Managing For Mental Health 1: Supportive Management Practices

Presented by Thrive in Your Workplace | October 1, 2020

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Housekeeping & ground rules

- Your video and audio will be off during the webinar

- Please use the chat for questions to the panel about the topic of today's conversation
    - We will hold dedicated time for Q&A at end of panel discussion

- Be respectful and civil

- Anyone not adhering to these ground rules will be removed from the conversation

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About Us

Thrive in Your Workplace (TWP) **helps local employers integrate mental health support** in the workplace to:

- Promote employees' emotional wellbeing

- Facilitate access to mental healthcare

- Create cultures of positive mental health at work

We work with employers from across sectors to shape customized workplace mental health strategies and implement workplace mental health programming. We also offer free training, resources and events to support the resilience of New York City's workforce.

Today's facilitators

Rachael Steimnitz, MPH, is a public health professional who helps organizations develop and implement health improvement programs. She currently leads content development and implementation for Thrive in Your Workplace, working closely with employers across New York City. Previously, she supported various quality initiatives for Health and Hospitals Corporation (H+H) and directed trainings and programs at the State Office of Mental Health. Rachael has a BA from the New School and a Master's in Public Health in Sociomedical Sciences from the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.

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Today's facilitators

Chris Lynn-Logue, MSW, is a social worker and mental health advocate. He currently works at the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC as the Employer Engagement Manager for Thrive in Your Workplace. Before working for ThriveNYC, he worked at the Department of Youth and Community Development as a Program Manager for Cornerstone Programs. In that capacity, he managed community centers located in NYCHA public housing developments. In addition to his work with community centers, Chris has also worked with the Mayor's Youth Leadership Council, the Young Men's Initiative, and other youth-related initiatives. Christopher earned his Master's in Social Work from New York University's Silver School of Social Work and his Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Morehouse College.

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Goals

By the end of today's training, participants will:

- Gain knowledge about mental health and common mental health challenges

- Understand the value and effectiveness of mental health support

- Develop skills to support your own and your employees' emotional wellbeing

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Being a supportive manager is a balancing act

- Face challenges in the workplace as both an employee and supervisor

- Are often the first people who employees reach out to for emotional support

- Play a crucial role in promoting mental health at work

- Must put on their own "oxygen mask" before helping others

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Agenda

- **Workplace Mental Health 101**

- Mental Health Support

- Supportive Management Practices

- Case Study

- Discussion / Q & A

Understanding the mental health spectrum

- **Mental health** is a state of wellbeing in which people can cope with the normal stressors of life, work productively, and contribute to their communities

- **Mental health problems** is a broad term that recognizes that mental health is a spectrum and we all experience mental health challenges
  - E.g. daily stress or stress related to COVID-19, anxiety related to uncertainty, social isolation and loneliness, or grief

- **Mental illnesses** are conditions in which people's thinking, mood and behaviors negatively affect their day-to-day functioning
  - E.g. depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and others, as well as addictions

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Mental health challenges affect all of us in different ways

In New York City:

- 1 in 5 adults struggle with mental illness every year

- Suicide is the sixth leading cause of death

- Over half a million adult New Yorkers are estimated to have depression, yet less than 40% report receiving care for it

- Mood disorders are the 3rd most common cause of hospitalization for both youth and adults age 18- 44

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Impact of COVID-19 on workers' emotional wellbeing nationwide

As the workplaces move to re-open, mental health concerns are prevalent:

- 85% of workers feel "worried and anxious they may catch COVID-19"

- 85% are also "worried and anxious they may lose their jobs"

- 84% of American workers report "really struggling" with employment-related matters. The reasons include mental health (37%), changes at work (27%), and managing money at home (23%)

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COVID-19 inequities also disproportionately affect colleagues of color

- Communities of color are experiencing disproportionate job loss

- In NYC, frontline workers are disproportionately people of color, making up 75% of essential workers
  - Being an essential worker increases exposure and infection risk

- People of color are less likely to work in industries or have jobs that offer sick leave or a work culture that allows time off, as compared to white employees
  - Workers without paid sick leave may be more likely to work when they are sick

Burnout may also be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic

In an anonymous poll of professionals about their experiences, 73% reported burnout at the end of April, a 12% increase from the 61% who reported burnout in mid-February.

Why?

- Great uncertainty around every part of virus response (lack of control)

- Boundaries between work and home are blurred (role confusion and ambiguity)

- Sheltering at home and isolation (lack of community)

- Pandemic has impacted communities differently (lack of fairness)

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Good news: Mental health support helps

- Most people who experience a mental health issue will recover and live happy, active lives

- Most individuals who experience mental illness will improve with appropriate diagnosis and treatment

- 80% of employees treated for mental health problems report improvements in their job satisfaction and productivity

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Employers can leverage workplaces to promote good mental health

The workplace can be activated to:
- Increase access to and quality of mental healthcare
- Create a supportive environment that promotes positive mental health

Managers play a critical role in creating an emotional supportive workplace by:
- Forming strong relationships with their direct reports
- Influencing the organization's operations and culture as leaders

In doing so, employers may also reap the social and economic benefits of a mentally healthy workforce:
- A World Health Organization study estimated that every $1 invested in prevention and treatment provides a return of $4 in improved health and productivity to the US economy
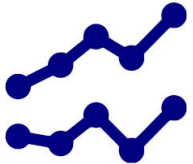
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- **Mental Health Support**

- Supportive Management Practices

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The mental health trifecta for emotional wellbeing
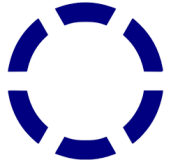
Social support: While physical distancing, you can maintain your social connections to friends, family members and loved ones. Stay in touch.

Exercise and nutrition: Mood and physical health are linked. Maintain your healthy habits – like prioritizing enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and doing consistent physical activity like walking, stretching and working out.

Routine: Structure can be grounding. Stay in-tune with sleep and eating patterns, and set a regular, daily schedule, particularly when working from home!

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Mindfulness can improve your wellbeing and how you manage staff
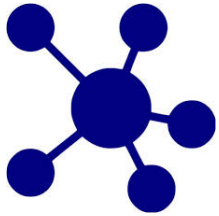
Key elements:

- Awareness of your current experience and the actions you perform
- Focusing your mind on the present, not the past or future
- Allowing an experience to occur without judging it to be good or bad

Effects:

- Improve mood and positive emotions
- Decrease anxiety and burnout
- Improve physical health outcomes, such as heart disease and others

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Use RAIN to manage your emotions and provide reassurance to others

The acronym **RAIN** is a helpful mnemonic for guiding practicing mindfulness:

- **R**ecognize what is going on

- **A**llow the experience to be there, just as it is

- **I**nvestigate with kindness

- **N**urture with (self-)compassion

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Managers can promote employee mental health in a variety of ways

- Lead with compassion by modeling supportive workplace behavior and mindfulness

- Foster an environment (both virtual and physical) that promotes positive mental health

- Create opportunities for social support

- Share mental health resources widely

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Talking about mental health in the workplace

General principles for engaging people about mental health

Inquire about how people are feeling and listen actively

Use supportive language and maintain a positive outlook

Share mental health resources and encourage people to seek help

Remember you are not a therapist: do not diagnose or label the person

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Best practices in communication: Start with curiosity and empathy

- **Ask open-ended questions** (e.g. 'How are you feeling? Has this been an issue before?')

- **Relate by sharing individual challenges** (e.g.' It has been really hard for me to sit and focus lately because I have been so worried about COVID-19')

- **Acknowledge different experiences and needs among people** with different identities (e.g. check in on Black colleagues and encourage them to practice self-care and take time off as needed in relation to recent political events)

- **Practice reflexive listening** (e.g. paraphrase employee concerns, validate what you hear, ask clarifying questions)

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Focus on the behavior, not the cause

1. Anchor the conversation around:

- Job performance and productivity
- Engagement with one's work
- Communication with coworkers
- Physical capability and daily functioning

2. Do not attempt to diagnose or force information:

- 'You acted really manic in that last meeting, what's up with that?'
- 'You seem really depressed lately. Are you?'

3. Avoid making negative assumptions:

- 'He is always late to meetings because he is lazy'
- 'She is super aggressive in meetings because she is a jerk'

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Case Study: Diane

Diane has been a very successful manager at her firm for over ten years. Over the last few months, her firm has laid off several members of her team, and Diane and her colleagues have had to pick up the slack, working extra long hours and weekends.

Diane's remaining team members feel very worried about their own jobs, in addition to feeling resentful, overworked and under-appreciated by leadership. In addition, Diane's children have been doing remote learning and she has had to balance supporting their needs with getting her work done.

Diane's manager has noticed that she has been more irritable, coming late to meetings, and has mentioned that she is no longer working out, and has had trouble sleeping. How should Diane's manager handle the situation?

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Manager response A

Manager: Diane, what's wrong with you over the past few weeks? I needed the TPS reports a week ago, and I have still not heard back from you about our newsletter.

Diane: I know, I am sorry, it has just been really overwhelming. Our team is trying hard, but with the reduced staff it has been impossible to keep up with the volume of work. I have been feeling really stressed, and it's been hard to focus.

Manager: Look Diane, we are all stressed right now. This is the time to step up. You should be feeling lucky that you still have a job.

Diane: Ok, got it. I will…I will figure something out

Poll: What happened after that meeting?

A. Diane felt motivated by her manager's support and quickly finished all her work

B. Diane felt empowered to go to her executive leadership to let them know that she did not feel supported by her manager

C. Diane's physical and mental health continue to decline, as does her work performance

What happened after that meeting?

C. Diane's physical and mental health continue to decline, as does her work performance

- Right after the meeting, Diane sends her coworkers a terse email telling them to shape up or ship out
- She starts sleeping even less, and feels groggy and increasingly anxious
- Finally, she goes to her doctor, who instructs her to take a leave from work to focus on improving her health
- Diane takes a six-week leave
    - Negative financial cost to employee
    - Increased workload and emotional strain on remaining team members
    - Loss of productivity

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Manager: Hi Diane, it's been a while since we have checked in, and I wanted to see how you are doing.

Diane: Fine.

Manager: I wanted to check in because I have noticed there are a few deliverables that have fallen behind, and I heard you mention that you have not been working out, which I know is very important to you. You don't seem yourself lately - is anything up?

Diane: Things have been really hard lately, with the reduced staff, to keep on top of everything. We have fewer people and more work, not to mention that my kids are doing remote school, which is very stressful and time-consuming during the day.

Manager: That does sound really hard. I know I have been feeling very anxious about what has been going on recently, too, and the news can be very overwhelming right now.

Diane: Thank you, it is very challenging. I have been working ten-hour days, and I can't sleep at night because I have so many thoughts going through my head, and sometimes it seems as though people are acting as if this is business as usual, which it is clearly not.

Manager: I am really sorry to hear that, and I want to help and make sure that we come up with some ideas to mitigate this stress. What can we change to make work easier?

Diane: I think we need to look at some of these deadlines and think about what can realistically be accomplished with our reduced team.

Manager: That makes sense. I will follow up with some of the other directors to identify priorities right now, and what can be pushed to a later date. I will make sure to get back to you by end of business tomorrow with an update.

Diane: And it would be really helpful if we could move our morning meetings to later in the day. I have to get my kid set up on Zoom in the morning, and it is really hectic to balance both of those things.

Manager: I did not know that. Thank you for telling me. We can definitely move our meetings to the afternoon. Is there anything else that you think would be helpful?

Diane: No, I think that sounds good for now.

Manager: Thank you so much for sharing these concerns with me, Diane. I really appreciate it and want you to know I will take this seriously. I am going to reschedule our morning meetings to the afternoon and reach out to the team to prioritize deliverables over the next few months. Let's plan to follow up in our weekly check-ins so that we can see what's working and if there are any additional tweaks that can be made.

Diane: That sounds good.

Manager: Finally, I want to remind you about our free employee assistance program. I have reached out to them in the past when I was feeling very stressed and they were really helpful. They are available for both you and your family, and I encourage you to take time to reach out if needed.

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Poll: What did the manager do well?

- Focused on the behavior and not the cause or diagnosis

- Related to Diane by sharing his own individual challenges

- Downplayed Diane's concerns

- Shared resources to access support

- Asked open-ended questions

- Told Diane to stay positive

- Assumed that Diane was turning work in late because she could not handle her job

What did the manager do well?

- **Focused on the behavior and not the cause or diagnosis**
- **Related to Diane by sharing his own individual challenges**
- Downplayed Diane's concerns
- **Shared resources to access support**
- **Asked open-ended questions**
- Told Diane to stay positive
- Assumed that Diane was turning work in late because she could not handle her job

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What happened after that meeting?

Diane holds a staff meeting to address employee concerns about workload and shares the plan to prioritize different deliverables. She also shares that she has been feeling very stressed, is working to address this issue, and encourages her team members to reach out to her and the EAP if they are feeling the same.

Diane's manager reviews the current work deadlines and creates an updated deliverable schedule and puts items that are not currently priorities on hold. He also reschedules their meetings to the afternoon.

Diane slowly begins to start taking walks to get back into physical activity, which helps with her sleep, and in turn, boosts her productivity.

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Wrapping up: Manager checklist for promoting mental health

❑ Identify free mental health resources to share with employees

❑ Prepare yourself emotionally for the conversation (make sure you are in a good headspace using some of the techniques mentioned in this training)

❑ Schedule a time and private space for the discussion

❑ Ask open-ended questions

❑ Demonstrate empathy and vulnerability

❑ Practice active listening

❑ Co-develop a plan and timeline to implement next steps

❑ Share resources for mental health and encourage employees to use them

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Managing for mental health at work has a cascading impact

Your attitude and actions as a manager create a ripple effect among your employees and set the tone for creating a workplace culture where it is okay to talk about mental health.

Your employees are your greatest asset – when they feel confident and engaged in their work, it boosts morale and productivity.

By managing and supporting your own mental health, you create the space to support your employees and affect their lives both at work and at home.

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- **Discussion / Q & A**

Discussion / Q&A

- Please share your questions in the chat

- A copy of the training slides and recording will be shared after the session

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Mental health support is available

New Yorkers can visit the [ThriveNYC Resource Guide to Mental Health Services to Access While at Home](#) for regularly updated resources, including services tailored to the needs of aging New Yorkers, veterans, students and young people, and people harmed by violence, crime, or abuse.

Follow [@MentalHealthNYC](#) on Twitter for the latest updates

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Thank you for joining us!

Visit https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/workplace to learn more about workplace mental health or contact twp@thrive.nyc.gov to schedule a free consult.

Please share your feedback via the brief evaluation survey shared in the chat.

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