

Mental Health Awareness Guide

Providing you with a brief recap of the following videos:

- ✓ What is mental health?
- ✓ Mental health stigma
- ✓ Thoughts, beliefs and feelings
- ✓ What can you do to support?



Defining Mental Health

Good mental health is defined by the World Health Organisation as:

“A state of wellbeing in which an individual **realises** his or her **own potential**, can cope with the **normal stresses** of life, can **work productively** and fruitfully and is **able to contribute** to their community.”



Prevalence of poor mental health

Unfortunately, poor mental health is prevalent. Stats say that

1 in 4 of us will experience a mental health issue at some point throughout our lifetime.

But these numbers only include those who voice their experiences.

Given the numbers affected, it is very possible that people around you might be struggling with their mental health. **How might you spot poor mental health?**

There are many different signs.

But those struggling could display some of the following characteristics:

- low mood
- changes in mood
- being anxious
- irritability
- tearfulness
- finding it difficult to manage everyday life for example, preparing food or washing
- difficulty concentrating or remembering things
- sleeping less or too much
- becoming suspicious or paranoid
- becoming isolated and withdrawn
- suicidal thoughts

Another way to spot the signs of poor mental health is to just **trust your gut when something seems unusual.**



Stigma

Principally, stigma is about **misinformation**, and education is key to reducing it. Attending training/watching videos, such as these ones, can be helpful for you to **gain a better understanding** in the future.

The prevalence shows that **it's normal to sometimes experience poor mental health**. It can sometimes be debilitating and require time away from work.

Mental health may be less appreciated because it's not visible. We should always try to approach mental health in the same way we do with our physical health. Through **understanding** it's importance, **being sensitive** towards anyone who is struggling, and giving it the same level of **care and attention**.

Remember, the statistics.

It's possible that there will be some people around us who are struggling with their mental health or have done at some point during their lives. Just because we can't see it, it doesn't mean they're not experiencing those struggles right now or haven't in the past. Understand that **what you see on the surface doesn't always reflect a complete story**.



Cognitive principle

It's what we do with our thoughts that affects our mood and our mood affects our behaviour.

When someone is struggling with their mental health, how they might interpret information can change.

A simple comment can spiral into concern and worry.



In these circumstances, **talking can really help.** There are always people you can turn to. This could be a friend, colleague, manager, or your workplace might have an employee assistance programme.



How you can help if someone is struggling

If you think someone might be struggling, it can be difficult to know what you can do to support. We often avoid when we're unsure, which doesn't do anything to help the person in need.



Supporting someone going through a difficult time can be tough on you too.

If it's affected your wellbeing, make sure you take the time speak to someone you feel comfortable with as well.

Here are some do's and don'ts...

✓ Do

- ✓ Listen patiently, ask open questions, let them cry.
- ✓ Show an interest in their feelings and beliefs and decide what to tell friends and/or colleagues.
- ✓ Also think about and discuss which support services may be helpful to them.

✗ Don't

- ✗ Make assumptions, try to 'jolly the person up', or make the situation light-hearted – and don't be afraid to take action if needed.
- ✗ It's also important not to keep secrets if the person doesn't feel safe or you think the situation is reaching a crisis point.
- ✗ Don't tell them to stop crying and don't rush to take action.
- ✗ Avoid confirming or denying any irrational thoughts and don't try to solve their problems for them.

Improve knowledge, recognise the impact, know what you can do.

- ✓ Knowledge and understanding helps us work towards breaking down the stigma, becoming comfortable with mental health, knowing what you can do and in turn, act with confidence.
- ✓ The overriding principle here is understanding what might be going on in people's heads raises awareness more than anything else.
- ✓ Bring it back to work, appreciate how mental health can impact work.



Importantly,
don't be afraid
to talk
about
mental health.



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GR06560 09/2022 REG015 (62236)