

Resources

Mental Health Toolkit for Healthcare Professionals



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INTRODUCTION

Mental health for those in healthcare

Often as a caregiver, it's all too easy to overlook your own mental health and well-being. Explore a wealth of information on mental health in healthcare, designed to support caregivers in prioritizing their own well-being.



Chapter I

How to recognize poor mental health

What is mental health and what are symptoms of a problem?

According to SAMHSA.gov, mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices.

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood and behavior could be affected.

Poor mental health symptoms

Look out for these symptoms in yourself and others:

- Headaches, backaches, stomach aches (not accounted for by a medical condition)
- Negativity or cynicism
- Difficulty setting limits or boundaries with time and resources
- Negative feedback from people at home or at work
- Difficulty concentrating or staying focused on tasks
- Unusual levels of anger, frustration or resentment
- Overindulgence related to food, spending, drugs or alcohol
- Difficulty balancing work and family responsibilities

"Regular mental health checks are important because many of the symptoms of depression or anxiety disorders come on so gradually that you might not be aware how much the condition is affecting your daily life."

Liz Ferron,
senior consultant for VITAL WorkLife

Chapter II

Mental health stigma



Internal barriers

Internal barriers to mental health can be just as challenging as external ones. These barriers are often deeply rooted in a person's psyche and can be difficult to identify and overcome. Some common internal barriers include:

- low self-esteem,
- negative self-talk and
- a lack of self-awareness.

These barriers can prevent individuals from seeking help or engaging in self-care activities that promote mental wellness. Overcoming these internal barriers requires self-reflection, positive self-talk and a willingness to seek support from trusted individuals or mental health professionals. It's important to acknowledge and address these barriers in order to prioritize your mental health and well-being.



Organizational barriers

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall well-being, yet many organizations fail to prioritize the mental well-being of their employees. Organizational barriers to mental health can manifest in various ways, such as:

- a lack of resources for mental health support,
- stigmatization of mental health issues and
- a culture that prioritizes productivity over self-care.

These barriers can prevent individuals from seeking help or support when they need it most, leading to increased stress, burnout, and even more severe mental health concerns. As such, it is crucial for organizations to recognize and address these barriers to ensure that their employees can maintain good mental health and thrive both in and outside of the workplace.

Chapter II Continued



Systemic barriers

Systemic barriers to mental health refer to the societal and institutional structures that hinder individuals from accessing adequate mental health support and resources. These barriers can include:

- lack of affordable and accessible mental health services,
- social stigma and discrimination,
- inadequate insurance coverage and
- a shortage of mental health professionals in certain areas.

These systemic issues disproportionately affect marginalized communities, such as low-income individuals, people of color and those living in rural areas. Addressing these barriers is crucial in promoting mental health equity for all individuals.

Stigma for physicians

The stigma surrounding mental health can be especially challenging for physicians who seek support. The very nature of their profession, which requires them to constantly care for others, can make it difficult for them to prioritize their own well-being. This can lead to feelings of guilt or shame, making it even harder to seek help. There is a fear of being seen as weak or incompetent by colleagues or patients, which can further discourage physicians from seeking the support they need. and as if that is not enough, there is also the fear of undue repercussions to their medical license.

Despite these challenges, it's important for physicians to prioritize their mental health, and to know that seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness.

[Download our article, Physicians and their Experience with the Stigma for Seeking Help.](#)



Physicians and their Experience with the Stigma for Seeking Help

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Chapter II Continued

Legal steps to ensure physician confidentiality

The Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act aims to prevent suicide, burnout and mental and behavioral health conditions among health care professionals—all serious concerns that have been intensified by the pandemic. The goal is to remove barriers, such as stigma and fear of jeopardizing their career, for physicians seeking help. [Read More >](#)



Several states such as Delaware, Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia have passed legislation to provide professional safety. Resulting in innovative support solutions for healthcare, such as SafeHaven, launched by the Medical Society of Virginia (MSV) and VITAL WorkLife in 2020 to offer safety protections to physicians and providers who seek help or emotional support. [Read More >](#)



Chapter III

The importance of mental health

For yourself

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall health and well-being. It affects how we feel, think and behave, and influences our ability to handle stress, make decisions and form relationships.

Poor mental health can have a profound impact on our daily lives, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression and even physical illness. It is crucial to prioritize mental health and seek support when needed to maintain a healthy and fulfilling life.

By taking care of our mental health, we can improve our quality of life, **increase resilience** and achieve our full potential. So, let's acknowledge the significance of mental health and take the necessary steps to support it.

For others

Addressing your own mental health can have a positive impact not only on yourself but also on those around you. By openly discussing and prioritizing mental health, you can help break down the stigma that is often attached to mental illness.

When we talk openly about our struggles, we create a safe and supportive

environment for others to do the same. This can lead to a more compassionate and understanding society, where seeking help for mental health issues is the norm rather than the exception.

By taking care of our own mental health, we become advocates for mental health awareness and promote a culture of acceptance and support. We can help eliminate the shame and discrimination that often prevent people from seeking the help they need.



Chapter IV

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence, also known as EI or EQ, refers to the ability to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. It involves skills such as empathy, self-awareness and effective communication, which are essential for building strong relationships and achieving success in both personal and professional spheres.

While traditional intelligence (IQ) is important in determining an individual's cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence is equally crucial in determining one's emotional well-being and social competence. Developing and improving emotional intelligence can have a significant impact on an individual's overall quality of life and success.

Impact on mental health

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in maintaining good mental health. It enables individuals to understand and regulate their own emotions, as well as perceive and respond to the emotions of others in a constructive manner. By having a strong grasp of emotional intelligence, individuals can effectively manage stress, anxiety, and depression, which can significantly improve their overall well-being.

Additionally, emotional intelligence can enhance social relationships by enabling individuals to communicate effectively, empathize with others, and resolve conflicts in a positive manner. Ultimately, developing emotional intelligence can lead to greater success and fulfillment in both personal and professional aspects of life. [Read More >](#)



Chapter V

Post-traumatic growth

Grow through what you go through.

Years of compounding stress have led many to a bend or breaking point—and leaving many to ask how we pick up the pieces.

For some, these difficulties have been traumatic. The trauma may be caused by one or more significant incidents that commonly lead to emotional or psychological duress, and for others the accumulated impact of these incidents. Experiencing trauma can lead to mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug use, as well as impacting their relationships at work and home. Some have been led to consider a career change as a way to avoid the difficult feelings associated with practice.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a theory that explains a kind of positive change after living through trauma. **It was developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi, PhD,** and Lawrence Calhoun, PhD, in the mid-1990s, and holds that those who endure psychological struggle following adversity can actually see positive growth afterward. For many people who have survived a trauma they find positive changes such as a new appreciation for life, a newfound sense of personal strength and a new focus on helping others.

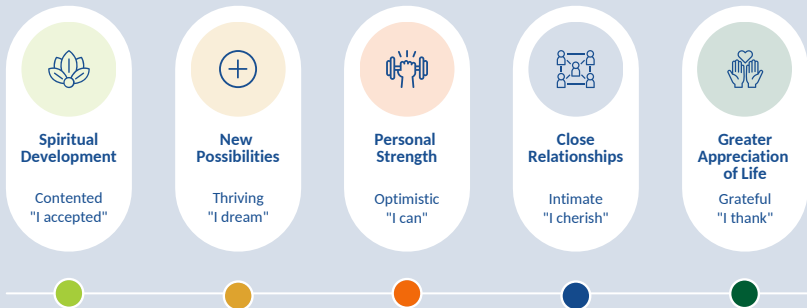
Chapter V Continued

Positive impacts

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) has been found to have several positive impacts on mental health. Those who have experienced trauma and undergone PTG often report a sense of increased resilience and personal strength. This newfound strength helps them to cope better with future challenges and reduces the likelihood of developing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

By focusing on these positive changes, those who have experienced trauma can find new meaning and purpose in their lives, leading to better mental health outcomes. [Read Article >](#)

Post-Traumatic Growth



Chapter VI

Supporting mental health in the workplace

Actionable insights for employers

Recognizing an employee suffering from a mental health disorder can be difficult, especially given the absence of physical or visual symptoms. In most cases you might not notice a concern until an employee exhibits problems focusing and their productivity starts to suffer. If you do spot signs early, you may be able to help an employee seek support and avoid disability leave.

In addition to the resources available to all employees and family members, VITAL WorkLife offers resources to assist managers and supervisors in their role, including a Resource Site which includes training and educational tools, engagement kits, program information and more. Managers and supervisors can also speak with one of our senior consultants for expert advice to address concerns or issues. Contact us [online](#) to learn more!

Explore the possibilities—contact us today!

Ideas for involvement

There are numerous ways that employers can support mental health in the workplace. One of the most important is to create a culture of openness and acceptance around mental health issues, so that employees feel comfortable discussing any concerns they may have. This can be achieved through training and educational programs for managers and supervisors, as well as through regular communication with employees about mental health resources and support.

Employers can also provide access to mental health services, such as counseling or therapy, through an [employee assistance program](#). In addition, offering flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible scheduling, can help employees manage their mental health by reducing stress and allowing them to better balance work and personal responsibilities.

Employers can promote mental well-being by encouraging healthy habits and offering well-being programs and incentives to create a more positive and productive workplace.