



SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing - Mental Health in the Workplace

Topic Overview	Learning Objectives
<p>Mental health issues are common in the workplace, but rarely talked about and often stigmatized. In light of COVID-19, it is increasingly imperative that employers are responsive to and supportive of mental health in the workplace. This lesson covers many aspects of mental health in the workplace, such as burnout, cognitive diversity, accommodation, and how managers and leaders can support their employees and destigmatize the conversation around mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the importance and benefits of prioritizing mental health in the workplace • Describe the cost of not addressing mental health (i.e. loss of productivity, employee retention, presenteeism etc.) • Discuss how leaders can destigmatize mental health in the workplace • Design a survey to gauge employees wellbeing
Resource Summary	
<p><i>Invisible Diversity in the Workplace: Capabilities, Challenges, and Strategies.</i> (2018). One Mind at Work. https://onemindatwork.org/report/</p> <p><u>Summary:</u> This paper provides a guide for employers to promote cognitive diversity in the workplace, referring to it as “invisible diversity.” There is growing evidence that neuro-diverse individuals (people with autism, dyslexia, and ADHD) or mental health conditions have unique skills and capabilities, which are often overlooked in the workplace. This paper aims to reduce the barriers and stigmatization around cognitive diversity in the workplace</p>	
<p>Weiss, L. (2020, October 20). <i>Burnout From an Organizational Perspective.</i> Stanford Social Innovation Review. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/burnout_from_an_organizational_perspective</p> <p><u>Summary:</u> This article reviews the signs and causes of burnout from a systems perspective. Weiss discusses the costs and risks of burnout (physical, economic, and social costs) resulting from overwork and insufficient resources. Lastly, they discuss how to create a burnout shield, including managerial behaviour, fairness and transparency, health entrepreneurs, and focusing on team resilience.</p>	
<p>Greenwood, K. & Krol, N. (2020, August 7). <i>8 Ways Managers Can Support Employees’ Mental Health.</i> Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2020/08/8-ways-managers-can-support-employees-mental-health</p> <p><u>Summary:</u> This article discusses the ways leaders can support employees’ mental health, including: displaying vulnerability, modeling healthy behaviours, creating a culture of connectivity, flexibility and inclusion, communication, increased training, modifying policies and practices, and measuring wellness.</p>	
<p>Mental health, accommodation, and the workplace (No. 2) [Audio podcast episode]. (2019, December). In <i>HRD Talk</i>. Human Resource Director Canada. https://soundcloud.com/user-67625283/episode-2-december-2019-mental-health-accommodation-and-the-workplace</p>	



Summary: Dr. Bill Howatt, Chief of Research, The Conference Board of Canada, shares his personal experience with mental health and accommodation. He discusses training resiliency and psychological safety, the different types of stigma, and how corporations can help individuals thrive.

Villegas, S. (2021, January 6). *Destigmatizing Mental Health In The Workplace Starts At The Top*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/01/06/destigmatizing-mental-health-in-the-workplace-starts-at-the-top/?sh=68b7052835c4>

Summary: Villegas discusses the steps leaders need to take to destigmatize mental health in the workplace – starting with opening up the conversation from the top down. A paradigmatic shift in corporate culture is required, from viewing mental health as a “weakness” to empathetic and compassionate leadership. Transparent and honest communication is required for employee success, which is only achieved if mental health is prioritized by leadership.

Discussion and Exam Questions

1. What is cognitive diversity (invisible diversity)?
2. What are common barriers to invisible diversity in the workplace? Provide examples (i.e. hiring process, office setting, measuring success metrics etc.).
3. How can managers support the mental health of employees?
4. Why should managers care about mental health? (answers: it’s the right thing to do, financial costs, good for business, recruitment and retention, and it saves peoples lives)

Additional Resources

[Combat Mental Health Stigma with a Shift Towards People-First Language](#)
[Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#)
[Mental Health - Having Courageous Conversations](#)
[What is psychological safety?](#)

Related Business Topics

- Leadership
- Mental health in the workplace
- Corporate culture
- Sustainable individual and team performance
- Diversity and inclusion
- Strategic HR

Related Sustainable Development Goals Targets

[SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages](#)

3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.



3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

Suggested In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Burnout Discussion

Facilitate a class discussion based on the following scenario.

As a manager, you have noticed early signs of burnout from one of your star employees, Richard. Richard has always been highly productive and produced high quality work, but in the past few weeks he has seemed off. He has shown signs of reduced efficiency and energy, his work has had more errors than usual, and he has displayed increase irritability in insignificant situations. Concerned that there may be a deeper issue, you know you need to act sooner than later.

Based on the Greenwood and Krol article, *8 Ways Managers Can Support Employee's Mental Health*, how should you respond to the situation? Discuss how you would you approach talking to Richard and the best way to offer support.

Activity 2: Pulse Survey

You are a manager at a tech company that has just transitioned to working remotely due to COVID-19. The transition has gone smoothly, productivity is up and targets met, but you want to check on your team to see how they are handling the shift emotionally and mentally. Create a short mental health pulse survey to send to your employees to gauge their wellbeing and determine how you can best support them through this challenging time.

A pulse survey is a short and easy-to-complete set of questions to get a timely and accurate snapshot of employee's views towards work. The goal of the survey is to determine employees' mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing, any struggles they are facing, and how the organization can better support them. More information on pulse surveys can be found [here](#).