May is **Mental Health Month** Toolkit
Elevating Mental Health and Well-being for a Resilient Workplace

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION | CENTER FOR **WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health is always important, but with the lingering effects of the pandemic and a shift in "returning to normal," it is at the top of the priority list. This toolkit provides tips and resources for supporting mental health and well-being at work.

Promoting Resiliency for People and the Organization

Excessive stress strains physical and mental health. Building and promoting resilience helps employees manage stress, thrive in a competitive job market, and address workplace conflicts and other challenges on the job. Improving resilience in the workplace is also associated with greater job satisfaction, engagement, happiness at work, commitment to the organization, and better overall health.

How can you support and promote resilience in your workplace?

• Offer and promote opportunities to create professional networks of support, by scheduling or sponsoring networking events, offering diversity enrichment opportunities, and creating mentorship programs.

• Encourage and offer opportunities for mindfulness, meditation, and other spiritual practices. You might invite a mindfulness leader to present on the value of the practice and then lead a 15-minute mindfulness break during the workday.

• Work with leaders and managers on modeling healthy behavior and responses to work challenges by refocusing reactions to the positive and what's been learned from the situation and prioritizing learning from past mistakes in moving forward.

• Create a safe work environment that allows people to set reasonable work hour limits, prioritize sleep and physical health, and encourage people to access mental health support when it's needed.

• Acknowledge and support people's strengths and be proactive about validating and celebrating employee "wins" to bolster self-confidence.

Learn more about resiliency, visit the following resources from the Center for Workplace Mental Health:

• Resilience: A Strong Workforce Needs It

• The Value of Resiliency

Promoting Self-Care

Maintaining a work-life balance and prioritizing mental health are essential to our overall well-being. They also impact performance and productivity. Unfortunately, with much of the world at home during the pandemic, the lines between home and work are blurred. The need to take a break and engage in stress reducing activities is more important than ever. Here are every day practical tips to promote and share with employees to encourage self-care:

1. Keep a regular schedule with periodic breaks and set healthy boundaries with work hours.

2. Stay connected with family, friends, and support systems using technology or safe in-person gatherings.

3. Keep your immune system strong by getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and maintaining a balanced diet.

4. Prioritize personal hygiene because the way you look impacts the way that you feel which in turn impacts performance.

5. Exercise and stay active by taking walks outside for fresh air, maintain your fitness routine.

To learn more about self-care, visit the following resource from the Center for Workplace Mental Health:

• Working Remotely During COVID-19: Your Mental Health and Well-Being
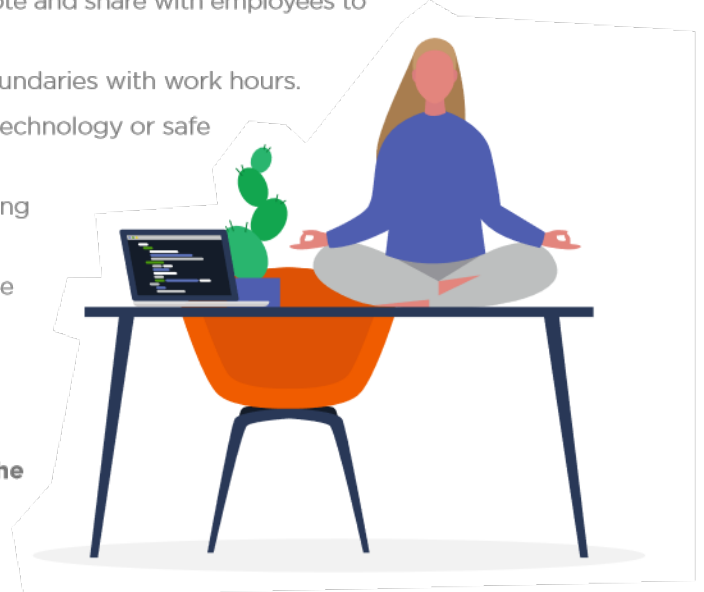
Addressing Isolation and Loneliness

Feeling lonely or isolated was on the rise before the pandemic. More than 40% of American adults report experiencing loneliness, and despite spending one-third of the day at work, many do not consider co-workers to be friends, a sentiment that has negative implications on both individual and team performance. While employers have been leveraging technology and innovative ways to address the growing concern of loneliness in the workplace, more can be done to ensure that employees feel connected and part of the team.

Employers can make a difference in addressing workplace loneliness by:

1. Evaluating the organization's current state of social connection through a pulse survey that will gauge employee thoughts on whether they feel valued, if the organizational culture supports connectedness, and what the organization can do better to support feelings of community.

2. Understanding and building high-quality relationships cross-functionally and at all levels of seniority. This can be done during the onboarding process by pairing new hires with a buddy and/or someone at a higher level within the organization that can act as a mentor.

3. Strengthening social connections by sponsoring or hosting organization-wide non-work-related activities like book clubs, walking clubs, escape rooms, or trivia nights.

4. Promoting programs and activities that highlight the importance of creating healthy work relationships, aiding in a cultural shift that creates a safe space for employees to ask for and seek help when needed.

5. Creating opportunities for employees to learn more about each other, including "lunch and learns" where employees can share personal experiences and interests outside of work.

Learn more about isolation and loneliness here:

• Mental Health Topic: Loneliness

• Virtual Town Hall: Addressing Loneliness and Isolation Through Connection and Creativity
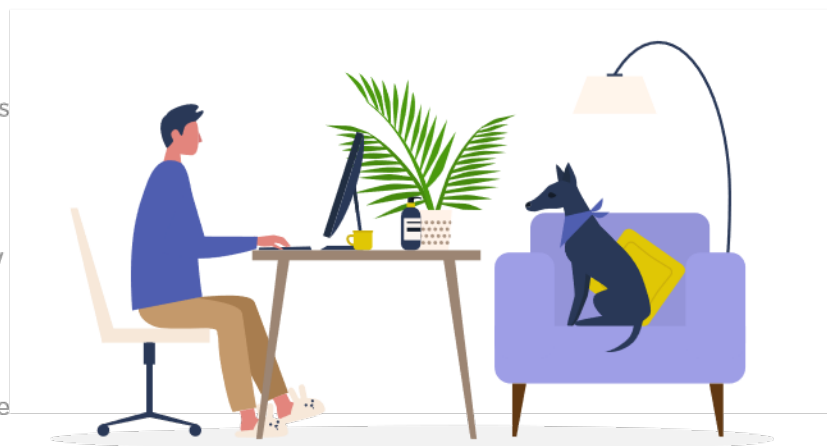
Mental Health Issues: More Common Than You Think

Mental health issues are more common than you think and impact the workplace in many ways, including performance, productivity, retention, disability rates, healthcare costs, and more. Educating employees about common mental health conditions, like depression and anxiety, through internal communication campaigns, trainings, and resource sharing can help reduce stigma, create and foster a psychologically safe space for people to share and thrive, and ultimately work toward changing the conversation in workplace mental health.

Consider sharing these 5 fast facts about mental health with your employees to start the conversation:

1. 1 in 5 adults experience a mental health condition, yet less than half receive care
   https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml

2. Within the global workforce, around 3 in 10 employees experience severe stress, anxiety, or depression.
   https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/2019/11/the-mounting-crisis-of-mental-health

3. Mental health conditions are more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease.

4. People with other chronic medical conditions are at a higher risk for depression and vice versa
   https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/chronic-illness-mental-health/index.shtml

5. Depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.
   https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression

To share more "fast facts" on depression, a common condition, check out these infographics:

- 5 Myths vs. Facts about Depression
- Depression: More Common Than You Think

Show Your Support

Providing support and elevating the conversation around employee mental health and well-being is the marker of a caring organization. As an employer, you can take key steps to support employee mental health and make a positive difference in their well-being by:

- **Planning a comprehensive workplace mental health initiative with Right Direction:**
  Right Direction is a high impact, turnkey initiative that raises awareness about depression and other mental health conditions and encourages help-seeking behaviors. Right Direction helps organizations create a healthier and more engaged workforce and communicates to individuals that "you are not alone."

  CLICK HERE **to check out Right Direction's template posters and fact sheets that you can customize for your organization.**

- **Using targeted communications (like the proposed model language below) to let your employees know**

you care about their mental health, make mental health more visible, and keep employees updated on the benefits your organization provides:

To Employees:

We understand that these are challenging times. You may be finding the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic impacting your mental health and well-being. Taking care of both your physical and mental health right now is imperative. If you or a loved one think you may need extra support – which many of us do right now, please connect with available resources. These include our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which can connect you with services and supports including (**add contact information for your organization's EAP). Our healthcare benefits also include mental health coverage should you or a family member need it. Getting help when you need it is a sign of strength. Please remember, you are not alone, we are all in this together.

• Providing training, like the Center for Workplace Mental Health's **Notice. Talk. Act.® *at Work***, to people managers to better equip them to:

  o **NOTICE** potential signs of mental health concerns,

  o **TALK** with a person about these concerns, and

  o **ACT** to connect a person with services and supports.

Trainings like NTA at Work strengthen employees' knowledge of the impact of mental health on the workplace. **Interested in learning more about NTA at Work? Fill out our form to learn about implementing the training at your organization.**

• Adopting a "you are not alone" strategy:
Bringing in speakers with lived mental health experience helps to reduce stigma around mental health and allows your workforce to see that people with mental health conditions can – and do – thrive in the workplace. To find a speaker for your organization, reach out to organizations like The Stability Network and The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) that offer speakers on the topic of mental health.

CLICK HERE to view the Center for Workplace Mental Health's Virtual Town Hall, Changing the Conversation in Workplace Mental Health, that features three of The Stability Network's speakers.