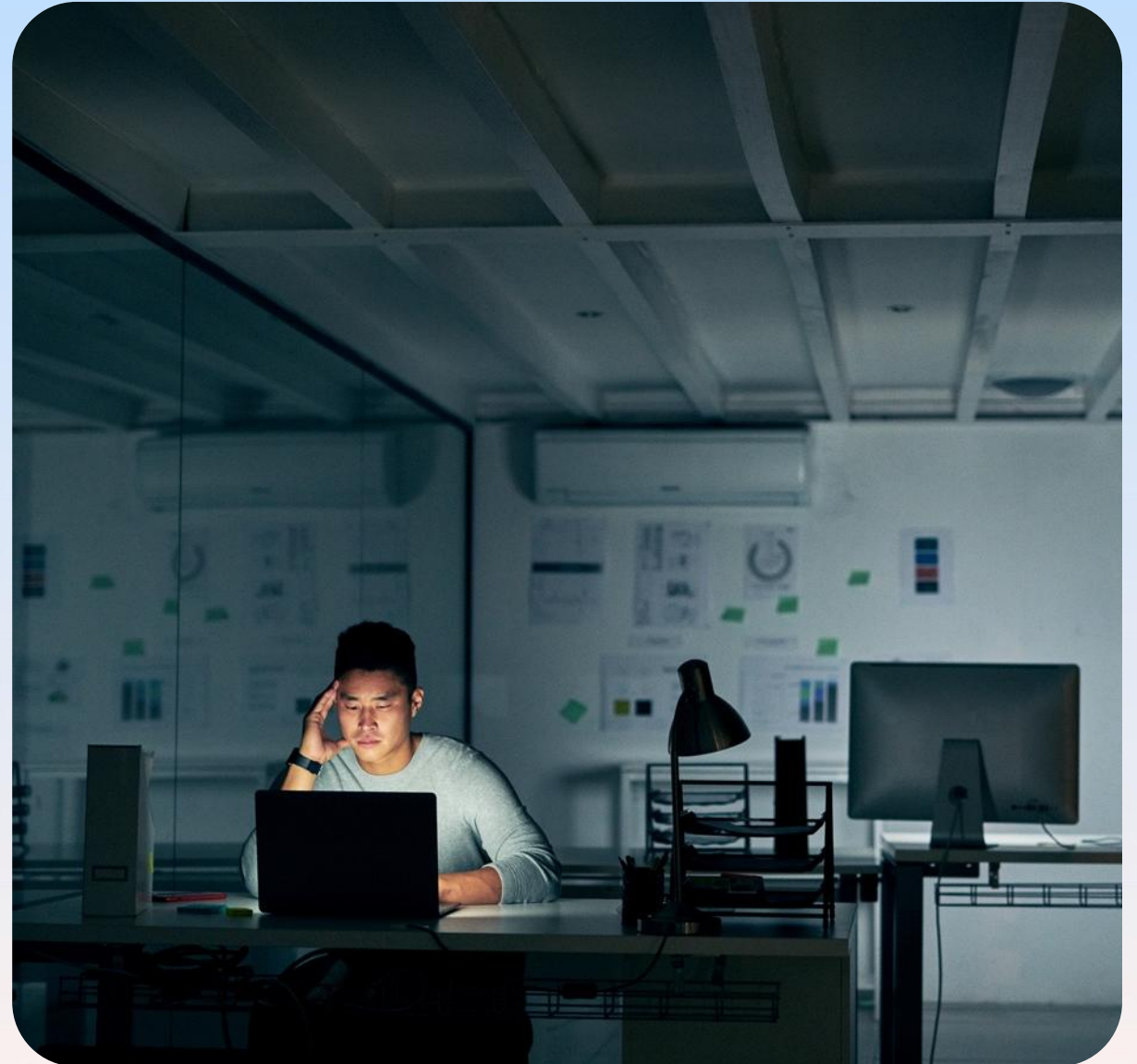


Mental Health Awareness for Leaders

Presented by ComPsych® Corporation



Agenda

- Overview of mental health concerns
- Factors impacting mental health
- Signs of emotional distress
- Strategies for supportive interactions and destigmatizing mental/emotional health distress
- Responding to suicide
- Available resources



Facts About Mental Health



Globally, **close to a billion people, or 1 in 7**, currently struggle with one or more mental health or substance abuse disorders



Mental health disorders are among the **leading causes** of ill-health and disability worldwide



Sources: Ritchie and Max Roser (2019) - "Mental Health". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: '<https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health>' [Online Resource]

World Health Organization (2019) – "Mental Disorders" and "Mental Health" Published online at: <https://www.mobihealthnews.com/news/survey-most-employees-willing-give-employer-provided-digital-health-tools-chance>

Factors Contributing to Emotional Distress



Economic stress



Social isolation



Increased work demands



Barriers to mental health care

Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

–World Health Organization

Case Study

Scenario

- A once highly productive employee is increasingly missing meetings and you discover assignments are not being completed.
- You meet with the employee about the problem and they become tearful and assert that they will “do better.”
- You make expectations clear and begin to document the problem and give the employee ongoing feedback on what you see as their performance gaps. The employee responds by further distancing and you sense they are now avoiding you. The situation is worsening.



**What is
happening
and what
can you do?**

Leadership Roles

Earn trust and forge an alliance with employees

- Acceptance of differences and distress
- Expression of value and caring
- Solidarity and belief in success

Offer support to employees who inform you of, or present signs of mental health concerns.

Role is not to diagnose, inquire about or treat mental health disorders

Know your resources:

- Human resources
- Employee Assistance Program (GuidanceResources)

Potential Signs of Employee Mental Health Distress



What do you notice when an employee is distressed?

- Persistent anxious, depressed or irritable mood
- Highly reactive mood – e.g. happy then angry
- Withdrawn and isolative
- Lethargic, unable to self motivate
- Deterioration of personal hygiene
- Impulsive, reckless or avoidant behavior
- Interpersonal problems and/or excessive conflicts
- Bizarre and/or irrational thinking
- Difficulty sleeping, weight loss/gain

Questions



What would you do if you saw someone **sneezing**?

What would you do if you saw someone **crying**?

What would you do if you knew someone has been in the hospital for a **heart problem**?

What would you do if you knew someone had been **hospitalized for depression**?

Common Responses to People with Mental Health Conditions

- **Confusion and Fear** - avoidance
- **Judgement** – behaving dismissively
- **Frustration and Anger** - blaming, conflict
- **Compassion** – support (enabling)

Will I make it worse by talking to them?

You are fragile. Let me do it for you!

If it were me, I'd never do that!

I can imagine this must be difficult for you.

They are behaving that way to provoke me!

Confusion and Fear

- Encountering **someone presenting with strong emotions** or unusual behaviors can cause immediate distress.
- **You don't know what to do** and you fear the consequences of getting involved.



Intervention:

Recognize you cannot fix the problem” or make them feel better – but you can help.

- How can I understand more about what this person is experiencing?
- Listening expresses value/caring
- Listening empowers employees

Judgement

- Results from a **lack of empathy or ignorance** of the person's situation of what they are experiencing
- **Inability to tolerate the person's distress** and/or a belief that you can't really help the situation



Intervention: Empathy

- *“What can I guess about what they are going through?”* (Perspective Taking)
- *“When have I struggled and suffered?”* (Emotional empathy through vulnerability)

Frustration and Anger

Personalizing their actions, belief that they are **behaving intentionally** to undermine your authority.



Intervention: Acknowledge and Understand

- *“Am I angry?”*
- *“Why would a decent and reasonable person behave this way?”*
- *What might be their positive intention?*

Compassion

- Compassion is a product of empathy with someone who is in pain
- Our natural desire is to help
- Problematic perceptions:
 - “This person is fragile”
 - “I should make things easier for them and lower my expectations”



Intervention: “Bi-focal Vision”

- *“What do I admire/appreciate about this employee?”*
- *“How might they succeed in the future?”*
- Perceptions become internalized
- Convey positive expectancy while acknowledging present difficulties.

Helpful or Not?



“Are you OK?”

A well-intentioned inquiry but is usually met with, “Yes, I’m fine.”

“How can I help?”

Distressed people are often unable to identify needs and do not wish to be a burden to others

“How are you feeling?”

“Would you like to talk?”

Appropriate for those you know intimately or who you think would like to talk about their situation and feelings provided you have time to really talk/listen.

Responding to an Employee in Distress



Observe

“I’ve noticed...”



Listen and Acknowledge

“I know this is a difficult time for you now. I know you are going through a lot.”



Ask

“What’s happening right now?”



Discuss Options (wait...)

“What’s worked for you in the past?”

“What do you think might help now?”

“Can I suggest some resources that have helped other people in a similar situation to yours?”

Being Supportive – Don'ts



- Don't expect to “cheer up” someone who is distressed
(“Think of all that you have to be grateful for!”)
- Don't argue or try to debate someone into feeling better
(“It's not really that bad. You are not seeing the big picture.”)
- Don't insist that their feelings are wrong or an over-reaction
(“Stop talking nonsense! I know you don't really feel that way!”)
- Don't give advice *(“You **should** ...”)*
- Don't use stigmatizing language *(“That's just **crazy** talk!”)*
- Don't enable by taking on their responsibilities, covering up or ignoring performance issues

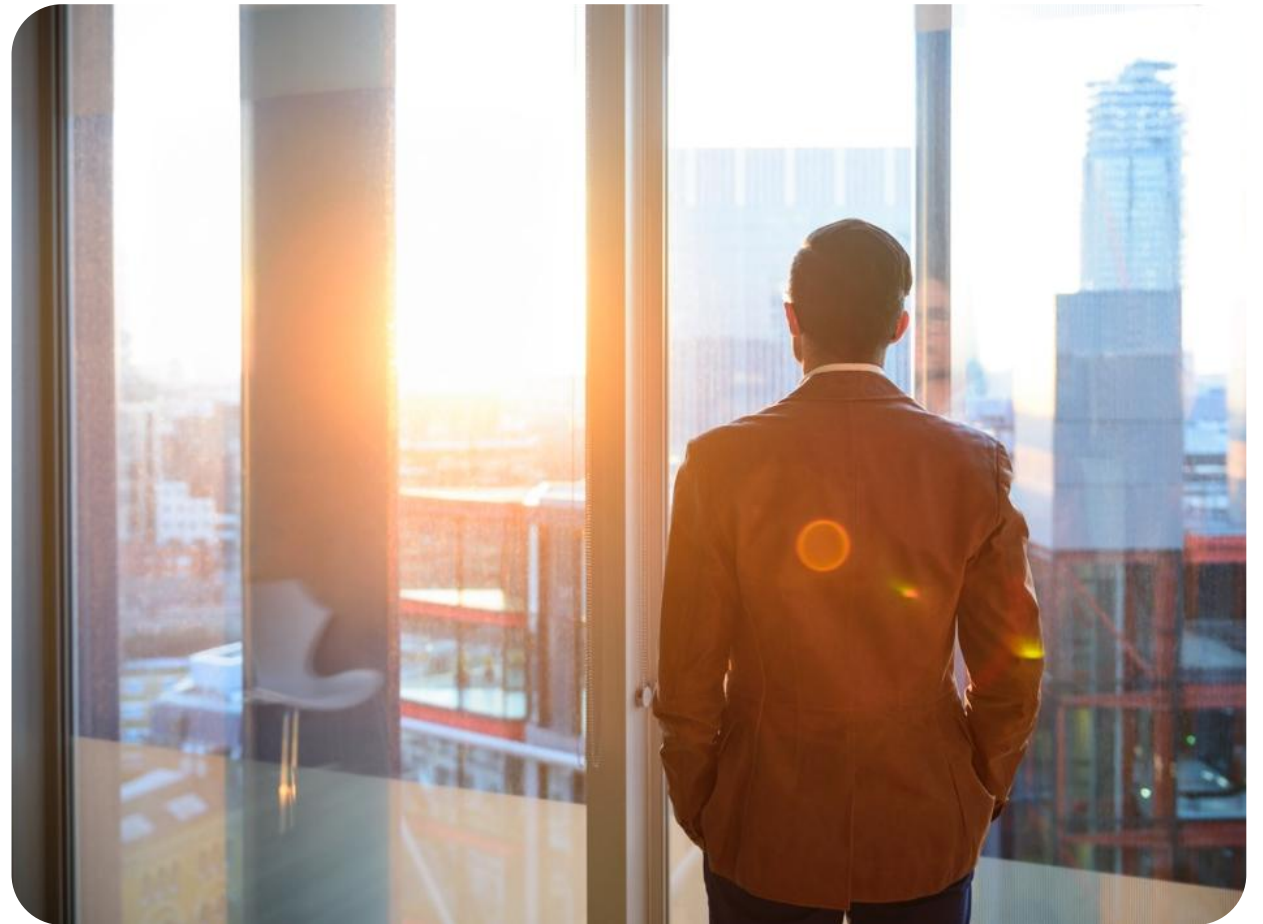
Being Supportive – Do



- Stay connected to the employee (*“How are you doing?”*)
- Listen and attempt to understand
- Acknowledge distress and validate positive interactions (*“I know this is difficult right now. I know you are trying your best.”*)
- Consider your respect and admiration for the employee and image them prospering in the future
- Allow them to problem solve and identify needs/options
- Emphasize that professional help is available and effective
- Respond promptly to any suggestion of suicide

Possible Warning Signs of Suicide

- Substantive withdrawal and lack of engagement
- Talking or writing about death or dying or making comments such as “*What’s the point of living?*” “*Life is meaningless*” or “No one would miss me if I were gone”
- Mentioning or joking about suicide
- Seeking lethal means such as buying or asking to borrow a gun
- Giving away possessions
- Saying last goodbyes
- Showing interest in end-of-life affairs such as making a will, discussing funeral preferences or inquiring life insurance



What to Do

**If someone is considering suicide,
the situation must be taken seriously!**



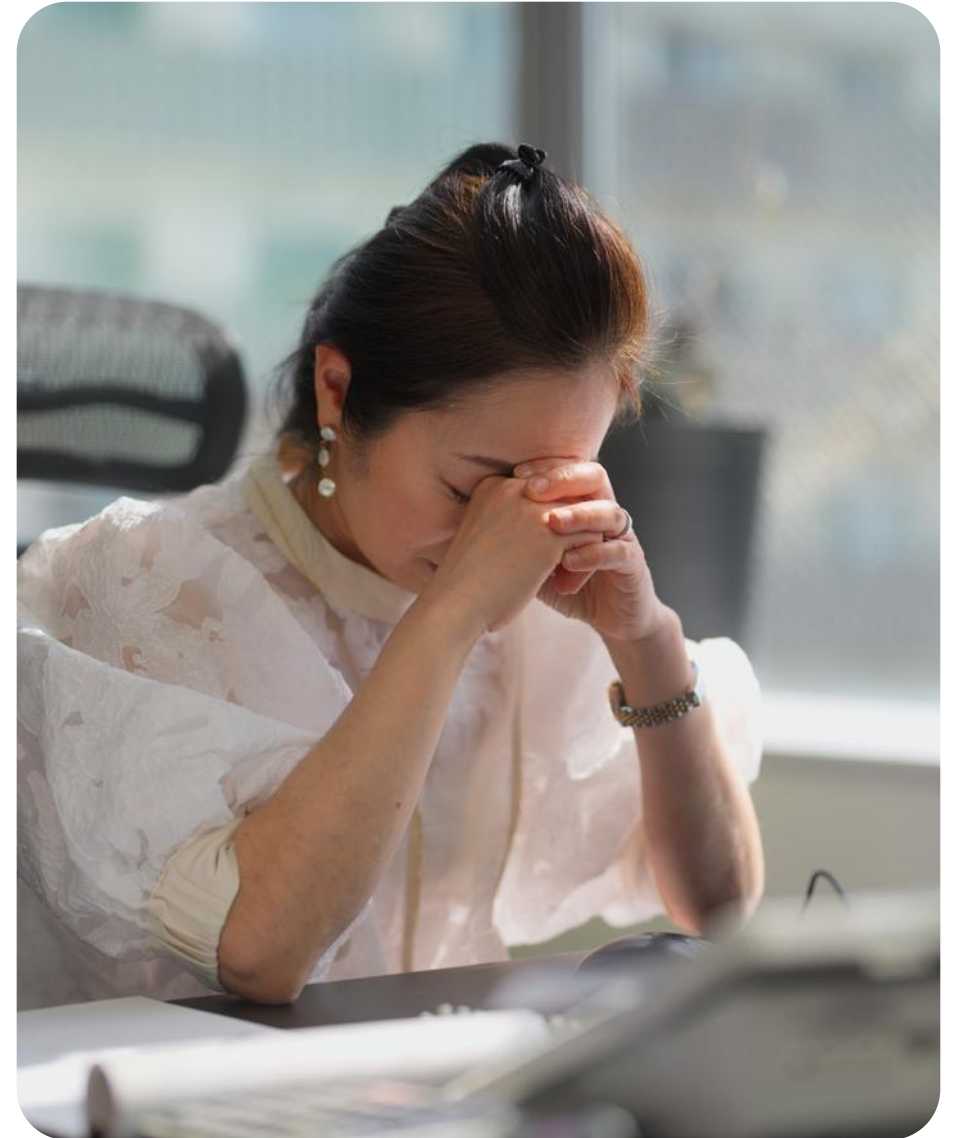
Ask:
Ask the person
about suicidal
thoughts



Agreement:
Get their
agreement to
accept help



Arrange:
Help them to
connect with
resources



Response to Suicide



Observe

“I’ve noticed that you brought up suicide today.”



Listen and Acknowledge

“You are going through an extremely difficult time.”



Ask

“Are you thinking about taking your life?”



Discuss Options (wait...)

- *“Can you agree to get help?”*
- *“I’d like to help you. Can we call the EAP now?”*

Summary

- Everyone struggles with mental health issues at some time
- Be attentive to performance issues and employees in distress
- Seek to understand – not to resolve/treat/cure
- Create a working alliance with the anticipation of success
- Become familiar with, use and refer to resources:
 - Employee Assistance Program – GuidanceResources
 - Intervene early when you see employees in distress



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