

# Mental Health in the Workplace

## What is Mental Health?



# What is Mental Health?

- ▶ **Mental health** (or well being) is an ideal we all strive for. It is a balance of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health. Caring relationships, a place to call home, a supportive community, and work and leisure all contribute to mental health. However, no one's life is perfect, so mental health is also about learning the coping skills to deal with life's ups and downs the best we can.
- ▶ **Mental illness** is a serious disturbance in thoughts, feelings and perceptions that is severe enough to affect day-to-day functioning.



# Mental Health Facts

- ▶ At any given time, percentage of Canadians who have a mental illness: 10.4%
- ▶ Percentage of Canadians who will experience depression in their lifetime: 7.9 - 8.6%
- ▶ Percentage of Canadians who will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetime: 12%
- ▶ Canadians that will have a mental illness or substance use disorder in their lifetime is: 1 in 3



# Anxiety Disorders

## **Most common mental illness in Canada:**

- ▶ 9% men and 16% women affected in any given year

## **Types of anxiety disorders and % affected:**

- ▶ Generalized Anxiety 1.1%
- ▶ Specific Phobia 6.2 – 8.0%
- ▶ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - data unavailable
- ▶ Social Phobia 6.7%
- ▶ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder 1.8%
- ▶ Panic Disorder 0.7%



# Signs of Anxiety

- ▶ avoiding friends, social activities and family
- ▶ having frequent outbursts of anger and rage
- ▶ losing your appetite
- ▶ having difficulty sleeping
- ▶ drinking a lot and/or using drugs
- ▶ not doing the things you once enjoyed
- ▶ constantly worrying
- ▶ frequent (and drastic) mood swings
- ▶ lacking energy or motivation



# Depression

- ▶ 4 to 5% of Canadians are affected at any one time
- ▶ Women experience twice as much as men
- ▶ Age of onset for depression: Adolescence
- ▶ Youth under 20 years of age have the highest rate of depression symptoms
- ▶ 80% of people who are depressed respond well to treatment
- ▶ 90% of people who are depressed never seek treatment



# Signs of Depression

- ▶ Experience deep sadness for a period of at least 2 weeks
- ▶ Loss of interest in or enjoyment of your favorite activities
- ▶ Feelings of worthlessness
- ▶ Excessive or inappropriate feelings of guilt
- ▶ Thoughts of death or suicide
- ▶ Trouble concentrating
- ▶ Fatigue or lack of energy
- ▶ Aches and pains (such as headaches, stomach pain, joint pains or other pains)
- ▶ Sleeping too much or too little
- ▶ Change in appetite or weight



# Suicide

- ▶ Number of suicides in Canada every year: Approximately 4000
- ▶ Suicide accounts for 24% of all deaths among Canadians aged 15 to 24 and 16% of all deaths for the age group 25 to 44
- ▶ 90% of people who succumb to suicide have a diagnosable mental illness
- ▶ 8 out of 10 people who attempt suicide hint about it to family or friends beforehand
- ▶ 15% of people with chronic depression succumb to suicide



# Suicide: A Growing Concern

According to a British Columbia study of 15,000 Grade 7 to 12 students:

- ▶ 34% knew of someone who had attempted or died of suicide
- ▶ 16% had, themselves, seriously contemplated suicide
- ▶ 14% had made a suicide plan
- ▶ 7% had attempted suicide
- ▶ 2% had to have medical attention due to an attempt



# Implications of Employment

- ▶ Employment, or engaging in some form of meaningful work/ activity, is well recognized as a key determinant of health and essential to mental health.
- ▶ Unemployment has a negative effect on mental health. Unemployment is the leading cause of poverty, and that poverty is a leading cause of poor physical and mental health.
- ▶ Meaningful work and employment must be viewed as essential components to establishing and maintaining positive mental health.



# It Can Seem Challenging....

- ▶ A mental illness makes the things you do in life seem difficult; work, socializing with other people, dealing with daily routines, etc.
- ▶ If you think you, (or someone you know), might have a mental health issue, you need to ask for help right away. Mental illness is a treatable illness, however early recognition and treatment are key.



# Why Mental Health Issues are Often Hidden in the Workplace

## Stigma & Fear:

- ▶ of losing employer's respect
- ▶ of losing one's job
- ▶ of not being promoted
- ▶ of being isolated or shamed by co-workers and colleagues
- ▶ of asking for accommodation
- ▶ that long-term career goals may be affected
- ▶ of admitting to an illness



# Stigma & Discrimination in the Workplace

- ▶ **Stigma** is a mark or sign of shame, disgrace or disapproval, of being shunned or rejected by others. Stigma can often lead to discrimination.
- ▶ **Discrimination** occurs when a person is treated differently from another person in the same or similar circumstances based on past, present, associated or assumed characteristics.



# Stigma: A Barrier to a Healthy Workplace

- ▶ Although one in five Canadian workers will be affected by mental illness, stigma will prevent many from reaching out for help
- ▶ In a Conference Board of Canada report, 54 % of over 1,000 respondents believed that a mental illness would hurt their chances of being promoted



# Stigma & Discrimination

## **Self-Stigma**

- ▶ You begin to believe the negative opinions about you and start to think that you deserve to be called names and denied opportunities.

## **Stigma and Discrimination by Association**

- ▶ Negative judgments about - and disrespectful actions against - family members and mental health professionals.



# Take Action

- ▶ Recognize that employment is a key part of our lives and is crucial to maintaining our mental health
- ▶ Understand the benefits of addressing mental health in the workplace
- ▶ Only 31% of employers have plans to address mental health and mental illness in the workplace



# How to Remove Stigma from the Workplace

## As a co-worker:

- ▶ **Educate Yourself.** The primary method in reducing stigma is by understanding what mental illness is and what it is not
- ▶ **Treat people with respect.** Select respectful language, emphasize abilities not limitations, and refer to the person not illness
- ▶ **Confront Stigma.** Immediately let people know when they express a stigmatizing attitude or opinion
- ▶ **Support your co-workers.** Learn about and promote the mental health policies and programs available in your workplace



# How to Remove Stigma from the Workplace

## As a person with mental illness:

- ▶ **Get treatment.** Don't allow stigma to hold you back from seeking help
- ▶ **Don't allow self-doubt and shame.** Mental illness is not your fault! It can happen to anyone and is not a sign of weakness
- ▶ **Inform others.** Help educate your co-workers to understand mental illness, and share your story
- ▶ **Be a Champion.** Find opportunities to speak about mental health in the workplace and in personal conversations. Your sharing will help others facing similar challenges



# What Can Employees Do?

- ▶ Bring any and all workplace stress to the attention of your employer or manager. If there are workplace factors such as unrelenting or unreasonable deadlines and workloads, lack of resources, or physical factors such as lighting, noise or workstation placement that is causing stress, ask to work together to address and solve these issues.
- ▶ A major stressor can be a lack of adequate training, if you feel that you need better training to do your job, ask what options are available.



# Educational Resources

The image displays seven educational resource cards from the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSOC). Each card includes the MDSOC logo at the top, a title, a small representative image, and a larger title at the bottom. The cards are:

- Medication and You:** Features a collage of four photos showing people in various settings, including a doctor and a patient.
- What is Depression?:** Features a photo of a woman looking down with her hand to her face.
- Workplace Mental Health:** Features a photo of a diverse group of smiling people in an office.
- What is Bi-Polar Disorder?:** Features a close-up photo of a person's face with a yellow and blue color scheme.
- Quick Facts:** Features a collage of photos showing people in various settings, with the text "Mental Illness & Addiction in Canada".
- Cannabis and You:** Features a photo of hands holding green cannabis plants.
- Operational Stress Injuries & Other Traumatic Stress:** Features a photo of a Canadian flag and a red maple leaf.



# Contact Info

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada offers a vast amount of support, resources and information to help.

Please visit or contact us for further information on mental illness and mental health.

[www.mdsc.ca](http://www.mdsc.ca)  
[info@mdsc.ca](mailto:info@mdsc.ca)

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**Mood Disorders** Society of Canada  
La Société Pour **Les Troubles de L'Humeur** du Canada