

Supporting mental health and well-being in the workplace



Doyanne Darnell, PhD

Assistant Professor

UW Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Clinical Director, Psychological Services

Harborview Mental Health and Addiction Services

darnelld@uw.edu



Jennifer Petritz

Director UW Medicine

Human Resources

jennyp@uw.edu

Thank you for supporting mental health and well-being in the workplace!

Our aim for this session:

How can managers support employees with regards to mental health and well-being?

We'll talk about 3 different ways:

- *Supporting a healthy workplace culture*
- *Resources for employees who may be struggling with mental health concerns:*
 - Directly seek assistance from manager
 - Exhibiting behaviors that have a direct impact on their job performance
- *Helping an employee in crisis*

HOW CAN MANAGERS SUPPORT
EMPLOYEES WITH REGARDS TO
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

*Supporting a healthy
workplace culture*



gettyimages®
BRO Vector

Supporting a healthy workplace culture

Communicate the value of mental health and well-being implicitly and explicitly

- Post signage about resources available to employees
 - If primarily virtual, consider a slide in staff meetings dedicated to resource reminders
- Incorporate resources into onboarding
- Remind employees about resources at least annually
- Role model healthy workplace behavior and self-care
- Notify employees of and support their attendance at resilience workshops

BURNOUT

BEATING BURNOUT AT WORK

WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout results from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:



Exhaustion:
Physically, emotionally, and cognitively, described as feeling like the tank is empty.



Negative & Cynical:
Feeling negative and cynical toward work, co-workers, and others in one's life.



Ineffective at Work:
Reduced effectiveness or ability to perform one's work.

<https://www.workplacementalhealth.org/employer-resources/infographic-beating-burnout-at-work>

WHAT CAN ORGANIZATIONS DO TO TACKLE BURNOUT AT WORK?

Small changes can lead to big results in reducing and preventing burnout by addressing six key workplace factors (Maslach, 2016). Here are those factors and tips for addressing them:



Workload
Ensuring people have the time and tools needed to get the job done.

Tip: Remind people managers to check-in on workload, and openly communicate about expectations and deadlines.



Autonomy and Control
Offering people the chance to have some control over how they perform their work?

Tip: Explore ways to give team members more autonomy & control over tasks while still meeting deadlines.



Reward and Recognition
Ensuring people are recognized and rewarded for a job well done.

Tip: Remind everyone of the need to recognize and reward wins and achievements, both big and small.



Community and Sense of Belonging
Creating opportunities for people to feel like there is trust & mutual support with colleagues.

Tip: Find ways for people to connect with peers, supervisors, and across teams, through ERGs, mentorship programs, and in virtual settings.



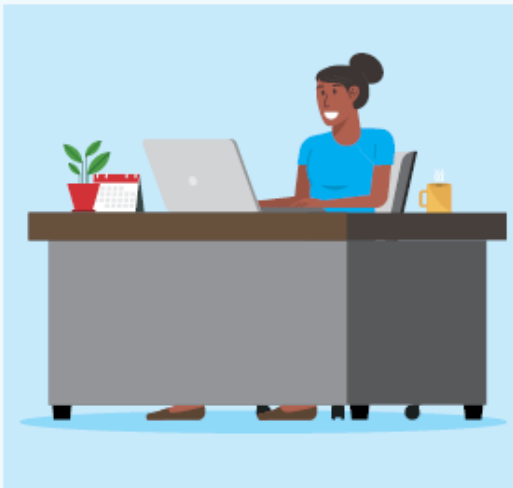
Fairness
Offering opportunities for people to be promoted and feel like they are treated fairly at work.

Tip: Review opportunities for advancement to ensure alignment exists between performance and promotion.



Values and Purpose in Work
Supporting people in feeling good about their work and proud of their contributions.

Tip: Find ways to relate the meaning of work tasks to organizational purpose and mission and communicate employee contributions to both.

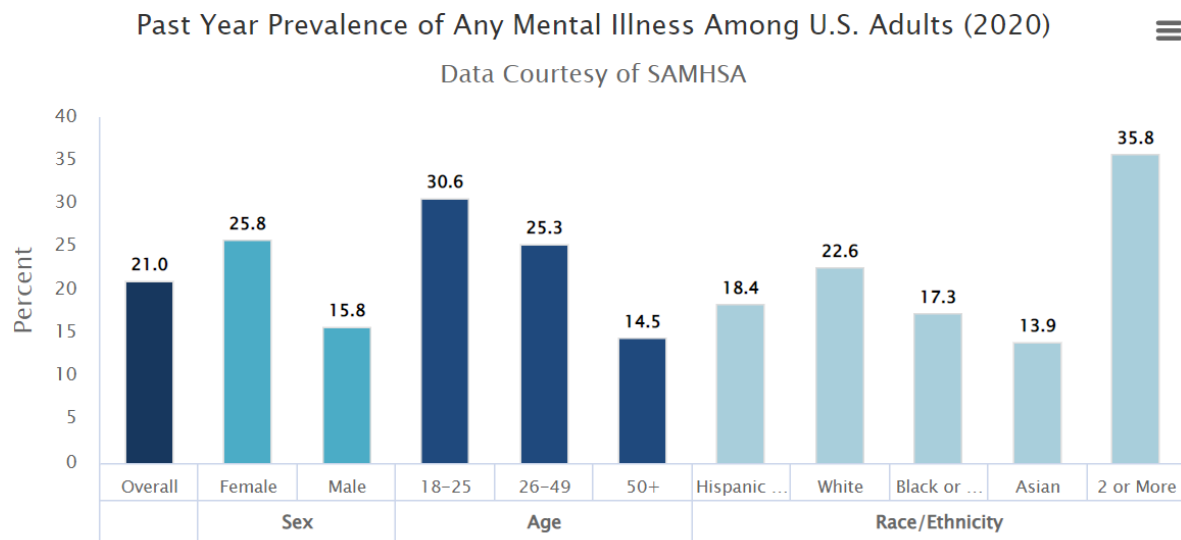


Employers can also help reduce and prevent burnout by:

- Supporting People Managers:** Remind managers about leading with empathy, scheduling regular check-ins, and encouraging open dialogue with their teams around the factors that contribute to burnout.
- Offering Training:** Offer an interactive training with people leaders that informs them about the six (6) factors and how to effectively address them to reduce or eliminate burnout on their teams.
- Surveying Employees:** Develop a simple survey to assess and prioritize the factors that may be impacting burnout in the workplace. Better understanding how burnout is impacting your organization is key in tackling it.
- Developing an Action Plan:** Work with a small group of thoughtful employees to create an action plan that addresses the issues uncovered in the employee survey. Be sure to address organizational culture, as it impacts performance, productivity, retention, and more.

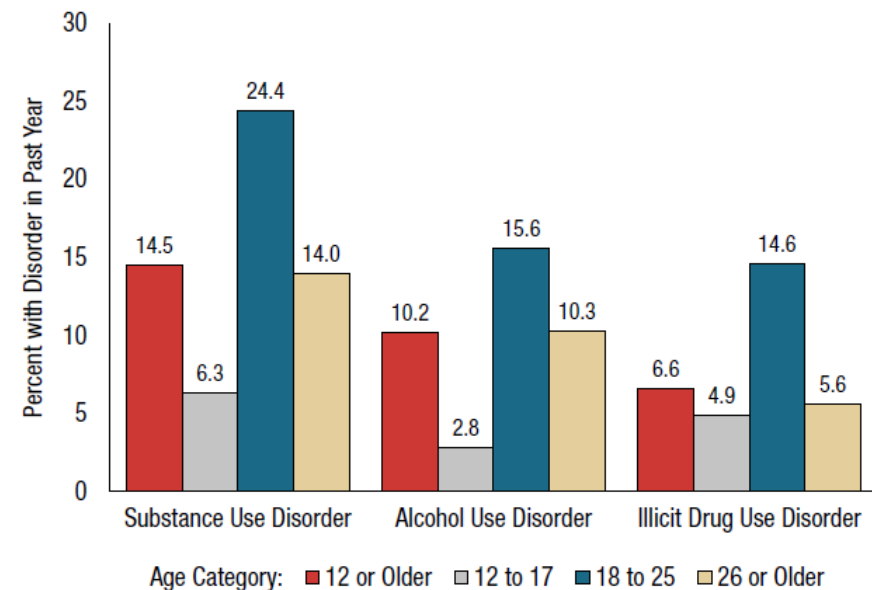
Mental health and substance use disorders are common and may contribute to performance issues

Figure 1



<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

Figure 26. Substance Use Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorder, and Illicit Drug Use Disorder in the Past Year: Among People Aged 12 or Older; 2020



<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

HOW CAN MANAGERS SUPPORT
EMPLOYEES WITH REGARDS TO
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

*Employees who may
be struggling with
mental health concerns*



Employees who may be struggling with mental health concerns

Common signs of mental health and substance use concerns

- Changes in appearance
 - Significant weight loss or weight gain
 - Hygiene concerns
- Changes in behavior
 - Attendance or lateness problems
 - Coming to work tired, sleepiness
 - Appearing excessively energetic and fidgety
 - Hostility or aggression
 - Avoidant
 - Isolating
- Mood changes or fluctuations
 - Sullen, withdrawn
 - Agitated, irritable
- Cognitive difficulties
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Difficulty tracking conversations
 - Not remembering what was talked about
 - Losing track of things or tasks
 - Not completing tasks on time

Employees who may be struggling with mental health concerns

Vetting out potential mental health concerns through a performance management conversation

Managers Role:

- Not your job to be a professional counselor, or best friend
- It is your job to ensure employees perform their jobs in a satisfactory manner by effectively addressing performance concerns and providing support as needed.

Five Steps to Manage Performance Issues:

- Identify performance issues
- Observe behavior
- Document facts
- Work with HR to prepare to meet with the employee
- Meet with Employee

Employees who may be struggling with mental health concerns

Vetting out potential mental health concerns through a performance management conversation

Meeting with Employee

- Clearly describe the work performance issues you have identified.
- Outline behavioral changes, if any, that you have observed.
- Explain why this problem concerns you (workplace impact).
- Inform the employee of the “personal consequences” if work performance or conduct does not improve.
- Discuss all available supportive services and encourage the employee make use of them.
- Express confidence in the employee’s improvement and set a date for a follow-up discussion.

UW/Local Resources

- **Leave of Absence** UW & Washington State offer generous leave of absence benefits
- **CareLink** connects you with experts who help you or your family members navigate life's challenges in a free and confidential setting and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 866-598-3978.
- **SafeCampus** is a violence-prevention and response program supporting students, staff, faculty and community members. Call 206-685-7233 24/7 to anonymously discuss safety and well-being concerns for yourself or others.
- **The Whole U** is UW's workplace wellness program, providing programs and resources for health, wellness and mindfulness.
- **UW SOM Employee Mental Health Resources** information at:
<https://faculty.uwmedicine.org/employee-mental-health-support/>

HOW CAN MANAGERS SUPPORT
EMPLOYEES WITH REGARDS TO
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

*Helping an employee in
crisis: Suicidal Ideation*



Helping an employee in crisis: Suicidal Ideation

- **Suicide** is when people harm themselves with the goal of ending their life, and they die as a result
- **Suicidal behavior** refers to taking actions related to ending one's own life
- **Suicidal ideation** is when people think about wanting to die, wanting to kill themselves, and/or how they might go about doing this
 - Concern about ideation is high when someone has a plan, means to carry out the plan, and intent to carry out the plan

<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/index.html>

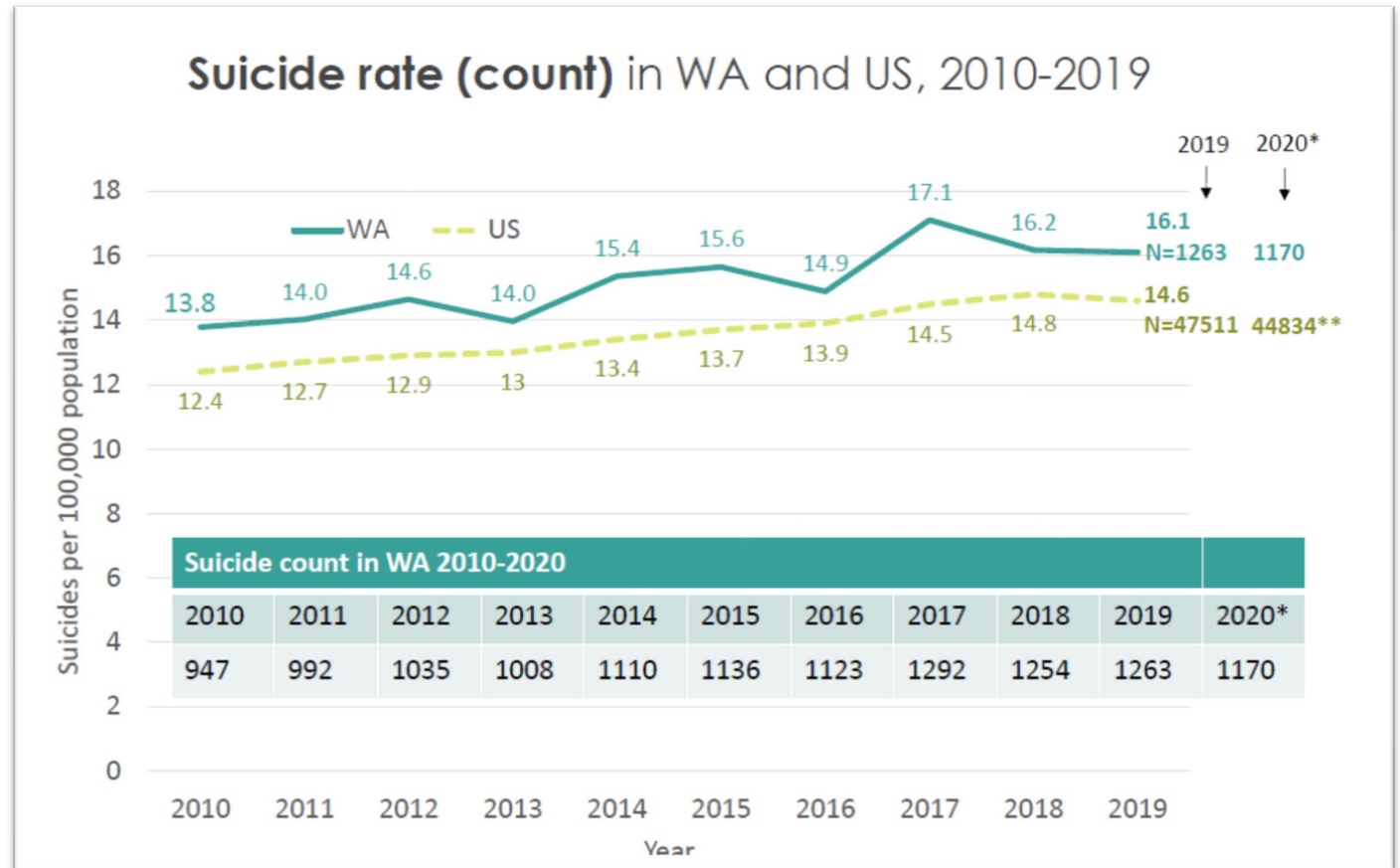
12.2 million people in the U.S. have seriously
thought about suicide.

(3.7% of the population)

Some warning signs of suicide risk you might observe

- Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves
- Talking about feeling empty or hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions
- Feeling unbearable emotional or physical pain
- Talking about being a burden to others

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/suicide-faq>



<https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs//140-254-SuicideInWA.pdf>

Intervention Options for Employees with Suicidal thoughts or Intentions

Contact HR to help walk through the following steps

Attempt to solicit their agreement to one of the following:

- Accompany employee to the ED if there is a strong possibility of suicide
- Call 911 if employee refuses intervention and leaves
- Warm transfer to CareLink for assessment and appropriate intervention options
- Obtain agreement of employee for a CareLink outreach call

If employee refuses warm transfer or an outreach call:

- Explain how beneficial CareLink can be and encourage them to call by end of day
- If they have a therapist or doctor ask that they contact their provider by end of day
- Arrange a time to follow up with the employee

If the employee does not return for their next shift and does not answer calls:

- Call the employee's emergency contact number for a welfare check
- If unable to reach them, call 911 for a welfare check

In all cases, follow up with the employee and consult with CareLink as needed

Debrief with supervisor and/or HR as needed for managerial support

Crisis Resources

- National Crisis Line: suicidepreventionlifeline.org
 - 800-273-TALK (8255)
 - 988 – July 16, 2022
- Crisis Connections of King County: 866-427-4747
- Snohomish County Crisis Line (CDMHPs): 800-584-3578
- Pierce County Crisis Line (CDMHPs): 800 576-7764

Where can I learn more about mental health in the workplace?

Links:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/initiatives/resource-center/case-studies/index.html>
- <https://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>
- <https://www.rightdirectionforme.com/for-employers/resources/>

QUESTIONS?

