



It's OK to talk about mental health.

In the modern workplace, in all industries, employees and organizations are changing their attitudes towards mental health. There is a movement to start talking about mental health productively and to reject stigma, the negative and prejudicial feelings that have traditionally kept people with mental health issues from seeking the support and guidance that they need.

It is especially important that those with mental health challenges and their colleagues can find support as early as possible. This month, we sat down with Victoria Davis, the Manager of Worksite and Community Well-Being at the **Mental Health Association of Erie County**, to learn about what to look for when you suspect that you or a colleague might be dealing with mental health challenges. You can break the stigma and talk about mental health—it's just a conversation away.

Know the warning signs. "Mental health issues don't just affect the person who experiences them," Davis emphasizes. "They affect everyone: colleagues, friends and co-workers." Here are some behavior changes you may see in the workplace if someone is experiencing a mental health issue—or that you may experience yourself.

- Decline in dependability or lower quality of work
- Decreased enthusiasm or frequent complaints
- Expression of grandiose or strange ideas
- Dramatic personality changes
- Late arrivals or absences
- Inability to make decisions

3 Steps to Help Someone Struggling with Mental Health

- 1. Be aware.** Notice changes in behavior. Learning the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders can help you to become more aware.
- 2. Respond by listening.** Ask them how they are doing, and use active listening skills to find out from them what is going on. Respect their privacy if they are not comfortable speaking with you.
- 3. Collaborate to help them get the help they need.** Don't diagnose their issue yourself or tell them what to do. Inform them of the Resources available to them, and support them as they decide what path is best for them. Let them know getting support is ok, and that they are not alone.

Learn coping skills. "There's no one-size-fits-all solution to dealing with mental health," Davis says. "Different coping methods work for different people." Here are some of the skills she suggests. "You have to figure out what works for you."

- Communicate and spend time with friends, family, and co-workers
- Exercise or walk outside during lunch
- Meditate or use relaxation techniques
- Listen to music

Get Support. As part of your **EAP** benefits, you, anyone in your household, and your colleagues may receive up to four sessions in person with a Master's Level clinician. We will work with you to problem solve, develop coping strategies, and connect to community resources, if needed. For an emergency situation, always call 911 first.

The Mental Health Association of Erie County, Inc. provides essential programs and services related to mental health, including: workplace trainings to address mental health, information and referral services, workshops and support groups, basic emotional skills training, child and family support, and legal and community advocacy.