

Increasing Awareness about Mental Health

A toolkit to help increase awareness about mental health among your employees



Helping raise awareness about mental health among your employees

Dedicate this month to helping your employees become more aware of mental health issues. Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. It includes emotional, psychological and social well-being and affects thoughts, feelings and actions. Mental health determines how people handle stress and relate to others and the everyday choices they make. Being mentally healthy can promote productivity and success in work, school, parenting, caregiving and other important aspects of life.

What's in the toolkit?

This toolkit provides all the materials needed to deliver a successful campaign to increase awareness about mental health:

- Campaign objectives
- Suggested timeline
- Email campaign series
- Awareness handouts and lifestyle flyers
- Campaign kick-off event ideas
- Employee and organizational challenges
- Prize strategy
- Employee evaluation

Campaign objectives

- Explain how mental health impacts overall health and well-being
- Dispel common myths about mental health and mental illness
- Identify actions that could improve mental health in communities
- Identify self-care strategies that could improve mental health and well-being in individuals
- Know risk factors for poor mental health
- List symptoms of mental illness in adults, adolescents and children
- Suggest ways to help support optimal mental health among children, adolescents and older adults
- Explain how depression differs from normal stress and anxiety
- Tell how depression is diagnosed
- Suggest strategies to prevent suicide
- Know how to find mental health resources and services
- Identify actions to take to help a troubled co-worker
- Know ways to avoid workplace burnout and deal with a stressful work environment
- Know self-care strategies if you are a caregiver for a person with mental illness
- Understand the benefits of resiliency and how to build it

Suggested timeline

The total campaign is designed to last a minimum of four weeks but can be shortened or extended if desired. See the attached email campaign series for email timelines and content.

Email campaign

Pre-launch email – Increasing awareness about mental health/
Coming soon

Kick-off email – Increasing awareness about mental health/
Join us to get started

Week 2 reminder email – Challenge yourself to make your mental health a priority

Week 3 encouragement email – Practice mindfulness

Week 4 employee evaluation email – We want your feedback

Week 4 organizational challenge (*optional*) – Spread the word about mental health

Awareness handouts and lifestyle flyers

Two types of educational information are provided for use during the campaign. Awareness handouts are intended to provide information about an aspect of mental health and raise self-awareness. The lifestyle flyers are generally more interactive and provide opportunities for employees to apply information about mental health and well-being in their everyday lives – at home and at work. Distribute both types of materials each week.

	Awareness handouts	Lifestyle flyers
Week 1: Start the conversation about mental health Employee challenge: Make your mental health a priority	What is mental health and why is it important?	Take charge of your mental health
Week 2: Who is at risk?	Common warning signs and symptoms of mental illness	Support for those who are most vulnerable
Week 3: Recognizing depression and other mental conditions	Depression – more than just “the blues”	Mental health services
Week 4: Support for mental health and well-being Organizational challenge: Spread the word about mental health	Help for troubled co-workers	Promoting positive mental health and well-being

Campaign kick-off event

We strongly recommend an onsite event to kick off the campaign. The event can be as big or small as you want, but it's an important opportunity to introduce the campaign theme to employees and to encourage them to participate in the challenge.

If you are unable to arrange an onsite event, we recommend setting up a table in a common area, such as the entrance to the employee cafeteria, for the distribution of materials. Keep materials restocked for the duration of the campaign.

Suggestions for kick-off event:

Announce the program “Increasing awareness about mental illness” at company-wide or departmental meetings.

- If the company has an employee assistance program (EAP) or another program that provides employee advocacy, invite a representative to explain the services provided and how to access them.
- Invite a representative from a local mental health service provider to give a brief presentation about resources available to employees.

Employee challenges

Individual challenge: Make your mental health a priority

Distribute the log for the individual challenge during the first week of the campaign. Employees are encouraged to use the information, strategies and skills introduced over the course of the campaign to take steps to optimize their personal mental health during the next four weeks.

Organizational challenge (optional): Spread the word about mental health

Distribute the contact log for the organizational challenge at the end of the campaign. Set a deadline for returning logs. After logs are returned, calculate the number of handouts/flyers that were distributed and report the demographics of the outreach project.

Group event (optional):

Organize a volunteer opportunity and invite employees to support a worthy project that would increase awareness about mental health and well-being and promote teamwork among employees. Ask a few employees to serve as a committee to identify a community mental health need and organize the project. Here are a few ideas:

- Donate water, food, personal hygiene products, etc. to a food bank.
- Collect shoes, books or toys for children at a school.
- Visit patients in a local hospital or nursing home.
- Engage in a beautification project in the community – plant a tree or flowers or pick up trash or litter along a roadway.

Prize strategy

While offering prizes for participation in the employee campaign is not required, it can increase participation. Consider individual giveaways for employees who complete the employee challenge. Or, offer a drawing for one or more raffle prizes for employees who complete the challenge. As an alternative, consider offering a prize to employees who complete the evaluation survey. Some ideas for individual prizes that support mental health and well-being include the following:

- personal journal
- relaxing music
- gift certificate for a massage, manicure, pedicure or other salon service
- aromatic candles
- body lotion
- voucher for a yoga class
- personal time off
- flowers or a plant
- herbal tea

Employee evaluation

A brief evaluation survey is available to collect feedback, ideas and information from employees who participated in the campaign. Participant feedback will be valuable for planning future campaigns.

Campaign content

1. Start the conversation about mental health

What is mental health and why is it important?

- Test yourself (quiz)
- Supporting mental health and healthy lifestyles

Take charge of your mental health

- Take care of your body
- Take care of your mind
- Take action

2. Who is at risk?

Common warning signs and symptoms of mental illness

- Symptoms of mental illness in adolescents and adults
- Symptoms of mental illness in children

Support for those who are most vulnerable

- Children: What parents, teachers and health professionals can do
- Adolescents: Positive tips for parents of adolescents
- Older adults: How to help older adults

3. Recognizing depression and other mental conditions

Depression – more than just “the blues”

- A continuum of feelings
- Diagnosing depression
- Self assessment: Are you experiencing symptoms of depression?
- Suicide

Mental health services

- Talk to your primary care provider first
- Find a mental health professional
- Ask about the cost of services

4. Support for mental health and well-being

Help for troubled co-workers

- Notice. Talk. Act.
- Workplace bullying
- Workplace burnout
- Tips for dealing with a stressful work environment

Promoting positive mental health and well-being

- Specific ways to help
- If you are a caregiver
- Resilience: Everybody needs it

5. Challenges:

- Individual – Make your mental health a priority
- Organizational – Spread the word about mental health

6. Employee evaluation

Additional resources

The Center for Workplace Mental Health provides employers with the tools, resources and information needed to promote and support the mental health of employees and their families. The Center engages employers in eliminating stigma, reducing barriers to care, raising broader mental health awareness, improving and implementing mental health programs and designing benefits that improve employee mental health. This work is done through turn-key programs, toolkits, employer case studies, topical resources, publication and more. workplacementalhealth.org

The World Health Organization works with governments across the world to put in place mental health policies, plans and laws that respect human rights and promote access to care as well as to employment, educational and other opportunities. [who.org](https://www.who.org)

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