

Maintaining Momentum for Mental Health & Racial Equity at Work

Presented by Thrive in Your Workplace
February 23, 2021

Housekeeping

- Your video and audio will be off during the webinar
- Please share questions and comments in the chat
 - We will also hold time for Q&A at end of the presentation
- A copy of these slides will be shared with attendees after the training and the recording will be posted online

About Us



Thrive in Your Workplace (TWP) helps local employers integrate mental health support at 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 trainings, resources and events to support the resilience of New York City's workforce.

Today's facilitators



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Employer Engagement Manager
Thrive in Your Workplace



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Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC

Agenda

- Introduction to mental health and racial equity
- Strategies to promote mental health equity at work
- Exploring MERIT for your workplace (breakout sessions)
- Resources



Introduction to Mental Health & Racial Equity

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 challenges is a broad term that recognizes that we may all experience emotional distress related to stress, loneliness, grief, etc.

Mental illnesses are diagnosable conditions that negatively affect day-to-day functioning, e.g. depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, addictions

Mental health challenges affect all of us and in different ways

- **1 in 5** adults experience mental illness every year
- Suicide is **the sixth leading cause of death in New York City**
- **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

Sources: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

COVID-19 has taken an emotional toll on workers nationwide

- **85%** feel "worried and anxious they may catch COVID-19"
- **85%** are also "worried and anxious they may lose their jobs"
- **84%** report "really struggling" with employment-related matters
 - The reasons include **mental health (37%)**, changes at work (27%), and managing money at home (23%)

Source: Psychology Today

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected people 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

Sources: NYC Comptroller 2020 Report, CDC, Annals of Epidemiology

COVID-19 may be further compounding systemic issues

- Structural barriers to mental health support
- Shortage of mental health providers, particularly providers of color
- Exposure to trauma and violence
- Bias and discrimination in healthcare, workplaces, and other settings

Experiencing discrimination has negative effects on mental health

- Includes traumatic events such as exposure to racism, violence, economic insecurity, abuse, grief, and other negative life events, or viewing racially-motivated events on TV or online
- Erodes sense of self-worth and may lead to mental and physical health challenges:
 - anxiety, depression, and even symptoms of PTSD presented as persistent negative thoughts and mood changes
 - chronic stress, high blood pressure, unhealthy eating
 - substance misuse

Sources: American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Social Science & Medicine

Discrimination and bias at work can show up in different ways

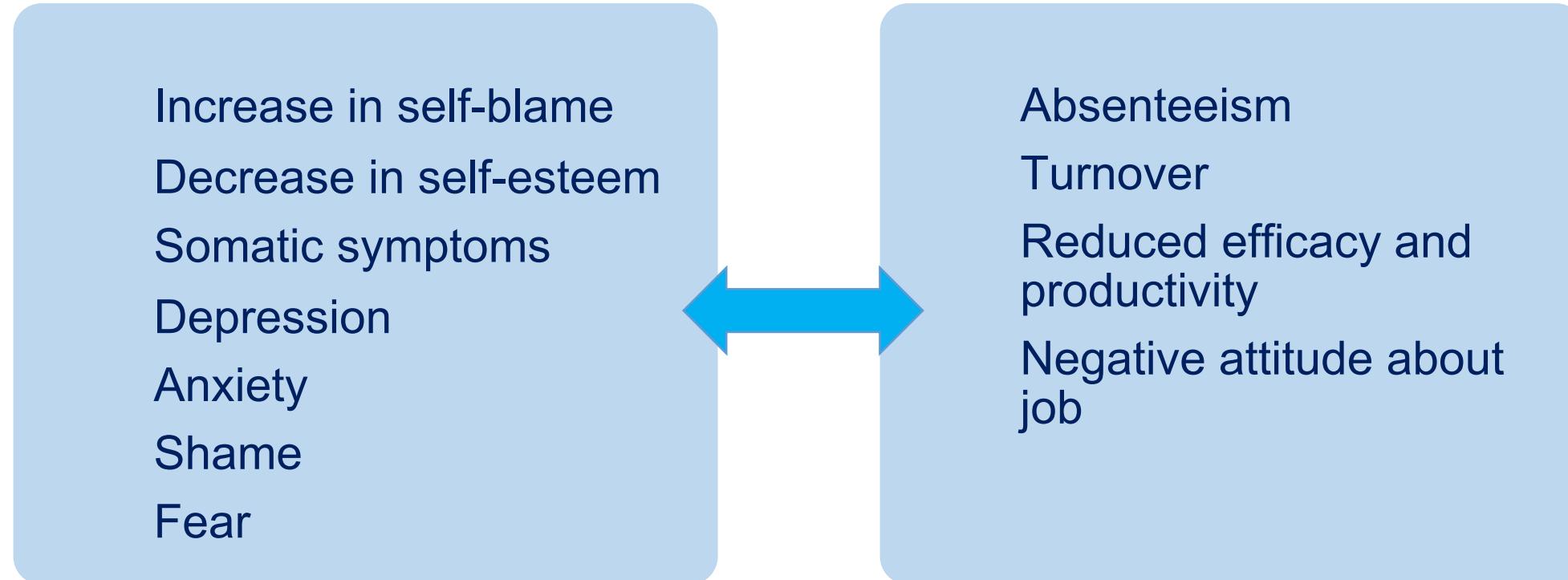
- Negative changes in workload
- Unfair promotions or inequitable distribution of work
- Assumptions regarding employees' abilities
- Disparate application of discipline or policies
- References to age, race, gender, etc.
- Unequal compensation or benefits
- Questionable hiring practices
- Lack of diversity

Source: Frontiers in Psychology, National Conference of State Legislatures

Poll

How might workplace factors affect an employee's wellbeing?

Job performance can also suffer as a result of discrimination and bias



Sources: American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, The Lancet, Social Science & Medicine



Widespread protests during summer 2020 served as a catalyst for organizations to actively increase diversity, equity and inclusion efforts...

But DEI work remains at risk of being de-prioritized

- DEI roles may be considered expendable
 - Job postings for DEI roles dropped 60% during first few months of COVID and then shot up after the summer protests
- DEI functions are often under-resourced
- DEI leaders are not always empowered to make the system changes needed to address workplace discrimination
- Previous research has shown that women and minorities who champion diversity in the workplace may be penalized for doing so

Sources: Harvard Business Review, Knowledge@Wharton

How do we maintain momentum to continue supporting mental health and racial equity at work?

A photograph showing a group of people's hands clasped together in a circle on a wooden desk. On the desk are several laptops, a smartphone, a tablet, and a cup. The hands belong to people of different skin tones, symbolizing unity. The background is slightly blurred.

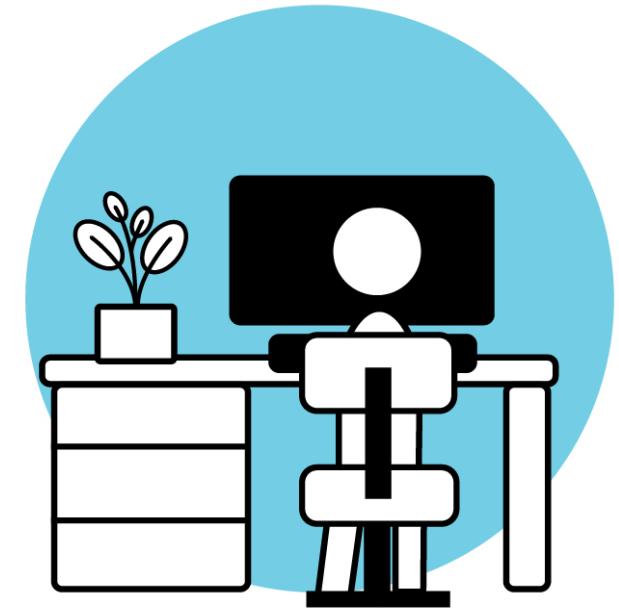
Strategies to promote
mental health and
racial equity at work

What is mental health equity?

Mental health equity is achieved when every person can reach their full “health potential” without inhibition from “socially determined circumstances,” which can include workplaces and workplace dynamics.

Promoting mental health equity at work

1. Enhance protective factors
2. Focus on organizational change, rather than behaviors
3. Use a structured and measurable approach to guide your efforts



Sources: American Mental Wellness Association, NEA EdJustice , Harvard Business Review

1. Enhance protective factors

Protective factors include:

- Strong support networks and relationships
- Religious, spiritual or intellectual engagement
- Positive personal characteristics
- Stability of basic needs

Source: American Mental Wellness



Employee resource groups can foster belonging and also inform DEI efforts

- Serve as a source of support for employees
- Symbolize a commitment to certain values or shared concerns, e.g. mental health, racial identity, sexual orientation
- Support the recruitment and retention of diverse staff
- Build an inclusive and engaged workforce

2. Focus on organizational change, not behaviors

- Create inclusive organizational policies and processes, rather than asking employees to change
- Ensure policies and systems treat all people fairly by standardizing expectations, opportunities and rewards
- Pursue sustainable strategies that are embedded into the fabric of the organization, not one-off efforts

3. Use a structured approach, like the MERIT framework, to guide efforts

The MERIT framework was developed by Wharton management professor Stephanie Creary:



- Differentiates organizations that perform DEI work from those that value DEI work, and positions it to be sustainable
- Advocates for merit-based practices with objective features and systematic evaluation

Source: Knowledge@Wharton

The MERIT framework presents 5 principles

M: Make DEI goals and work actionable, measurable, and evidence-based

E: Elevate DEI work internally and externally

R: Require leaders and managers to participate in behavior-based DEI trainings

I: Identify leaders and non-managerial employees willing to serve as DEI sponsors

T: Treat DEI work as core rather than peripheral work

M: Make DEI goals measurable and evidence-based

What could this look like in practice?

Implementation tips from TWP:

- ✓ Attach metrics to DEI goals
- ✓ Report out on them quarterly

E: Elevate DEI work internally and externally

What could this look like in practice?

Implementation tips from TWP:

- ✓ Dedicate a budget
- ✓ Issue regular progress reports

R: Require all staff to participate in behavior-based trainings

What could this look like in practice?

Implementation tips from TWP:

- ✓ Offer trainings that focus on skills and strategies, not just awareness-building

I: Identify DEI sponsors from across the organization

What could this look like in practice?

Implementation tips from TWP:

- ✓ Invite participation by leadership, mid-level managers and junior staff
- ✓ Include interdisciplinary perspectives

T: Treat DEI as core, rather than peripheral, work

What could this look like in practice?

Implementation tips from TWP:

- ✓ Establish a senior role to lead the work
- ✓ Include DEI measures in performance reviews



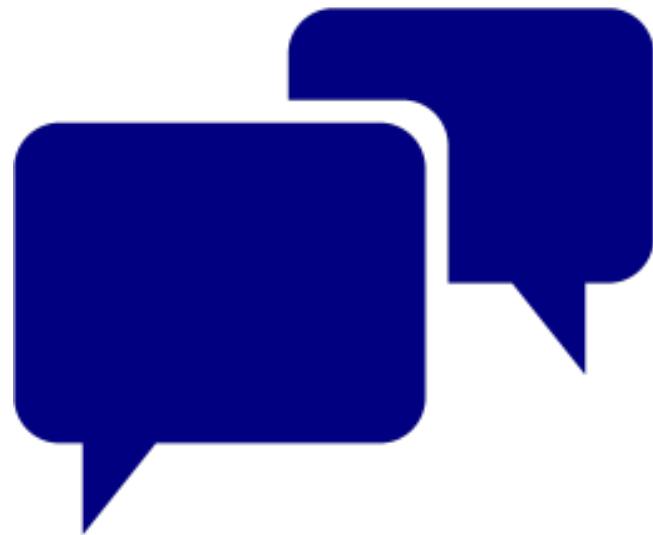
Breakout sessions

Breakout sessions: how can you begin implementing MERIT in your workplace?

- **Measure:** What are some ways that we can measure DEI?
- **Elevate:** How can we elevate DEI within our workplace and externally?
- **Require:** What elements would be most helpful in a training? How can we ensure that senior leaders participate?
- **Identify:** What does it mean to be a sponsor of this work? How can we set this role up for success?
- **Treat:** How do you signal “core,” rather than “peripheral,” work?



Discussion



MERIT framework uplifts the principles of a mental-health friendly workplace



- Demonstrates leadership commitment
- Establishes accountability
- Includes staff from across the organization
- Encourages transparency and communication
- Focuses on measurable, lasting change

Q&A

- Please share your questions in the chat
- A copy of the training slides and recording will be shared after the session



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 harmed by violence, crime, or abuse.

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

Thank you for joining us!



Thrive in Your Workplace

Redefining Workplace
Mental Health

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



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