cafetacenter.net
855-CAFÉ-TAC
cafetacenter@gmail.com

Questions You Can Ask

- How are you feeling today, really? Physically and mentally.

- What's taking up most of your head space right now?

- Tell me about a recent "win," either at work or at home.

- How can I support you this week?

- What's something you can do today that would be good for you?

- What's something you're looking forward to in the next few days?

- What are some goals we can work on this week?

- Who can help us reach these goals?

Supporting Employees with Mental Health Conditions Short Case Scenario: First Seek to Understand

This guide examines what strategies are effective in building a positive workplace culture around mental health rooted in openness, acceptance, and understanding between supervisors and employees.

It's based on a discussion from a CAFÉ TAC webinar from Navigating the Workplace: A Four-Part "Case Scenario" Series on First Seeking to Understand which you can find online at cafetacenter.net/navigating-the-workplace-a-four-part-case-scenario-series/.

Why Understanding?

Many challenges and difficulties involving mental health in the workplace are a result of misunderstanding. For people with mental health conditions to thrive in the workplace, there must be understanding that comes from effective communication, active listening, and a supportive culture.

This often means a person-first approach, focusing on the individual and their unique experiences rather than solely on their diagnosis. It's crucial to remember that individuals are more than their mental health conditions.

Find more resources to help employers understand mental health and support employee wellness at cafetacenter.net.

Communication Strategies

Effective communication is vital in creating a supportive workplace. This includes:

Effective Communication and Active Listening

- Utilizing open-ended questions to encourage open sharing.

- Practicing reflective listening to ensure you truly understand and connect with the individual.

- Creating a safe and judgment-free space for honest dialogue.

Disclosure in the Workplace

- Recognizing the benefits of disclosure, such as enabling access to necessary accommodations and helping break down stigma.

- Emphasizing the importance of individual choice. Encourage employees to disclose only to the extent they feel comfortable.

- Fostering a culture of mutual understanding that does not pressure employees to disclose.

Creating a Supportive Workplace Culture

Mental Health Check-Ins

- Regularly check in with employees to inquire about their well-being.

- Shift from solely task-focused interactions to include questions about their personal well-being.

- Example questions: "How are you feeling today?", "What's taking up most of your headspace right now?", "How can I support you?"

10 Tips for Workplace Mental Health

1. **Know Available Resources:** Direct employees to HR, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and local mental health services.

2. **Be Aware of Stressors:** Recognize external and internal pressures affecting employees' performance and well-being.

3. **Listen Actively:** Encourage open dialogue and truly listen without preparing responses.

4. **Encourage Open Discussions:** Normalize conversations around mental health through initiatives like Mental Health Month.

5. **Be Proactive with Support:** Offer help before issues escalate.

6. **Praise and Encourage Team Members:** Acknowledge efforts and provide positive reinforcement.

7. **Provide Reasonable Accommodations:** Adjust work environments and schedules to support employees' needs.

8. **Discuss Mental Health Openly:** Share information and resources without forcing personal disclosures.

9. **Avoid Assumptions:** Approach each situation with an open mind and without preconceived notions.

10. **Create a Culture of Trust:** Demonstrate vulnerability and foster mutual respect and understanding.

Resources and Tools

Mental Health Check-In Guides: Developed jointly by the CAFE TA Center and Rebel Leadership Group, these guides provide valuable resources, including example questions and strategies for employers to support employee well-being.

Additional Resources:

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Offer confidential assessments, short-term counseling, and referrals.

- **Training Opportunities:** Collaborations with organizations like the Disability Rights Commission, Mental Health America, and others can provide valuable training sessions on mental health awareness and inclusion.

Action Items

Implement Regular Mental Health Check-Ins: Incorporate brief check-in questions into routine team meetings to encourage open dialogue about well-being.

Utilize Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Promote awareness and accessibility of EAP resources within the workplace. Encourage employees to seek support when needed.

Provide Training and Resources: Schedule training sessions on mental health awareness and inclusive practices. Distribute mental health check-in guides and other relevant resources to employees.

Foster Open Communication:

- Create an environment where employees feel safe to discuss mental health without fear of judgment.

- Lead by example by openly discussing mental health and supporting colleagues.

Create Flexible Work Arrangements:

- Offer accommodations such as flexible hours, remote work options, and wellness spaces to support employee well-being.

5 WAYS TO CREATE A CULTURE OF OPENNESS AT WORK AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

1. Awareness is the first step.

2. Demonstrate vulnerability to help create a culture of trust.

3. Be comfortable discussing mental health at work.

4. Don't make assumptions.

5. Provide reasonable job accommodations.