Course Summary & Takeaways

Key Skills for Managers Supporting Workplace Mental Health

MIND SHARE
PARTNERS

Lesson 1: Understand Mental Health & Stigma at Work

Mental health is a diverse spectrum of experiences. We're *all* on it.

Mental health challenges are increasingly the norm.

- **1 in 5 people** will manage a mental health condition each year,[1a] and up to 83% in their lifetime.[1b]
- **Executives and CEOs** were more likely to experience at least one mental health symptom.
  Individual contributors faced greater rates of depression.
  Managers and executives faced higher rates of burnout.3

Mental health is a product of many factors and intersects with our identities and experience.

- Mental health is a product of our **biology, psychology, and social environment**—and more.[10]
- Our experience of mental health is impacted by the **prevalence of mental health triggers** and by **the stigma we experience**, both of which are influenced by our identities and communities.
- **Consider:** How have your own unique identities and experiences played a factor in your experience of mental health and stigma?

Stigma can make it difficult to talk about or seek help.

- **8 in 10 employees** say **shame and fear** prevent them from getting treatment.
- **~40% of employees** feel **comfortable talking** about their mental health to their colleagues or manager.
- **Only half** of conversations about mental health at work were described as **positive.**

The work environment plays an integral role in our mental health.

- **What the research says**: 1
  - Job strain
  - Effort-reward imbalance
  - Low decision latitude
  - Job insecurity
  - Hostile work environment
  - Low social support
- **Factors exacerbated by the pandemic:**
  - Work-life boundaries
  - Caregiving challenges
  - Isolation
  - Racial injustice & reckoning
  - Physical health
  - Fear & uncertainty
- **Consider:** How does your work culture and environment impact your experience of mental health at work?

Investment in mental health pays off.

- **80% of people can live symptom-free** with the right treatment.6
- Investment in mental health training and awareness programs **yields 5:1 and 6:1 ROI** (U.S., U.K., Canada).7

Lesson 2: Creating Safety & Allyship for Mental Health

Remember your role...

- Be aware, curious, and supportive
- Check in with HR if a person discloses a mental health condition to you
- Support someone in how they engage at work and get their job done
- Contact emergency support in a crisis
- Create an inclusive working environment

Consider how you can cultivate...

Trust. *"I'm with you."*

- Be authentic.
- Share your story.
- Model healthy behaviors.

Inclusion. *"We're a team."*

- Say "mental health."
- Avoid stereotypes.
- Trust and educate yourself on other's experiences.

Advocacy. *"I care."*

- Share and be aware of company resources.
- Advocate and modeling healthy work practices.

Lesson 3: Strategies to Support Your Own Mental Health

Components of Care

Professional care

- Coaching or therapy
- Short, medium, or long-term
- Medication
- Emergency services

Self-led care

- Individual preventative and self-care practices
- Communities of support

Team care

- Manager support
- Team support
- Workplace adaptations

Emergency Mental Health Resources

- **U.S. Hotlines**
  - *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* | Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255); press 1 for Veteran's support
  - *Crisis Text Line* - Text "HELLO" to 741741
  - *Disaster Distress Helpline* - Call 1-800-985-5990
- **Global Lists**
  - List of local emergency numbers
  - List of suicide crisis lines

Adapt with flexible solutions and model mentally healthy choices.

- **Create adaptations** to proactively support a culture of mental health.
- **Explore flexibility** to create a sustainable way of work.
- **Iterate over time** as your needs change.
- **Model** mentally healthy choices

Note: *Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or mental health condition. The contents of this document are provided for informational purposes only and do not constitute medical advice.*

Inclusion Assessment

Complete this as a self-assessment first, and then introduce it to your wider team to create a culture of inclusion.

	Inclusion Aspect ("As a manager...")	Supporting Examples (if applicable)	Ways to Hold Ourselves Accountable
	E.g., I make my team feel comfortable about expressing different perspectives, even if they're different from my own.	*E.g., Currently not in place.*	*E.g., Proactively invite varying opinions and solutions in team meetings.*
#1	**Ask for feedback.** I ask my team for feedback on decisions that will influence us before they are made.		
#2	**Transparency.** I clearly communicate decisions and the reasoning behind them.		
#3	**Vulnerability.** I role model vulnerability (e.g., feeling stressed, not having all the answers, etc.).		
#4	**Unique talents.** I appreciate the unique talents that my team brings to the table.		
#5	**Authentic convos.** I take the time to engage in authentic conversations with others.		
#6	**Advocacy.** I help my team understand why inclusion is important for the wider group.		
#7	**Encourage.** I remind my team members that asking for support is normal and okay.		
#8	**Preferential treatment.** I am careful not to engage in preferential treatment of some group members over others.		
#9	**Callout discrimination.** I correct discriminatory or biased behaviors.		
#10	**Failure as learning.** I approach failures as opportunities for positive learning.		

Adapted from "Diversity & Inclusion at Work" worksheet from Cornell University's Diversity and Inclusion Certificate.

Mental Health Action Plan

Complete this exercise for yourself to be more aware of and proactive about supporting your own mental health.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR -OR- COMMON STRESSORS / SITUATIONS *"I should proactively care for my mental health when I notice…" E.g., "I start missing small to-do's."*

ADAPTATION OR SELF-CARE STRATEGY	PROACTIVE - or - REACTIVE	SOLUTION - or - RELIEF
Example: Taking a mental health day	*Reactive*	*Relief*

FORMAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS I'D LIKE TO EXPLORE | Example: Therapy or coaching.

To help your thinking, consider a specific time when you were struggling at work:

- What were the early **signs** you were struggling? *E.g., starting to feel overwhelmed*
- What would have been helpful **in that moment**? *E.g., taking a mental health day*
- What **proactive routines or strategies** could be implemented earlier that would help? *E.g., blocking work time*

Lesson 4: Tools for Compassionate Conversations

Set intentions.

Reflect

- How am I showing up to this conversation?
- In what ways am I being open, curious, and compassionate?
- What are my assumptions about this person or situation?
  E.g., Mental health as a spectrum, a product of many factors.

Plan ahead

- What language do I want to use?
- What do I hope to accomplish from this conversation?
- Who or what might be helpful resources in preparation for this conversation?

Be curious. Pair an observation statement with an open-ended question.

Example observation statements:

- "I've noticed that you've been online really late and really early this week."
- "Work and life have really blurred together recently."
- "You've seemed quieter lately."

Example questions:

- "How is this week going?"
- "How are you given everything that's going on?"
- "How can I support you?"

Navigate privacy:

- Do not force or put someone in a position where they feel like they have to disclose. Focus on the outcome, not the cause.
- Do not limit opportunities only because of someone's mental health condition
- Do what you can to create a supportive environment, regardless of whether someone has a condition or not.
- Partner with HR to learn about specific local regulations.

Listening

- **Be attentive.** Minimize distractions.
- **Restate & clarify.** "So it sounds like... "
- **Prompt to share more.** "You mentioned _____. Tell me more about that."
- **Be conscious of identity** and aware of your biases.

Validating

- **Give thanks.** "Thank you so much for sharing that story with me.
- **Affirm their experiences.** "Wow, that does sound like a lot for one person to handle."
- **Share if it would be helpful.** "When my father passed away last year, I had a really hard time focusing at work. I can only imagine what you are experiencing must also be really difficult."
- **Be mindful about solutions.** Don't try to 'fix' the problem. Provide supportive resources.
- **Communicate intent.** "I don't know what to say, but I want you to know that I hear you and want to support you."

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Lesson 5: Creating Flexible Solutions

Examples of Workplace Adaptations

Individuals

- **Reflect on your mental health,** work norms, and stressors.
- **Formalize boundaries.**
  - Blocked work time
  - Turned off notifications
  - No-meeting days
- **Build-in breathing room.**
  - Schedule 25m or 55m meetings | Read: "Research Proves Your Brain Needs Breaks," *Microsoft*
  - Built in time to plan and organize
- **Optimize your space.**
  - Work area
  - Work tools & digital platforms
- **Take care of your wellbeing,** such as exercise, sleep, meditate, clean, make time for hobbies.
- **Unplug.** Limit doom scrolling, stop looking at your screen, talk to a human.

For managers:

- How can we enable and empower our team members
- How can we remove barriers and burdens?
- How can we scale or formalize healthy practices?

For leaders:

- How can healthy practices be ingrained in how we operate as a company?

Managers & Teams

- **Be transparent** about decisions that impact people's work or way of working.
- **Align on communication norms.**
  (hours, platform, time zones, responsiveness)
- **Create opportunities to connect.**
  Ask genuinely how people are doing.
  Create space for people to talk about challenges and struggles.
- **Give appreciation,** recognition, validation.
- **Balance autonomy with structure.**
  When possible, give clear expectations for outcomes but with freedom of process.

Organizations & Leaders

- **Consistently advocate for and model** work-life balance / integration.
- **Scope roles and projects appropriately.**
- **Ensure sufficient coverage.**
- **Hire and promote good people managers.**
- **Invest in quality resources.** Remember to think about the day-to-day employee experience; not just moments of need.

Working Styles Worksheet

My Communication Preferences *(e.g., email is best for tasks, Slack for immediate response)*

My Working Hours *(e.g., online from X am - Y pm ET; not available to respond after Z time)*

My Return to Office & Social Preferences

(e.g., I feel hesitant about broad social interaction and prefer to keep most meetings virtual; or, I'm vaccinated and excited to socialize)

My Working Style

What gives me energy and motivation? What drains my energy or motivation?

What is important for me to prioritize outside of work? (e.g., child care; therapy appointments)

When working with me, it's helpful when... (e.g., people send agendas in advance of a meeting)

Team Adaptations Worksheet

Complete this exercise as a team to discuss challenges, identify bright spots, and create healthy team norms.

	Bright Spot or Challenge	**Solution or Adaptation** (to solve challenges or grow bright spot)	**Ways to Hold Myself Accountable**
	E.g., It's hard to disconnect. We feel like we're "always on." *E.g., We are good about not emailing people on vacation.*	*E.g., Proactively discuss communication norms for "offline hours."* *E.g., Create a policy for off-hour emails and normalize scheduling emails.*	*E.g., Set calendar reminders for breaks.* *E.g., Discuss work norms in quarterly team check-ins.*
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			
#6			

Bonus Lesson: Enabling Culture Change

Mind Share Partners' Framework for Mental Health Culture Change

	Activities & Outcomes	Example Programs
Leadership	• Understands mental health and why it matters • Practices, models, and advocates for mentally healthy behaviors • Invests in and sponsors mental health training, resources, and other programs • Has a defined mental health strategy with clear goals and metrics	• Mental health as a part of people strategy • Storytelling (e.g., videos) • Executive training • Shared norms for leaders with accountability
Managers	• Understand mental health and why it matters • Practice, model, and advocate for mentally healthy behaviors • Understand mental health policies (i.e., ADA, accommodations process, partnering with HR, resources available) • Effectively balance compassion and compliance	• Manager training as a part of new manager onboarding and ongoing professional development • Standard practices for team adaptations (e.g., working style conversations)
Employees	• Employees have a shared understanding of mental health, why it matters, and resources available • Mental health is named and practiced as a core part of organizational culture • Mental health programs are integrated into broader inclusion efforts	• Intranet site with resources and policies • Communications campaigns • Story-telling events • "Mental Health Ambassador" programs • Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
Practices	• Daily working norms and practices that support employee mental health are established and normalized. • Understanding and awareness of how working practices and underlying workplace stressors impact mental health. • Workplace factors that have a negative impact on employee mental health are proactively addressed and solved for.	• Working style conversations • Team norm conversations (e.g., email responsiveness, working hours) • Flexible practices clarified where possible (e.g., work hours, location) in work location • Accountability mechanisms to ensure healthy practices (e.g., manager reviews)

Policies	• Explicitly name and support mental health (e.g., leave, wellness). • Inform daily decision-making and practices (at all levels of the organization). • Align with organizational values and mental health goals • Address cultural and regional differences	• Mental health policy and policy review process • Mental health days, LOAs, Accommodations processes • Team norm conversations (e.g., email responsiveness, online hours)
Benefits	• High quality, regularly assessed, and have parity with physical health. • Provide sufficient access to care (e.g., continuity of care, size of network, global / local considerations). • Employees know what benefits exist; resources are actively shared and normalized.	• Mental health treatment insurance coverage • On-site therapists • Mental Health / Self-care Apps • Clear metrics for benefits • Communications to build awareness and normalize use • "Mental Health Ambassador" programs
Accountability	• Clear ownership over and metrics to track mental health goals. • Metrics are regularly assessed and updated • Mentally healthy behaviors are reinforced through performance reviews	• "Chief Wellbeing / Wellness / Mental Health Officer" role • Defined metrics for supporting mental health with regular data collection and analysis • Organizational level surveys and qualitative conversations (e.g., annual, pulse, etc.) • Expectations around supportive mental health practices (e.g., manager check-ins, leadership modeling) as a part of performance review processes and team norm setting (e.g., wellbeing plans)

Considering Your Organization's Culture

Complete this reflection to identify the strengths you can build from, the pain points to address, and envision what you want your organization to look like one year from now.

	Current Strengths	Current Challenges	Target State *1 year from today*
Leadership			
Managers			
Employees			
Practices			
Policies			
Benefits			
Accountabilit			