let's talk about mental health
lamp
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Mental Health in your Workplace: Topics and Issues

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Did you know 3 in 5 professionals suffer from anxiety? Anxiety is a feeling of stress, panic or fear that can affect your everyday life physically and psychologically. There are different types of anxiety including social anxiety and health anxiety. GAD refers to generalised anxiety disorder. The symptoms of anxiety can vary from person to person and different people are affected in different ways.

Psychological symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder at work

GAD can cause a change in a person's behaviour and the way they think and feel about things, resulting in symptoms such as:

- Restlessness
- Feeling constantly "on edge"
- Irritability
- Disengagement with work
- Obvious fatigue and/or lack of energy
- Declining work performance
- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Inability to concentrate or focus

These symptoms may cause someone to withdraw from social contact to avoid feelings of worry and fear. They may also find going to work difficult and stressful, and may take time off sick. These actions can make them worry even more and may have an effect on their self-esteem.

GAD can also have a number of physical symptoms, including:

- Dizziness
- A noticeably strong, fast or irregular heartbeat (palpitations)
- Muscle aches and tension
- Trembling or shaking

- Excessive sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling sick
- Headache
- Pins and needles
- Insomnia

What can you do to help an employee with anxiety?

- Maintain clear, open and regular communication by holding regular face-to-face conversations with your team members. During these conversations, cover potentially anxiety-inducing subjects like workload, expectations and general work performance.
- Put your employee in control of their workload and workspace and hold regular conversations about how comfortable they feel meeting deadlines and fulfilling what you expect of them as an employer.
- Talk to them about their workplace triggers or stresses and the measures they would like put in place to reduce these.

Reasonable adjustments for an employee with anxiety may include:

- Changing working hour to accommodate your employee
- Allowing the employee to take some time off (either paid or unpaid) to attend medical appointments
- Granting frequent or longer rest breaks
- Provide the option to work from home
- Reduce or reassign some of your employees workload
- Offer your employee training in workload management
- Consider their physical working environment
- Allow your employee a quieter workspace and a quiet place to take breaks in
- Offering a reserved parking spot, so they can drive to work rather than taking public transport
- Provide increased supervision and one to one support
- Create clear policies surrounding mental health and how issues are dealt with
- Providing resources and training to raise awareness of mental health issues
- Phase a return to work

Sources and Further Reading

Anxiety - Every Mind Matters - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

https://championhealth.co.uk/insights/anxiety-workplace/

https://championhealth.co.uk/insights/reasonable-adjustments-mental-health/

https://championhealth.co.uk/insights/top-causes-stress-work/