

What is Behavioral Health?

Behavioral Health includes **mental health** and **substance misuse** and can range from strong well-being to significant emotional and behavioral struggles.

Mental Health

> Refers to emotional, psychological and cognitive functioning.

The most common mental health problems are **anxiety** and **depression**, although mood disorders like bipolar and eating disorders are also mental health issues.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a specific type of anxiety that happens after people experience a traumatic event, such as:

- physical or sexual assault
- witnessing violence
- experiencing suicide
- a natural disaster

Substance Misuse

> Refers to using alcohol and/or drugs in a way that is excessive and interferes with relationships or the ability to get work done.

People can have alcohol or drug problems whether they misuse on a regular basis or binge use a few times a year in a way that is dangerous or harmful to themselves or others.

For example, driving while intoxicated, aggressive actions toward others, putting a child, family member or friend's life at risk, are all examples of dangerous behaviors.

What does depression, anxiety, and trauma look like?

We all fall somewhere on the behavioral health continuum, and how we are doing mentally and emotionally changes, so it's important for us to **know the signs**:

Depression

- Irritated mood
- Loss of interest in activities
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Physical problems or pain
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling guilty for no reason
- Poor concentration
- Thinking of suicide

Anxiety

- Feeling nervous, tense or restless
- Worrying much of the time
- Sense of impending danger
- Chronic or severe fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble sleeping
- Increased heart rate
- Hyperventilating
- Trembling, sweating
- Headaches, GI trouble

Trauma

- Shock, denial, or disbelief
- Confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Anxiety and fear
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Feeling disconnected/numb

What Needs to Change?

How we think about behavioral health has to change. What often gets in the way of understanding and help-seeking is stigma.

Stigma means we have a negative association with a certain idea; many people feel they will be judged or treated differently if they talk about their mental health struggles.

The first step in reducing stigma and providing support is to start the conversation about what mental health and substance misuse look like, how to talk about it and what can help. Remember that mental health is a part of overall health.

Myths and stereotypes also get in the way of help seeking. Myths are often untrue and can even be damaging, for example the idea that: Asking someone if they are suicidal will put the thought in their head.

WHEN IN FACT, if a person is not suicidal, asking about it does not make them feel that way.

CULTURE ultimately reduces stigma and empowers our industry to use company or union benefits without fear. The good news is more and more companies are talking about mental health and providing benefits to the workforce.

Essential Tips for a Helpful Response: The ACT Method

Knowing what to say to someone who might be struggling with depression or anxiety isn't easy. While you may feel awkward and unsure at first, know that whatever you say doesn't have to be perfect or profound.

The important thing is to express your care and concern in a genuine and nonjudgmental way.

The ACT Method

Acknowledge that you've noticed a change in demeanor or mood.

Care by reminding them that you are there for them.

Talk about information and resources. Ask how you can help.

Additional Tips to Discuss Mental Health

Don't be discouraged by the fear of saying something wrong. When people are struggling, they often feel isolated; but knowing someone cares – especially at work – helps us all feel less alone.

- The best way to start a conversation is to use your own words and be direct. If you are not sure where to start, use the ACT approach (above) as a guide.
- Letting your coworker know you're there to talk, whenever they are ready, can be meaningful and supportive to someone.
- Pay attention to your verbal and nonverbal behaviors and continue to listen before speaking throughout the conversation.

Tool Box Talk:

Suicide, Addiction, Mental Health

Date:

Printed Name	Employee #	Company	Signature

