TIP OF THE MONTH

Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace

Adapted from FEAP Mental Resource Guide for Managers and Employees

Whether at work or at home, new and chronic stressors elevate the risk of mental distress and emotional exhaustion. And, while we may not be able to rid ourselves of the cause of stress, we can relieve our minds and bodies of stress and support our colleagues and team members through their own experiences. Everyone plays an important role in supporting mental health in the workplace.

All staff members can actively support their coworkers by:

- Focusing on what is within your control.
- Giving one another grace and assuming positive intent.
- Remembering that self-compassion and connection make us stronger.
- Watching for signs that indicate others are struggling, such as missing deadlines, increased absences, irritability or anger, difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or making work transitions.
- Expressing concern: If you are worried about someone, tell them, and ask how they are doing. Then actively listen. You might say, “You haven’t seemed like yourself this week, how are you doing?”
- Routinely reminding one another about resources for mental and emotional health.

Managers can support their team members’ mental health.

While everyone experiences some symptoms of distress occasionally, managers should particularly be

alert to a pattern of behaviors which may indicate a cause for concern, such as:

- Change in interpersonal relationships, such as withdrawal from co-workers, overreaction to criticism, inappropriate outbursts, complaints from others.
- Reports of chronic fatigue, insomnia, frequent headaches, or stomach aches.
- Fluctuation in work quality, inability to concentrate, procrastination, mood swings, increased agitation, frequent periods of anxiety or tenseness, negative attitude, emptiness/loss of direction.

Exhibiting an open mind and supportive demeanor surrounding mental health is one of the best ways to influence others to do the same. You can do this by:

- Being aware of where you are emotionally and normalize checking in on how people are doing, and looking for ways to build stress relief and self-care into the work day.
- Reinforcing each of your team member's sense of purpose and that each individual matters.
- Responding supportively to employees who are struggling. See Conversation Tips and Inclusive Language Guidance.
- Offering to help them connect with care. FEAP provides assessments, referrals, and brief counseling.
- Supporting employees in taking needed breaks and time off to disconnect from work and recharge.
- Leading with compassion and making accommodations when possible or necessary.

Don't forget that supporting mental health includes taking care of yourself. Strategies for success include:

- Taking needed breaks to help restore and be more productive. When you take time off, disconnect from work to recharge.
- Restoring yourself for a few brief minutes to build resilience and support your mental health.
- Increasing physical activity as a moderator of stress.

If you need assistance or advice, FEAP is here to help. Schedule an appointment or contact us at 434.243.2643.

To access on-demand resources, please check out our FEAP Virtual Resource Library, which offers educational material curated by FEAP counselors.

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