

Mental health in the workplace

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May is Mental Health Awareness Month. And workplaces aren't immune to the cost of mental health issues. Mental health problems strongly influence employee performance, rates of illness, absenteeism, accidents and staff turnover. Consider these facts¹:

- Untreated mental illness costs the U.S. a minimum of \$105 billion in lost productivity each year
- 60% of Americans with a mental disorder get no treatment
- Mental illness is estimated to result in 35 million work days lost each year
- Almost 50% of managers had no training in managing workers with mental health issues

As a manager, you're in a unique position to help change the conversation about mental health. You can encourage your team to learn more about mental health and change the conversation to reduce stigma.

What can you do?

One possible resource is "The Campaign to Change Direction," a program endorsed by the First Lady, Michelle Obama, and other national leaders. This campaign is focused on raising mental health awareness and encouraging support strategies.

For example, urge your staff to learn some of the signs of a person who may be suffering emotional pain. Concerning signs can include:

1. Showing sudden or gradual personality changes
2. Acting angry, agitated or moody more often than usual
3. Becoming withdrawn from other people
4. Making bad choices like abusing drugs or alcohol, poor self-care and other self-destructive behaviors
5. Expressing hopelessness

If you or someone on your team observes any or all of these signs — show concern, give hope and find help.

Take the pledge

You can take the pledge to help spread awareness around mental health issues this month. As an individual or as a team, visit www.changedirection.org, and choose "Make a Pledge." May is Mental Health Awareness Month but mental health issues likely impact your organization year-round. But you can make a difference.

¹ www.psychologytoday.com