basis.

Ongoing and open communication about progress, what works and what doesn’t is essential.

You might get questions from the team about why one person works differently. Plan with the employee what they want the rest of the team to know and how you will both deal with any questions.

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