Mates in Mind

Building Cultures of Prevention

Resource Pack 2020

ZSA

In partnership with the Zero Suicide Alliance

Taking action to prevent suicide

Here at Mates in Mind, we believe breaking the silence and stigma surrounding mental ill-health is a crucial step towards providing a safe and healthy workplace environment, which can play a vital role in suicide prevention.

## Mates in Mind Managing Director, James Rudoni comments:

"We know that the effect on those impacted by suicide is lasting and we believe that every suicide is a preventable death. Mental health can be a difficult topic to address, but anything mentionable is manageable.

What we know from data previously reported by the Office for National Statistics (2018) that the risk of suicide is elevated in some sectors of the economy, such as construction, which is three times the national average for site workers, which is why we exist, to help support these sectors in bridging the mental health gaps and supporting their workforces.

Opening up an honest conversation about mental health in the workplace continues to be the most immediate and effective starting point. We cannot underestimate this important first step – helping to provide clear language, create general awareness and help people to recognise that everyone has mental health the same way that they have physical health. In this space, part of the messaging is about people recognising the signs in themselves, but awareness also is about enabling people to spot the changes in behaviour in others, combined with having increased confidence to know how to appropriately open up a conversation with a colleague.

Our experience in supporting hundreds of organisations has shown us that the work we do here at Mates in Mind can make a meaningful difference to the wellbeing of an organisation and its people. Awareness days, such as World Suicide Prevention Day provide an opportunity for workplaces and sites across the country to get involved and start a conversation which could save a life"

By working together, we can be the change needed to improve mental health across the UK.
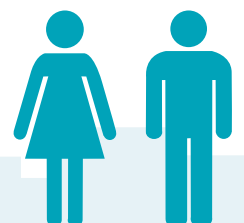
Taking action to prevent suicide

We know that sometimes it can be difficult to know how to take action to prevent suicide. Knowing where to start, or what to say can seem daunting or confusing.

But Mates in Mind can support you to begin those important conversations and make a change.

It doesn't matter when or why your organisation is taking action to prevent suicide, we are here to support you with the tools and resources you need to create a culture of prevention.

Why we need to take action to prevent suicide in the UK

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that in 2018, there were 6,507 suicides registered in the UK.

They reported that three-quarters of suicides registered were among men.

Regarding regional trends, Scotland had the highest suicide rate in Great Britain and males aged 45 to 49 years had the highest age-specific suicide rate

Our updated '**Building cultures of prevention and resilience**' pack can be used to help individuals and organisations in raising awareness as part of a strategy to reduce suicide rates. With resources and guidance ranging from immediate actions to longer-term steps, the pack's objective is to give support to anyone who may need it.

As Mates in Mind continue to develop content to help organisations drive change and improve mental health across their workplaces, we also welcome any feedback from our Supporters. We sincerely hope that the resources collated in this pack are useful and informative – and that they provide support and guidance to anyone who might need it.

Fundamentally, we want to remind people that you are not alone, there is always someone there to support you- and remind organisations that we are here to enable them in taking action.
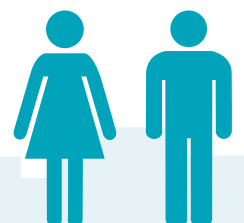
Taking steps to prevent suicide

Start the conversation

Talking about mental health supports steps towards suicide prevention, because those important conversations have the power to:

Increase awareness

Talking about the fact that we all have mental health and recognising that this is part of who we are, can help to normalise the conversation around the topic. This contributes to an environment where individuals have greater awareness and understanding of the challenge and how it can be tackled.

Creating awareness is an important step in any prevention strategy. It is important for individuals to be able to recognise when they may need support, for themselves or others, and what to do get help.

Let people know they're not alone

Building awareness and understanding means that colleagues are able to support each other. Just as with safety, we recognise that we have a responsibility not to ignore an issue.

If someone has been impacted by suicide, talking about it can empower them to seek more help – and not feel alone.

Help bust the taboo

Individuals may be put off talking about suicide because of the stigma and taboo around the subject. The feelings of being alone, coupled with the thought they might be judged, can stop them reaching out for the support they need at a difficult time.

## Knowing the facts helps start conversations

When talking about mental health and also suicide, it's important to know the facts.

The **statistics and trends resource** by Samaritans can support you in your conversations and help you understand the ins and outs of the topic.

Suicide statistics and trends for the UK and Republic of Ireland

Busting the taboo by busting the myths
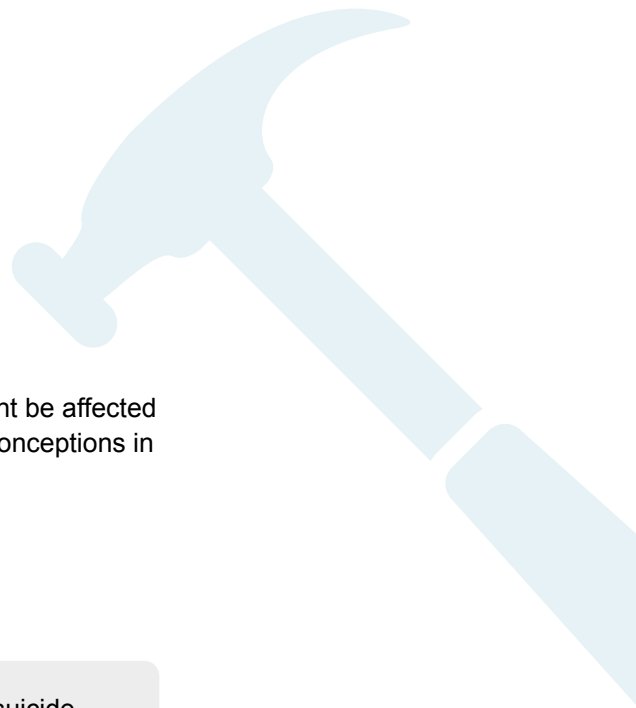
Busting myths like these can help you to support someone who might be affected by suicide. Samaritans have listed a number of these common misconceptions in the helpful resource below, explaining the facts around the topic.

For example:

Myth: People who say they are going to take their own life are just attention seeking and shouldn't be taken seriously.

Fact: People who say they want to end their lives should always be taken seriously.

It may well be that they want attention in the sense of calling out for help and helping them get support may save their life.

Myth: Talking about suicide is a bad idea as it may give someone the idea to try it.

Fact: Suicide can be a taboo topic. Often, people who are feeling suicidal don't want to worry or burden anyone with how they feel and so they don't discuss it.

But, by asking someone directly about suicide, you give them permission to tell you how they feel. People who have felt suicidal will often say what a huge relief it was to be able to talk about what they were experiencing.

Once someone starts talking they've got a better chance of discovering options that aren't suicide.

Myths about suicide

Support for individuals

Are you struggling to cope?

Remember, you are not alone and there is always someone to help you.

Below are the immediate actions you can take if you are struggling to cope.

Coping right now

- Try not to think about the future – just focus on getting through today
- Stay away from drugs and alcohol
- Get yourself to a safe place, like a friend's house
- Be around other people
- Do something you usually enjoy, such as spending time with a pet[ii]

Start the conversation

If you find it difficult to talk to someone you know, you could:

- **call your GP** – ask for an emergency appointment
- **call 111 out of hours** – they will help you find the support and help you need
- **contact your mental health crisis team** – you will know if you have a crisis team
- **call a confidential helpline** – see our confidential list below

Spotting the signs that someone needs support

Signs that someone may need support

- Feeling restless and agitated

- Feeling tearful

- Not wanting to talk to or be with people

- Not wanting to do things you usually enjoy

- Using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings

- Finding it hard to cope with everyday things

- Not replying to messages or being distant

- Their work just doesn't appear to be at the same standard

- New pattern of unexplained lateness or absences

- Recent inability to concentrate on their work or in meetings

- Recent inability to complete any of their work

You might not always be able to spot these signs, and these emotions show up differently in everyone.[iii]

Our free Spotting the signs infographic is available for download and can be used in online or print versions to raise awareness about mental ill-health. This way your workforce will know how some signs to look out for if they think they should reach out.

www.matesinmind.org/assets/uploads/WMHD_2019_Spotting_the_signs_infographic_3.jpg

Taking action when you spot the signs

Encourage them to talk about their struggle and actively listen

Enabling individuals to speak about what they are struggling with can be the best way of supporting them in what they're going through.

Don't' be afraid to start a conversation with someone if you are worried about them.

See these <u>tips from Samaritans</u> about how to be an active listener:
- Show you care: Focus on the other person, make eye contact, put away your phone.
- Have patience: It may take time and several attempts before a person is ready to open up.
- Use questions: Use open questions that need more than a yes/no answer, and follow up with questions like 'Tell me more'.
- Say it back: Check you've understood, but don't interrupt or offer a solution.
- Have courage: Don't be put off by a negative response and, most importantly, don't feel you have to fill a silence.

Encourage them to seek help for what they are struggling with

Remind them, there is always someone to listen and support them.

If you are supporting someone in the workplace, you can suggest they talk with:
- their Employee Assistance Programme (if their workplace has one)
- their HR representative
- their health and safety representative

They can also speak with other health professionals, either within their organisation, such as occupational health, or external to their organisation, such as their GP.

You can also signpost the person other confidential services if they are not comfortable with talking to someone directly related to their organisation. Our list of confidential support services (page 11) can help individuals to cope with their difficulties.

Take care of yourself

Supporting someone in distress can be distressing in itself. If you're helping someone who's struggling, make sure you take care of yourself as well. For example, by talking to someone you trust about how you're feeling.[iv]

- **SHUSH tips**

- **Supporting someone who feels suicidal**

- **Talking to someone who feels suicidal**

- **Samaritans Supporting Someone Online**

- **MIND How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem**

- **If you are worried about someone else, Samaritans**

Supporting those impacted by suicide

When taking action and raising awareness about mental wellbeing, with an aim of preventing suicide, it's important to remember that suicide bereavement is thought to affect around half the general population and that 'grief doesn't stop, it changes.' [v]

Therefore, it's important to consider that it doesn't matter how long ago somebody may have been touched by suicide, they may still need support – and your words and actions will mean something to them. However, it has been reported that '25% of people bereaved by suicide said they received no support after their loss. Only 1% said they preferred to cope without support.' [vi]

The resource below can help you to find the words to reach out to someone who may need it.

"We all need a little help from time to time but for some who find it hard to communicate or understand their problems the world can feel a very dark and lonely place. I want to help by encouraging people to talk and for others to listen. Sometimes all it takes to make a difference is a kind understanding ear."

SHEQ Co-ordinator and Mates in Mind Supporter

"When I first worked as a site manager, I never felt I could talk to anyone about any difficulties I faced, I didn't want to show any weakness as I thought people would think I couldn't do my job. I have had to work hard to get better at talking to others and keeping my mental health 'healthy'."

Project Executive and Mates in Mind Supporter

Finding the words
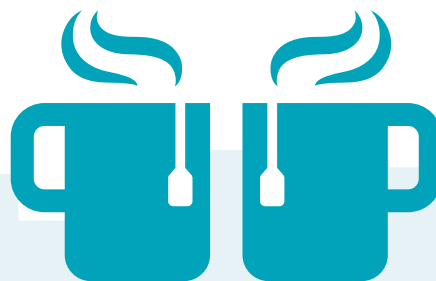
Confidential support services

Remember, you are not alone.

Samaritans: 116 123

The Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. 24/7 support for people who are in despair or suicidal.

National Counselling Society: www.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/find-counsellor

As a Mates in Mind Supporter, your organisation has access to The National Counselling Society (NCS). The NCS deliver a free assessment and up to 8 counselling sessions at a fixed rate of £30 per session for all Mates in Mind Supporters.

To find a counsellor that is partnered with Mates in Mind, please go to the NCS website, search the location you need and then refine your search by selecting the drop down list "Charities we work with" and select Mates in Mind. This will populate a list of counsellors who work with us.

Construction Industry Helpline: 0345 605 1956

Provided by the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity and supported by the Considerate Constructors Scheme, the helpline advises on a range of matters including occupational health and wellbeing, support and advice for people with stress, and home worries such as divorce, tax and financial concerns. The services can also provide emergency financial aid to the construction community in times of crisis.

Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393 (or text 86463)

The team at the leading mental health charity Mind can provide information on a range of topics including types of mental health problem, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments.

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM): 0800 58 58 58

CALM provide a helpline for men in the UK who are down or have hit a wall, who need to talk or find information and support. The helpline is open 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year. They also offer a webchat service between the same hours.

Prevention of Young Suicide (Papyrus): 0800 068 41 41

Papyrus provide confidential help and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person. Their HOPELineUK service is staffed by trained professionals who give non-judgemental support, practical advice and information to; children, teenagers and people up to the age of 35. They can be contacted on 0800 068 41 41, by email: pat@papyrus-uk.org or SMS 07786 209697

The Silver Line: 0800 4 70 80 90

The Silver Line is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

**Workplace mental health support service: 0300 4568114**

Provided by Remploy, in partnership with Access to Work, WMHSS offers a free and confidential support service to help you remain in your job when it is being affected by stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issue (whether diagnosed or not). If you are finding work difficult or you are absent from work their advisors will help you make a wellbeing plan and support you with workplace adjustments, including how to get support from your employer.

Zero Suicide Alliance: www.zerosuicidealliance.com/ZSA-Resources

The Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA) is a collaboration of National Health Service trusts, charities, businesses and individuals who are all committed to suicide prevention in the UK and beyond. The ZSA is ultimately concerned with improving support for people contemplating suicide by raising awareness of, and promoting, FREE suicide prevention training which is accessible to all.

Employers guide to building a culture of prevention
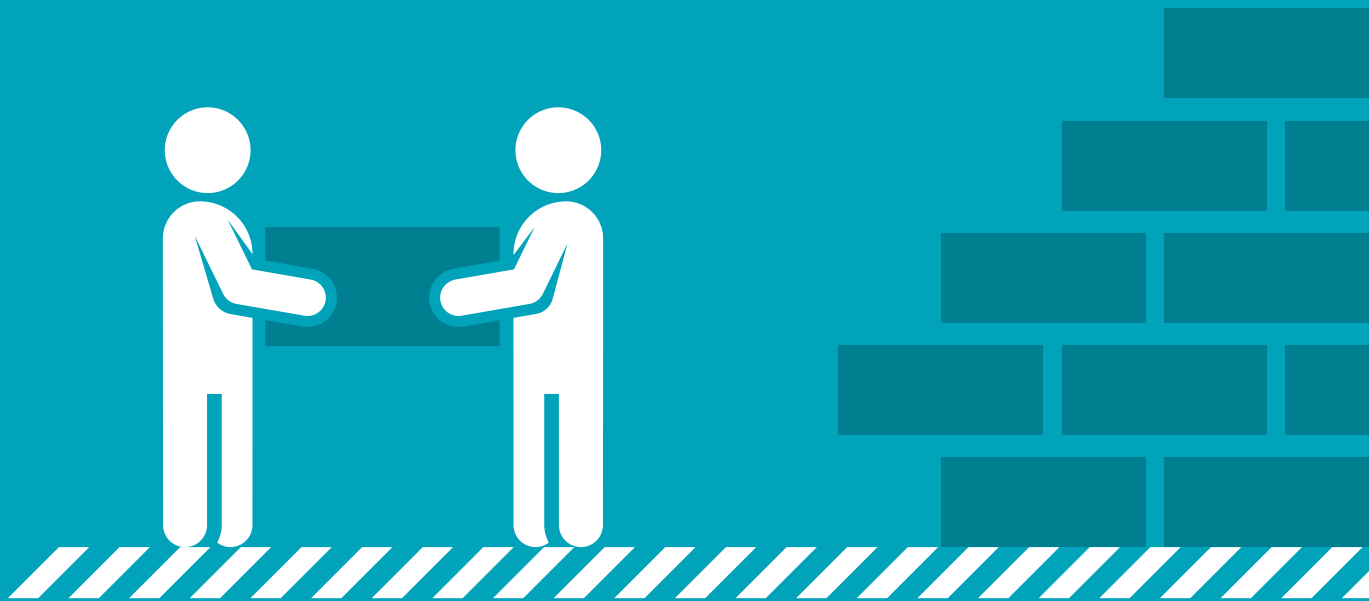
An employer's role in suicide prevention

Up to 135 people can be impacted by a single suicide.[vii]

Employers and workplaces are part of a community's social fabric and therefore play a part in addressing this wider public health issue.

It doesn't matter when or why your organisations is taking action to prevent suicide, we are here to support you with the tools and resources you need to make a change.

At Mates in Mind, we enable organisations to improve their workforces' mental health by providing the skills, clarity and confidence to employers on how to raise awareness, improve understanding and address the stigma that surrounds mental health.

We recognise that mental ill-health does not always necessarily cause suicide, and that 'most people who choose to end their lives do so for complex reasons'. However, we also understand that mental illness can play a part with research showing that 'many people who die by suicide have a mental illness'[viii]

The tools and resources here have been collated to support you in looking after the mental health and wellbeing of your workforce, in order to support suicide prevention more widely.

Developing lasting change

By creating an open and inclusive culture, employers can empower their workforces to have difficult but important conversations about mental health and suicide.

If a workforce has the awareness and understanding of how and where they can get support, in an environment where they feel listened to and treated with respect, they will feel more able to get the support they need.

A workplace culture where conversations are encouraged, and mental health and wellbeing are being proactively supported by employers can be crucial in tackling the complex challenges of mental ill-health and suicide prevention.

We have witnessed this through the work we have done with our Supporters. Conversations like the one below, had by one of our Supporters, can be critical to the lives of individuals.

"When I was asked to share my story and read it across sites and the company…it opened up a lot of conversations. I found a lot of people coming to me with their own stories and telling me how they were relieved that they had someone to talk to who understands.

"When you talk about organisations developing cultures… I found that it was about giving them the information and having the conversation…Let them talk and listen to what they say, because sometimes it just comes flowing out - and it's an ease to their mind."

Site manager and Mates in Mind Supporter

It doesn't matter where your organisation is in its mental health journey – whether you have never thought about it, have done some training or don't know if there's more you should be doing – Mates in Mind is here to help.

Developing resilience in our people

Everyone has some level of resilience - and by understanding more, the greater our ability to strengthen our resilient skills. Any of us can practice these skills – some of us will learn these skills naturally over time, some may need to make a conscious effort to practice.
- Resilience is not remedy for weakness but how we recognise and build on our strengths
- It is our ability to sustainably bounce back from setbacks and stay effective in the face of tough demands and difficult circumstances
- It is not just about coping with major events in our lives, but everyday challenges

Resilience is broadly defined as the psychological capacity to adapt to stressful circumstances and to bounce back from adverse events. It is an important personality trait and it is sometimes referred to as a muscle that contracts during good times and expands during bad times.

"Resilience theory argues, it's not the nature of adversity, but how we deal with it".

There are many common characteristic traits linked to positive ways of coping with pressure and change. Each person falls somewhere on a continuum on each personality trait. For example, between extroversion and introversion; neuroticism (from being emotionally stable to often feeling anxious or upset); openness to experiences; conscientiousness; to agreeableness (from egocentric and sceptical to altruistic and supportive).

There is a complex and non-linear relationship between personality traits and resilience – which tells us that few traits are either always good or always bad for our resilience. The key to remember is that good resilience is about having the right balance of different personality characteristics – and not extremes. For example, being overly resilient could drive someone to becoming overly focussed on unattainable goals, and whilst having ambition and goals are important, it may be more effective to keep our goals achievable which may mean weighing up the importance of others.

Some of the most important resilience building approaches to are around our mindset, our optimism, our ability to re-frame situations and to recognise and avoiding thinking traps. As managers and leaders, there is much that we can do to support and sustain resilience. Ultimately, resilience building is a personal endeavour which everyone should take responsibility for.

Things managers can do to build and sustain resilience in their teams

What can leaders and managers do to support and build resilience in others?
- Resilience building for managers is both a buffer to stress and pressures, as well as performance enhancing
- A manager's own resilience is vital to their own effectiveness (the 'resilient role model')
- Your team's resilience can be sustained or undermined by your actions and behaviours
- Your role is facilitative – it is the individual who must take personal responsibility for improving their own resilience.

Developing resilience in our people

So, with this in mind, what can managers do to build and sustain resilience in their teams?

- **Take responsibility for developing your own personal resilience**

- **Assess your leadership style**
  - Managers have a significant impact on how engaged or how pressured their team's are.
  - By better understanding your leadership style, you can better identify negative and positive effects on your teams.

- **Developmental support for building resilience of employees**
  - One of the biggest drivers of employee engagement is the degree of interest that staff feel their manager has in their wellbeing.
  - Discuss resilience with your team – ask people to think about what they may see as the benefits of increasing resilience both at home and work - this demonstrates that you care not just about performance but how people feel.
  - Encourage your team to complete a personal resilience questionnaire (e.g. the University of Warwick, University of Southampton and Durham University 50 question, self-report statement designed to help people determine the strengths of certain personality traits) www.psychometrictest.org.uk

- **Actively manage the sources of workplace pressure**
  - How effective are you at preventing and reducing stress in your team?
  - Think and reflect how your behaviours as managers are effective for preventing and reducing stress at work. A useful self-reflection tool for managers is the HSE Stress management competency indicator tool which helps managers reflect on your own behaviour and management style.

References: Cooper, C; Flint-Tylor, J; Pearn, M

The 3Ts approach to supporting your workforce

When addressing suicide and mental ill-health in your workforce it is important to take a joined-up approach. Both mental ill-health and suicide are highly complex issues, impacted by a number of factors from across individuals lives.

Therefore, we have developed an **employer's action plan** to enable employers to change the way they **think, talk and tackle** mental health within their organisation. By taking this joined-up approach employers can support the positive mental wellbeing of their employees at work.
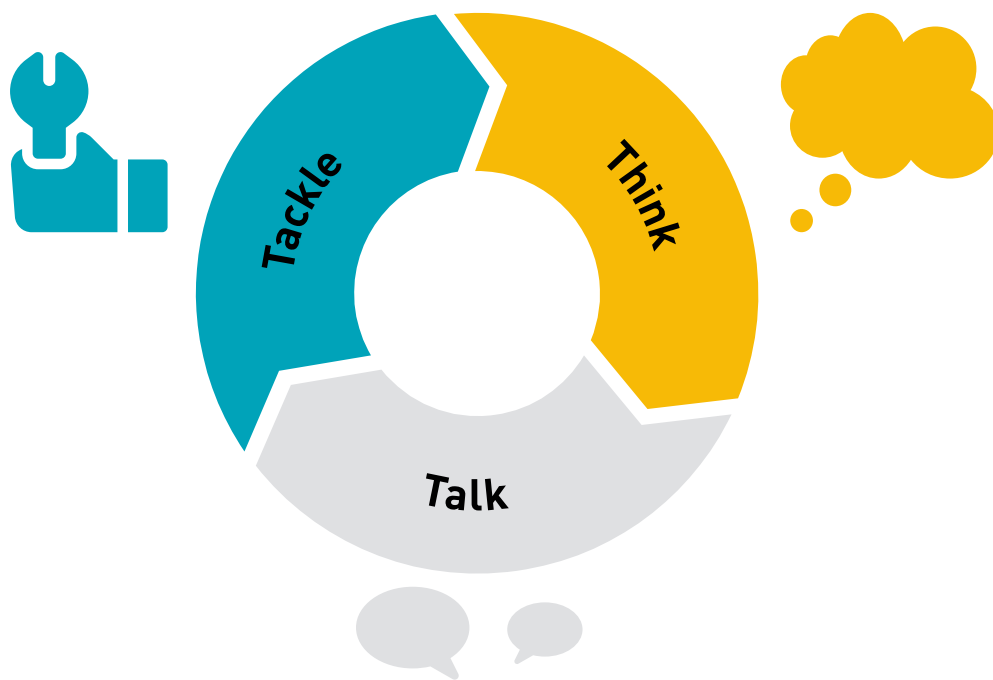
Our **employers action plan** explores how you can use our 3Ts approach to develop a preventative culture, taking action to improve mental health and preventing suicide.

Employers action plan: creating a culture of prevention

Think

General awareness

By improving general awareness about mental ill-health and suicide, organisations can begin to challenge the stigma around the topics. You can improve your organisations awareness by:
- Displaying awareness posters
- Making your workforce aware of the facts around mental ill-health and suicide
- Making your workforce aware that there is always support available to those who need it
- Identify stress triggers that impact focus. Understand how the change in pace, the rate of work, and the increase in expected output will affect the teams resilience

Talk

Start the conversation

Depending on the context of your discussion, there are many ways the conversation can be started in work, for example through:
- Team meetings
- Toolbox talks
- Presentations or briefs
- Conversations with line-managers

Discuss the topic using sensitive and inclusive language

- Invite open two way communication within your teams and encourage constructive feedback.
- Ensure communications are inclusive of those across your workforce, regardless of: gender, culture, religion, race, sexuality etc.
- Ensure that the language you use is considerate of those who might be impacted by the topic, including: those who have been bereaved buy suicide, or individuals who may need support themselves

Lead by example

When seeking to drive a meaningful change, it is crucial that those at a director/ manager level within an organisation show that they are actively supporting good mental wellbeing in the context of work. How can you help?
- Discuss mental health and suicide prevention with others within management and leadership roles
- Attend briefings and talks organised to discuss and tackle the issue
- Attend managers' training to equip yourself with the tools and understanding necessary to support individuals within your workforce
- Embrace failures publicly , highlighting to your team that they are opportunities to grow and learn in a high-pressure environment. A negative relationship to failure or not allowing teams to innovate for fear of failure can stunt resilience
- Exercise mindfulness and encourage lateral thinking

Tackle

Access to, and signposting available services

By making sure you are clear what benefits and support are available directly to those within your organisation or elsewhere. You can do this by:

- Signposting to internal support: making people aware of your businesses workplace mental health policy; access to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and individuals within the organisation that are championing this issue
- Signposting to external support services such as: confidential helplines, resources and organisations

Training

By attending training, individuals can develop the necessary understanding and skills to help support how they think, talk and promote better mental health. Individuals from across all roles within an organisation can benefit from training such as:

- General awareness training
- Manage the conversation training
- Mental Health First Aid training
- Resilience training

How can we support you with your action plan?

Mates in Mind can support your organisation to build a mental health plan and to create a culture of prevention. Find out how by contacting your organisation's Support Manager today.

Our dedicated team of Support Managers work with organisations of all sizes to develop a tailored action plan, evaluating your organisation's priorities and gaps and providing the tools and support you need. This plan will not only include ongoing support with communication and delivery of your plan, but also training opportunities, promotional materials and a suite of tools (including packs like this one) to enable you to drive long-lasting and meaningful change.

If you don't know who your Support Manager is, or you are not yet a Mates in Mind Supporter, please contact a member of our team:

020 3510 5018

support@matesinmind.org

References

i   The Office for National Statistics, Suicide by occupation, England: 2011 to 2015

ii   NHS, Help for Suicidal Thoughts

iii Samaritans, If you are worried about someone else

iv   The Prince's Responsible Business Trust, Reducing the risk of suicide: toolkit for employers

v   Support After Suicide Partnership, Finding the words

vi   Support After Suicide Partnership, Finding the words

vii Public Health Matters blog, Support after Suicide – Key to Suicide Prevention

viii NHS Inform, Suicide: why people attempt suicide

Contact us

📞 020 3510 5018

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