

Subject line:

Can you tell the difference between a mental health myth and fact? In this edition of the EAO Supervisor newsletter, we'll debunk some common myths about mental health issues.

EAO Newsletter: May Issue

The recent school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, is the latest instance in a pattern of horrific gun violence in our country. The senseless loss of innocent life is difficult to comprehend. We are heartbroken for the families whose lives have been devastated by this violence, as well as angry that this senseless pattern of violence persists.

This event, after similar tragedies at schools in Newtown, Parkland and Columbine, in addition to recent events at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, and a church in Southern California – affects all of us in different ways. Feeling desensitized, traumatized, fearful, angry, overwhelmed, or "shut down" are all understandable and common responses.

We encourage all of us to remember to center our shared humanity and to check in with one another. Know that some of us may not be able to continue with 'business as usual'. Please hold time and space to support each other as needed. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the EAO for specific support and resources.

Our partners at LifeMatters can also provide support. In light of recent events in Orchard Park, NY and Uvalde, TX, LifeMatters is hosting an educational support session on Wednesday, June 1 at 12:30 p.m. CST. If you are overwhelmed with emotions, this session is for you. It will provide education, support and referral information.

Topic: Coping with Tragedy

Host: Haleh Pals

Date: Wednesday, June 1, 2022

Time: 12:30 pm, Central Daylight Time (Chicago, GMT-05:00)

Objectives:

1. Identify common reactions to trauma.
2. Recognize symptoms of mental health struggles.
3. Choose strategies for coping effectively.
4. Know how to talk with children and others you care about.
5. Leverage your LifeMatters EAP benefit to help yourself and others.

Session number: 2660 446 1230

Session password: ZPzpht8XF33

To join the training session

1. Go to <https://prohealthcare.webex.com/prohealthcare/k2/j.php?MTID=t5231a5da55542fb6e7c9ce9f00a96d37>
2. Enter your name and email address.
3. Enter the session password: ZPzpht8XF33
4. Click "Join Now".
5. Follow the instructions that appear on your screen.

To view in other time zones or languages, please click the link

<https://prohealthcare.webex.com/prohealthcare/k2/j.php?MTID=t8771d576e4056456016ef283dd9f2379>

INTRO:

At the University of Wisconsin, we often discuss mental health as a part of employee well-being. However, not all supervisors have had the chance to learn what mental health means. Mental health issues impact many in the workplace, but they are often not well understood. Gaining a deeper understanding of mental health helps supervisors support their employees.

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the stresses of life, and can contribute positively to their communities while enjoying life.¹ It is more than the absence of a mental disorder; it is the ability to think, learn, and understand one's emotions and the reactions of others. Mental health issues can disrupt a person's mental health.

When we speak about mental health issues, we are referring to a wide range of possible conditions and experiences that affect a person's thinking, mood, or behavior. Sometimes the symptoms of a mental health issue appear as physical problems, like fatigue, headaches, or stomach pain. Just like a physical illness, ongoing mental health issues can cause stress and make it difficult for someone to function. Mental health is an important component of a person's overall health.

You do not need to be diagnosed with a mental illness to experience mental health concerns or to prioritize your mental health. Anyone can benefit from campus mental health resources, whether they're experiencing a mental health crisis or just looking to check in with themselves.

Misconceptions and stigma around mental health stop people from seeking help when they need it. Understanding mental health is the first step to providing appropriate care and support for employee well-being. In this edition of the EAO Supervisor newsletter, we'll debunk some common myths about mental health issues.

¹ (<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/health-topics/mental-health>)

Myth: Mental health issues are rare. I probably don't know anyone who's impacted by them.

Reality: Mental health issues are actually very common. In 2020 alone, about one in five American adults experienced a mental health issue.² Between 30-50% adults will ultimately report experiencing a mental health issue throughout their lifetime.³ You probably know many people with mental health issues without knowing it, as most people with mental health issues are active members of our communities.

The Employee Assistance Office serves UW employees in many ways, including for mental health concerns like depression, PTSD, or anxiety. Many people on our campus experience these issues.

Myth: Mental health issues are caused by weakness or personality flaws. You should be able to just "snap out of it" on your own.

Reality: Mental health issues have nothing to do with being lazy or weak. Just like a physical illness, mental health issues can come from biological factors, life experiences, or family history. Mental health issues are not conditions that people choose to have or not have, and anyone can develop a mental health condition.

Many people need help to feel better. Treatment can vary depending on a person's experience, and may include therapy, medication, or both. It may take time to recover from a mental health issue, just as it sometimes takes time to recover from an injury or physical illness.

People with mental illness are **not** weak. In fact, recognizing that you need help with a mental health issue takes strength and courage.

Myth: There is no hope for people with mental health issues. Once you have a mental health issue, you can't recover.

Reality: There are more treatments, services, and community support systems available today than ever before, and research shows that they work (mentalhealth.gov). People with mental health issues can feel better and recover with the right treatment, allowing them to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. While early identification and treatment is ideal, it is never too late to seek mental health care.

Myth: People with mental health issues can't handle the stress of holding down a job.

Reality: Most people with mental health issues live productive, active lives. Studies show that employees with mental health problems are just as motivated, punctual, and hardworking as other employees.⁴ When employees experiencing mental health issues receive effective treatment, it can result in increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and a stronger sense of belonging at work.

² <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

³ <https://hr.untsystem.edu/sites/default/files/wellbeing/awp-mentalhealthawarenessworksheets.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/mental-health-myths-facts>

Myth: I can't do anything to help someone with a mental health issue.

Reality: You can take simple steps to support people with mental health issues. These steps include:

- Helping share information about mental health resources
- Modeling healthy habits for mental health self-care
- Using respectful language when talking about mental health issues
- Learning and sharing the facts about mental health, especially when you hear things that are untrue
- Treating them with respect, just as you would anyone else

At UW-Madison's Employee Assistance Office, referrals from a trusted coworker or supervisor are one of the most common ways that employees learn of our services. Supervisors have an opportunity to connect people with the help they need by sharing their knowledge about campus resources. If you have questions about how to share campus mental health resources with employees, you can always reach out to the EAO for a confidential consultation.

Myth: You only need to take care of your mental health if you have a mental health issue.

Reality: Just like your physical health, everyone can benefit from taking active steps to promote their well-being and improve their mental health. Mental health is a continuum, and you may fall anywhere on the spectrum. The World Health Organization stresses that mental health is more than just the absence of mental health issues, but also actively pursuing and preserving happiness and well-being.⁵

It is never a mistake to prioritize your mental health or build healthy habits, even if you feel like you're doing well. If you want to learn more about mental health, reach out to the Employee Assistance Office or LifeMatters for a consultation.

LifeMatters Monthly Promotions and Resources

Our affiliate partner, LifeMatters, offers promotions, newsletters, webinars and more! Go to mylifematters.com and sign in with Bucky2. Webinars are located under "Quick Links."

[Next month's promotional content](#) includes the following.

Flyers:

- A Healthy Sleep Routine
- Vacationing on a Budget
- Addressing Harassment (for managers)

⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

Posters:

- Sleep Well
- Smart Money
- Inclusion

Webinar: "Children and Mental Health: How to Advocate For Them"

This webinar will be hosted on June 28th at 12pm. A full description and meeting link will be available on the LifeMatters website next week.