

# Mental Illnesses in the Workplace



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## FOR EMPLOYERS:

### What to look for:

- ◆ Tardiness, absences
- ◆ Lack of cooperation, can't work with others
- ◆ Decreased productivity, frequent accidents, difficulty screening out stimuli
- ◆ Physical complaints such as stomach aches, pain, fatigue
- ◆ Difficulty concentrating, remembering things
- ◆ Making excuses for poor work or missed deadlines
- ◆ Anger, overly emotional, anxious
- ◆ Reduced interest in one's work
- ◆ Difficulty handling stress, schedules, multiple tasks
- ◆ Willingness to take on extra work, excessive energy, inappropriate work goals
- ◆ Risk-taking, out of control behaviors, sudden weight changes

### What to do:

- ◆ Ask open ended questions – What has your day been like? How are things going? Tell me about your workload
- ◆ Listen nonjudgmentally
- ◆ Give reassurance and information (e.g., FMLA)
- ◆ Encourage them to seek help, refer them to resources available at your organization
- ◆ Follow up with them

## FOR EMPLOYEES:

### How to take care of yourself:

- ◆ Pay attention to diet, exercise and sleep
- ◆ Avoid or limit alcohol, tobacco, other drugs
- ◆ Engage in favorite hobby or activity
- ◆ Be with friends, connect with others
- ◆ Take time to recharge batteries
- ◆ Spend time in nature
- ◆ Reduce stress
- ◆ Consider adjusting schedule, if possible

### Seek help if you need to:

- ◆ Reach out to someone you trust – family, friend, faith leader
- ◆ Contact your primary care physician or employee assistance program
- ◆ Be aware of your rights (e.g., ADA, FMLA)

### Suicidal behavior:

#### *What it might look like—*

- ◆ Talking about it, a preoccupation with death
- ◆ No hope for the future, making final arrangements, giving away possessions
- ◆ Self-loathing, unexplained anger
- ◆ Social isolation, changes in hygiene or appearance
- ◆ Alcohol or drug abuse

#### *What you can do as a co-worker—*

- ◆ Express empathy, offer hope
- ◆ Ask about it (don't worry, it doesn't promote it)—do they have a plan?
- ◆ Listen nonjudgmentally
- ◆ Contact crisis team or 911



NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults with mental illnesses and their families. NAMI Minnesota offers education, support and advocacy.

