

AN EMPLOYEE GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH

General information

Common mental health difficulties are increasingly recognised within the workplace with around 20% of all 16-64 year olds suffering, and of these about a quarter are receiving treatment.

Mental Health difficulties now represent one of the biggest causes of workplace sickness and absence.

As the employee, what can you do?

- Keep at work. Most people with common mental health difficulties do better and feel better more quickly with the support and distraction provided by good work.
- Tell your manager that you are struggling and discuss how he and the company may help you.
- Socialise – the company of friends, family and workmates is important to avoid isolation and loneliness when you are suffering. It may be an effort to socialise but it is usually very helpful for recovery.
- Do “normal stuff” – try to keep your life as normal as possible and avoid withdrawal. So shop, see friends, keep the house tidy, and do the usual things that you do.
- Exercise – There is strong evidence that regular exercise is important to help recover and reduce the risk of reoccurrence of mental health difficulties. You may not feel like it, but try to at least go out for a brisk walk if you can.
- Food – make sure that you eat well, and regularly. Avoid too much sugar, but chocolate can be helpful in moderation.
- Sleep Hygiene - It is difficult to get better if you feel exhausted and have unrefreshing sleep. Establish a routine; avoid using laptops and gaming machines before bedtime. Avoid caffeine after 2pm, exercise during the day, sleep in a dark room wearing earplugs if noisy. Keep pets out of the room as they disturb you. Consider cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT)
- Care – Consider professional talking therapies (CBT). See your GP. Ask your manager to refer you to EAP.
- Online advice and support
 - www.mind.org.uk
 - www.sane.org.uk
 - <https://www.samaritans.org/>
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/>
- Avoid alcohol – Regular alcoholic drinks or excessive drinking reduces the effects of prescribed treatments, impacts on sleep hygiene and may prolong a mood disorder. Remember abstinence is best, but if you drink limit yourself to 14 units per week.
- Seek advice from your GP