BEING A

stigma*free*

COMPANY

LEARN THE FACTS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

If you have a mental health condition, you're not alone. One in 5 U.S. adults experiences some form of mental illness each year, and 1 in 17 has a condition such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or long-term recurring major depression.[1,2]

Despite their prevalence, we often have a hard time understanding mental health conditions. There are so many misconceptions about what mental illness is and what it means to live with a mental health condition. For example, mental illness is not the result of a personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. Likewise, it isn't about "getting over it" through willpower. Without meaning to, we may send those messages to a friend or coworker struggling with a mental health condition. These kinds of offhand comments can often add to the stigma that many living with a mental health condition experience.

RECOGNIZE THAT STIGMA IS REAL

None of us likes labels, and you certainly don't want to be labeled by a mental health condition. This can make you feel the pain of stigma—or a sense of disgrace that makes you feel different in a negative way. In the workplace, this may lead to teasing, harassment, lack of advancement opportunities or discrimination. Plus, if you're afraid of being misunderstood or unsupported, you might think twice about telling a supervisor, seeking treatment or managing a loved one's condition. Secrecy doesn't help anyone.

UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT

Mental health conditions greatly impact companies, both financially and in terms of morale. Productivity can suffer and turnover can be high. Absenteeism (frequently calling in sick) and its counter, presenteeism (working while sick when you should have called in), can be big problems. Depression is the leading cause of disability in the workplace. It significantly contributes to lost productivity through 2.5 absences per month. Severe depressive disorders cost an estimated $12,000 per employee each year. In addition, 4.6 days are lost each month due to anxiety disorders.[3]

EMBRACE A STIGMAFREE CULTURE

When workplaces pledge to be stigmafree, it makes a big difference! Making stigmafree culture a priority visibly shows and reinforces that your company values employees' overall health, including emotional well-being and physical health. A stigmafree workplace might offer the following:

> Health and wellness programs
> Manager and employee education
> Employee engagement activities about mental health
> Information about available mental health resources
> Social activities that let colleagues form supportive relationships
> Ways for employees to get involved with community activities and events
> Respectful, supportive communication to break the silence around mental health conditions

Sources
1. Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved Oct. 23, 2015, from http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-adults.shtml
2. Serious Mental Illness (SMI) Among Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved Oct. 23, 2015, from http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/serious-mental-illness-smi-among-us-adults.shtml
3. NAMI Massachusetts. Bad for business: The business case for overcoming mental illness stigma in the workplace. Retrieved April 13, 2016, from http://bit.ly/1ql56mn

WORKING WELL

HOW TO PROMOTE A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

Stigma, the hidden burden of mental health conditions, can be as hard to deal with as the condition itself. It affects people's well-being, prevents them from seeking treatment and damages self-esteem. The effects can last long after someone has engaged in recovery.

EVERYONE CAN PLAY A ROLE

> Use respectful language to talk about mental health conditions.

> Challenge misconceptions when you see or hear them.

> See the person, not the condition.

> Offer support if you think someone is having trouble.

AVOID LABELS SUCH AS THE FOLLOWING:

> Challenged
> Crazy
> Demented
> Lunatic
> Normal/not normal

> Psycho/psychopath
> Schizo
> Special
> Sufferer/victim
> Wacko

USE RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE THAT DOES NOT DEFINE SOMEONE BY AN ILLNESS:

INSTEAD OF…	TRY…
She's bipolar	She has bipolar disorder/She's living with bipolar disorder
Schizophrenic	person with schizophrenia
Manic depressive	person with bipolar disorder
The mentally ill	people with a mental illness/mental health condition
Committed suicide	died by suicide

stigma*free*

nami
National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.NAMI.org | 800-950-6264

NAMI   NAMICommunicate   NAMICommunicate   notalone.nami.org | ok2talk.org