

Professional aid 4 young workers facing diverse challenges at work

Map of Mental Welfare in the Workplace

Disclaimer

PROUD is an Erasmus+ project, which aims at reinforcing individual well-being & professional excellence of working youth.

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Disclaimer

The document you are about to access contains guidelines, tools, useful practices and other resources intended for mentors engaged in professional mentoring relationships. These resources aim to promote and enhance mental health and professional advancement among mentees. However, it is important to note that the content provided should be utilised solely as a means of prevention and not as a substitute for professional mental health treatment.

Mentors are advised to exercise caution and discretion when applying the information contained within this guide. While the content aims to offer guidance and support, it is essential to recognize the limitations of these materials in addressing mental health issues comprehensively.

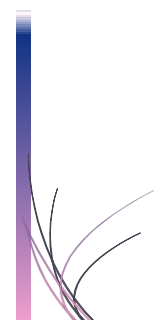
Should mentors observe mentees exhibiting symptoms of mental illness, as described in this guide or otherwise, it is imperative to refer them to a qualified mental health professional for further evaluation and assistance. Mentors should not attempt to diagnose or treat mental health conditions based solely on the information provided in this document.

The intention behind these guidelines is to foster a positive mentoring environment and provide mentors with helpful tools to support the mentees' mental health and professional growth. However, it is crucial to understand that mentors are not mental health professionals, and their role primarily revolves around providing guidance, motivation, and resources for career advancement.

By utilising this document, you acknowledge and understand the limitations of the provided information and agree to apply it responsibly and when necessary, in conjunction with appropriate mental health support services. The document's authors, the European Union and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) are not liable for any actions taken by mentors or mentees based on the content within this guide.

Chapter 1

Mentoring and Well-being for Young Employees



1. Mentoring and Well-being for Young Employees: Definition

Mentoring is a professional relationship between two people, in the context of which the mentor passes their experience and knowledge to the mentee. Mentoring can be a relationship between an experienced employee or manager/director and a new employee, but also between two experienced professionals with the aim to develop a specific skill in a specific area, or to find solutions to specific problems and stimulate further growth.

Mentees can attend mentoring programmes within their organisations or seek external mentoring by experts for various purposes:

- **To find the right or a more appropriate direction** toward a solution to problem
- **To develop their interpersonal and professional skills** and enhance their career growth
- **To maintain a healthy work-life balance** in their strive to perform their best both at work and in their personal lives

1. a. The Benefits of Mentoring for Young Employees

To achieve a healthy work-life balance and stable career growth, young employees must navigate various factors, such as heavy workloads, rigid schedules, negating complex company cultures while maintaining consistent self-care and development practices.

Mentoring can benefit young employees and help them unlock tap into their full potential in various ways:

- **Soft and Job-related Skills Development:** For stable career growth and healthy work-life balance, young mentees can develop skills such as:
 - Empathy
 - Active listening
 - Relationship-building
 - Leadership
 - Creativity

- Conflict management
- Problem-solving
- Decision-making
- Self-management
- Communication
- Resilience
- Digital readiness

- **Development of Self-Management and Self-Care Competences:**

- Identification and capitalisation on personal strengths
- Positive thinking
- Mental/Thinking 'Traps' Management
- Personal time management
- Mindfulness
- Cultivation of meaningful relationships (personal and professional)
- Self-motivation
- Tolerance and acceptance
- Habit awareness

2. The Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors and Mentees

2. a. Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors

The responsibilities of mentors can be summarised through the description of 4 key roles. Specifically, a mentor acts as:

- **A Coach:** Mentors provide constructive feedback, share advice, and give insights into their specific industry as experts with extensive experience.
- **The 'Devil's Advocate':** Mentors are often required assume the role of the 'opposing side', to challenge the mentee in order to help them develop their decision-making skills and critical thinking.
- **A Companion and Supporter:** Mentors are 'companions' of mentees throughout their career; they provide support during setbacks and encourage their mentees so they stay motivated to grow.
- **A Learning and Networking Resource:** Mentors utilise a plethora of tools in order to support their mentees throughout the mentoring relationship and they help mentees expand their network.

2. b. Roles and Responsibilities of Mentees

The responsibilities of mentees can be summarised through the description of 3 key roles that additionally offer a general overview of what mentees should strive for when they attend mentoring programmes. Specifically, a mentee acts as:

- **The Hero of the Story:** Mentoring revolves around the career and needs of the mentee. The mentee takes the initiative to bring their thoughts and concerns into the mentoring session, implement new knowledge and skills into their day-to-day work/ and life, as well as to create short and long-term action plans.
- **An Investigator:** As an investigator, the mentee is responsible for gathering information that informs their decisions, helps them manage conflict and other challenging situations and allows them to maintain a high level of self-awareness and self-monitoring.
- **An Apprentice:** Finally, the ultimate responsibility of the mentee is to learn and grow.

However, it is important to remember that mentors are not supposed to simply tell mentees what to do in any given situation, but instead help them become self-reliant professionals.

3. The Key Aspects of the Mentoring Relationship

3. a. The 3 Phases of a Mentoring Relationship

The overall course of the mentoring process consists of 3 phases:

Phase 1: Initiation (3 sessions)

The initiation phase marks the beginning of the mentoring relationship. During this phase, the mentor and mentee establish rapport, define goals, and clarify expectations. The mentor helps the mentee navigate the new environment, understand their role, and identify areas for growth and development. It is crucial to establish open

communication and mutual trust in this phase, as it forms the foundation for the mentoring relationship. Usually, mentors and mentees should dedicate at least 3 sessions in order to discuss and decide on the above topics.

A good practice for both mentors and mentees is to draft a **'Mentoring Agreement'**, which helps formalise the relationship by displaying their mutual commitment and agreement on:

- Meeting frequency, time and place
- Initial targets/goals
- Confidentiality issues
- Terms of breaching confidentiality (*under what circumstances should the mentor or mentee breach confidentiality?*)
- Mentoring relationship termination terms

Phase 2: Main Phase

The main phase focuses on the ongoing development and support of the mentee. The mentor provides guidance, knowledge, and resources to help the mentee acquire new skills, expand their knowledge, and develop their potential. It involves regular meetings as per the 'Mentoring Agreement', constructive feedback, and tailored advice to address the mentee's specific needs and challenges.

The mentor may also facilitate opportunities for the mentee to network, gain exposure, and broaden their horizons. The main phase of the mentoring relationships lasts as long as the mentor and mentee deem necessary.

Phase 3: Separation (3 sessions)

The separation phase marks the natural end or transition of the mentoring relationship. At this stage, the mentee has gained sufficient knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate their professional or personal journey independently.

The separation phase may involve final reflections, evaluation of achievements, and celebration of the mentee's growth. While the formal mentoring relationship may come to an end,

the connection and support between the mentor and mentee can continue to evolve in different forms.

As a general rule of thumb, mentors and mentees should dedicate 3 sessions to the closure of the mentoring process, in order to ensure that there is enough time spent for reflection and future planning.

3. b. The Mentoring Process: GROW Model

The GROW model provides a framework for the mentoring process and conversations, facilitating a systematic approach to problem-solving, goal-setting, and action planning.

It encourages mentees to take ownership of their development and empowers them to explore multiple possibilities before committing to a specific course of action. This process fosters independence, motivation, and resilience, allowing mentees to continue their development long after the mentoring relationship ends. It also maximizes the benefits of the mentor's guidance and support, leading to a more meaningful and impactful mentoring experience.



The 4 Actions of the GROW Model are:

- **GOAL;** establishment a clear and specific goal. The mentor works with the mentee to define what they want to achieve or change. The goal should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, evaluated and reviewed

(SMARTER). By setting a well-defined goal, the mentee gains clarity and direction, which helps focus their efforts and actions.

- **REALITY;** once the goal is established, the mentee and mentor examine the current reality or the mentee's current situation. This involves assessing the mentee's strengths, weaknesses, and resources, as well as the external factors influencing the situation. The mentor asks questions to encourage reflection and self-awareness in the mentee, helping them gain a realistic understanding of their circumstances at any given point in their career.
- **OPTIONS;** the mentee explores various options and strategies to reach their goal. The mentor encourages brainstorming and creative thinking, helping the mentee generate a range of possibilities. Together, they evaluate the pros and cons of each option, considering feasibility, resources, and potential obstacles.
- **WILL;** The final phase of the GROW model focuses on commitment and action planning. The mentee identifies the actions they are willing to take to move towards their goal. The mentor helps them establish a clear plan with specific steps, timelines, and accountability measures. By setting milestones and regularly reviewing progress, the mentor supports the mentee's motivation and ensures they stay on track.

The GROW model can be adapted and customized to fit the needs of the mentee and the mentoring context, making it a versatile tool.

4. Best Practices – What a Mentor Does and Doesn't Do

4.a. A Mentor...

- Provides **guidance** and **support**
- **Shares** knowledge, expertise, and experiences.
- Offers **constructive feedback** and advice.
- **Listens** actively and empathetically.
- Helps set **goals** and develop action plans.

- **Challenges and encourages** personal and professional growth.
- **Offers perspective** and different viewpoints.
- Shares relevant **resources** and networks.
- **Celebrates achievements** and milestones.

4.b. A Mentor does not...

- **Make decisions for the mentee**
- **Provide all the answers** or solutions
- Take **responsibility** for the mentee's actions
- **Impose personal beliefs or values** on the mentee
- **Provide therapy or counselling**
- **Create dependency** on themselves
- **Violate confidentiality or breach trust (unless the terms of confidentiality breach dictate otherwise)**
- **Solve all the mentee's problems**
- **Guarantee specific outcomes** or results

It is essential to understand that a mentor's responsibilities are limited to providing guidance and support in a professional context.

Mentors are not mental health professionals. If a mentee expresses thoughts, behaviours, or symptoms indicative of mental illness, it is crucial for the mentor to recognize the limits of their role and responsibility.

In such cases, the mentor must prioritize the well-being and safety of the mentee and breach confidentiality. The above must be **explicitly explained and agreed upon in the Mentoring Agreement** prior to initiating a long-term mentoring relationship.

The duty of mentors is to encourage mentees to seek professional help from a qualified mental health professional who can provide appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and support. Referring the mentee to a mental health professional ensures that they receive the specialised care and expertise needed to address mental health concerns effectively.

5. Resources

a) Template: Mentoring Agreement Template

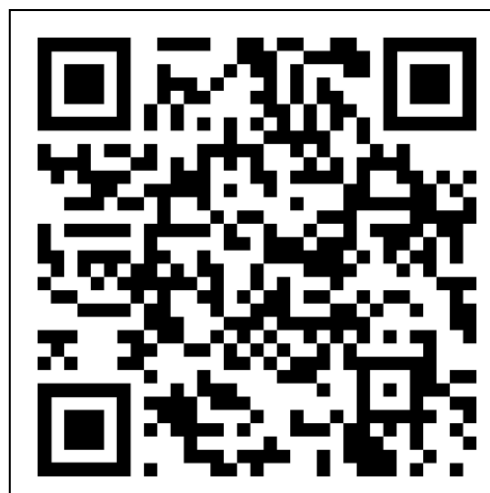
A Mentoring Agreement or 'contract' is important as it establishes clear expectations, boundaries, and commitments for both the mentor and mentee. It provides a framework for effective communication, collaboration, and accountability, ensuring a productive and successful mentoring relationship.

For direct access to a free, downloadable example/template of a Mentoring Agreement, scan the QR code below:



b) Video: Tips for a Thriving Mentoring Relationship

Mentors can help mentees manage the obstacles ahead of them, and become the best they can be in their area of expertise. For more tips, you can watch a TEDx talk by Janet T. Phan by scanning the QR code below:



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7. PROUD Promotional Material Sample

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Unlock your Potential!



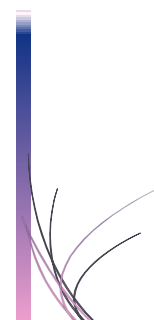
Mentoring helps you...

- 1 Think outside the box
- 2 Capitalise on your strenghts
- 3 Develop interpersonal skills
- 4 Find solutions to work-related problems
- 5 Maintain a good Work-Life Balance
- 6 Stay motivated and pursue your goals

You can access the downloadable versions of PROUD posters at www.proudproject.eu

Chapter 2

Occupational Burnout



1. Definition of Occupational Burnout

Occupational burnout is a psychological condition that typically occurs as a result of prolonged exposure to demanding work conditions, high job demands, and insufficient resources or support to meet those demands. Job burnout can be enhanced by personal factors. Private causes may include personal life stressors, lack of work-life balance, and individual coping mechanisms.

2. Symptoms, Triggers, and Impact of Occupational Burnout on Young Workers

Young workers are susceptible to experiencing occupational burnout, and its impact can be significant. Recognizing and addressing burnout in young workers is crucial for supporting their well-being, productivity, and long-term career success.

2. a. Specific Triggers of Occupational Burnout on Gen Y and Z

Members of Gen Y and Z may experience generation-specific triggers of occupational burnout, such as:

Digital Dependency: Gen Y and Z individuals may exhibit an excessive reliance on digital devices, constantly checking emails, messages, and social media platforms even outside of work hours, leading to increased stress and burnout.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): With the prevalence of social media, young workers may experience a fear of missing out on career opportunities, social events, or industry trends. This fear can contribute to anxiety and burnout.

Multiple Job Demands: Gen Y and Z individuals often engage in multiple job roles or side hustles simultaneously. Burnout may arise from juggling these multiple responsibilities, experiencing excessive workloads, and lacking time for self-care or personal interests.

Entrepreneurial Frustration: Many individuals from Gen Y and Z have an entrepreneurial mindset and aspirations. Burnout can occur when their entrepreneurial endeavors face setbacks. This frustration can lead to a sense of disillusionment and exhaustion.

Idealism vs. Reality Clash: Gen Y and Z individuals tend to value meaningful work and purpose-driven careers. When confronted with mundane or unfulfilling tasks in their jobs, a clash between their idealistic expectations and the reality of their work can contribute to burnout.

Lack of Mentorship and Guidance: Gen Y and Z individuals often seek mentorship and guidance to navigate their careers. Burnout can occur when they perceive a lack of mentorship support, feeling lost, unsupported, and uncertain about their professional growth.

Remember, these triggers are not universal and may not apply to every individual in Gen Y and Z. Burnout is influenced by various factors.

2. b. More Likely Symptoms of Occupational Burnout on Gen Y and Z

The following are some of the most characteristic warning signs:

Cynicism and Detachment: Overdosed cynicism may lead to emotional detachment from work. The enthusiasm they once had decreases, replaced by skepticism and negativity towards tasks, colleagues, and the organization's goals.

Chronic Fatigue: Young workers experiencing burnout often battle constant fatigue that goes beyond typical tiredness. This exhaustion impairs their ability to recharge even after restful nights, leaving them physically and mentally drained.

Physical Ailments: The toll of burnout extends to physical health. Young workers may experience headaches, muscle tension, and gastrointestinal problems. These ailments are often a manifestation of the stress and strain they're under.

Mental Health Struggles: Burnout can significantly impact mental health among young workers, increasing the risk of anxiety and depression due to prolonged workplace stress and exhaustion.

Please remember that recognizing symptoms as warning signs necessitates the involvement of actual healthcare professionals rather than relying solely on guidance from mentors.

2. c. Impact of Occupational Burnout on Young Workers

More likely generation-specific impacts of occupational burnout are the following:

Decreased Job Satisfaction: Burnout can significantly diminish job satisfaction among Gen Y and Z individuals. The lack of fulfillment, exhaustion, and feelings of being overwhelmed can erode their passion for their work and negatively impact their overall job satisfaction levels.

Delayed Career Advancement: Burnout can deny career progression for young workers, as decreased productivity and motivation may lead to missed opportunities.

Disillusionment with Organizational Culture: Burnout can lead Gen Y and Z individuals to question the values and culture of their organizations. They may feel disconnected from their company's mission or purpose, leading to decreased loyalty and engagement.

Job Hopping: Gen Y and Z individuals may be more inclined to switch jobs frequently due to feelings of unfulfillment or disappointment in their positions. They may seek new opportunities to escape the negative feelings without consciously realizing the real triggers which are often within themselves rather than external sources.

Relationship Strains: Burnout can spill over into personal relationships, as young workers may have less energy and time for maintaining healthy connections in the workplace and beyond.

Work-Life Imbalance: Burnout may disrupt work-life balance for young workers, leading to difficulties in separating work from personal life. This imbalance can result in chronic stress and negative impacts on mental and physical health.

It is crucial to note that not all individuals in Gen Y and Z will experience these specific impacts, as burnout can manifest differently for each person. Understanding and addressing the unique impacts of burnout on these generations can help organizations and individuals develop strategies for prevention and support.

3. Mentoring as Means of Prevention against Occupational Burnout

Mentoring young workers from Gen Y and Z in the workplace can play a crucial role in preventing or avoiding occupational burnout. Here are some strategies to effectively mentor and support them:

Establish a Trusting Relationship: Build a strong mentor-mentee relationship based on trust, open communication, and mutual respect.

Promote Work-Life Balance: Emphasize the importance of work-life balance. Encourage them to set clear boundaries between work and personal life for their well-being, prioritize self-care, and engage in activities outside of work that bring joy and relaxation.

Teach Stress Management Techniques: Help them develop effective stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises.

Foster Goal Setting and Time Management: Assist them in setting realistic goals and developing action plans. Teach them effective time management skills, including prioritization, task delegation, and organization, to prevent overwhelming workloads.

Support Career Development: Help them identify their strengths, interests, and areas for growth. Support their professional development to enhance job satisfaction and future prospects.

Role Model for Healthy Behaviors: Lead by example and inspire them to prioritize their well-being.

Offer Constructive Feedback: Provide timely and constructive feedback: recognize their accomplishments and celebrate their successes to boost morale and motivation.

Encourage Reflection and Self-Awareness: Encourage regular self-reflection and self-assessment to help them identify signs of burnout early on. Promote self-awareness of their own limitations, needs, and boundaries.

Foster Mentorship and Networking: Encourage them to seek mentorship opportunities and connect with professionals in their field.

Remember, effective mentoring requires a personalized approach that considers the unique needs and preferences of each young worker. By implementing these strategies, you can help prevent or reduce the risk of occupational burnout, enabling young workers to thrive in their careers.

4. Best Practices – ‘DO’ and ‘DON’Ts’

4.a. What to do if a mentee exhibits symptoms of Occupational Burnout

As a mentor, if your mentee from Gen Y or Z exhibits symptoms of occupational burnout in the workplace, here is a to-do list to provide support and help them navigate through this challenging situation:

- **Recognize the Signs:** Be vigilant and educate yourself about the symptoms of occupational burnout to identify them in your mentee.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Foster a supportive and non-judgmental environment where your mentee feels comfortable discussing their challenges and concerns.
- **Active Listening:** Listen attentively to your mentee, allowing them to express their feelings, frustrations, and experiences.
- **Validate Their Experiences:** Assure your mentee that their feelings of burnout are valid and that many individuals go through similar experiences.
- **Evaluate Workload and Resources:** Review their workload and available resources. Help them identify areas where adjustments can be made, such as redistributing tasks or seeking additional support.
- **Encourage Boundaries:** Promote the importance of setting boundaries between work and personal life. Help your mentee establish strategies to disconnect from work during non-working hours.
- **Redefine Goals:** Collaborate with your mentee to set achievable goals. Break down larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps to reduce overwhelm.
- **Monitor Progress:** Provide ongoing support and adjust strategies as needed.

- **Referral to Professionals:** If symptoms persist or worsen, suggest seeking professional help from mental health experts or counsellors.

- **Celebrate Progress:** Acknowledge and celebrate your mentee's achievements, no matter how small.

Remember, every mentee is unique, so tailor your approach to their specific needs. Your role as a mentor is to offer guidance, support, and resources to help them overcome burnout and recover a sense of well-being in the workplace.

4.b. What not to do if a mentee exhibits symptoms of Occupational Burnout

As a semi-professional mentor, it's important to be aware of what to avoid when supporting a mentee from Gen Y or Z who exhibits symptoms of occupational burnout. Here's a not-to-do list to keep in mind:

- **Don't Overstep Your Role:** Remember your role as a semi-professional mentor and avoid assuming responsibilities that should be handled by professional therapists or counselors.
- **Don't Provide Unqualified Advice:** Avoid offering advice beyond your expertise or qualifications. Stick to providing guidance within your areas of knowledge and experience.
- **Don't Offer Quick Fixes:** Avoid from providing simple or superficial solutions to their burnout. Recognize that addressing burnout requires a comprehensive and individualized approach.
- **Don't Assume a Cure-All Solution:** Be cautious of assuming a single solution for all cases of burnout.
- **Don't Neglect Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality and respect your mentee's privacy. Avoid sharing their personal information or discussing their burnout symptoms without their consent.
- **Don't Ignore Warning Signs:** Pay attention to warning signs. If you notice red flags, encourage your mentee to seek professional help.
- **Don't Dismiss Their Experience:** Avoid dismissing or belittling your mentee's experience of burnout. Take their concerns seriously and validate their feelings and emotions.

- **Don't Dismiss Individual Needs:** Avoid generalizations and assumptions about what works for all Gen Y or Z individuals. Tailor your support to their specific needs.
- **Don't Take Over Their Work:** Resist the urge to take over tasks or responsibilities from your mentee. Instead, empower them to develop their own skills and coping strategies.
- **Don't Disregard Boundaries:** Respect personal and professional boundaries. Avoid overstepping or pressuring your mentee to share more than they are comfortable with.
- **Don't Enable Workaholic Behavior:** Avoid reinforcing or enabling workaholic tendencies. Encourage a healthy work-life balance.
- **Don't Ignore Organizational Factors:** Recognize the influence of organizational factors on burnout. Advocate for changes in the work environment if necessary, such as addressing excessive workload or improving support systems.

By being mindful of these considerations, you can provide ethical and appropriate support as a semi-professional mentor, while also recognizing the limitations of your role and expertise.

5. Resources

a) Book recommendation

To find out more descriptions, good practices, and other related topics of Occupational Burnout, see below our book recommendation:

- Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle by Emily Nagoski, PhD and Amelia Nagoski, DMA
- Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones by James Clear
- When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress by Gábor Dr. Máté

b) Test: Burnout Self-Test

Don't miss to do a self-assessment about occupational burnout with a practical test, which offers immediate result. You can find the test with the help of this QR code:



c) The Definition of Occupational Burnout

Burnout shares a lot of symptoms with depression, anxiety and exhaustion, but how can we tell the difference? For more information on the definition of Burnout, scan the QA Code below:




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7. PROUD Promotional Material Sample


Occupational Burnout




Prevent Burnout find Balance:
Discover a **New You!**

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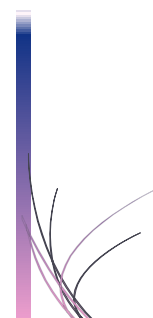
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Chapter 3 Depression



1. Depression on rise among employees:

1. a. Definition

Depression is a persistent mood disorder, different from temporary mood fluctuations which form a normal part of life, or grieving. It is a common mental illness, which involves chronic feelings of emptiness, sadness, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities we once enjoyed, that may occur without a clear reason. It negatively impacts the way people think, feel and act. The state of depression is also characterized by reduced activity and increased fatigability. In the long run, it hinders physical health and subjective wellbeing.

1. b. Occurrence

Unfortunately, depressive disorder has its own success story. Before the 1960's there were only a few cases of depression registered, mostly affecting middle-aged women. Back then it was considered as an "unusual condition". Soon after it started spreading and within mere 30 years it became a global epidemic. According to the World Health Organization, 3.8% of the world's population, and 5% of adults suffer from depressive disorder (2023). In 2017 the number of Europeans diagnosed with depression reached 40 million. During the Covid-19 pandemic the prevalence of depressive disorder skyrocketed, in several countries doubled or even tripled. Yet, the treatment and care system didn't keep up with the boom. It is concerning that in high-income countries merely one out of four people suffering from depression (23%) receive minimally adequate treatment, while the major depressive disorder is foreseen to become the no. 1 cause of disability around the world by 2030 (WHO).

The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) points out that depression can happen to anyone, at any time, however the first episode often appears during early adulthood, between the late teenage and the mid-twenties. Psychologists draw attention to the fact that young adults are more and more exposed to the risk of depression due to high performance and comparative pressure, and career frustration, which generates stress and can raise the risk of over-performing/exhaustion, or under-performing/apathy.

1. c. Triggers

It is known that exposure to persistent stress, adversity and multiple loss can act as triggers. Furthermore, scientists identified certain factors that increase the risk of developing depressive tendencies.

- **Genetic features** (there is a higher probability of depression among people whose close relative(s) had depression)
- **Gender** (depression is two times more frequent among women than men. The difference can be due to the fact that certain types of depression are specific to women, such as baby blues or PMDD, and gender discrimination can be another reason too. Last but not least, researchers found that women are more likely to report depression and reach out for help, compared to men.)
- **Environmental factors, negative life events** (trauma, neglect, poverty)
- **Biochemistry** (hormonal problems)
- **Psychological and social factors** (e.g., low self-esteem, pessimism, lack of social support, lack of purpose)
- **Seasons** (scientists found correlation between the occurrence of depression and the lack of sunlight, especially in countries with winter and fall particularly poor in daylight and sunshine).
- **The presence of multiple risk factors** further augments the likelihood of occurrence of depression.
- **Further triggers that can be avoided:**
 - Intense exposure to worrisome news or media output (e.g., seeing aggression negatively affects the immune system, e.g., even in case of action or horror movies that one may enjoy);
 - Alcohol and drugs;
 - Having too little sleep.

1. b. Types of Depression

There are different types of depression, depending on the persistence, reoccurrence and cause of depression.

- **Depressive episode:** the diagnosis of depression presumes the presence of symptoms for at least two weeks. The gravity of depression can vary, three levels are distinguished, mild, moderate and severe.
- **Recurrent depressive disorder:** it is characterized by repeated - yet not so frequent - episodes of depression. The duration of individual episodes is between 3 to 12 months.
- **Persistent depressive disorder (PDD):** this type of depression is scarcer (e.g., affects 1,5% of adults in the USA), this diagnosis is given in case of constant depressive state of at least 2 years.
- **Major depressive disorder (MDP):** it is a more frequent type of depression (e.g., 7,1% of US adults), consists of repeated major depressive episodes with gaps (minimum two months between the episodes).
- **Major depressive disorder with seasonal pattern, also known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD):** it appears during winter or fall, due to the lack of necessary sunlight, while disappears in the rest of the year.
- **Postpartum depression (baby blues):** this is a very specific type of depression that affects women following birth-giving. However most often it disappears within a few weeks, , it can persist for months or even years in case it is not treated.
- **Pre-Menstruation Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD):** PMDD goes beyond premenstrual syndromes (PMS). It causes depression, irritability, anxiety, mood swings, among other symptoms, already a week before the menstruation starts. The PMDD diagnosis presumes that the symptoms must be present in most menstruation cycles for at least a year.

The treatment of depression takes time and requires professional competence (psychologist, psychiatrist). Several treatments are known, e.g. psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, pharmaceutical therapy, positive psychology based interventions, light therapy.

2. Symptoms and Impact of Depression on Young Workers

2. a. Symptoms

The main symptoms of a depressive episode are the followings (ICD-10, Mental Health Centre of America):

- *Reduced concentration and attention;*
- *Reduced self-esteem and self-confidence;*
- *Ideas of guilt and unworthiness (even in a mild type of episode);*
- *Bleak and pessimistic views of the future;*
- *Ideas or acts of self-harm or suicide;*
- *Disturbed sleep;*
- *Diminished appetite.*

The Fifth Edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) indicates eight criterions. If an individual experiences five or more of the below symptoms (including depressed mood (1), or loss of interest or pleasure (2)) during the same two-week period, it can be considered as depression.

1. *Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day.*
2. *Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.*
3. *Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.*
4. *A slowing down of thought and a reduction of physical movement (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down).*
5. *Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.*
6. *Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day.*
7. *Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day.*
8. *Recurrent thoughts of death, recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.*

It is important to highlight that the diagnosis of depression cannot derive from symptoms caused

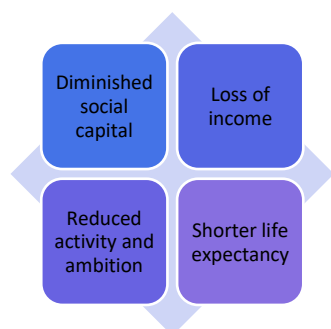
by substance abuse. However, it is common in case of males that depression augments the probability of excessive alcohol consumption. Other frequent symptoms of depression in males may include (Medical News Today, 2023)

- *Social withdrawal including family and other social situations;*
- *“Workaholism”, overworking;*
- *Struggling with difficulty to manage both work and family responsibilities;*
- *Erroneous dominant behavior in relationships (e.g., controlling, abusive).*

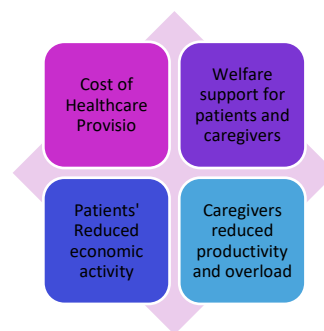
2. b. Impact

WHO considers depression as a leading cause of impairment today, including occupational and social disability. Depression doesn't strike only the patients. It has a harmful multi-level impact on the economy, society, and individuals.

For the ill individual the consequences of depression include, besides the above mentioned symptoms, loss of income, reduced social circle and loss of ambition and productivity. Studies also found that depression is linked to earlier onset of dementia, and higher probability of suicide and premature death.



The close ones and family members also face difficulties, their social and professional aspirations and personal needs can be limited by their responsibilities. The cost of healthcare, social support, and loss of active workforce eats up a significant part of the GDP. Furthermore, workplaces must bear the costs of substitution, fluctuation, and reduced productivity. The depressed individual.



3. Mentoring as Means of Prevention against Depression

A mentor's first task in the context of depression is to focus on prevention; helping mentees in managing work-related goals, expectations, concerns, and stress in a sustainable way. Mentors should incentivize mindfulness about the possible triggers, accompany and guide mentees in creating a feasible preventive strategy for reducing common triggers. What more, setting motivating positive objectives and implementing happiness and resilience generating work-life strategies has proven effective in preventing depression.

Mental illnesses, including depression are still stigmatized in societies. The fear of becoming a “second class citizen” holds back the depression sufferers from seeking help. The tendency of secrecy is more common among men. For this reason, it is crucial that organizations pay attention to disarming the stigma around depression and promote the importance of prevention, self-care, mutual social responsibility, support and compassion. No one should feel afraid to seek help and communicate openly when experiencing symptoms or struggling with depressive triggers.

There is a lot a mentor can do for prevention:

- **Raising awareness** about the risk factors of depression is also crucial, in order to capacitate mentees to better evaluate their own state of wellbeing, and possibly, that of their colleagues/loved ones too;
- **Providing support and discretion**, thus reducing the mentee's social isolation and fear of being stigmatized for having mental problems or work-related difficulties;
- **Enhancing stress-resolution skills** (e.g., mindfulness-based stress reduction, conscious breathing, physical exercise);

- **Recommending healthy diet** protecting the body from oxidative stress;
- **Driving attention to the importance of self-care and work-life balance;**
- **Strengthening resilience and happiness** skills, which are scientifically proven to be efficient in the prevention and reduction of depression;
- **Mapping the “mines”,** guiding the mentee in the creation of a SWOT analysis about the most important stressors and energy wasters in the present;
- In case of work overload, encourage the mentee to ask help from someone (occasionally), reorganizing tasks (short and middle-term strategy), or speaking with the manager (long term strategy);
- **Helping mentees in establishing healthy boundaries** (e.g., boundary management in home offices; self-advocacy, saying “NO” to things that go beyond reasonable limits);
- **Share inspiring or thought-provoking videos** regarding the topic, and recommend tests/questionnaires with the mentee enabling them to evaluate their subjective wellbeing, stress level, resilience and self-care skills;
- **Promoting open communication** and the atmosphere of trust, support and psychological safety among employees;
- **Practicing and promoting compassion** (towards oneself and others too);
- Promoting regular physical exercise, which stimulates the secretion of mood booster endorphins;
- **Enhancing the building and maintaining supportive social connections** inside and outside the organization, which are scientifically proven to augment the level of subjective wellbeing and health;

4. Best Practices – ‘DO’ and ‘DON’Ts’

4.a. What to do when a mentee expresses or shows signs of depression risk

- Mentors have to make mentees feel safe, accepted, keep absolute discretion, nurture trust, and show compassion. Encourage mentee’s self-confidence and follow them up regularly.

- It is important to ease the fear of stigma and share information about how common depression is nowadays (“you are not alone”).
- **Orientate the mentee towards a competent healthcare professional,** a psychologist or psychiatrist. This should be done already at early signs of depressive tendency, even in the presence of severe triggers that seem to be persistent or aggravating, before the onset of depression.
- **Be available** for the mentee ensuring a non-judgemental, supportive environment, enabling him/her to ventilate, share or discuss about his/her worries;
- **Recommend regular gratefulness practice.** For example, the daily exercise of writing a gratitude diary (identifying 3 things for which one feels grateful that day) can reduce the level of depression and brings relief within 15 days;
- **Create/recommend a mindfulness based-stress reduction intervention;**
- Create/recommend resilience and happiness skill development program;
- **Send the mentee to a general health check-up** (e.g., blood test, hormone panel);
- **Apply the below recommended tests** to better understand the gravity and urgency of the mentee’s situation.
- If possible, **recommend a support group** too, where the mentee can meet people in the same situation.
- Apply the above preventive measures;

4.b. What not to do when a mentee expresses or shows symptoms of depression

- Don’t let too much time pass by. Act.
- Don’t try to resolve the situation alone.
- Don’t go deep into topics that are too painful for the mentee, this might require a psychologist.
- Don’t diagnose the mentee.
- Don’t be afraid to share your concerns with the mentee and urge him/her to seek help.

- Informing the HR or the mentee's managers or colleagues about the mentee's condition is not the mentor's competence. On the contrary, he/she ought not to do that. Discretion first.
- Don't let the mentee disappear, stay in touch, accompany the process (even when he/she is treated by a healthcare professional), and reach out. Depressed people tend to isolate socially; therefore, the mentor has to be more proactive.
- Don't take it personally if the mentee acts irritated, arrogant, or disappears on you, depression can cause such symptoms.
- In case the mentee shares suicidal thoughts, involve a professional psychologist right away.

5. Resources

a) The Definition of Depression

To find out more details about the definition and description of depression, you can refer to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD10) Database. For direct access to information about depression in ICD10, scan the QR code below:



The following external resources are in English only:

b) Tests

The **Satisfaction with Life Scale**, and **Well-Being Survey** are useful tools to measure satisfaction with work life and life in general, which can be a very useful starting point for designing a personalized mentoring strategy.

The **CES-D Questionnaire** serves to measure depression symptoms in the context of mentoring, in SOS situations, in order to have a reference point to decide on the urgency of taking further steps (seeking/recommending professional help).

The **Authentic Happiness Inventory** can be used for measuring the overall level of happiness in the context of mentoring in order to help mentees realize how well or not well they are, if they need to embrace changes.

The **Stress and Empathy Questionnaire** can help to measure the overall state of health, with special focus on stress, which can be a trigger of depression.

Finally, the **Workplace Perma Profiler Test**, is a scientifically validated tool that provides insight into the individual's state of well-being in the work environment, focusing on the key factors determining happiness and satisfaction with the work life. By taking the questionnaire you will receive a short explanation about the importance of each of these factors, which helps to interpret the relevance of your scores.

To access the above open tests from the Authentic Happiness Centre of the Pennsylvania University, scan the QR code below. The page can be used free of charge but it requires registration:



c) Video: I Had a Black Dog, his name was Depression:

This 4-minute animation video of the WHO guides through the symptoms, consequences and ways out of depression. It also speaks about social stigma and fears relating to it, indicating a better approach with a silver lining.



d) Video: The new era of positive psychology:

In this 24-minute video Dr Martin Seligman, father of Positive Psychology and former researcher of depression explains 3 keys to live happier.



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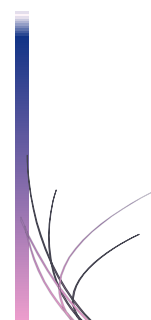


Depression is not a fault.
It is a situation to grow from.
You are not alone.

You can access the downloadable versions of PROUD posters at www.proudproject.eu

Chapter 4

Social Isolation



1. The Definition of Social Isolation

Isolation is the sensation of being separated from others. This can manifest in physical isolation, such as remote work, or in emotional isolation when someone feels disconnected from their community.

Social isolation refers to a deficit in social relationships.

Emotional isolation can result from social isolation, where a person may experience emotional detachment even when they have a social network. Emotional isolation can sometimes emerge as a defence mechanism, serving to shield a person from emotional distress.

Social isolation can contribute to feelings of loneliness in some individuals, while others may experience loneliness even without being socially isolated.

Maintaining connections with others greatly impacts mental well-being and provides a protective shield against anxiety and depression.

1a. Symptoms and Impact of Social Isolation on Young Workers

A sense of belonging is a fundamental human need. In the workplace, employees seek to cultivate this feeling, as it leads to increased on-the-job effort and heightened employee performance.

Belonging plays a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity. When employees experience inclusion, they perceive the organization's genuine concern for them as individuals, resulting in increased satisfaction, happiness, and the ability to express their true selves.

Social isolation, whether from coworkers or friends, can give rise to feelings of loneliness and depression among individuals. Symptoms associated with social isolation encompass:

Physical symptoms: These may manifest as headaches, sleep disturbances, fatigue, diminished motivation, and decreased energy levels.

Mental health conditions: Social isolation can contribute to the development of depression, anxiety, and even panic attacks.

Eating habits: Individuals may experience disruptions in their eating patterns, leading to either increased or decreased food consumption.

Negative emotions: Social isolation often engenders feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

Workplace isolation encompasses two key parameters:

a) Colleague Isolation: This parameter gauges how an employee perceives their interactions with others and their feelings regarding colleagues' recognition of their personal and professional values.

b) Company Isolation: This dimension pertains to the employee's perception and belief in the organization's recognition of their individual contributions. (D'Oliveira, T.C., & Persico, L. (2023).

Social isolation is also experienced by people that work remotely.

Microsoft's 2022 New Future Work Report found some remote workers felt, "socially isolated, guilty, and trying to overcompensate." Another 2023 study by Integrated Benefits Institute also concluded remote and hybrid work is associated with an increased likelihood of anxiety and depression symptoms compared to in-person work.

Indicators of isolation and loneliness in remote employees include:

- ✓ A sudden decrease in their engagement, such as reduced participation in offering suggestions or contributing to goal-setting discussions.
- ✓ Frequent unexplained absences from meetings, not attributed to technical issues.
- ✓ A noticeable shift in their conversations, where they primarily focus on work-related topics, neglecting personal or other interests.

1.b General practices of supporting peers and colleagues to prevent isolation.

- **Fostering a sense of team spirit** is paramount within any organization. The advantages of mutual support include stress reduction and heightened productivity.
- **Effective communication** serves as the bedrock for nurturing team cohesion, encompassing actions such as:
 - Beyond mere pleasantries, **extending a genuine interest** in your colleagues' well-being and emotions.
 - **Actively listening, maintaining eye contact, and respecting** personal boundaries, while being culturally sensitive in your communication.
 - Seasoned employees should **recall their early experiences** and be attuned to potential struggles faced by newcomers, offering guidance during their adjustment phase.
 - Before providing advice, always **seek your colleague's consent**. Practice empathy, refrain from criticism, and exhibit kindness and politeness.
 - Take time to **discover your colleagues' personal interests**, as engaging in casual conversations during daily coffee breaks can foster relationships.
 - A **positive remark**, even for minor accomplishments, can boost their self-assurance and demonstrate your appreciation.

2. Mentoring as Means of Prevention against Social Isolation.

2.a. The importance of an Inclusive work environment

An inclusive work environment is one where every individual feels a profound sense of belonging, fostering an atmosphere that encourages employees to bring their authentic selves to the workplace.

In such an environment, collaboration, cooperation, openness, fairness, curiosity, and accountability are not just ideals, but actively promoted values. This inclusive culture warmly embraces the rich tapestry of backgrounds and

perspectives among its employees, harnessing this diversity to unlock greater talent, innovation, creativity, and contributions.

It is crucial to recognize that the ultimate success of a business hinges on the degree of inclusion and the well-being and engagement levels of its employees. A study featured in Forbes, comprising 2,000 employees, highlighted a significant correlation between higher well-being and engagement and a greater sense of inclusion. Furthermore, the behaviour exhibited by leaders and managers plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' perceptions of inclusion, while interactions among peers are equally instrumental in fostering inclusivity.

Building an inclusive culture can be facilitated through the implementation of policies and practices that promote acceptance and an understanding of how business traditions may vary across different cultures. Encouraging employees to embrace inclusivity in their actions is yet another essential step toward creating a more inclusive workplace.

By actively fostering inclusivity through these measures, organizations can unlock the full potential of their workforce, drive better business outcomes, and create a workplace where every individual is empowered to thrive.

2.b. Overcoming culture barriers with generation Z, need to understand the key elements of their culture.

Culture encompasses the traditions and values passed through generations, defining a society's way of life. This includes etiquette, attire, language, religion, rituals, art, norms (like law and morality), and belief systems.

Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2012, identifies with terms like "lit," "bruh," and "major key." Their identity is shaped by the digital age, climate concerns, changing finances, and COVID-19. They're often called "Digital natives" due to their constant internet presence.

Gen Z is marked by flexibility, independence, open-mindedness, creativity, and a love for

learning. They're adept at digital communication but may struggle with punctuation.

Their characteristics impact their workplace behaviour, posing both opportunities and challenges for organizations. They crave progress, detesting repetitive tasks. Motivation comes from transparent communication, leadership quality, recognition, challenging projects, career paths, and support for personal and professional growth (Racolța-Paina, Nicoleta & Irini, Radu. (2021)

To overcome obstacles, foster respect, and encourage collaborative, efficient work by facilitating clear communication between older and newer employees. Each generation can learn from the other, benefiting from their unique approaches.

3. The significance of tolerance and acceptance of the individuality of employees against social isolation.

Tolerance, defined as the willingness to accept differing behaviours and beliefs, is a vital aspect of fostering a cohesive and innovative work environment.

In the workplace, where individuals with diverse backgrounds, opinions, and styles come together, tolerance plays a crucial role. Promoting open, assertive communication, respect, and trust among employees cultivates a sense of belonging, open-mindedness, creativity, and enhances reliability and productivity.

Embracing different perspectives and experiences sparks innovative thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Tolerance doesn't require agreement with another's beliefs; it's about respecting the right to hold those beliefs.

While some organizations implement zero-tolerance policies to prevent incidents, fostering an inclusive and equitable environment, where diversity is supported, contributes to employee well-being, growth, and increased empathy.

Leaders and managers play a pivotal role by exemplifying tolerance, creating inclusivity, and valuing their team members, ultimately boosting satisfaction and productivity (Von Bergen, C. W., & Collier, G., 2013.

4. Best Practices – 'DO' and 'DON'Ts'

4.a. What to do if a mentee feels excluded

- **Show empathy:** Demonstrate understanding and compassion for your mentee's feelings of exclusion. Be a good listener: Listen actively and ask open-ended questions to encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings.
- **Explain your support:** Reassure your mentee that you are there for them and willing to help.
- **Emphasize relationship quality:** Stress that it's the quality of relationships that matters, not the quantity.
- **Identify areas of help:** Ask where they need assistance in their personal or work life.
- **Ensure confidentiality:** Let them know that your conversations will be confidential and a safe space to discuss their concerns.
- **Provide positive feedback:** Acknowledge their skills and potential, boosting their self-esteem.
- **Share your own experiences:** Discuss a time when you felt excluded and how you overcame it, serving as an example.
- **Lead by example:** Demonstrate inclusivity in your behaviour and actions.
- **Show kindness and compassion:** Approach the situation with understanding and care.
- **Be aware of language and tone:** Pay attention to the words you use and your tone of voice, ensuring they are sensitive and supportive.
- **Focus on similarities:** Emphasize common ground and shared experiences.
- **Promote workplace tolerance:** Encourage a culture of tolerance and diversity in your workplace.
- **Foster social connections:** Promote socialization by inviting employees to common lunches.
- **Establish reporting procedures:** Create internal mechanisms for employees to report harassment or discrimination.

- **Initiate diversity discussions:** Start regular discussions (e.g., "diversity roundtables") to address critical issues related to diversity and inclusion in your company.

4.b. What not to do if a mentee feels excluded

- **Avoid criticism:** Refrain from criticizing or belittling your mentee.
- **Steer clear of irony:** Avoid using ironic or sarcastic remarks that may be hurtful.
- **Don't use stereotypes:** Never resort to stereotypes when discussing your mentee's situation.
- **Avoid sarcasm:** Steer clear of sarcastic jokes, as they can be hurtful and undermine trust.
- **Don't judge:** Refrain from passing judgment on your mentee's personality traits or actions.
- **Don't make unfulfillable promises:** Be realistic about what you can offer and avoid making promises you can't keep.
- **Don't provide therapy:** Even if you have a psychology certification, mentoring is not a substitute for professional therapy or counseling. (Center for Health Leadership & Practice, Public Health Institute, 2003).

4.c. Key benefits of mentoring against social isolation

- 1. Enhanced Sense of Belonging:** Mentoring makes individuals feel accepted and valued within their professional environment.
- 2. Alleviation of Isolation:** It helps mentees realize that they are not alone in facing challenges and uncertainties, fostering a sense of community.
- 3. Boosted Confidence and Communication Skills:** Through mentoring, individuals gain the confidence to express themselves effectively and improve their communication skills.
- 4. Effective Feedback Reception:** Mentees learn how to accept constructive feedback gracefully and use it as a valuable tool for personal growth and development.

5. Professional Relationship Skills: Mentoring imparts the knowledge and skills needed to maintain professional relationships, enhancing one's ability to collaborate and succeed in a team-oriented setting.

6. Expanded Network: It offers the opportunity to expand one's network of professional contacts, providing access to a broader range of career opportunities and resources.

7. Understanding Company Culture: Mentoring allows mentees to quickly and easily grasp the nuances of their current company's culture, enabling them to navigate it more effectively.

By focusing on these benefits, mentoring not only addresses social isolation but also serves as a powerful catalyst for personal and professional growth.

5. Resources

a) Video: Why Ostracism can be like Death in the Work place

Often, ostracism is not viewed as a bad behaviour in contrast to bullying or verbal/physical abuse. However, ostracism is just as harmful for an individual. To find out more, scan the QR Code below:



b) Video: How to Start Changing an Unhealthy Work Environment:

Unhealthy work environments can have disastrous impacts in the mental health of employees, as well as employers. Dr. Glenn D. Rolfen explains how

negative work environments can change; to watch his TEDx Talk, scan the QR Code below:



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Social Isolation

Withdrawal
Decreased Productivity
Lack of Collaboration
Minimal Communication
Emotional Changes
Physical Health Decline
Difficulty in Forming Relationships

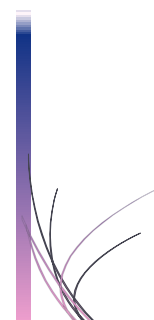
Don't let them overcome you!

**Find out more about
Social Isolation in and out
of workplace @
www.proudproject.eu**

You can access the downloadable versions of PROUD posters at www.proudproject.eu

Chapter 5

Anxiety



1. The definition of anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, unease, and worry, and it's often accompanied by physical changes like sweating or rapid heartbeat.

Everyone feels anxious sometimes, it is perfectly normal. Anxiety becomes a problem when it is so paralyzing that it affects one's life.

Workplace anxiety refers to worries about events at work, being tense or stressed about work, or aspects that are related to work. Workplace anxiety may be related to any number of issues, from job performance to financial well-being to relationships with co-workers and beyond and as a result, it can also hurt personal life and well-being.

1. a. The difference between anxiety, fear, and depression

There is a common misconception of the three terms:

- **Anxiety vs. fear**

Anxiety is not the same as fear, but they are often used interchangeably. While both anxiety and fear are designed to help us to deal with danger, the main difference between the two is that anxiety is **future-oriented**, whereas fear is **present-oriented**. Anxiety is a response to an **undefined threat**, something not so clear, that might or might not happen (e.g., there are rumours about possible layoffs in the company). Fear is an appropriate response to something very **specific, and concrete** (your supervisor has terminated your employment and you fear for your future).

- **Anxiety vs. Depression**

Anxiety and depression often walk hand in hand and accompany one another. Depression and anxiety have different characteristic symptoms, though *some do overlap*.

Depression is characterised by feelings of *sadness, hopelessness, lack of interest* in things once enjoyed, lack of energy, eating more/less than usual, sleeping too little or too much and trouble thinking or concentrating. These feelings are persistent, they last for a longer period (2 weeks

and more) and they are present most of the day. On the other hand, anxiety is characterized by being *restless, nervous, feeling worried, or dread*.

Symptoms of the subjective experience of depression and anxiety:

Depression	Common symptoms	Anxiety
<i>Persistent sadness</i>	<i>Irritability</i>	<i>Unwanted thoughts</i>
<i>Hopelessness</i>	<i>Lack of concentration</i>	<i>Panic attacks</i>
<i>Guilt</i>	<i>Irregular sleep</i>	<i>Excessive worry</i>
<i>Lack of energy</i>	<i>Increased/decreased appetite</i>	<i>Restlessness</i>
		<i>Feelings of impending doom</i>

2. Learning to recognise the symptoms of anxiety in employees

2. a. General symptoms of anxiety

It's common for people to feel nervous about a myriad of things, whether it is work-related or not. Anxiety is a more extreme feeling, often crippling, and contains persistent levels of uneasiness, apprehension, and worry.

Here are some general symptoms of anxiety that **can be observed in employees**:

- Excessive worrying
- Irritability, the employee is snapping at others, often annoyed or in a bad mood
- Obvious fatigue/lack of energy
- Restlessness, impatience
- Need for perfection
- Having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Struggling to make decisions
- Panic or anxiety attacks
- Physical symptoms include sweating, upset stomach, dry mouth, and trouble sleeping (without any other medical explanation)
- Coping behaviour like excessive smoking/drinking

2. b. Impact of anxiety on employees' performance

Having anxiety not only negatively affects one's personal life and health, but it also can have a huge impact on one's career.

Employees can make decisions influenced by anxiety, such as refusing a promotion due to a fear of more responsibility or turning down great opportunities because it involves more public speaking or perhaps travelling.

Learning to recognize the symptoms of anxiety in the workplace will go a long way toward supporting struggling employees.

The most visible changes in **employees' performance** include:

- A drop in performance
- High error rate
- Increased sick leaves
- Reduced interest/disengagement in work
- Poor job productivity

2. c. The most common causes of anxiety in the workplace

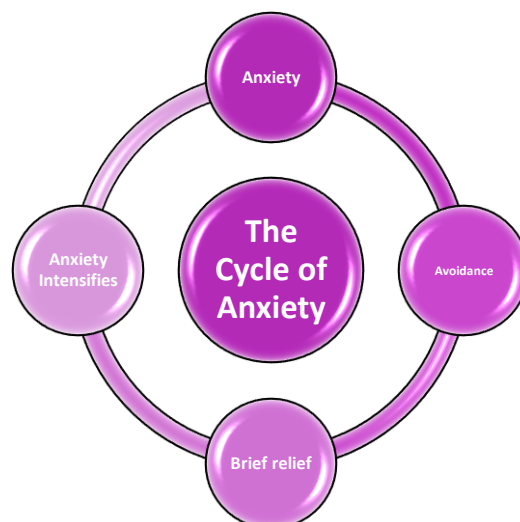
Every employee is unique. What stresses out one person might be energizing another. It is always necessary to talk to employees and try to dissect the stressors relevant specifically to them.

The most common causes of work-related anxiety are as follows:

- Lack of experience of young employees
- Long work hours/overworking
- The effort to achieve work-life balance
- High stress/meeting deadlines
- A lack of support from the manager and/or co-workers
- A hostile work environment/toxic work relationships
- Job security

3. The vicious circle of anxiety

Even though the experience with anxiety can differ, anxious thoughts and feelings are rather universal. People experiencing anxiety can often get themselves into something called the Cycle of Anxiety. Knowing the signs of the 4 typical stages may help to manage the symptoms as they arise.



The Cycle of Anxiety on an example:

1. **Anxiety:** A trigger or stressor occurs causing physical symptoms. The thought of delivering a presentation in front of senior management results in nausea.
2. **Avoidance:** Desire to escape. Employee calls in sick that day.
3. **Brief relief:** Feelings of relief due to avoiding the stressor come up.
4. **Anxiety intensifies:** The relief doesn't last long. The realisation that the presentation will be just postponed results in even higher anxiety.

Understanding this vicious cycle helps to break it. No matter which stage of the anxiety cycle you're in, there are strategies you can try to help you cope (see below).

4. Anxiety management

Anxiety can be debilitating but the good news is that there are measures that can be taken to take away its power and help to get it under control. Here are a few of them.

General tips on anxiety management:

- **Knowing the triggers:** Knowing what leads to periods of acute anxiety allows one to take appropriate steps to mitigate the stress or possibly avoid the trigger altogether. One of the great ways how to do that is by *journaling*. Making daily notes and then reviewing them helps to reveal the triggers. At the same time,

journaling provides relief, as it allows for the anxiety to “stay on the paper”.

- **Getting grounded:** Many people find out that having a plan for what to do when they’re anxious helps minimize physical symptoms of anxiety. Things like quick meditation sessions, a short walk or a call to a friend are all excellent techniques for learning how to overcome anxiety.
- **Relaxation techniques:** Anxiety makes the whole body to be tense. A great way how to release this tension is to implement one or two relaxation techniques into one’s daily routine. Visualization techniques, meditation and yoga are examples of these techniques that can ease anxiety. However, they must be done regularly to provide the desired effect.
- **Physical activity:** Exercise is a powerful stress reducer. It can improve mood and helps to stay healthy. Developing a routine to be physically active for most days of the week greatly helps decrease anxiety by making the body flooded with endorphins and keeping the mind busy.
- **Right conditions:** Sometimes elements in the environment can cause or attribute greatly to anxiety. Small changes, like decreasing the temperature in the bedroom, working with noise-cancelling headphones, or avoiding too much caffeine during the day can make a big difference.
- **Sharing the burden:** Talking to a family member, friend, co-worker, therapist, support group, etc. and sharing the experience helps people to realise they are not alone with their feelings and other people can provide much needed comfort and understanding. Sharing is caring.
- **Healthy habits:** Lifestyle directly influences our mental well-being, that is a fact confirmed by much research but gladly ignored by most people. Not only (but especially) with anxiety, we should get enough sleep, stay hydrated, eat healthy and fresh food, manage coffee intake, and avoid smoking, alcohol, and drugs. However, taking care of the mind is equally important. Things like striving for a work-life balance, spending time with family or pursuing hobbies help us maintain our mental health.

5. How mentoring can help with anxiety

Mentoring is proven to reduce stress and anxiety levels. Even though mentoring is certainly not a replacement for therapy, a great mentor can help a mentee to find solutions to challenges *in a secure environment*. They can help mentees to see that the problem can be solved, and that stress can be avoided or minimized.

How mentoring helps manage anxiety:

- **Spotting the warning signs:** Frequent absence from work or a tendency to dwell on worst-case scenarios are often indicators of anxiety. A mentor is usually able to quickly determine that the mentee is struggling with anxiety based on certain behaviour. Subsequently, they can provide useful behavioural feedback and help develop a strategy to manage the anxiety, whether it means adjusting the work conditions or seeking a therapist.
- **Isolation:** Anxiety can make feel people like they are alone with the problem. Opening to a mentor and sharing the feeling of anxiety can make employees feel less isolated. Mentors and mentees often report the importance and relief of being listened to – and recognize that other people were going through similar issues, helping them to feel more supported.
- **Finding triggers:** Due to the nature of the relationship, mentors are often confidants. Mentees trust them enough to confide in them and share what is bothering them. With the help of a mentor, the mentee can identify certain events or people’s actions that can trigger their anxiety.
- **Finding solutions:** Mentors can provide completely different perspectives on a situation or a problem, which stems from their rich experience. Their valid opinions can lead to a strategy for a mentee which will help them remove or minimize anxiety.

6. Resources

Dealing with anxiety is a complex and deeply subjective matter. However, here are some verified techniques that can be used anywhere and that can provide quick relief. However, none of them are a substitute for a treatment.

a) Tool: 4-7-8 technique

One of the most powerful tools to help with acute and chronic anxiety is our breath. When focusing on our breathing we tend to forget our worries. What's more, it helps to soothe the racing heart and stimulates hormones that help calm us down. One of the easiest techniques is 4-7-8. Find the easy step-by-step guide by scanning the QR code below:



b) Tool: 333 rule

When facing strong anxiety, the one that almost leads to a panic attack, the best thing to do is get grounded. It's a defusing technique that works on the principle of distraction from obtrusive thoughts. 333 rule is a quick life-saviour in times of need. Get a free guide by scanning the QR code below:



c) Tool: Emotional freedom technique or Tapping

EFT is an alternative therapy for anxiety and some other conditions (e.g. PTSD). It is based on the combined principles of ancient Chinese acupressure and modern psychology. You can learn how it works and try it for yourself for free by scanning the QR:



d) Video: Mental Health at Work

'Switching off' in the modern age is often considered to be a luxury that many people cannot afford. For more information on the importance of mental health at work and anxiety management, scan the QR Code below:



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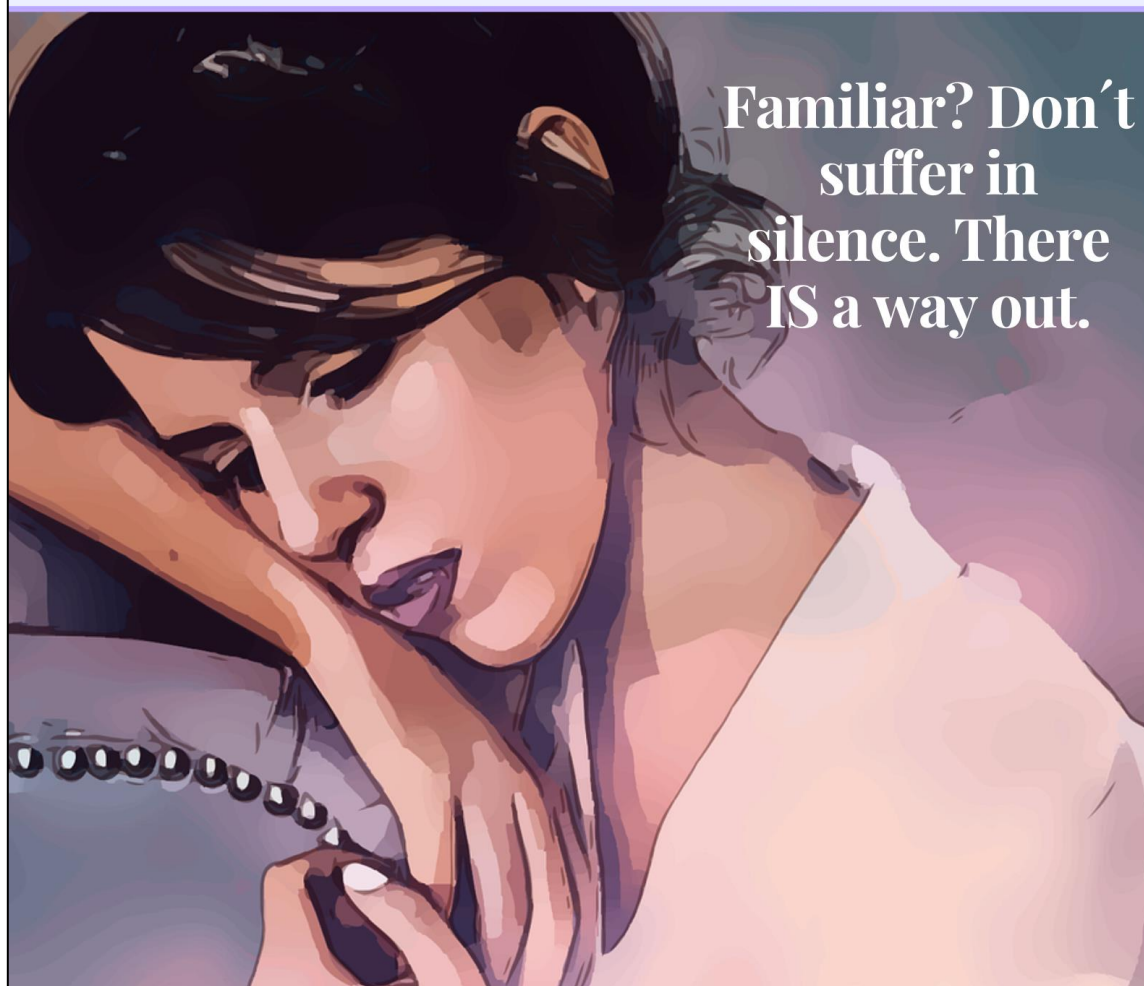
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8. PROUD Promotional Material Sample

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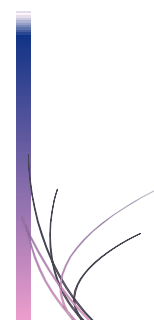
"Things are NOT going to work out."
"I will end up homeless." "My colleagues hate me."
"I'm going to fail." **Anxiety** "I'm going crazy."
"I'm having a heart attack."
"I will mess up this presentation and I will get fired."



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Chapter 6

Workaholism



1. Workaholism and its impact on young workers

The term *workaholism* was first used by Wayne Oates (1968). In his view a workaholic's personality is distorted by addictive working, which has a negative impact on his mental and physical health. The use of the term became widespread in the 1990s, when the mass burnout of especially young workers became a serious problem of society. Researchers of behavioural addictions pointed out 7 components of addiction to work (Griffiths 2005). These are:

- Work becomes overimportant, it comes well before any other activity.
- A workaholic can only be satisfied if he has worked enough, but as he gets used to working more and more, he needs more and more work to become satisfied.
- If a workaholic is stressed, nervous, bored, he finds relief in working. Work becomes a mood enhancer.
- If a workaholic cannot work, it results in withdrawal symptoms. These are psychical: stress, restlessness, being nervous etc.
- A workaholic usually comes into personal conflicts with his family, friends, as he has no time for them. In extreme cases it means a conflict within the workaholic's self, he feels that his behaviour is harmful for himself, and yet, he is unable to change his behaviour.
- After some time, mental and physical problems arise from overwork, like burnout, depression, stomach ulcer, cardiovascular problems.
- In the end most workaholics recognize their problem and try to stop. It is often followed by fallback. The sense of guilt, the inner tension is so strong in them that without expert help they are unable to keep to the road to recovery.

Some find it difficult to differentiate between diligent, dedicated work; overwork brought on by a difficult situation (e.g. a pressing project deadline ahead); and workaholism. Moreover, some regard workaholism as a positive personality trait of the

employee. None of these is true for a workaholic, who suffers from an addiction. The person is most likely workaholic, if, together with the above seven symptoms, personality traits such as these are present in him (Clark et al. 2020):

- high level of perfectionism
- pessimistic self-assessment
- negative affectivity (the person is prone to experience lots of negative feelings like anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, nervousness etc.)
- superb, compulsive conscientiousness
- endless brooding on job events
- impulsive, extroverted contenders more easily become addicted than introverted people.

As mentioned above, the impact of workaholism in the long run are usually **mental and physical problems (burnout, depression, stomach ulcer, cardiovascular problems), conflicts in the family and with friends, lower and lower level of achievement at work, dissatisfaction with work etc.**

2. The definition of self-care and simple practices/tips

Self-care in general is the individual's answer to how he can better cope with daily stressors. In the case of a workaholic, it means how he can fight against his addiction, supposing he has recognized it and feels a real wish to overcome it. There are various tricks that might help, if the person is strong and persistent enough. Here are a few examples mentors may find useful to advise (Kun 2022):

- Sometimes a consultation with the boss helps. Try to arrive at an agreement about a more optimal division of work, a more realistic schedule.
- Do not multitask! Plan the schedule of your daily to-do-list and do not forget to plan breaks into it!
- It is useful to group the items on the to-do-list by importance. Less vital tasks may wait until the more pressing tasks are finished.
- Try to find interesting, challenging tasks, and insert such ones into the daily routine

of boring ones. An understanding boss might help here a lot!

- Understand that you have the right to say NO. It is not expected of you to volunteer for practically every task at once. Be assertive, and when there is too much for you to do, say no to the next task. Say NO to yourself, too. Try to balance your free time and professional time, and when your free time begins to dissolve into thin air, say NO to yourself and stop working.
- Learn to endure mistakes. Your own ones. Making mistakes is human.
- Study your workplace whether it pushes you into workaholicism. If yes, try to find a friendlier place.
- Consider your private life important. Plan activities for your free time, with friends or family. Be nice and caring with your relatives and friends. Listen to your body, too. Fulfil the needs of your body, e.g. do not forget to eat or to sleep.
- Do not stare at the screen of your digital devices before going to bed, during meals, while talking to your children. Turn off your mobile/computer in your free time.
- If you feel lost in your fight, visit a therapist or a self-help group!

3. The importance of work-life balance, understanding the differentiation as well as the link between work and personal life

A meaningful, well-paid, satisfactory job is an integral part of our self-content. However, we must not sacrifice ourselves on our work's altar, neither mentally nor physically. If we do so, not only our personal wellbeing, but also our work achievement will become worse, too. Whether we manage to find our work-life balance alone, or with the help of a therapist, we must cling to it. This balance is the basis of a healthy family life, the key to our personal mental and physical health. With this, we will be able to raise our children to become successful, healthy adults. So, it is worth fighting for this balance. While working, we should be efficient. When work time finishes, we should concentrate on recreation, family, and friends. Practical tips a mentor might find useful to advise: Do not read work emails in your free time, do not bring office

work into your bed, when working hours finish, be your personal self.

4. Best Practices – What a Mentor Does and Does Not Do

A mentor should be aware of the danger that young workers struggling to keep their jobs and to look successful sometimes become workaholic. If the mentor listens to the mentee actively and empathetically, and finds that the mentee has symptoms and personality traits like the ones listed in chapter 1 (Definition and impact), he might offer the mentee a self-check test (see below, in chapter 5 Resources). If these confirm the suspicion, the mentor might advise the mentee to use some of the practical tips (see above in chapter 2 Simple practices/tips). Even if the mentee is NOT workaholic, these practical tips might help create a healthier work-life balance. But if the mentee continues struggling and complaining, or the mentor experiences further symptoms, he might look up the availability of a local self-help group, or a psychologist/addictologist and advise the mentee to try to contact them.

It is also a possible solution – and beneficial for all the employees – to work in cooperation with the boss to create a healthy workplace atmosphere, where one might get regular feedback on the achievements, positive feedback on successfully perfected tasks, where there is a pleasant team spirit, collaboration, a reliable work plan etc. Healthy workplace atmosphere is also one of the best tools of prevention against any mental or professional problems.

What a mentor should NOT do is to aggressively “cure” a mentee who is likely to be workaholic.

5. Resources

a) Test: Addiction Risk Test

Several work addiction risk tests with evaluation can be found on the internet. For an example to such a test in English, scan the QR code below:



The presence of work addiction might be esteemed by the Bergen work addiction scale (BWAS) (Andreassen et al. 2012). It contains seven questions on a Likert scale. These are the questions:

- *Thought of how you could free up more time to work?*
- *Spent much more time working than initially intended?*
- *Worked in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression?*
- *Been told by others to cut down on work without listening to them?*
- *Become stressed if you have been prohibited from working?*
- *Deprioritized hobbies, leisure activities, and exercise because of your work?*
- *Worked so much that it has negatively influenced your health?*

b) Video: The Impact of Workaholism

How much are we willing to sacrifice for the sake of our work? How tricky is it to realise that we've gone

too far? Dr. Kai-Fu Lee presents the impact of workaholism on his own life; to watch his presentation, scan the QR Code below:



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Work- aholism



Are these typical of you?

- 1** Work is before any other activities
- 2** Your satisfaction depends on the amount of work
- 3** Work is a mood enhancer for you
- 4** You are stressed, worried or nervous if you cannot work
- 5** Work is a root of your family conflicts
- 6** Mental and physical problems arise from overwork
- 7** You feel guilty, if you fall back after trying to stop your problems

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