



MOOD DISORDERS ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA INC.

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Depression At Work

Sources: NIMH, NMHA, San Antonio Business Journal

Success in the work environment depends on everyone's contribution. That's why no one in the workplace can afford to ignore depression.

The ordinary hurdles of modern life may trigger depression. People may feel bad as they encounter them but then feel better when they get beyond them.

The experience of some degree of depression is universal. That's why employers have such a difficult time identifying the more serious forms of depression that can affect a person, resulting in deterioration of relationships and job performance. These forms are known as clinical depression.

Depression tends to affect people in their prime working years and may last a lifetime if untreated. More than 80 percent of people with clinical depression can be successfully treated. With early recognition, intervention, and support, most employees can overcome clinical depression and pick up where they left off.

The top 10 sources of workplace stress

Source: The Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health

- Too much or too little to do: the feeling of not contributing and having lack of control
- Lack of two-way communication between management and employees
- Being unappreciated
- Inconsistent performance management processes: employees get raises but not reviews or get positive evaluations but are then laid off
- Career and job ambiguity: changes affecting employees' workload change without them understanding why
- Unclear company direction and policies
- Vicious office politics disrupt positive behaviour and create mistrust
- Pervasive uncertainty about the future of the organization, and the employee's role in it
- Random interruptions
- The treadmill syndrome: too much to do all at once

Signs of depression in the workplace

Sources: Canada Post's *What You Need To Know About Depression* leaflet, CMHA

- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreased productivity
- Inability to concentrate
- Decline in dependability
- Unusual increase in errors at work
- Susceptibility to accidents
- Frequent tardiness, increased "sick" days
- Lack of enthusiasm

A brief guide for tackling depression in the workplace

Sources: Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health, CMHA

- Educate management about depression.
- Target depression financially: set measurable financial goals such as reduced absenteeism.
- Assess, and if necessary, reform EAP and health plans (e.g., make sure employees are aware of confidentiality, and that the EAP provider is equipped to treat depression and other mental disorders).
- Survey staff. Find out their issues, stressors, problems, complaints.
- Combat employee enslavement by e-mail and voice mail to temper information overload (e.g., introduce protocols that limit access to certain hours, set up filters to screen out junk e-mails and limit personal use).
- Tackle environmental factors such as space allocation, air quality and temperature control, lighting, and workspace design.
- Implement changes that increase an employee's feeling of influence and flexibility without decreasing productivity (e.g., flexible hours, working at home, feedback as well as work placement programs).
- Design and implement protocols specifically for employees with depression and those returning to work after stress leave.
- Be sensitive to the fact that physical conditions such as heart disease and addictions are sometimes rooted in underlying depression.
- Take employee health into account when measuring productivity.

“Promoting recovery through self-help.”