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Supporting Employees in Times of Uncertainty

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**Presented by: Dympna Carten, Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN),
Health Services Authority**

**Questions & Answers with: Shannon Seymour, Director of The
Wellness Centre**



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**THE PESSIMIST
COMPLAINS ABOUT THE WIND.
THE OPTIMIST EXPECTS IT TO CHANGE.
THE LEADER ADJUSTS THE SAILS.**

— *John Maxwell* —



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Supporting Employees in Times of Uncertainty

- Introduction
- Challenges unexpected and expected
- Early interventions – spotting the signs of stress and poor mental health
- Encourage people to talk about their mental health – supporting staff to stay well and in work
- Help available – how to access

Introduction

- Working remotely, restrictions, negative news & the economic recession caused by the pandemic, has affected many people's mental health.
- In February 2021, the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) conducted a survey to look at [the impact COVID-19 had on mental health](#).
- During the pandemic, about [4 in 10](#) adults in the U.S. reported symptoms of anxiety or of a depressive disorder, a increase from [one in ten](#) from January to June 2019.
- Research from July 2020 found specific negative impacts on mental health, such as:
 - difficulty sleeping (36%)**
 - increases in alcohol consumption or substance use (12%)**
 - difficulty eating (32%)**
 - worsened chronic conditions (12%)**
- Researchers have found that social isolation and loneliness were linked to worse cardiovascular and mental health.

Challenges unexpected and expected

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- Getting back into a routine
- Juggling traffic, hair, make up – clothes
- New expenses – transportation/childcare
- Introverts, people who enjoy working on your own and being on your own
- 'Social anxiety'
- Manning your own time / schedule – potential increase in productivity

Challenges unexpected and expected

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- Adjust to new protocols
- Office politics –being able to adapt
- New medical condition/ongoing treatment may have to be at appointments for a significant amount of time.
- New parents having to return to work having to spend a prolonged amount of time at home.
- Coping with bereavement

Early interventions – spotting the signs of stress and poor mental health

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Physical

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Aches and pains
- Visible tension or trembling
- Nervous shaky speech
- Excess sweating
- Indigestion
- Nauseous

Early interventions – spotting the signs of stress and poor mental health

Psychological

- Tearfulness
- Mood changes-blunted/high mood
- Indecisiveness
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of humor
- Increased sensitivity
- Lapses in memory/ confusion
- Irrational thought processes
- Hypervigilant
- Responding to sensations and experiences not observable by others
- Expressions of self-harm

Early interventions – spotting the signs of stress and poor mental health

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Behavioral

- Increased smoking and drinking
- Withdrawal/less social
- Irritability/anger/aggression
- Over excitement
- Restlessness
- Lateness/overworking
- Difficulty with coworkers
- Disruptive/argumentative behavior
- Isolation
- Hyperactivity

Encourage people to talk about their mental health – supporting staff to stay well and in work

If you have a concern, it is crucial that you facilitate an early conversation about needs - to identify and implement appropriate support and adjustments.

In all cases, this should be treated the same way as someone with a physical condition.

**It is okay to ask
"Are you okay?"**



Encourage people to talk about their mental health – supporting staff to stay well and in work

- Any conversation should be had in private
- In a calm, welcoming environment
- Protect the persons dignity
- Avoid interruptions (turn off phones, ensure no one can walk in)
- Ask simple, open, and nonjudgmental questions
- Avoid patronizing responses
- Maintain good eye contact
- Listen actively and carefully
- Be prepared for silence and be patient
- Avoid making assumptions & underestimating people

Encourage people to talk about their mental health – supporting staff to stay well and in work

Questions to ask

- How are you doing at the moment?
- You seem to be a bit down/upset/ under pressure/frustrated/angry. Is everything okay?
- I've noticed you've been arriving late recently, and I wondered if you're, okay?
- I've noticed the reports are late when they usually are not. Is everything okay?
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- What would you like to happen? How?
- What support do you think might help?
- Have you spoken to your GP or looked for help anywhere else?

Encourage people to talk about their mental health – supporting staff to stay well and in work

Questions to avoid

- You're clearly struggling. What's up?
- Why can't you just get your act together?
- What do you expect me to do about it?

- Your performance is really unacceptable right now – what's going on?
- Everyone else is in the same boat and they're okay. Why aren't you?
- Who do you expect to pick up all the work that you can't manage?

Help available – useful resources

- In-house Occupational Health Program
- Employee Assistance Program-EAP 1-345-949-9559
- The Counselling Centre- 1-345-949-8789
- Emergency Room/ 911
- Mental Health Helpline for advice- 1-800-534-6463
- HSA-Behavioural Health Outpatient Department- 1-345-244-2650
- AA-1-345-926-9044
- Encourage check up with their General Practitioner
- Private therapy



If you feel someone is unwell and may be a danger to themselves or others you can make an application under the Section 5 of the Mental Health Act 2013 where they can be reviewed by a Psychiatrist.



Feeling anxious? Call 1-800-534-6463(MIND)

During times of crisis, you may find your mood and feelings being affected. You may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping. Do know that it is okay to not be okay and that caring professionals are here for you.

Call 1-800-534-MIND (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)

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