

# Unlocking Awareness and Adjusting Your Approach

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH AS PART OF A BROADER HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND INJURY-PREVENTION PLAN

There is a stigma attached to mental health in the United States. Misrepresentation in entertainment and the media has created a general misunderstanding, fear, and negative perception of those battling mental health issues. As a result, those affected are often afraid to tell even their closest friends and family for fear of being labeled “crazy.”

According to Mental Health America, a national nonprofit, more than 50% of people with mental illness do not receive treatment for their condition (“Adult Data 2022”). Due to fear around how a mental health diagnosis will affect their personal and professional lives, people experiencing issues often delay or avoid seeking professional help. However, that could be changing for the better.

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### A Shift in Public Perception

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One positive outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is the shift in attitudes and awareness around workplace mental health that it prompted. The loss and uncertainty experienced in their personal, social, and work lives had people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues at a higher rate than ever before. As a result, people realized the

reality of mental health and that issues are more common than they initially thought, fostering more honest and open communication around the subject.

According to a 2021 Harvard Business Review study, 50% of respondents said they had left a job for mental health reasons, and 76% reported at least one mental health issue in the past year (Greenwood and Anas). In addition, the study confirmed that the traditional stigma around mental health is receding, with two-thirds of respondents saying they had spoken with a coworker about their mental health in the past year.



or policy was to have an open company culture around mental health.

To achieve that, companies must begin training their leaders on how to address mental health issues correctly and how they can help create open and stigma-free communication around mental health.

If you ask a child how to have a healthy body, they will likely say eating healthy food and exercising. That is because we are taught in our early years about the steps we must take to promote physical health. However, due to the stigma around mental health, the vast majority of employees never learn how to nurture and protect their mental health.

“If we took as good care of our emotional health as we do our physical health, everyone would have a therapist they check in with from time to time just as they do with their medical doctors,” said Kris Corbett, director at Atlas Injury Prevention Solutions. Companies can change that inconsistency by training their employees on mental health, giving them tools to understand it better, the steps to manage it, and how to seek professional help if they need it.

Another proactive approach gaining popularity is using an early intervention specialist. In contrast to a traditional on-site

emergency medical technician you often see on construction

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