



# The Frontline Employee

May 2021

## **Mental Health Awareness Month: What's Normal, What's Not?**

Could you spot the difference between someone who is simply disappointed versus someone depressed enough to take their own life? What about being very happy, excited, and restless versus having bipolar illness? Over-drinking versus alcoholism? Identifying mental illness or addictive disease is not as easy as physical illness, but there is one indicator worth paying attention to, and that is your concern—for yourself, a friend, or loved one. Early identification of mental illness often means better treatment success. Mental illness affects how one thinks, behaves, and/or feels—and safety, health, relationships, communication, wellbeing of others, and occupational functioning may be at risk. So, if you are “concerned,” take the next step—speak with a doctor or a mental health professional. Still not sure? Speak with your EAP, and you will know what to do next.

## **May Is Stroke Awareness Month**

Do you know the signs of someone having a stroke and how to act? Most people do not. Here is what you should know. Remember “FAST.” F stands for “face drooping.” A stands for “arm weakness.” S stands for “speech difficulty.” And T stands for “time to call 911.” T might be the most important. Research shows calling 911 as being the fastest way of getting help, not driving a stroke victim to the hospital, which delays treatment crucial to survival. Other symptoms include the following; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, and lack of coordination. Learn more at [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) and [www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org).

## **Not Enough Feedback?**

Not getting enough feedback from one’s supervisor is a common complaint. One solution is to ask for it. Set a time for a feedback meeting in an environment without distractions. Come with two or three observations about your work that you judge as positive and a couple that focus on areas where you need improvement. Discuss the items, and ask whether your supervisor has anything to add. This exercise will achieve maximum engagement, and you will feel closer to your supervisor, feel less stressed, and feel better about your job. Be proactive with communication at work. It can be its own stress reliever.

## **Stop Procrastinating with the Five-Second Rule**

The “five-second rule” is a mental tactic conceived of by attorney and author Mel Robbins. Its purpose is to stop procrastination in its tracks and help you accomplish more. The science of the approach is sound. Here are the steps: When you become aware of a need to take some action, count down “5-4-3-2-1” and immediately, *physically*, move to action before the desire to procrastinate takes hold. Do not wait for an excuse to delay action. The left side of the brain controls logic, direction, and math. This technique allows this side of your brain to take control before the right side jumps in to undermine you. Learn more: “The 5-Second Rule” by Mel Robbins.

## **Be a Self-starter to Attract More Opportunity**

When you are sufficiently motivated and show a strong desire and determination to succeed, you are demonstrating the traits of a self-starter. Self-starters are obviously desired workers because of their ability to get things done. However, just as valued is how much easier they make life for their supervisors: Self-starters free up a supervisor to feel less anxious about the need to follow up and micromanage. In addition, when anxiety levels are reduced, fewer conflicts are likely between the manager and employee. Consequently, self-starters may have faster paths to promotion or recognition. To become a self-starter, meet with your boss once per year for an “overview meeting.” Discuss goals that both of you agree are rewarding but that will also advance the organization. Then meet with your boss for a few minutes four times a year to discuss your progress. This will also allow you to highlight (promote) your accomplishments. Avoid the mistake of engaging in exciting goals and spending most of your time on those while overlooking or falling behind on the essential functions of your position. Your initiative may be overshadowed by your lack of success doing what counts most.

## **Witnessing Death and Injury in the Workplace**

Frightening accidents and crimes in the workplace, often with serious injury or death, do happen. Although you are unlikely to witness such an event, realize that in addition to what transpires for the victim(s), your experience constitutes traumatic stress—something considered by experts as a nonphysical “assault” to the brain. This type of stress is best managed with education, guidance, and a few important self-care practices that you will be given following such an incident. The goal is to help you manage the normal physical and emotional health effects of traumatic stress. These may include severe anxiety, replay of the event in your mind, panic attacks, and nightmares, among other impacts. Feeling guilt and wondering how you could have prevented the tragedy, even if there is absolutely nothing you could have done, is common. Follow the guidance of mental health professionals and the EAP if you ever experience a traumatic stress incident. These professionals can help you assess any emotional impact, offer interventions, and help you recover both your feelings of safety and the passion for your job.

## **Do You Have “Smiling Depression?”**

Symptoms of depression may include, among others, sleep disturbances, appetite changes, crying, low energy, sadness, and difficulty feeling pleasure or participating in hobbies or activities that were once valued. Like other health problems that can affect behavior and are obvious to others, those with depression may mask their symptoms at work in order to appear engaged, in control, and happy. On the surface, some depressed people may appear fine, but denial and fear of being seen and identified by others as being depressed are covered up because of fear of the repercussions on their employment. Embarrassment may also cause some persons with depression to mask their true experience. Some medical professionals have referred to this as “smiling depression.” Are you showing a smile on the outside while feeling miserable on the inside and keeping depression a secret? Speak to your EAP or a mental health professional and get the real happiness back.

## **Your First Back to Work Team Meeting**

It is coming someday: a genuine in-person meeting at work with your team. Perhaps a year has gone by without all team members being in the same place. To reinforce or reestablish team cohesion, have a “remote working lessons learned” discussion. What did you learn about each other’s work style? What positive and constructive feedback can you give each other? What new communication issues became obvious among the group? How can you leverage your experiences for greater productivity going forward? During the meeting, share what each person felt was the upside to the adversity. Hint: Commit to group confidentiality with meetings of this type. The result will be a heartfelt and bonding experience.

**Questions? Call during business hours 815.748.8334, or after hours at 800.373.3327**