The Importance of Mental Health

We all need a “mental health” day away from work every now and then. But what happens when that one day, or even several days, doesn’t fix our moods? It’s estimated that 44 million adults (that’s 18% of us) have some type of mental illness.

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in America and most did not seek medical treatment in the last year. Surprisingly enough, early symptoms of mental illness start small; loss of sleep, feeling tired for no reason, feeling low, feeling anxious, or hearing voices. These early symptoms might not ever become serious. Sometimes, they go away on their own, but when they do not go away, it typically takes 10 years from the time they first appear until someone gets a correct diagnosis and proper treatment.

The following 10 Steps to a Mentally Healthy Workplace is taken from a posting at Mental Health America.

1. **Productive atmosphere.** That means the facility is clean and well maintained; that employees feel respected and appreciated; and that intimidation, bullying, and harassment are not tolerated.

2. **Pay employees a livable wage.**

3. **Reasonable accommodation.** That includes provisions for physical and mental disabilities, which could mean changes to the work space or schedule, or using technologically-adapted equipment.

4. **Provide a comprehensive health insurance plan.** Such a plan should include smoking-cessation, weight-loss, and substance abuse programs.

5. **Open and transparent communication.**

6. **Employee accountability.** Employees must be willing to support one another as well as management.

7. **Management accountability.** Employees should be encouraged and allowed to provide work-related feed back to their supervisors (anonymously if necessary).

8. **Offer opportunities for a work/life balance.** That includes benefits such as like flexible schedules and telecommuting (if applicable).

9. **Emphasize clear and positive values.** Everybody inside and outside the company should know what your organization stands for.

10. **Fitness.** Encourage employees to be physically active and stay fit. If possible, incentivize employees to join a gym or take fitness classes.

Visit [www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org) for more information or to download tools for mental wellness.