



Embracing
mental health
discussions in
the workplace



Elevating mental wellness in the workplace is proven to be effective for employee health and satisfaction.

From celebrities and media, to close friends and family, there has been a noted uptick in mental health conversations around the world. One clear exception, however, continues to be in the workforce, where people are concerned about the stigma and the negative impact the mention of mental health may have on their careers.

To help you establish a safe and supportive workplace setting where mental health can be discussed, we've gathered insight from noted psychiatrist Dr. John Oldham, chief of staff at The Menninger Clinic and a professor at Baylor College of Medicine, on how you can foster an environment that is supportive of mental health in the workplace.

Employees desire confidential support for mental health



believe it's inappropriate to discuss mental health at work¹



of those with a diagnosed mental health condition did not confide in workplace management¹



fear the impact disclosing their mental health need will have on their career¹

Setting the stage for a safe conversation—if an employee wants to talk

Successful mental health conversations leave employees feeling heard, understood, and hopeful that if they need it, there is help. If an employee approaches you, make sure you are providing:

Full, undivided attention.

Through body language, removing distractions (i.e., closing laptops, silencing phone, etc.), mentally preparing for a discussion, and getting in the frame of mind.

A quiet location.

Find a private room or consider going for a walk outside. Engaging in physical activity can help reduce some of the discomfort surrounding the dialogue.

Confidentiality.

Foster a workplace that values open communication and reassures confidentiality.



I Conversation tips

Listen.

Show compassion and appreciation that your colleague confided in you. A simple “Thank you for trusting me with this information” or “I’m here to listen” are good places to start.

Respond with empathy.

- “What you’re going through sounds difficult.”
- “It seems like you’ve got a lot on your plate right now.”

Remain non-judgmental.

Do not minimize or maximize how a person is feeling.

Language to avoid:

- “Don’t worry. This is just a small problem.”
- “Stop focusing on the bad stuff. Look at all the good things you have going for you.”

From depression to family issues, employees are in need of mental health support on their terms.

60%

of employees report that mental health has had an impact on their work life¹

50%

say that when company leaders talk about their own mental health, they feel more comfortable to do the same¹

Refer to their experience as a continuum.

Recognize that we all have ups and downs in life, and there are times when mental health, like physical health, will be better and times when it will be worse.

Let them know if you “get” it.

Have you had a similar experience? Share it so the person doesn’t feel so alone. If relevant, indicate that you or a friend or family member found therapy helpful.

Be prepared for emotional reactions.

Everyone expresses themselves in a different manner. Prepare yourself for different potential reactions. Allow them to express their emotions fully. Stay calm and be a good listener.

Stay up to date on your company’s mental health resources.

Helping someone understand resources without discussing details can also make a difference.

| What you can do next

Following a conversation, make sure your colleague/employee is aware of what mental health support is available through your company.

Human Resources can provide guidance on what resources are offered and can help if he or she is unsure of what to do next.

Remind them that there are a variety of ways to receive confidential mental healthcare, with a therapist, counselor, or psychologist, whether it's in-person sessions or virtually.

Virtual care, such as Teladoc, can provide access by phone or video to a mental health professional to receive guidance seven days a week from anywhere, including the comfort of home or during a lunch break.

36%

are not aware of sources of support in their workplace¹

40%

would welcome remote access to mental health information and support¹



Healthy tips to ensure good mental wellness

- Pay attention to how you are thinking and feeling. Don't ignore what is uncomfortable.
- When stressed, use relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing, or other forms of physical relaxation.
- Take part in activities you enjoy and feel passionate about.
- Keep a healthy diet. Avoid nicotine, artificial energy drinks, or other energy supplements.
- Surround yourself with positive emotional support. Don't isolate yourself.
- Engage in regular physical activity.
- Aim to sleep 7-9 hours per night.
- Seek mental health counseling and psychiatric care if needed.

I would take my mental health appointments during my lunch break at work. With my schedule, it would be unlikely that I could get the benefits of seeing a therapist consistently without taking time off work. Teladoc has been a huge help. I don't feel like it's a hopeless struggle to make time for work and myself now.

Helia

Keep in mind, there is no health without mental health.
In the workplace, mental wellness should be valued from the top and visibly endorsed by the CEO and all managers.

The tips in this guide are provided to help you effectively and appropriately support those seeking help in your workplace.* There are many other resources available to support specific situations.

For more information on mental health, visit these organizations:

Teladoc: [Teladoc.com/therapy](https://teladoc.com/therapy)

Better Help: [BetterHelp.com](https://betterhelp.com)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) **: nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions

Mental Health America:** mhanational.org/MentalHealthInfo

Mental Health.gov:** mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health

John M. Oldham, M.D., M.S., is the chief of staff at The Menninger Clinic in Houston, Texas, a professor at Baylor College of Medicine, and an advisor to Teladoc Health.

He specializes in personality disorders and is recognized internationally as a leader in psychiatric medicine. A past president of the American Psychiatric Association and the American College of Psychiatrists, he is also the senior editor of *The American Psychiatric Publishing Textbook of Personality Disorders*, and an editor of the *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*.

* Not all tips may be appropriate or applicable in all situations. If you have any questions or concerns, contact your human resources department or a behavioral health professional. And, as always, call 911 or go to your local emergency room in the event of emergencies.

** These resources are provided for information purposes only, and do not constitute endorsement by Teladoc Health, Inc.

¹ 2019 study by Teladoc Health, commissioned through Ipsos MORI, of nearly 4,000 employees across the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Australia.



This conversation guidebook is produced by Teladoc Health, the leader in virtual care, providing millions with the treatment they need. Teladoc Health is committed to encouraging open dialogue and reducing stigma around mental health in the workplace.

Learn more at TeladocHealth.com

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