

**How
are
you?**



Mental health in the workplace

Guide for managers



Five good reasons to take mental health seriously

Is it worthwhile for managers to pay attention to mental health? Yes! There are some solid arguments in favour of this:

Good reason no. 1: Costs.

On average, an organisation experiences a productivity loss of between 3 and 8% due to mental health. These costs can easily be reduced – take a look at the protective factors on pages 4 and 5 of this brochure.

Good reason no. 2: Success and innovation.

- 2 Organisations that take the mental health of their employees seriously see increased loyalty, motivation and innovation from their employees. Health promotion and success are therefore mutually beneficial.

Good reason no. 3: Loyalty.

If you consistently support an employee during a mental health crisis, he or she is not likely to forget that. The team that successfully supports the employee in question will also remember this. These experiences create a sense of identity with the company and empower employees to achieve outstanding results.

Good reason no. 4: Egotism.

Does this sound like a paradox? It's not. One in two people will experience mental health issues during their lifetime, and for one in four people, these issues will restrict their ability to work. This also applies to managers and company owners. As such, you might also one day benefit from better knowledge regarding mental health – or indeed be set back by a discriminatory attitude.

Good reason no. 5: Doing the right thing.

There is always room for improvement when it comes to important values within our society, such as ethical behaviour, tolerance, social security and helping others. In the event of an illness, we would all like to be able to rely on other people – including our managers and team colleagues – supporting us rather than letting us down. Why should this be any different for depression than it would be in the case of a heart attack or colitis?



**How
are
you?**

Key tips

- **Create an environment in your organisation** where people can talk about mental health without fear of discrimination or dismissal. Lead by example and tell other people how you are every now and then (more information on pages 5 and 9).
- **Don't turn a blind eye** if you notice that something is wrong with an employee. It is understandable if you feel uncomfortable, but it is important for everyone – yourself included – that you take action. Page 8 of this brochure provides information on how to have conversations with employees.
- **When you want the affected person to talk to you, start by building trust.** Tell the employee how much you value them and tell them why you want to talk to them: not to find out whether you should give them notice, but to find out how you can provide them with better support.
- **Don't hesitate to seek advice from the disability insurance (DI) provider or your sick pay insurance provider.** Read more about this on pages 10 to 12 of this brochure. It may come as a surprise to you that there are a wide range of DI support options available, although they do vary by region. The legal framework conditions among sick pay insurers also vary greatly.
- **Try to cooperate with the person affected, the treating doctor and, where applicable, the case management team.** Round-table discussions with all those involved is still an unfamiliar idea for many and uncertainty on the part of the person affected may often cause them to hold back. Clearly communicate the aims of the conversation.
- **Use the available services to make reintegration easier.** Ask the DI provider whether you are entitled to a support subsidy when an employee returns to work.

How to promote good mental health

Someone who feels safe and comfortable in the workplace stays healthy and is ready to fully commit to their role. A leadership style that promotes good mental health comprises seven key factors.

1. Certainty.

Certainty occurs when requirements and expectations are clearly communicated. Other key words and phrases include tolerance and openness when dealing with errors, transparency and predictability.

→ *In order to ensure fluid communication, hold fixed weekly and monthly meetings as well as regular employee meetings and target-setting meetings. Be consistent. Say what you do and do what you say.*

2. Appreciation.

Employees need superiors who trust them, give them responsibility and appreciate them – not only in terms of their performance but also on a personal level.

→ *Appreciation only has a positive effect if it is genuine and appropriate. Taking time for your employees, giving them attention and seeing them as people, including within the organisation, reduces stress and encourages good performance.*

4

3. Appropriate workload.

The right workload can vary. A workload that is easy to achieve today may turn out to be too much next week because the person in question may also be experiencing personal difficulties. Being underchallenged can also be harmful to our health.

→ *In order to prevent burnout or bore-out syndrome in employees, contribute in a proactive manner by asking for regular feedback on workloads and time resources, ensuring that activities are appropriate to employees' specialist qualifications, communicating priorities when processing tasks and offering challenges.*

4. Motivation rather than pressure.

Too much pressure leads to stress and this can have a long-term negative impact on (mental) health. Someone who feels comfortable within the organisation, can identify with their work and can see the point of their work, is self-motivated and less susceptible to stress.

→ *You stimulate motivation If you are able to align the personal values and inner motivations of your employees with the aims of the company.*

5. Flexibility.

Excessively rigid requirements and a lack of freedom to make decisions are detrimental to employee health. Take a liberal approach to management, trust your employees and make sure they know that they can count on your support at any time.

→ *Avoid pre-structuring tasks too much and promote independent project working. Tailor flexibility to individual employees and make sure you don't overburden anyone with too much freedom.*

6. Working environment.

For many people, the main motivator for going to work is a good relationship with colleagues and superiors. A comfortable working environment is therefore crucial for the mental health of your employees. As a manager, you can make a significant contribution in this regard.

→ *Act as a role model in matters great and small, set an example in terms of fairness and be honest, tolerant and predictable. Make sure that you are available. Allow personal and social interactions between your employees.*

7. Anti-discriminatory attitude.

Mental health issues and the associated performance losses are still greatly stigmatised in society. This makes it harder to seek help in a crisis and can exacerbate the situation

→ *Do not allow harmless "remarks" about those concerned. Provide clear information and show that you support the employee affected, just as you would if someone had to go to hospital due to pneumonia. As a manager, you can also contribute to anti-discrimination by speaking openly about your own state of mind in times of personal stress.*

5

Source: www.compasso.ch — *Berufliche Integration* — Informationsportal für Arbeitgeber (available in German, French and Italian)

Recognising mental health issues

Despite everything we know about mental health issues, they are sadly still not recognised nearly often enough. There is one simple sign that demonstrates this tendency: Those affected are often considered to be “difficult” employees. People are therefore aware that there is a problem, but this problem is misinterpreted: Instead of a mental illness, the problem is interpreted as a slump in performance or a character flaw. This triggers an impulse to exert pressure or to look the other way rather than offering support.

Early warning signs.

Some early warning signs occur with multiple mental health issues, while others are more specific. As a manager, you need to keep your eyes and ears open and be aware of the possibility of mental health issues. This applies to signs that you recognise in others as well as those that you may notice in yourself.

General signs.

- Fluctuating performance
- Unpredictability
- Sensitivity and increased irritability
- Susceptibility to conflict
- Tension
- Exhaustion

6

Early warning signs of high stress levels.

- Your neck is tense, your stomach burns, your heart pounds and your chest is tight.
- Your mind is filled with negative thoughts, which you cannot stop.
- At work, your mind suddenly goes blank.
- You are physically tired and exhausted, but you cannot get to sleep.

Early warning signs of burnout.

- You can only see obstacles ahead of you. A feeling of heaviness takes hold.
- You put off a lot of things, even at home.
- You cannot relax properly when sleeping or at weekends. And your holiday feeling has already passed after a few days.

Early warning signs of depression.

- You are tired and exhausted regardless of how long you have slept. Some people with depression wake up very early in the morning and/or lie awake for a long time before falling asleep.
- You are quickly irritated and feel criticised or rejected. Conflicts are mounting up.
- Concentration is difficult. You seem absent and distracted. You no longer perform consistently. Sometimes you cannot do anything. Some people with depression may even call in sick. Then the next day, it is business as usual.
- Nothing makes you happy anymore.

Early warning signs of AD(H)D.

- A huge discrepancy can be seen between potential and achievement.
- Performance is very variable and can fluctuate between extremes – sometimes it is excellent, sometimes completely unsatisfactory.
- In direct contact, those affected are often persuasive, but have difficulty with details. Others have to “clear up the mess”.
- Brief conflicts are frequent, but after half an hour “everything has been forgotten”.
- Those affected are likeable, even when they have forgotten yet again to bring the documents to the meeting.

Early warning signs of anxiety disorder.

- You have frequent dizzy spells and feel weak at the knees. You are also shaky, with wide pupils and sweaty hands. You are nervous and irritable.
- You avoid certain situations; for example, you leave colleagues to deal with customers (avoidance behaviour).

Early warning signs of addiction.

- Those affected are sensitive or have bouts of temper. On the other hand, they are often overly friendly.
- There are increased conflicts and fluctuations in performance.
- Short absences occur more frequently.
- There is a noticeable smell of alcohol (breath, skin).



How
are
you?

Weekend.
Wage negotiations.
Burnout.

**We talk about
mental health too.**

The challenge: have a conversation

An employee seems unfocused and absent. An employee has had several one and two-day absences within a short period of time. You have a vague feeling that something is not right. Could it be that he or she has a mental health issue? You want to intervene before things get worse. Maybe there is a prospect that they will be unable to work and the whole team is starting to suffer as a result of the situation. But how can you tackle the matter?

It is worth knowing that there is never a “right time”.

First and foremost, if you are feeling uneasy, do not wait, take action. Do not collect further “evidence” but try to start a conversation. It is crucial to take action early when it comes to mental health issues. Not only does it improve the chances of recovery for the person affected, it also largely saves those around them from having to pay the price, because you can take supportive steps in good time.

How to conduct the conversation.

It is a real challenge to have a conversation in such a complex situation. You may be uncertain, do not wish to hurt the other person or cannot find the right words.

- 8 Two things are important: firstly, that you tell the other person what you have noticed clearly but without judgement. And secondly, that you tell the other person how much you value them. This approach is demonstrated to optimum effect in the following example: The example can also help you with useful phrases.

→ *We have been working together for four years now and I value you greatly. But I don't fully understand what you have been going through recently. I haven't seen you like this before. You are usually so committed. Now there have been these conflicts. Of course, that can*



How
are
you?

**Car.
Overtime.
Insomnia.**

**We talk about
mental health too.**

happen now and again, but not so frequently. You feel like you are being treated unfairly, but the other team members can't understand it. They all like you and want the best for you. And neither you nor I have been able to provide an explanation for what is happening. Over the years, I have seen that mental health issues can sometimes be behind these kinds of changes. I know that this may offend you. But if this is the case, it is important that we are aware of it. Then we will be able to support you. Have a think about it.

Lay the groundwork.

These kinds of conversations are easier if they do not take place completely out of context. As a manager, get into the habit of regularly giving your employees the opportunity to discuss their mental health. If someone is coming to work with a stiff back and gritted teeth, ask them about it. For example, use a quiet moment to ask the project manager how he is progressing with his task and new team. You have recently noticed that he has frequently been sitting at his desk with dark circles under his eyes and that he seems a little absent. You know that he has just become a father, so ask him how he is and how he is coping with double the amount of stress.

→ *By regularly discussing mental health, you are showing that anyone can speak about it in your organisation. The most powerful signal you can give is talking about your own mental health. This then paves the way for introducing the possibility – without judgement – in a conversation that the present difficulties may be related to a mental health issue.*

Keep at it.

Do not expect the situation to be resolved with a single conversation. It usually takes several attempts before an employee is ready to talk about a mental health issue.

→ *In the initial conversation, mention why you are asking and what help is available. In this way, you are reassuring the employee that they will not be fired and you are giving them the opportunity to talk openly about their problems.*

Next steps

After a conversation, you know that you have an employee with a mental health condition and impaired performance. Questions that may now be of interest include: How does this condition affect their ability to work and their performance? Have they been given a sick note? If so, for how long? Does their workload within the organisation need to be reduced? How will they be reintegrated into the company?

And above all, where can I get support?

This is where the cantonal labour inspectorate can help.

These inspectorates act as points of contact when it comes to implementing legally required health protection. They offer advice on mental health and can help you to navigate the minefield of support services. You will find lots of useful information on the website www.psyatwork.ch (available in German, French and Italian)

How sick pay insurance can help.

The law states that employees must be paid a wage for a specific period while they are ill. If you do not wish to bear these costs yourself, you can take out sick pay insurance.

- 10 → *The policies vary greatly among the individual sick pay insurers. Some insurers have recognised that early support for mental health conditions is not only useful but also more cost-effective. For example, they offer case management or coaching, work experience and graduated increases in ability to work.*

How DI can help.

Isn't disability insurance responsible for pensions? Yes, but in the last ten years the focus has increasingly shifted to job retention. DI is therefore important for you. It has a range of tools, some of which are used at an early stage: early detection, early intervention and rehabilitation measures.

Early detection. A DI declaration is possible after at least 30 days of inability to work or repeated frequent work absences over the course of a year. If the person affected does not do a self-declaration, it is advisable to submit the declaration on his/her



behalf, though only by prior agreement and obtaining his/her consent. This step is recommended if reduced performance is an emerging factor. You will learn which diagnostic steps and support measures may be useful. However, early detection is primarily a preliminary assessment as to whether a DI application is indicated. Thus the early detection declaration is not actually a DI application. If other support steps are required, a DI application is needed in addition.

Early intervention. The aim of early intervention is to prevent a longer period of inability to work. Therefore, the help provided in this context should be prompt and relatively unbureaucratic. A maximum of CHF 20,000 is available per person for early intervention measures. The following options are available:

- **Workplace adaptation.** People with mental health issues, and particularly those with ADHD or autism, experience sensory overload and need quiet workplaces. DI can help here with noise-reducing wall panels, for example.
- **Training courses, placement service and professional advice.** Sometimes the workplace is not appropriate for the person affected. An internal or external change of post can help to resolve this problem. DI provides support in terms of implementation and training requirements.
- **Socio-professional measures and employment measures.** Socio-professional measures – often in the form of coaching or within the context of case management – help re-establish the ability to work in the workplace. In the event of mental health issues, it is usually not the workplace but rather the job profile that needs to be adapted. Employment measures come into effect when someone is unable to work in their regular workplace. DI specialists can advise you and the person affected, and assist with the process.

11

Professional rehabilitation measures. If someone has been unable to work for a longer period of time, their performance must be re-established gradually. DI provides support in this respect by means of the following measures:

- **Integration measure.** This measure often follows early intervention and comprises the first steps to professional reintegration, including resilience training and business-related integration with support at the workplace. Generally, a case manager supports the integration measure.

While early intervention can be triggered with little bureaucracy, an integration measure must be enacted. At the earliest, the measure comes into effect after six months of impaired performance. The measure itself generally lasts between three months and one year. In exceptional cases, it can be granted for a further year. Administration varies greatly according to the individual situation.

- **Retraining, support for initial training.** If it is not possible to stabilise a precarious situation, conventional professional rehabilitation is the remaining option. Retraining is the most important and most common measure in this respect.
 - *The DI office remains a point of contact for young people and young adults who fail or postpone initial training due to health reasons. The DI office can clarify whether certain additional costs will be covered.*
- **Work experience.** It is often the final stretch on the road to recovery: For a period of six months, a sick person can try out another job in a different area of activity or a different department with their previous employer or with a new employer. The DI office provides a daily allowance for this purpose and the work experience is usually supervised by a case management or coaching officer.

Financial support from DI.

The DI office not only organises pensions, but is also acquainted with other financial instruments.

- **Training period subsidies.** If you are taking on an employee after a long period of illness, you can apply for training period subsidies from the DI office if the person affected requires a high level of support and their capability is still reduced.
 - **Daily allowance.** In certain circumstances, the DI office pays a daily allowance, for instance during integration measures, retraining and initial training. There is no daily allowance in the early intervention phase.
- 12 • **Capital assistance.** This is mentioned for the sake of completeness; capital assistance comes into play if someone has to become self-employed for health reasons.

Case Management.

Case managers deal with the interface between the people affected, care-givers, insurers and employers. There are private case management companies which specialise in mental health. However, sick pay insurers and the DI office often also undertake their own case management.

Case managers provide important support for all parties involved. Their work is very practice-oriented and focusses on job retention or professional reintegration. As part of this work, they coordinate the collaboration between the different parties.

Understanding medical certificates: performance-related sick note

What many people do not know, and you yourself may not know, is that there is not only regular sick leave, but also a performance-related sick note. This is used not (only) to relieve someone for a period of time but primarily to relieve them from particularly stressful duties. In the case of mental health conditions, it is not usually the number of working hours that is the issue, but rather the stress resulting from various activities. Work activities are meaningfully adjusted on a case-by-case basis, for example by relieving the employee of a stressful task for a certain period of time.

An example of a performance-related sick note.

Mr Beat Meier is undergoing medical treatment. Due to his condition, he is on sick leave. His working hours will be reduced by 30% between XX.XX.–XX.XX.2020. In addition, his output has been reduced to 50% during his remaining work hours. In particular, he is unable to undertake any late or night shifts or any on-call services.

As agreed with Mr Meier, you may contact me at any time.

(Doctor's signature)

13

Additional relief measures.

It may also be the case that an employee is unable to undertake any shift work due to illness. Or that someone with a sick note can continue to attend vocational school courses. Or, conversely, that apprentices may only be on sick leave from the vocational school. In such cases, in particular, contact between everyone involved – you, the person affected and the caregiver – is urgently required.



Mutual openness and tolerance

Mental health issues are a reality faced by employers and managers in today's workplace. This brochure has provided you with information on how to deal with this reality and who you can turn to for support. To conclude, here are a few further thoughts to reassure you.

We are surrounded by people who have regained their health.

It is a fact that if you manage an organisation or have a management role, you have many employees who have already lived through a mental health issue and have regained their health. You probably do not even know it, as they are going about their work quite normally. These people may be your managing directors or on your board of directors. These people will also be part of your cleaning team and can be found at all other levels of the organisation.

Why is the subject of "mental health" so difficult for everyone?

Mental health conditions trigger fear and unsettle us. As a result, there are a lot of false views and preconceptions. Here are a few examples:

14 *Preconception: I can't have a mental health condition. I am in control of my life.*

Fact: If only. Unfortunately, nobody has control over whether they suffer a mental health condition or remain healthy. You can only take limited precautions. The most common remark by those affected is "I never thought that it could happen to me."

Preconception: Mr Müller is coming back. But he will no longer be able to work under pressure.

Fact: People with a mental illness usually recover completely and can take on responsibilities again. The earlier the intervention, the better the prognosis and the quicker the recovery.

Preconception: They are pretending to be ill!

Fact: Of course there are people who abuse the social system. However, the majority of these people pretend to be physically ill. Even they shy away from the discrimination associated with a mental illness.



When we're faced with mental issues: Suggested viewing and reading

In the film **GLEICH UND ANDERS** ("Same and Different"; available in German and French), people with mental illnesses give us a direct insight into the challenges they face at work. They give a very personal and real account of their breakdowns and successes, their often serious money worries and their various experiences with employers, doctors and social institutions. As the views of relatives and employers are consistently incorporated, we are able to build differentiated, real-life pictures of people with mental health conditions.

A film by Jürg Neuenschwander, in collaboration with Therese Stutz Steiger HD, 72 minutes, surround sound, 2016

The film was supported by Pro Infirmis, the Federal Bureau for the Equality of People with Disabilities and the Swiss Mental Health Foundation Pro Mente Sana.

For further information on the film, visit: www.promentesana.ch (available in German)

15

Up-to-date advice on the topic

(in German only)

pro mente sana

Beobachter
EDITION



Nowadays, most of us work not with devices and physical strength but with our brains. Mental health has become a kind of Achilles heel in the world of work.

- What can trigger or promote a mental illness in the work environment?
- How can symptoms be recognised at an early stage?
- How does effective prevention work?
- What treatment and help is available?

The author and psychiatrist Dr Thomas Ihde-Scholl provides answers to these questions in this observer's guide.

Thomas Ihde-Scholl
Wenn die Psyche streikt
240 pages, ISBN 987-3-85569-908-7
Fr. 39.90

**ORDER
NOW!**

promentesana.ch
kontakt@promentesana.ch
044 446 55 00

More information at www.how-are-you.ch

- Conversation tips for managers, persons affected and people close to them
- Suggestions for mental health care
- Addresses and services available
- Information about the “How are you?” campaign

Advisory services

Pro Mente Sana offers specialist, confidential advice if you want to know how and whether to address mental health issues in the workplace or if you have legal or insurance-related questions: Pro Mente Sana advice line: Tel. 0848 800 858 (in German; standard charge); see also www.promentesana.ch.

The DI office is a rehabilitation insurance provider and possible partner for health problems in the workplace. An early detection declaration enables options and limitations to be explained quickly and simply.

You can find the relevant addresses at www.ahv-iv.ch/en > *Contacts* > *DI offices*.

Order or download brochures

At www.how-are-you.ch > *More about the campaign* > *Order brochures* you can order or download further copies of this brochure, a brochure for employees, a general brochure on mental health and disease, a brochure on mental health and disease in the family and a brochure containing tips on how to conduct talks.

16

Also available

For information about first aid mental health courses, please visit www.ensa.swiss

Campaign partner:

Cantons and pro mente sana

On behalf of:

Gesundheitsförderung Schweiz
Promotion Santé Suisse
Promozione Salute Svizzera



This brochure was supported by:

Beobachter
EDITION