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Group Benefits

What's on your mind?®
Start educating to help reduce stigma

Some pretend mental health problems don't exist and deny that stigma is present in their workplace. But, acknowledging and dealing with mental health stigma in the workplace may help a company become a leader in corporate and social responsibility.

What can you do to reduce mental health stigma in your workplace?

Workplace culture and values are key to sending the message that you value your employees and will work with and support them if they suffer from any illness, including mental illness.

Education can help

Good, credible information about mental health can help reduce stigma based on fear, myths, and lack of understanding about what's going on with a person with a mental health condition.

One technique involves contact-based education. This means actually meeting, talking to, or hearing from someone that has or had a mental health problem. Local community agencies can be a valuable resource to find a speaker for a workplace event. If you can't arrange direct contact with someone, there are great anti-stigma videos like those from the "Opening Minds" project of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Hearing how normal everyday people live through the experience of mental health disorders and recover as productive, high functioning people - just like those dealing with physical illnesses – can help transform attitudes and behaviours.

Be there for an employee returning from an extended absence

Transitioning back into the workplace following an extended leave of absence (whether it be medical or non-medical in nature) can be a very stressful time. A big contributor to this stress may be the employee's perception of what their colleagues and manager will be assuming about their absence and how they will respond to any questions. You can play a big part in making this transition less stressful by following the tips available in our return to work guide, available at www.manulife.ca/mentalhealth.

Support an equitable workplace structure

Leaders who are informed about mental health stigma can help set and implement values, principles, rules, and policies that treat mental health like any other health condition. Company policies and procedures can ensure mentally healthy work practices are in place to prevent the development of mental health problems or aggravating existing ones. Most companies have policies and procedures for physical safety but may not have thought about mental health and psychological safety in the workplace. Placing limits on the amount of overtime someone can put in, codes of conduct about workplace behaviour, and appropriate accommodations for return to work after being off with a mental health condition can help to create a work environment that supports everyone.

For more information, please visit www.manulife.ca/mentalhealth.