

Objective for Employees:

Improve mental health and worker morale during the workday using morale-boosting tactics. Encouraging employees to remain positive and ensuring employees support each other is crucial. Mitigating negative thoughts and our employee's mental health is the MHAP's objective.

Objective for the Employer and Management:

Using anxiety, fear, depression, and panic-reducing tactics to recognize mental health-related distress in the workplace. Creating a support plan for the distressed employee(s) is extremely important.



Introduction:

The Mental Health Action Plan (abbreviated MHAP) is a plan to improve mental health in the workplace. Using anxiety/fear-reducing tactics as well as learning to recognize distress early will ensure positive employee morale remains high, ultimately leading to more stability and avoiding interruptions in workplace functions (production, sales, management, shipping, etc.). This plan will emphasize specific categories of support, these categories of support will be highlighted below:

Categories of Support:

- Positive Moral Support Between Co-Workers
- Recognizing an Employee Under Distress
- Positive Moral Support from Management
- Positive Reinforcement – Patience
- Positive Reinforcement – Kindness
- Accommodations

Positive Moral Support Between Co-Workers:

Encouraging employees to support each other in positive ways will help aid in workplace morale and workplace productivity. A proposed bulletin which will be posted at the main bulletin board will highlight in further detail how employees can help each other during this worldwide crisis.

Recognizing an Employee Under Distress:

This portion of the MHAP is very crucial to aid in the success of this plan. It is important that employers and management learn to recognize the signs of a person in a state of distress/panic. Many people may hide these signs and symptoms and keep it to themselves, though some will reach out it is possible that a majority won't. Due to this, making management aware of the common signs and symptoms of panic and distress is crucial for the success of the MHAP.

Symptoms of Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder, according to Mayo Clinic:

Sense of impending doom or danger	Chills
Fear of loss of control or death	Hot flashes
Rapid, pounding heart rate	Nausea
Sweating	Abdominal cramping
Trembling or shaking	Chest pain
Shortness of breath or tightness in your throat	Headache
Numbness or tingling sensation	Dizziness, lightheadedness or faintness
A feeling of unreality or detachment	

Source: *Panic attacks and panic disorder.* (2018, May 4). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/panic-attacks/symptoms-causes/syc-20376021>

If someone is experiencing any of these symptoms, steps have to be taken to assist them. If someone is acting unusually, please encourage employees to reach out to management. Strategies to help will be included in the section **Aiding Employees**.

Categories of Support

Positive Moral Support from Employer and Management:

To ensure a positive environment, the MHAP recommends praising employees for small successes, whether it be the speedy completion of an important order or recognizing a person's positive morale. Small acts of encouragement help increase self-confidence and self-esteem. It is recommended that management keeps an eye out for the signs and symptoms of panic, anxiety, and depression. Taking the initiative to communicate with the employee and ensure they are both mentally and physically well is important. Keeping an open-door policy and allowing employees to speak with management at any time during the day will ensure that the employee affected by distress or anxiety won't have to deal with it alone.

Positive Reinforcement - Patience:

This category highlights the importance of patience from both management and employees. Ensuring that an employee doesn't feel overwhelmed with his workload and doesn't feel pressured by his peers will ensure an environment that aids in the reduction of potential episodes of panic. During this COVID-19 pandemic, we can already assume stress levels are extreme, any small thing we can do to mitigate that stress will help ensure continued uninterrupted production and a smaller overall impact on our mental and physical health. Being easier on employees and giving them less pressure while still ensuring the production quota is met. Ways we could do this include cross-training, giving small 5-minute breaks (which will be explained in the "Accommodations" category), or ensuring (if possible) orders are started earlier than the due date.

Positive Reinforcement - Kindness:

Ensuring we are kind to our peers, giving them positive reinforcement, and treating each other with the respect we deserve will further ensure stability in the workplace. The MHAP encourages management to be more communicative with employees in a positive way. Asking an employee how they are doing or how their day is going is a simple way to start a positive conversation that emphasizes kindness. Employees should be encouraged to be kind to each other as well.

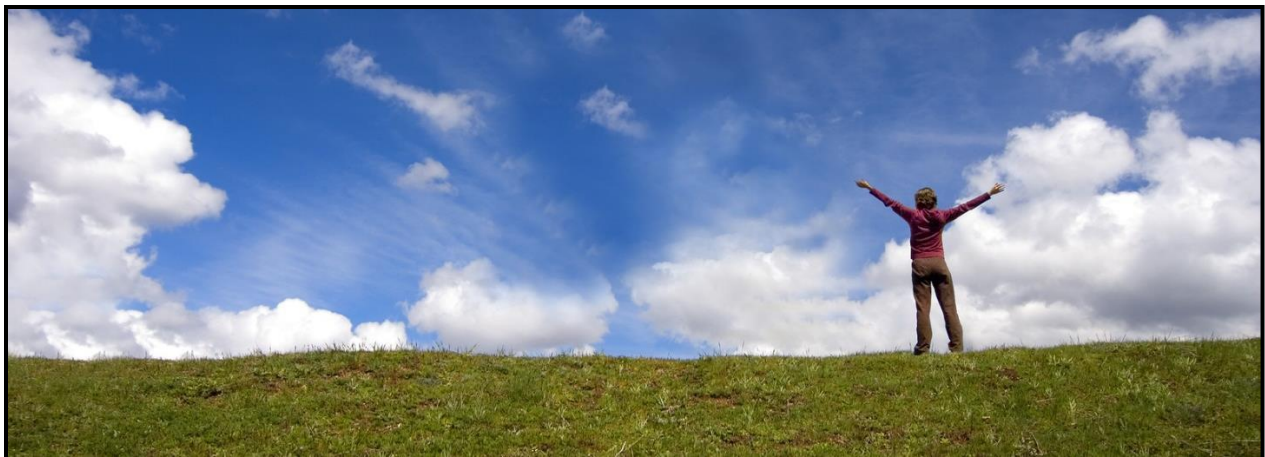
Accommodations:

The duty to accommodate is established by the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC). Essentially this duty ensures persons with disabilities are accommodated up to the point of undue hardship. Striving to make simple accommodations for all employees is important during the COVID-19 crisis whether or not they have a pre-existing mental health condition. Simple accommodations could make a large positive impact on mental wellness throughout the company.

Some of these accommodations may include:

- Allowing employees 5 to 10 minutes break if they feel their overall levels of stress rising to concern levels while ensuring management checks on them to not only ensure their wellbeing but to ensure that abuse of the accommodation is not taking place.
- If the position allows it, cross-training and moving employees between tasks could potentially assist their mental health, especially if they are becoming overwhelmed with the pressure of the current task at hand. Switching an employee to a new task perhaps could be what they need to reduce their stress.

Strategies to aid employees undergoing an episode of distress or panic, including employees with new symptoms of anxiety and/or depression will be discussed in the next section.



Aiding Employees Undergoing an Episode of Panic:

In the category “**Recognizing an Employee Under Distress,**” we discuss the signs and symptoms that align with a person experiencing an episode of panic. In this category, we will discuss ways to help an employee in a state of panic. Ways to help according to **HealthLink BC:**

- Stay with the person and keep calm.
- Don't make assumptions about what the person needs. Ask.
- Speak to the person in short, simple sentences.
- Be predictable. Avoid surprises.
- Help slow the person's breathing by breathing with them or by counting slowly to 10.

Source: Helping Someone During a Panic Attack. (n.d.). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw53602>

Positive reinforcement is beneficial during and after a person comes out of a state of panic, encouraging them that they can get through this. Afterward, perhaps praise them for their strength. Be sure to ask if they are okay and after the episode of panic confirm they are safe, ready, and willing to work.

Anxiety, Fear, and Depression in the Workplace:

During stressful times, the unfortunate reality is many people may develop anxiety and depression. This may take a huge negative toll on mental wellness overall. Learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of anxiety and/or depression in the workplace will ensure support tactics could be put into place for the affected individual.

Signs and Symptoms:

Please refer to the table below. We will discuss the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression as well as the things we can do to help. Please note many of the symptoms of anxiety seem to align with panic attacks.

Anxiety - Some Signs and Symptoms (According to Mayo Clinic)	Depression - Some Signs and Symptoms (According to WedMD)
Feeling nervous, restless, or tense	Trouble concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions**
Having a sense of impending danger, panic, or doom	Fatigue**
Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)**	Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
Having an increased heart rate	Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness
Trembling**	Pessimism and hopelessness**
Sweating**	Irritability**
Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry	Restlessness**
Feeling weak or tired**	Aches, pains, headaches, or cramps that won't go away

Source: (Anxiety): Anxiety disorders. (2018, May 4). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>

Source: (Depression): Signs of Clinical Depression: Symptoms to Watch For. (2019, September 17). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/detecting-depression#1>

**These signs and symptoms are more noticeable, keeping an eye out for all signs and symptoms in employees, including these is recommended.

Aiding Employees

How We Can Help

Employee Experiencing Anxiety	Employee Experiencing Depression
<p>If an employee is overwhelmed and/or unable to function efficiently in the workplace, allow the individual to take a 5–10-minute break. Please ensure that management checks on the individual at the end of the break.</p>	<p>If an employee is affected by a depressive state, allow the employee to take a 5–10-minute break. Please ensure that management checks on the individual whenever necessary and at the end of the break.</p>
<p>If an employee is too overwhelmed to continue workplace functions, then sending them home may be necessary. If the affected individual is operating a vehicle, ensure they have reached a calm, collected state of mind before they drive. This applies to panic attacks as well. Striving to convince an employee to remain in a safe space at work until the panic subsides or anxiety improves is essential.</p>	<p>If an employee is too overwhelmed by their depressive state to continue workplace functions, then sending them home may be necessary. If the affected individual is operating a vehicle, ensure they have reached a calm, collected state of mind before they drive. Striving to convince an employee to remain in a safe space at work until they feel capable of operating a vehicle safely is essential.</p>

Other Ways to Help (Anxiety) information sourced from Mental Health First Aid	Other Ways to Help (Depression) information sourced from Healthline
<p>Listen nonjudgmentally and ask how they're feeling and how long they've been feeling that way.</p>	<p>Giving reassurance and support can have a huge impact on the person.</p>
<p>Giving reassurance and support can have a huge impact on the person.</p>	<p>Show empathy and interest with your body language.</p>
<p>Encourage appropriate professional help.</p>	<p>Help them find support.</p>
<p>Encourage relaxation and meditation, as well as a healthy diet and regular exercise.</p>	<p>Encourage relaxation and meditation, as well as a healthy diet and regular exercise.</p>

Other Ways to Help (Anxiety) Source: How to Help Someone with Anxiety. (2018, December 27) Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2018/12/how-to-help-someone-with-anxiety/>

Other Ways to Help (Depression) Source: How to Help a Depressed Friend. (2019, May 29) Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-help-a-depressedfriend#listen>

Crisis Recognition



How to recognize a crisis:

Depression is known to increase the risk of suicide or self-injury. Below we will discuss the signs of a person who may be in crisis.

According to Healthline and WebMD, these signs may include:

- Frequent mood swings or personality changes
- Talking about death or dying
- Increased substance use
- Risky or dangerous behavior
- Getting rid of belongings or giving away treasured possessions
- Talking about feeling trapped or wanting a way out
- Pushing people away or saying they want to be left alone
- Saying goodbye with more feeling than usual
- Threatening or talking about suicide
- Excessive sadness or moodiness, including hopelessness

Source: How to Help a Depressed Friend. (2019, May 29). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-help-a-depressed-friend#warning-signs>

Source: How to Recognize Symptoms of Suicidal Behavior. (2020, March 11). Retrieved April 5, 2020, from <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/recognizing-suicidalbehavior#1>

If any employee is noticed experiencing **any of these symptoms**, it is extremely important to **ensure their safety and connect them with help** immediately. We must closely monitor signs and symptoms that could indicate someone is in crisis.

Conclusion



Using these strategies and understanding the information outlined in the MHAP, we can attempt to maintain positive mental health and well-being. A healthy work environment both physically and mentally will help aid in uninterrupted production, improvement in worker efficiency, and increase a worker's sense of safety and security in the workplace.



Sources of Information

Panic attacks and panic disorder (2018, May 4)

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