Anxiety in the Workplace

Managing anxiety, particularly while navigating the workplace, has become more important than ever. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), anxiety disorders are the most common mental health concern in the US, with over 40 million people (19.1%) diagnosed[1].

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is defined as a "persistent, excessive fear or worry in situations that are not threatening."[2] However, while commonly used interchangeably, anxiety differs from fear. Fear is the emotional response to a real or perceived imminent threat, whereas anxiety is the anticipation of a future event.

Symptoms can be either emotional, such as apprehension, dread, tension, jumpiness, restless, and irritability. Symptoms can also be physical, such as racing heart, shortness of breath, sweating, headaches, fatigue, upset stomach or diarrhea.[2] Common anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder (previously known as social phobia), as well as phobias.

The information contained herein is for purely informational purposes only, and is not intended to present medical, occupational, or therapeutic advice

1. https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Anxiety-Disorders (accessed 7-12-21)
2. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder.shtml (accessed 7-12-21)

Workplace Impacts

- Lack of focus
- Decreased productivity
- Increase in absenteeism
- Strain on interpersonal relationships
- Risks while operating machinery
- Inability to complete tasks while operating machinery

19 Ways to Help Employees Manage Stress and Anxiety at Work

1. Allow flexible work schedules
2. Consider remote work
3. Keep them working
4. Encourage co-worker communication
5. Educate yourself on the symptoms
6. Promote time management
7. Plan and prepare major projects
8. Adopt one and done mentality
9. Be realistic
10. Ask for help
11. Open lines of communication with leaders
12. Require individual organization
13. Avoid toxic coworkers
14. Schedule breaks
15. Set boundaries; leave work at work
16. Acknowledge success
17. Allow PTO and vacations
18. Suggest healthy habits
19. Offer and promote employee resources

If your employees indicate they are struggling with anxiety or any other mental health condition, encourage an open dialogue with them. Reduce stigma surrounding mental health disorders by being non-judgmental; consider suggesting that they contact their healthcare provider or your EAP if your organization offers such a service. Being understanding of your employee's mental health will strengthen their trust in you and forge a stronger working relationship.

Navigating life together