

Looking Out for Mental Health in the Workplace

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Raleigh Employee Assistance Program, Inc.

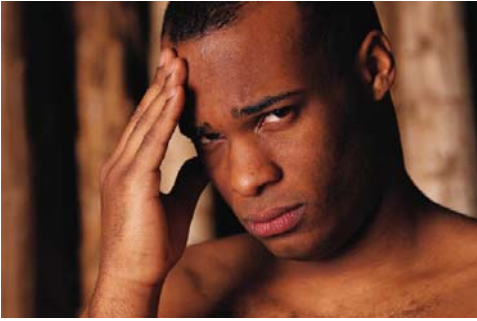
Have you ever been concerned about a coworker or employee's mental health, and wondered if your concerns are valid, or maybe what to do about them? **It's true that we all have days when we're feeling out of sorts, irritable or blue, but when should you be concerned enough to take some action to assist your employee?**

Clinical depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse are very common mental disorders that require an intervention, such as a referral to your employee assistance program and treatment. **Here are some common signs and symptoms that someone is having more than just a bad day.**

Clinical depression has a variety of appearances.



A person may be chronically irritable, tearful, sad or apathetic. Decreased energy, and a noticeable weight-loss or weight-gain are also common. A person may appear chronically tired or sleepy, as depression often causes insomnia. Depressed people often lose interest in activities that they once enjoyed, and no longer feel able to experience joy or happiness. Because depression can create difficulties with concentration and memory, you may notice a distinct decline in the quality or quantity of their work. **Clinical depression is a real medical illness, and a depressed person can't be expected to "just snap out of it."** If one of your coworkers or employees has been exhibiting some of these symptoms, and they've been noticeable for more than two weeks, a referral to your EAP is recommended.



Anxiety may have confusing symptoms. Some people with anxiety disorders feel their symptoms only in their bodies. For instance, they may experience chest pain, shakiness, or shortness of breath, and assume they are physically ill. But a trip to the doctor or emergency room indicates no medical reason for their discomfort. Often people with anxiety disorders are fearful or nervous about everyday activities, like speaking up in a meeting, eating in the company cafeteria, or even interacting with their coworkers. Because anxiety feels so uncomfortable, an anxious person begins to avoid many situations. This often leads to lost promotions or poor performance evaluations, because the anxiety and avoidance are often misinterpreted as lack of dedication or initiative, or the anxious person may be perceived as "not a team player." **The good news is that there are effective treatments for anxiety that can help anxious people perform better both at work and in their personal lives.** A REAP counselor can connect the anxious person with helpful resources.

Employees with **substance abuse problems** may often be late



or absent, especially on Mondays and Fridays. They may complain of headaches or gastrointestinal problems, or appear tired and irritable. You may notice shaky hands and signs of over-perspiration. These symptoms probably indicate the after-effects of substance abuse while not at work.

Such an employee may not be using at work, but binge-drinking or using on their off hours. Some people may also have problems from mixing prescription medicines, over the counter drugs, and/or alcohol. Signs of substance abuse at work include slurred speech, abnormal gait or clumsiness, poor judgment, accidents, or frequent trips away from the work station. If you notice such symptoms, a serious problem could be present. **For safety reasons, testing according to your Drug Free Workplace policy and/or a referral to the EAP for an evaluation may be indicated.**