

# SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS DURING COVID-19



## REDUCE STIGMA

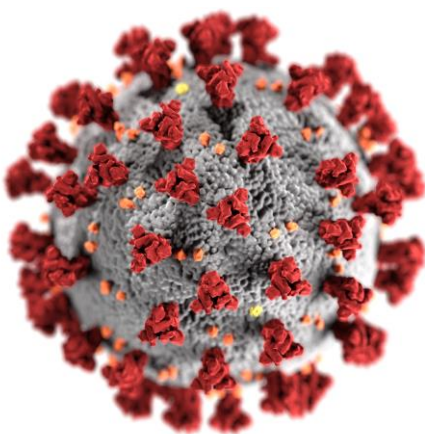
Let people know it's normal to feel anxiety, loneliness, stress, exhaustion and depression.

Talk about your own experiences to help normalize the discussion about how traumatic it can be for you.

Be honest. Be vulnerable.

Do not pretend that this situation is normal, it's not.

Express your difficulties and what you are doing to help manage the stress and anxiety.



## LET OTHERS TALK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES

- Allow time for people to check in at the beginning of meetings
- Allow the team to express concerns and offer help

## NORMALIZE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS AND TRAUMA

- This is a world wide “natural disaster”- There are symptoms that are expected and normal in response – similar to an earthquake or hurricane but drawn out, realizing the recovery will take months.
  - Short term traumatic stress is experienced by almost everyone and people express it in different ways. Be empathic, validate their emotions.
  - A long term disasters increase the likelihood of a traumatic stress reaction. Seek professional guidance.
- Chronic stress responses occur in ~9% of people resulting in a need for medical/mental health intervention.
- Social isolation can be destructive to the human mind. It is a primary risk factor for depression.
  - Offer opportunities for online social interaction- not all business, all the time
  - Be aware if performance drops. This may be a sign that an employee is suffering from traumatic stress or the effects of social isolation\.

## CHECK IN WITH EMPLOYEES OFTEN – BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND IN GROUPS

### MANAGE FEAR

- Know the facts: Seeking practical, credible information at specific times of the day: Don't watch the news all day everyday, seek out information at regular intervals from trusted sources:
  - World Health Organization
  - CDC or other national authority

- See the positives – Talk about the number of recoveries and the purpose of quarantine
- Stay informed as to restrictions and regulations from all governments so that you can help your employees navigate their jobs within the parameters of their location.
- Let people know that if they are ill, or a family member gets sick, their job is secure.
  - Be open and encouraging to employees to care for family members and themselves
  - Reassurances to all staff will help ease anxiety of balancing work and home life

## ENCOURAGE TEAM WORK

- Encourage employees to check in with each other often - not just for purposes of business.
- We are all in this together – encourage employees to help each other outside of work

## MAINTAIN A ROUTINE

- Keep your daily routines as much as possible.
  - Having continuity in work with a schedule can help and bring a sense of normalacy
- Express to staff their purpose in their job and how it is helping their community/government/agencies respond to the situation
  - Linking the mission of the customer to how we help gives purpose to their work
  - Having a schedule helps with the social isolation and the forced time at home.
- Encourage breaks in the work day
  - Time for exercise
  - Time for heading outdoors
  - Meditation/Yoga
  - Managers can even introduce stress coping mechanisms such as breathing techniques or a short meditation

## KNOW YOUR COMPANY RESOURCES



- Do you have a current policy on COVID 19 ?
- Do you have a policy within your company on how to respond to a mental health emergency with an employee?
- Do you know the mental health support numbers in the areas your employees work?
  - E.g. suicide hotline in the U.S. – 1-800-273-8255
  - There are online therapists in every state
  - Stay connected with your social and family networks via technology.

## Contact Us

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