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# Newsletter

Mental Illness and Gender -based Violence



# What does Mental Illness Awareness Mean?

Mental illness awareness is all about breaking down the walls of stigma by sharing our experiences, stories, and truths. It means educating others on what mental illness really is and helping those with illnesses know that they are not alone.

Mental illness awareness should not only be for one day, or even a month. Employees must be informed about it continuously because it can easily affect their lives as well as the lives of their friends and families. That is why corporate awareness for mental illness is vital in reducing the stigma.

Mental illness awareness increases the chances for early intervention, which can result in a faster recovery.

## What is Mental Illness?

There are nearly 300 mental disorders listed in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). This is a handbook used by health professionals to help identify and diagnose mental

illnesses (a mental illness and disorder are the same things, however disorder is a more outdated term).

Some of the main groups of mental illnesses include:

- Mood disorders (such as depression or bipolar disorder)
- Anxiety disorders
- Personality disorders
- Psychotic disorders (such as schizophrenia)
- Eating disorders
- Trauma-related disorders (such as post-traumatic stress disorder)
- Substance abuse disorders

The diagnosis of mental illness can be controversial. There have been many debates in the medical community about what is and isn't a mental illness. The definition can be influenced by our society and culture, but most mental illnesses occur across all countries and cultures. This suggests that they are not just constructed by social norms and expectations but have a biological and psychological basis too.



*The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as...*

*... a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.*

*Let us be healthy in our work.*

# Keeping well at work

Corporate wellness is an important component of the work environment. In an unhealthy work environment there is decreased productivity, higher absenteeism and presenteeism, poorer work ethic and even less safety in the workplace. A healthy workplace, both in mind and body, is vital to ensuring productivity amongst employees. The 2nd to the 6th of July is Corporate Wellness Week - an opportunity for the raising of awareness surrounding the need to create a healthy work environment.

With an estimated 56% of women and 29% of men being overweight and obese in South Africa, corporate wellness should be a top priority for all employers. Further shocking facts show that 1 in 3 men and 1 in 4 women in South Africa will develop a heart condition before the age of 60 and heart disease and stroke are the biggest non-infectious killers in our country. Did you know that up to 80% of these are due to our lifestyles and behaviour? Which means that 80% of premature deaths can be prevented merely through few small lifestyle changes.

Corporate wellness week will focus on wellness in the workplace and encouraging all employees to follow a healthy lifestyle, even at work. An employee that takes wellness to heart will benefit from a reduction in risk of heart disease and strokes, and other occupational conditions such as stress related illnesses.

## 5 quick tips to improve your health:

1. Step up! Choose the stairs instead of the elevator – it's a great way to get in shape
2. Experience yoga, it helps with focus, flexibility, and posture. There are countless free YouTube videos available.
3. Stay hydrated! Try to drink at least 8 glasses of water a day.
4. Snack well! Choose to snack on fruit or yoghurt during your workday instead of sweets and chocolates.
5. Laugh! Laughter is a great stress reliever.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the average person spends a third of their adult life in the workplace. It is thus important that the workplace is somewhere that employees can function at their peak. No matter if that workplace is at home or the office, let's ensure it's a healthy happy space.

## The WHO proposes the following:

"A healthy workplace is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and well-being of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace".



## Employers play an important role

Employees are ultimately responsible for changing their own behaviours. However, employers have great opportunities to assist their employees see the value of adopting a healthier lifestyle choice. A workplace culture where managers reinforce a sound wellness strategy can keep employees motivated and engaged. Wellness and incentive programmes can be utilised to drive and reinforce healthy behaviours, improving and enhancing productivity by mitigating risks associated with poor lifestyle choices.

Investing in employees' health through Employee Wellness Programmes (EWP) is increasingly being recognised as a value-add for both the organisation and its employees, with companies benefiting through reduced absenteeism, improved productivity and lower medical costs.

Wellness and incentive programmes can be utilised to drive and reinforce healthy behaviours such as Wellness Days which cover a wide range of activities focused around the following three elements:

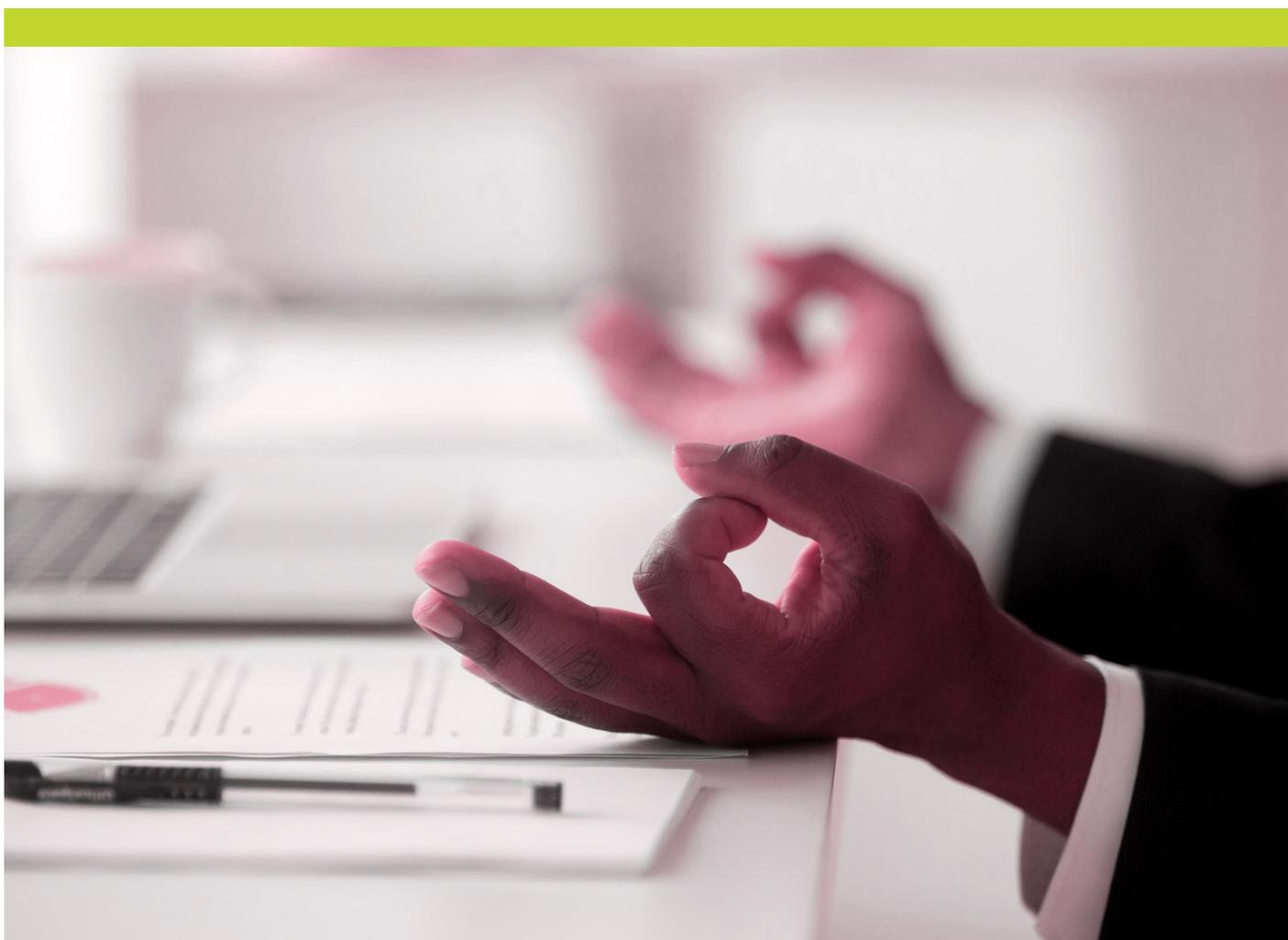
1. Psychological;
2. Health Screening; and
3. Management of employees with risks.

Employees are the backbone of any organisation and if they are in top shape mentally, emotionally as well as physically, it would unquestionably benefit both the organisation and the employees. It is imperative that employers commit to wellness promotion in the organisation in order to achieve increased productivity.

Corporate wellness should be viewed as an investment in a business' most important asset, its employees. Studies show that employees are more likely to be on the job and performing well when they are in optimal health. Benefits of implementing a wellness program include:

- Attracting the most talented workers
- Reducing absenteeism and lost time
- Improving on-the-job time utilisation, decision making and productivity
- Improving employee morale
- Reduction in staff turnover
- Improved disease management and prevention, and a healthier workforce in general, both of which contribute to lower health care costs.

To reap the benefits of a wellness programme, employers must maximize employee buy-in and participation. Ongoing communication and promotional material such as posters, pamphlets and newsletters play an important role in increasing participation by employees. Incentives such as prizes also keep employees motivated.





# Overcoming gender-based violence

*South Africa is becoming an increasingly unsafe place for women to live in. Statistics SA shows that femicide (the murder of women) is 5 times higher here than the global average. This means that in South Africa, women are 5 times more likely to be killed due to gender-based violence committed by men.*

*There are many forms of gender-based violence and that includes sexual, physical, emotional and financial violence.*

*Most acts of interpersonal gender-based violence are committed by men against women, and the man perpetrating the violence is often known by the woman, such as a partner or family member. Domestic violence often includes violence against children.*

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A total of **2 771** women were murdered in 2018/2019. This means **a woman is murdered every three hours**

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## Gender-based Violence Facts:

- A total of **2 771** women were murdered in 2018/2019. This means a woman is murdered every three hours.
- A total of **1 014** children were murdered in 2018/2019.
- **5 2420** total reported sexual offences in 2018/2019.
- **Between 28 and 37%** of adult men report to having raped a woman.
- **Just over 50%** of women report to having ever experienced emotional or economic abuse

## Are you in the cycle of abuse and don't know how to stop it?

An abusive relationship has a tension build up where the behaviour of the perpetrator changes dramatically. This results in an explosion. The perpetrator then shows remorse and/or shame after the tension release, thus making it very difficult for the woman to leave. Psychological, emotional and physical abuse then become interwoven into the nature of the relationship. This abuse takes a severe toll on self-esteem. The abused person starts feeling helpless and possibly even hopeless. In addition, most mental abusers are adept at convincing the victim that the abuse is his/her fault. Somehow, the victim is responsible for what happened.

### Psychological abuse can look like:

1. Humiliating or embarrassing the victim
2. Constant put-downs and hypercriticism
3. Slapping, biting, hitting behaviour
4. Unreasonable jealousy and extreme moodiness
5. Monitoring of behaviour, including reading emails and text messages
6. Threat of use a weapon against the victim, her children or pets
7. Dominating behaviour and control
8. Blaming, shaming and guilt
9. Isolating from friends and family
10. Using money to control

### Personal Safety with an Abuser:

1. Create a safe room in your house where there are no weapons and there are ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas. Install inside locks on a door or plan barricades for if you need to distance yourself. Old cell phones placed in the safe room can be used to call emergency services. Keep it charged.
2. Don't be afraid to call the police.
3. Create signs with trusted neighbours that you are in danger: leaving the garage door open or a light on.
4. Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal to them that they should get help or go to a safe place in their home.
5. Keep weapons, like guns and knives, locked up and as inaccessible as possible.

## Preparing to leave a toxic and abusive relationship

When an individual makes the decision to leave, the danger she is in increases drastically. These suggestions are important:

- Connect with a gender violence group (toll-free numbers below)
- Try have some money saved in an account in your name only.
- Move personal items and important documents to a safe place (passports, title deeds etc)
- Make copies of important documents (e.g.: tax returns, bank statements, investment statements, mortgage/loan information, car titles, pay stubs, etc)
- You can simply snap a picture of these documents with your phone and email it to a friend.
- Open a new bank account, a new emailing address, and if necessary a new P.O Box address
- Get legal advice if possible
- Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures, etc., in a safe place that is accessible for you
- Request a police escort while you leave

### Emergency numbers you should have on speed dial:

**10111** – Nationwide Emergency Response

**112** – Cell phone emergency (Will transfer you to an emergency service closest to you)

**10177** – Ambulance response

**0800 428 428** or **\*120\*7867#**

**(free)** - Gender-based violence command centre

# STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



**References:**

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/types-of-mental-illness>

[http://www.heartfoundation.co.za/topical\\_articles/employee-wellness-week-1-5-july/](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za/topical_articles/employee-wellness-week-1-5-july/)