



Boston University Faculty & Staff Assistance Office

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Mental Health Awareness at Work

One in five adults in the US have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year. These rates have likely increased over the past two years. According to the American Psychological Association's March 2021 Stress in America Survey, over 30% of US adults reported that their mental health had worsened since the start of the pandemic. Over 60% reported stress-related symptoms such as undesired changes in weight and sleep, and 23% reported drinking more alcohol to cope.

Mental health and substance use conditions affect people in the workplace. The BU Faculty & Staff Assistance Office (FSAO) offers the following tips and resources for supporting your own and your colleagues' mental health at work.

Tip 1: Support your own mental health

- Set boundaries to create work/life balance
- Practice self-care
- Advocate for yourself around work norms
- Ask for help when needed
- Take time off when needed

Tip 2: Be a Proactive Ally

- Show vulnerability
- Model mentally healthy behavior
- Acknowledge current events
- Cultivate inclusivity
- Normalize and advocate for positive mental health language

Tip 3: Know the resources

[BU Faculty & Staff Assistance Office](#)

- [Mental Health Self-Assessments](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [BIPOC Mental Health](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ Resources](#)
- [Wellness Presentations](#)

[BU Employee Wellness](#)

[BU Health Plans \(see coverage for Mental Health & Drug and Alcohol Treatment\)](#)

[BU Benefits Paid Family and Medical Leave](#)

[BU Equal Opportunity Office. Reasonable Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities](#)

Tip 4: Know What to Look For

Below are some warning signs that someone is grappling with a mental health or substance use issue:

- Change in behavior, demeanor, appearance, or performance
- Tardiness/absenteeism
- Mistakes, missed deadlines
- Forgetfulness
- Indecisiveness
- Apathy
- Hyper-performance
- Social withdrawal
- Neglected appearance
- Emotional displays (irritability, agitation, tearfulness)
- Agitation/aggression
- Illogical thinking
- Bizarre or unusual behavior

Tip 5: Intervene When You Identify Warning Signs

Reach out to express concern and show support. Initiate the conversation in private.

- “I’ve noticed you’ve been online really late and really early lately. How are you doing?”
- “I’ve been reading about x event in the news. I’m wondering how you’re doing.”
- “You’ve seemed quieter lately. Is everything o.k.?”
- Pause and listen. Don’t jump in with solutions or your own experiences.
- Validate with reflective listening: “That sounds really overwhelming.”
- Give thanks: “I appreciate your trusting me enough to share that with me.”
- Affirm their experiences: “That sounds like a lot for one person to handle.”
- Share your own experience *if it would be helpful*. “I went through a rough time last year. I found it very helpful to talk a counselor.”
- Don’t try to ‘fix’ the problem.
- Offer support: “You’re not alone.” “I’m here to listen.”
- Share resources: “Do you know about the Faculty & Staff Assistance Office (or PFML or EOO/Accommodations)?”
- Seek confidential consultation from the FSAO’s licensed behavioral health providers for help planning how to initiate a conversation, assessing level of risk/concern, and considering what additional steps you might take.

Communication and Active Listening Guidance

BU Ombuds Office [Communication and Conflict Management](#)

BU Terrier eDevelopment [Listening Even When it's Difficult to Listen](#)

[Using Active Listening in Workplace Situations](#)

Informational Resources

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [CDC Mental Health](#)
- [HelpGuide](#)
- [How to Talk About Your Mental Health with Your Employer](#). Harvard Business Review. July 30, 2021.
- [R U OK?](#) is a suicide-prevention initiative that promotes peer support and a safe culture to share personal struggles.
- [PsychHub YouTube channel](#)

Crisis Resources

- [Speaking of Suicide Resources](#)
- **Samaritans** <https://samaritanshope.org/> 1-877-870-HOPE (4673) Call or text.
- **Crisis Text Line** <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
Text HOME to 741741 Or [facebook.com/crisistextline](https://www.facebook.com/crisistextline)
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
 - 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (English) 1-888-628-9454 (Spanish)
1-800-799-4889 (For Deaf + Hard of Hearing)
- **Trans Lifeline** <https://translifeline.org/hotline/> (877) 565-8860
- **The Trevor Project (for LGBTQ youth)** <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/> 1-866-488-7386
- **Veterans Crisis Line** <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> 1-800-273-8255

Substance Use Disorders

- [FSAO Substance Use Resources](#) (including anonymous self-screening tool)
- [NIH Rethinking Drinking](#)