

Recognize and Respond

Addressing men's mental health needs in the workplace

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Today's topics

- 1 Mental health 101
- 2 Defining today's focus topics
- 3 What can and what should we do?
- 4 The role of empathy
- 5 Q&A



Today's speaker



Dan Harrah, LCSW

Vice President of Clinical Partnerships



Content warning

- Today's conversation will touch on some heavy topics including mental health issues and the subject matter can cause strong emotional reactions. If you need to take a break, please do so.
- The goal of having this discussion is to equip you, as leaders in your organization, to better support your teams' mental health needs and as individuals, to support those around you.
- This information, while led by a licensed clinician, is not intended to diagnose or treat any physical or mental health conditions.





Mental health 101

Poll Question #1

How would you describe your knowledge of mental health signs/symptoms?

- 1-not sure of the signs
- 2-limited knowledge
- 3-some knowledge but need a refresher
- 4-knowledgeable and confident
- 5-other



If you're uncomfortable, you're not alone

- Percentage of workers who said they felt comfortable talking openly and honestly about mental health with their:¹

	2019	2020
Supervisors	51%	62%
Co-workers	51%	65%

- In a 2021 survey, nearly two-thirds of respondents said they had talked about their mental health to someone at work during the past year.
 - Only 49% described the experience as positive or reported a positive or supportive response.²

Sources 1: APA Public Opinion Poll of 1004 US adults, conducted September 14 - 16, 2020
<https://psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/poll-american-workers-are-increasingly-comfortable>

2: Mind Share Partners' 2021 Mental Health at Work Report, as analyzed by the Harvard Business Review Article: <https://hbr.org/2021/10/its-a-new-era-for-mental-health-at-work>



1 in 5 men

are struggling with mental
health symptoms right now...

... and their needs vary widely

Sources: [CDC](#), [NAMI](#)



What factors may impact mental health?

Internal

- Genetics
- Hormones
- Temperament
- IQ
- Past experiences



External

- Culture/environment
- Finances
- Relationships
- Work
- School

Source: <https://www.alliant.edu/blog/how-environmental-factors-impact-mental-health>

Early signs of mental health problems



There is no physical test or scan that indicates whether a person has mental illness. However, people should look for the possible signs...

- ✓ Long-lasting sadness/irritability
- ✓ Excessive fear/worry/anxiety
- ✓ Lethargic, unable to self-motivate
- ✓ Deteriorated hygiene
- ✓ Changes in appetite or sleep
- ✓ Suicidal thoughts/gestures
- ✓ Illegal drug/alcohol use at work
- ✓ Excessive conflicts
- ✓ Interpersonal problems
- ✓ Stealing and lying
- ✓ Intimidating behaviors
- ✓ Highly reactive mood
- ✓ Withdrawn and isolated

Today's focus: Mental health conditions that affect men

- **Anxiety**
Anxiety disorders are characterized by persistent worry, fear, and stress that interfere with one's everyday life
- **Depression**
Persistent low mood, fatigue, and profound sadness are prominent symptoms of depression
- **Substance use disorders (SUD)**
Frequent use of alcohol and/or drugs that impact a person's behavior in day-to-day life
- **Suicidal thoughts and behaviors**
Thoughts, statements, and actions related to suicide

Source: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for/mental-health-substance-use-disorders>



Suicidal thoughts and behaviors

Focus on suicide

These can range from ideation (thinking about suicide), suicidal gestures (such as self harm, cutting and other behaviors not intended to end one's life), suicidal attempts and completed suicide

What someone might say: A person at risk may do any of the following:

Talking about killing themselves, feeling hopeless, stating they have no reason to live, being a burden to others, feeling trapped, reporting unbearable pain, reporting feeling "much much better"

How someone might behave:

Increased use of alcohol or drugs, looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods, withdrawing from activities, isolating from family and friends, sleeping too much or too little, visiting or calling people to say goodbye, giving away prized possessions, aggression, fatigue, or sudden significant improvement in mood

Other common risk factors:

- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress, harassment, bullying, relationship problems, unemployment
- Stressful life events, like rejection, divorce, financial crisis, life transitions or loss
- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

Source: <https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs/>



What can and what
should we do?

Poll Question #2

How comfortable are you providing support to someone in distress?

1-not sure what to look for

2-not very comfortable

3-comfortable but can use some additional info

4-comfortable and confident

5-other



Key Indicators:

When should
you say
something?

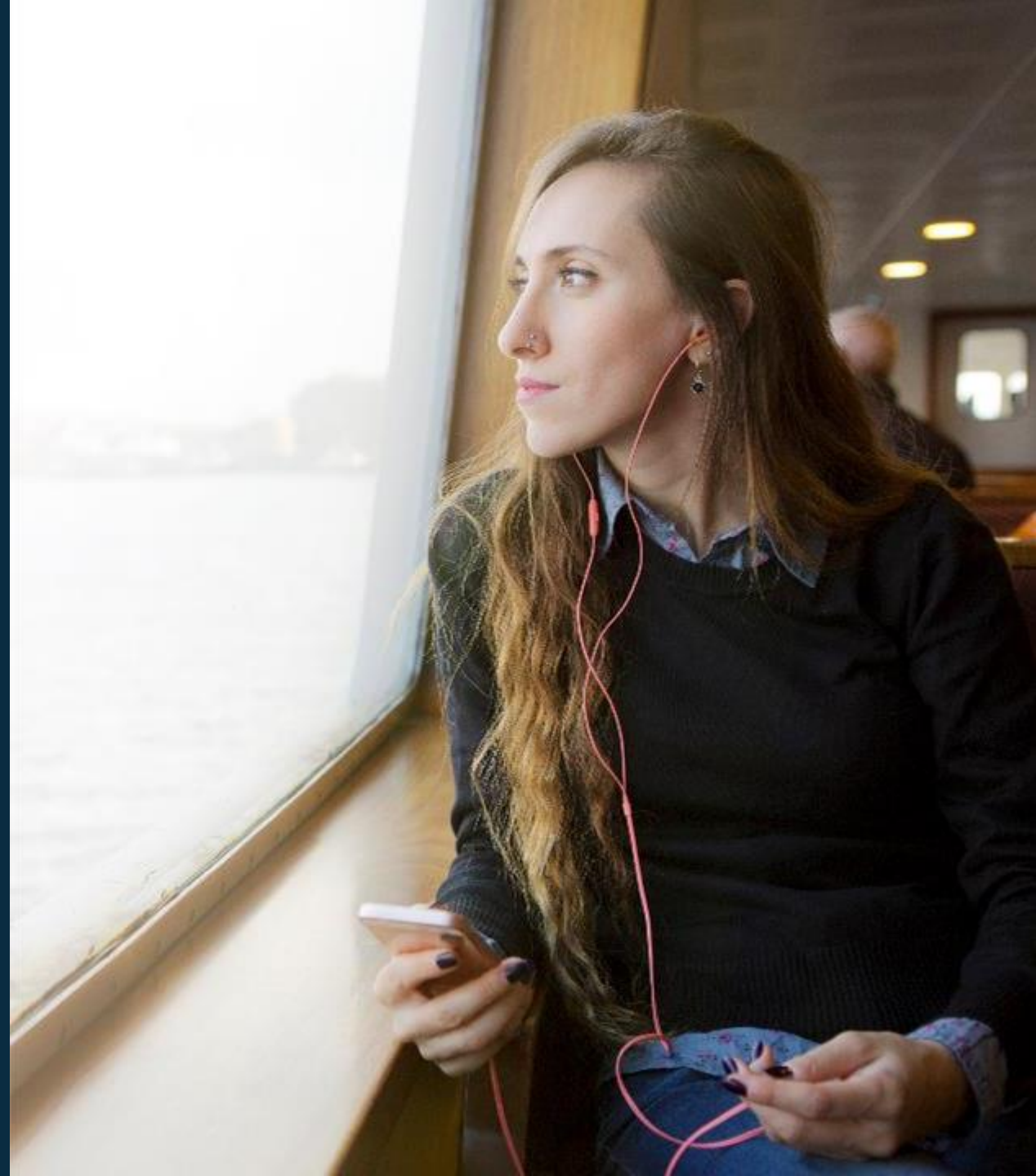


When to check in

We've reviewed several symptoms and presentations related to common mental health issues, but if you only remember one thing...

- When you notice someone “isn’t themselves” or there’s a “noticeable change” in the person, talk to them about it!
- Remember, trust your “gut” and check in with team members who are showing signs or symptoms of mental health issues – it can make a huge difference and possibly save a life!
- If you think someone is in serious crisis, get help from a trained professional as quickly as possible. You can also reach out to a Spring Health Care Navigator.

In the next section, we're going to discuss the A.L.E.C. framework for having a supportive conversation.



Prepare for the conversation



Set up time - give yourself at least 10 minutes to prepare



Eliminate distractions / mute or put your phone in your desk / turn off email notifications



Block at least 45 minutes for the conversation



Select a private space for the conversation

Your primary job in a supportive conversation is to listen and learn more - not to fix problems

Some key things to remember



Be a detective. You're working to learn as much as possible - without making assumptions or trying to solve problems.



While there are no hard and fast rules, aim to limit your speaking to 20 percent or less



If the person doesn't want to talk - don't force them - but let them know you're "there" if they need you, and ask for permission to check in again at a later time



Be prepared to sit with silence

ALEC Framework: Ask

- Be relaxed, friendly and concerned in your approach.
- Help them open up by asking questions like "How are you doing?" or "What's been happening?"
- Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, like "You seem less chatty than usual. How are you been doing?"

IF...

- If they don't want to talk, don't criticise them.
- Tell them you're still concerned about changes in their behaviour and you care about them.
- Avoid a confrontation.
- You could say: "Please call me if you ever want to chat" or "Is there someone else you'd rather talk to?"



ALEC Framework: Listen

- Take what they say seriously and don't interrupt or rush the conversation.
- Don't judge their experiences or reactions but acknowledge that things seem tough for them.
- If they need time to think, sit patiently with the silence.
- Encourage them to explain: "How are you feeling about that?" or "How long have you felt that way?"
- Show that you've listened by repeating back what you've heard (in your own words) and ask if you have understood them properly.



ALEC Framework: Encourage action

- Ask: "What have you done in the past to manage similar situations?"
- Ask: "How would you like me to support you?"
- Ask: "What's something you can do for yourself right now? Something that's enjoyable or relaxing?"
- You could say: "When I was going through a difficult time, I tried this... You might find it useful too."
- If they've been feeling really down for more than 2 weeks, encourage them to see a health professional. You could say, "It might be useful to link in with someone who can support you. I'm happy to assist you to find the right person to talk to."
- Be positive about the role of professionals in getting through tough times.

IF THEY NEED EXPERT HELP ...

Some conversations are too big for family and friends to take on alone. If someone's been really low for more than 2 weeks - or is at risk - please contact a professional as soon as you can.



ALEC Framework: Check in

- Pop a reminder in your diary to call them in a couple of weeks. If they're really struggling, follow up with them sooner.
- You could say: "I've been thinking of you and wanted to know how you've been going since we last chatted."
- Ask if they've found a better way to manage the situation. If they haven't done anything, don't judge them. They might just need someone to listen to them for the moment.
- Stay in touch and be there for them. Genuine care and concern can make a real difference.





The role of empathy

Self-care

Don't forget to show yourself empathy as well – it all starts with you !

1. Eliminate negative self-talk:

- Rule of thumb: if you wouldn't say something to your best friend, don't say it to yourself.
- Exercise: positive affirmations / mantras.

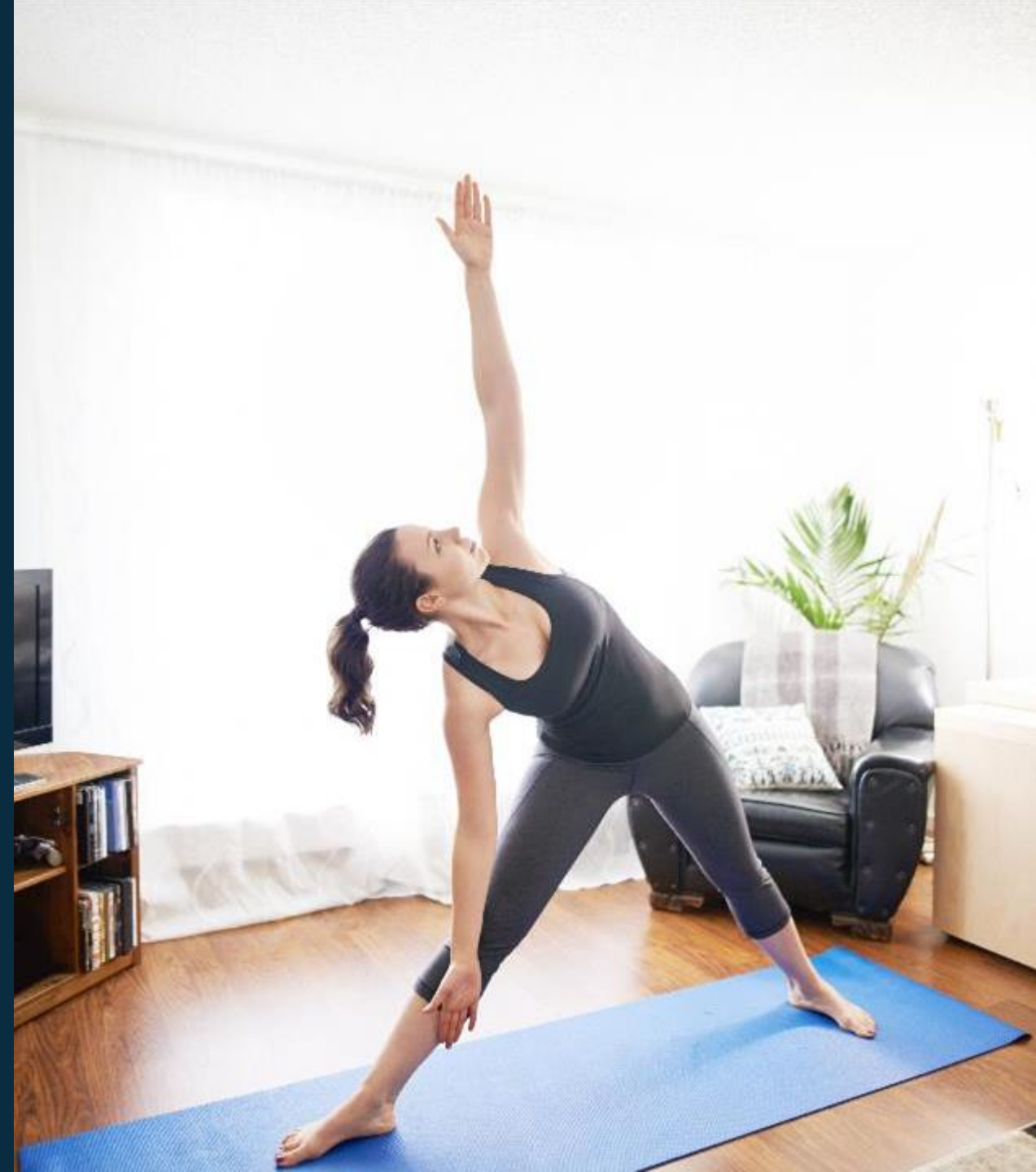
2. Treat yourself with the same compassion you show others:

- When you make a mistake, make amends, learn from it and forgive yourself.
- Pamper and nurture yourself. Remember - setting boundaries is an act of self-care.
- Exercise: schedule some "me time" daily and don't cancel on yourself!

3. Practice mindfulness:

- Take the time consider your thoughts and emotions without judgement.
- Explore them without trying to label them as "good" or "bad." Simply observe.
- Don't try to push bad thoughts away, but also don't dwell or ruminate on them.
- Exercise: mindfulness meditation.

Source: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/4-ways-to-be-kinder-to-yourself-build-self-empathy-0524185>



Questions?



Thank you

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