

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Helping a Co-Worker Identify and Address Mental Health Concerns

It can be hard to know whether a co-worker's behavior is just a result of a difficult emotional phase, or a signal of mental illness. Stigma can also make talking about these issues difficult. But turning a blind eye to a mental health concern could deprive someone you know of the support and care they might need.

Warning Signs

If someone you work with is exhibiting one or more of the behaviors listed below, they might be struggling with a real mental health issue:

- Unprovoked emotional outbursts
- Obvious personality changes
- Problems coping with daily activities and challenges
- Major changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Difficulty making decisions, concentrating or remembering things
- Extreme anxiety

Reaching Out

In many cases, early intervention in a mental health issue speeds the recovery process. If you've noticed something is wrong but are unsure of how to talk about it, consider:

Speaking to a Manager or Supervisor. They may have received specialized training to deal with these situations and can offer the appropriate resources and support.

Treading carefully. Discussing the topic of mental health with a co-worker can be highly sensitive. If you feel you're the most appropriate person to talk about the matter, do it privately to avoid creating a situation where your co-worker feels threatened or attacked. Focus on your concern over his or her well-being and your desire to help and reinforce your colleague's value in the workplace.

Offering information on support services. Provide your colleague with any helpful brochures, website addresses or contact information and encourage him or her to get in touch with a physician for diagnosis.

Staying tight-lipped. If your co-worker shares personal information with you, don't disclose or gossip with others about it. Keep information you've been entrusted with to yourself, unless you're concerned your colleague is a threat to him or herself or could harm others.

Talking about the issues of mental health with someone you work with can be difficult, but there are more resources available than ever before. By treading carefully, offer information and support, and letting the person know that you're there to help—and not to judge—you can support them in getting the help they need.
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