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National Alliance on Mental Illness

MINNESOTA

Understanding Mental Illnesses in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

- Increase your understanding of mental illnesses
- Understand why disclosure is difficult
- Learn about accommodations
- Increase your ability to respond appropriately

Mental Health

State of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of every day life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

- World Health Organization

Mental Illnesses

- Disrupt a person's thinking, feelings, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning
- Treatable medical conditions
- Biological in nature, affects brain structure & chemistry
- Causes include genetics, environmental, negative life experiences

Mental Illnesses – Very Common

- 1 in 5 adults (1 in 10 for serious)
- 1 in 5 children
- Specifically:
 - Depression (7%)
 - Bipolar Disorder (3%)
 - Schizophrenia (1%)
 - Anxiety (18%)

Major Illnesses

- Major depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Anxiety and panic disorders
- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Major Depression

- Persistently sad, irritable
- Changes in sleep, energy, appetite
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering
- Physical slowing or agitation
- Lack of interest or pleasure
- Headaches, stomach aches

Bipolar Disorder

- Elated, happy mood or an irritable, angry, unpleasant mood
- Increased physical and mental activity and energy, few hours of sleep
- Racing thoughts, risk taking, impulsivity
- Increased talking, more rapid speech than normal

Anxiety and Panic Disorders

- Pounding heart, sweating, trembling, dizzy, short of breath, numbness, chills
- Difficulty concentrating, fatigue, irritable, edginess
- Phobias – fear of flying, close spaces, social
- OCD – obsessions & compulsions

PTSD

- Re-experience – flashbacks
- Avoidance – avoiding places/emotions associated with event, detached, decreased interest, hopelessness
- Increased arousal – irritability, anger, can't concentrate, very alert, jumpy

Mental Illnesses & Workplaces

- Employees may have a mental illness
- Employees may have a family member with a mental illness
- Clients or customers may have a mental illness

**You want to be able to
respond and react appropriately**

When It's Employees

- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism
- 27 lost work days per year, 9 to sick days and 18 to lost productivity
- Increased health care costs
- Leading cause of short-term and long-term disability

When It's Employees' Families

- Absenteeism – take to appointments, meetings with schools, etc.
- Presenteeism – worry, frequent phone calls
- Emotional and financial stress

Employers See Benefits

- Employers with proactive mental health programs saw financial benefits
- Supporting treatment results in higher productivity and motivation and reduced absenteeism
- Employers see increased productivity

Employers See Benefits

- Health insurance cost containment
- Loyalty and retention
- More efficient workplace practices and policies
- Better workplace relations
- Diversity, acceptance, and respect in the workplace

How to Help Employees

- Address stigma in the workplace
- Understand the symptoms that can interfere with performance
- Create a mentally health workplace
- Learn about accommodations

Stigma in the Workplace

- May impact a person's decision to disclose to supervisor – raises, promotions, etc.
- May impact access to treatment and thus negative impact on quality of work
- May impact their ability to cope with a family member's mental illness

How We Visualize Mental Illnesses

- Close your eyes
- Picture a typical person with a mental illness
- What is their age? What do they look like? What are they doing?

Negative Images



- Older
- Homeless
- Institutionalized
- Disheveled
- Scary looking
- Sad



How We Talk about Mental Illnesses

Yell out or write down five slang words to describe mental illnesses

Common Adjectives

Crazy

Nuts

Insane

Wacko

Psycho

Demented

Deranged

Mad

Cracked

Kookie

Loony

Maniac

Berserk

Daft

Exercise

- Write down five slang words to describe cancer
- Write down five slang words to describe heart disease

Words in the Workplace

- That guy is nuts
- Oh sure, I'm sad sometimes too
- Why is she getting special treatment? – I don't see a disability
- I don't want to promote him – he has bipolar disorder, he is unstable
- The mentally ill should be locked up

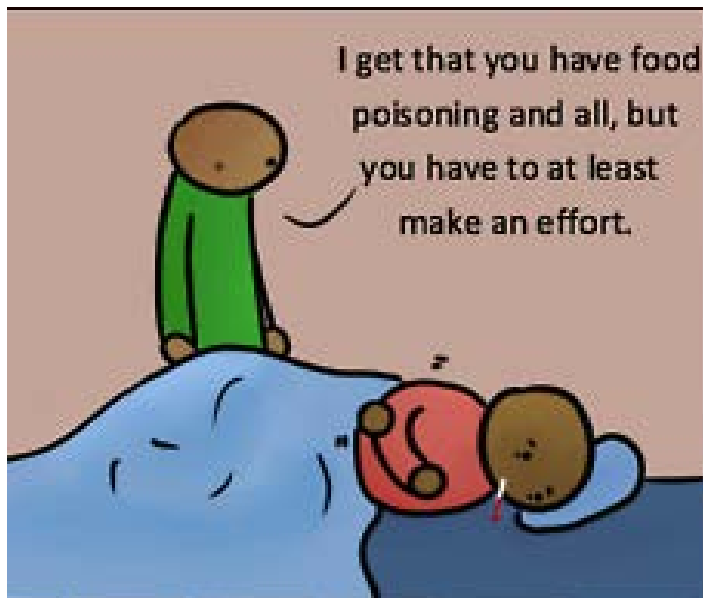
How We Think About Mental Illnesses

- Afraid
- Rudderless
- Dangerous
- Weak
- Selfish
- Lazy
- Irrational
- Incompetent
- Irresponsible
- Caused their illness
- Violent

Characteristics of People with Other Illnesses

- Courageous
- Determined
- Inspirational
- Generous
- Nonviolent

If Physical Illnesses were Treated Like Mental Illnesses



If Physical Illnesses were Treated Like Mental Illnesses



How the Media Portrays Mental Illnesses

- People who watch a lot of television avoid people with schizophrenia
- People with mental illnesses found to be nearly 10 times more violent than other television characters and 10 to 20 times more violent (during a two week sample) than in reality

Freek Energy Drinks – Evil Energy



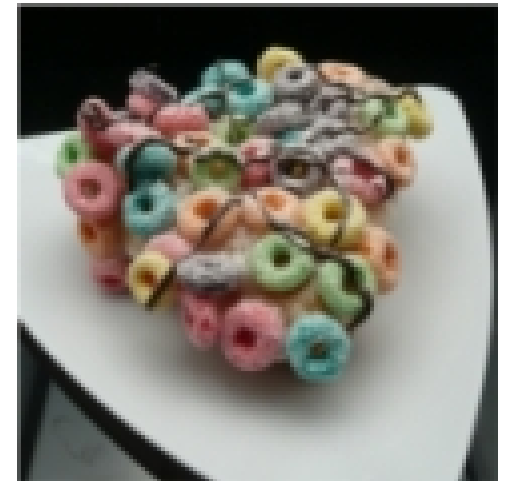
Psycho Donuts



Bipolar



Cocoa marbles



Cereal killer

Symptoms in the Workplace

- A mental illness alone does not lead to poor work
- An untreated or undertreated mental illness can lead to symptoms that interfere with work

Symptoms in the Workplace

- Overly emotional, bursting into tears
- Angry
- Difficulty concentrating, memory issues
- Anxious, suspicious
- Difficulty screening out stimuli
- Consistent tardiness or absences

Symptoms in the Workplace

- Changes in stamina or pace
- Decreased productivity
- Reduced interest in one's work
- Difficulty handling time pressures, stress, schedules & multiple tasks
- Physical problems, headache, stomach ache, racing heart, back pain

Symptoms in the Workplace

- Excuses for missed deadlines or poor work, increased accidents
- Lack of cooperation or inability to work with other employees
- Misinterpreting social cues or work culture
- Poor response to change or feedback

Medication Side Effects

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Nervousness
- Headaches
- Shakiness
- Confusion
- Weight gain
- Dry mouth

What Employers Can Do

- Implement practices that support mental health
 - Stress reducing activities
 - Support physical exercise
 - Promote work/life balance
- Promote health and wellness programs
- Promote EAP/call-line thru health plan

What Employers Can Do

- Develop a culture that accepts and treats mental illnesses as any other illness
- Put out information about mental illnesses, include in company newsletter
- Join the Make It OK campaign
- Provide educational sessions, conduct free depression screenings

Make it a Safe Environment to Disclose to Supervisor

- Empathy and compassion
- Positive response
- Willing to work with employee
- Make it okay to ask for time off to obtain the help they need

Remember Mental Illnesses are covered under the ADA

Disclosure

- Plain English, doesn't require diagnosis
- Have a medical condition that requires more frequent breaks
- Need time off or a leave of absence due to stress, depression
- Take medication that makes it hard to get up early in the morning

The Conversation Between Employee and Supervisor

- I've noticed...(insert behavior)
- How can I help you address these issues?
- Can we follow up in a week?
- I'm sorry to hear that, it must be tough, do you know about our EAP programs?

Accommodations

There are many accommodations that can be made to assist an employee who is experiencing a mental illness and to an employee who is returning to work. Be sure to involve the employee in developing them.

Think about how would you accommodate for other illnesses with similar symptoms.

Attendance

- Flexible scheduling, especially later starting time
- Modified break schedules
- Leave for therapy appointments
- Work from home, flex space
- Part-time, job sharing

Concentration

- Reduce distractions – sound panels, white noise, ear buds, music, organizers to reduce clutter
- Increase natural lighting, use full spectrum lighting
- Allow lamps instead of fluorescent lights which make noise

Concentration

- Modify way instructions and feedback are given, written versus auditory or tape record instructions
- Restructure job temporarily, focus on essential functions
- Assign one task at a time
- Divide larger tasks into smaller ones

Concentration

- Provide written checklists
- Use color coding schemes to prioritize tasks
- Use memory aids, email applications
- Use calendars with automatic reminders
- Allow extra time to learn tasks

Emotions

- Encourage use of stress management techniques
- Allow presence of a support animal
- Allow telephone calls to people who provide support
- Refer to EAP

Fatigue

- Flexible scheduling
- Goal oriented work load
- Reduce workplace stress
- Allow for walks outside
- Provide a place for a rest period

Co-worker Interaction

- Encourage employee to walk away from frustrating situations
- Provide opportunities for privacy
- Provide mental illness awareness training to coworkers and supervisors
- Meet regularly

When It's a Family Member

- Treat like other illnesses - may need time off to take loved one to treatment
- Refer to EAP, etc.
- Refer to NAMI classes and support groups

What Co-Workers Can Do

- It's not appropriate to try to diagnose co-worker
- Some work cultures don't encourage hot dishes, cards, etc. Follow your culture
- If someone does disclose to you respond with empathy – sorry to hear that, how can I help?

What Co-Workers Can do

- Arm yourself with facts
- Listen
- Demonstrate support in little ways
- Don't make assumptions about someone's mental health
- Promote your organization's commitment to staff well-being

What Employees Can Do

- Develop a routine, especially for sleep
- Don't forget physical health
- Stay organized
- Make time for yourself
- Utilize resources
- Consider changes in work environment
- Understand nothing is perfect

Think About Hiring People

- People with serious mental illnesses have the highest unemployment rate – 85%
- Work is an evidence-based practice, it helps people recover
- IPS (Individual Placement & Supports) is an effective program that helps the employee and employer

IPS

- Focus on Competitive Employment
- Integration of Rehabilitation and Mental Health Services
- Attention to Client Preferences
- Rapid Job Search
- Time-Unlimited and Individualized Support

NAMI Minnesota's Mission

NAMI Minnesota's mission is to champion justice, dignity, and respect for all people affected by mental illnesses. Through education, advocacy, and support, we strive to eliminate the pervasive stigma of mental illnesses, affect positive changes in the mental health system, and increase the public and professional understanding of mental illness.

Questions?

What We Do

- Education classes, booklets and fact sheets
- Suicide prevention
- Support groups, Helpline
- Public awareness presentations
- Legislative advocacy
- NAMIWalks

Support NAMI Minnesota

- Advocate for a better Mental Health System
- Attend an event
- Sign up for a newsletter
- Join an affiliate
- Be a sponsor
- Volunteer
- Become a donor

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