

5 Things Employees Can Do

Has this happened to you? A co-worker, someone you really like, is having trouble on the job. Taking unexplained breaks. Absent without a good reason. Looking worried, listless. You want to help, but you really aren't sure how. You're afraid to ask. And then your co-worker leaves for good. And you wish there was something you could have done. *Or, are you that co-worker?*

A productive company depends on an open and positive workplace culture. Sadly, one in five workers in the U.S. will be affected by a mental illness this year. That doesn't count the workers who have a family member or loved one with a mental illness.

Most people who do seek help are able to improve their quality of life and continue working productively. But that takes support. The people who need help, too often fear the consequences of disclosure. Science has proven that mental illness, like heart disease or diabetes, is a treatable health issue. Still, the stigma surrounding mental illness often prevents people from seeking the help they need.

That's where you come in. Every single employee can play a vital role in shaping workplace attitudes and creating a stigma-free environment. You can promote anti-discrimination just by the way you treat a colleague, work as a team, and get involved in initiatives that promote positive health and well being.

Here are 5 things you can do in your workplace:

1. **Encourage open communication when problems arise.**
2. **Speak up about instances of discrimination, bullying, or harassment.**
3. **Be a role model and promote the kind of culture that inspires people to do their best.**
4. **Try to understand your co-worker's situation and encourage them to seek support.**
5. **If you feel comfortable, share your own personal experience of a mental illness.**

There are many ways to support a colleague who is living with mental illness or caring for a family member with mental illness. Listening without judgment and being open to learning more about mental illness are great first steps.

For more information, visit ceos.namikeystonepa.org.

*Adapted from NAMI Massachusetts
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