

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

Toolkit for Sharp Leaders

“A leader is great not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others.”

Mental health problems are very common, and the CDC reports that **1 in 5 people** experience mental health problems in the workplace. Despite this, there is still a strong stigma (negative attitude) around mental health.

People with mental health problems can also experience discrimination (negative treatment) in all aspects of their lives, including work. Because of that, many people may be suffering silently, preferring not to open up about their mental health challenges.

Sharp leaders and team members must start working together to **help remove stigma** surrounding mental health and create a supportive environment for those struggling. Normalizing conversations about mental health within your respective teams and standing by your staff during emotional challenges is the best way to reduce the stigma often associated with mental health topics.

This document outlines a few things Sharp leaders can start doing **today** to create a supportive environment for their employees.

Familiarize Yourself with Mental Health Symptoms

There are a variety of symptoms that indicate a potential mental health problem in the workplace. Look for these symptoms as the warning signs:

- Feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Experiencing low self-esteem
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy
- Having difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Feeling isolated and withdrawing from others



- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Feeling irritable, angry, or restless
- Having suicidal thoughts
- Absenteeism
- Other observed changes in typical behavior

It's important to know how to recognize the above signs that someone may need extra support. That way you can **check in** with your staff members to make sure they feel well and comfortable.

Build a Culture of Connection Through Check-Ins

Checking in with employees could be done through one-on-one meetings, group meetings, regular rounds, or even just a quick email. Find out whether your employees have any questions, issues, or concerns they want to share.

Get the conversation started with some of these phrases:

- *How are you doing today?*
- *"How are you doing after that situation?"*
- *"Would you like to talk?"*
- *"I've noticed you've been more _____ than usual."*

Actively listen to each employee. Ask follow-up questions to gather more information. Restate what you heard to check your understanding. Remain **empathetic and non-judgmental** throughout each discussion. Offer support and resources to help. Here are some phrases you can use to encourage employees to check their mental health:

- *"I want to take a moment to acknowledge that our mental health and wellbeing are more important now than ever before."*
- *"I'm here for you."*
- *"It's ok not to be ok."*
- *"You are not alone."*
- *"How can I support you?"*
- *We have resources that can help you. Let me connect you to additional support."*

Talk About It

Create an open, accepting workplace where your employees **feel free** to discuss their mental health problems and where it does not seem like a taboo topic. People with mental health issues often feel isolated, are not

comfortable talking about it or are in denial. **Normalizing talking about mental health** will help to break down the stigma and make employees feel more comfortable seeking help.

Some ideas are:

- Start huddles and team meetings with mental health check-ins. Here are some ideas:
 - **The one-word check-in.** Go around the group and ask for **one word** that describes how each person is feeling.
 - **Check in using the [Mental Health Continuum](#).** Ask participants to check in using a color on the Mental Health Continuum, whether it's green, yellow, orange, or red.
 - **Stress First Aid:** Refer to the [Stress First Aid model](#) on sharp.com for quick videos to share with your team and generate discussion about how we can relate to the seven components of the Stress First Aid model in our everyday lives.
 - **Share a mood emoji:** For virtual meetings, use the react button in Teams or have staff post an emoji in the chat.
 - **Rose, Thorn, Bud:** Ask each employee to share a 'rose' (something positive), a 'thorn' (a challenge), and a 'bud' (something they're looking forward to).
 - **Gratitude Round:** Have each person share one thing they are grateful for that day or week.
- Work with [Sharp Best Health](#), [EAP](#), or behavioral health experts from [Sharp Mesa Vista](#) to schedule training sessions or workshops on the topics of mental health awareness, stress management, and mindfulness.

Openly Discuss *Your Own* Mental Health

Being honest about *your* mental health struggles as a leader opens the door for employees to feel comfortable talking with you about mental health challenges of their own.

- **Share** your mental health concerns or about a time where you were stressed.
- Share **how you manage** your challenges and include the **steps you take**. Perhaps you regularly engage in deep breathing, mindfulness, or meditation. Maybe you practice yoga, go for walks, or run each day. Or, you might have benefitted from your own use of Sharp support resources such as EAP or outside therapy. Sharing your personal experiences with mental health builds trust with your employees. It also encourages them to seek help when needed.

Promote Self-Care

Remind employees that it's important to take care of **their personal needs**, such as taking regular breaks, saying "no" when needed, and not working past designated hours.

Model that behavior yourself! More often than not, managers are so focused on their team's wellbeing and on getting the work done that they forget to take care of themselves. Share that you're taking a walk in the middle of the day, having a therapy appointment, or prioritizing a staycation (and actually turning off email) so that you don't burn out.

By implementing these strategies, Sharp can create a supportive environment that prioritizes mental health and builds trust among staff and colleagues, fostering a happier, healthier, and more productive workforce.

Sharp Support Resources

- [CAREForYou Program \(Peer-to-Peer Support\)](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- [Stress First Aid](#)
- [Maternal Mental Health Program](#)
- [Mental Health Classes and Support Groups](#)
- [Mental Health Matters](#)
- [Sharp Equality Alliance](#)
- [Sharp Best Health](#): Wellness Program for Sharp HealthCare Employees
- [Ways to Find a Therapist \(for those who have Sharp Health Plan\)](#)

National Support Resources

- [Mental Health Resource List](#)
- [Mental Health Resource List \(Spanish\)](#)
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
- [Supporting a Loved One Dealing with Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders](#)